

THE PARISH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

This directive has been designed to help parish incumbents and parishes in the formation, preparation and implementation of Parish Discernment Committees (PDC). Materials for this guide have been gathered from various sources including guides published by other dioceses.

Discernment Committee Members and the Inquirer

Ministry happens in community. One avenue of call to ministry is the Christian community itself and that call is tested in community. We are committed through our Baptismal Covenant to support one another in ministry. Discernment often takes place within the community of the person being called where the person is well known and has been observed over a lengthy period of time.

The work of a PDC focuses on discernment of a call to ministry of a member of that community. A by-product of that discernment is the increased learning and awareness about ministry, the orders of ministry, individual gifts, and the ways in which each person's gifts complement the gifts of others in the congregation. It is hoped that the result for the PDC members is a broader picture of how we live as God's people both in the Church and in the world. It is hoped that the result for the inquirer is a clearer picture of the ministry to which he or she is called.

The Inquirer, along with the members of his/her home parish, seeks to answer the fundamental question, "Is ordination the form my ministry as a Christian should take?" Before the question can be answered, a time of exploration, prayer, reflection and evaluation is required. The role of the PDC is to help the inquirer determine an appropriate response to this question by delving into the hard questions of vocational choice, reflecting on an inquirer's potential for ordained and lay ministry; evaluating his/her readiness to pursue this course; and exploring the depth of an inquirer's Christian faith and spiritual development.

At the same time that the PDC facilitates exploration for the individual, it can be an opportunity for personal reflection for each PDC member, as well as an opportunity to carry the discussion about ministry into the larger community. While the specific content of the PDC's discussions with the Inquirer are strictly confidential, the discernment process can serve as a training course in ministry and faith development for the whole parish.

The PDC is asked to enter into a special relationship with the Inquirer on behalf of the Parish and the larger church. This requires a commitment of time, energy, sharing of themselves, and a commitment to ask difficult and challenging questions of one another. This task calls for humility and a willingness to be open and candid in the context of a caring community: both to comfort and to support the Inquirer.

As an inquirer is asking, “Is ordination the form my ministry should take?” the PDC, wardens, vestry and incumbent are asking: “Does ordained ministry seem to be the form of ministry to which God is calling this person?; Can we in good faith send this person to the Bishop to be considered for ordered ministry? ; What is it about this person’s gifts and the way they are utilized that makes her/him especially suitable to the ordained ministry?; What ministries excite, inspire, and satisfy this person and what areas elicit discomfort and apathy?”

PDC Membership

The PDC, on behalf of the congregation and the larger Church, is asked to deal with such daunting questions and in doing so, enter into a special relationship with each inquirer. As mentioned earlier, this requires a significant commitment of time, energy, and prayer and a willingness to share one’s own life and faith. Such openness requires a strict commitment to complete confidentiality.

Many people entering this commitment say with reluctance, “What do I have to offer? Who am I to judge the truth of another’s call?” The basic qualifications are:

- knowledge and experience of the Anglican tradition
- a sense of one’s own ministry and vocation
- being well-known and trusted by the congregation
- willingness to make a sustained commitment to prayer and to the discernment process

The territorial archdeacon in consultation with the rector, priest-in-charge or interim priest (“the incumbent”), wardens and the inquirer, appoints five members to the PDC. Two must be members of the parish and three must be members from the archdeaconry discernment committee list. One of the members from the parish must be a church warden or a member of vestry. It is encouraged to have at least one member who does not know the candidate. When possible, membership should reflect the diversity of the congregation and parish in terms of gender, age, race, and life circumstances

The incumbent and the territorial archdeacon will lead an orientation meeting with the PDC to begin the process. The convener is a member of the PDC whose primary task is to help facilitate the work of the committee. The responsibilities of the convener are as follows:

- set the time and location of the meetings
- work to create a safe and confidential environment for discussion
- help to maintain the continuity of discussion from meeting to meeting
- make sure that all members have an opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings.

PDC Meetings / Sessions

Development of Committee Procedures

Each PDC will develop its own format and style for sessions with inquirers. Some of the issues in development that need to be agreed upon by PDC members by the end of Session I are:

- leadership style (select a convener)
- format for the meetings with the inquirer
- record-keeping needs and reporting procedures
- options for on-going relationships with the inquirer

The PDC process should include five to seven meetings to be held over a period of at least two months. It is preferable that more time be taken to allow for adequate consideration of issues, and prayer about those issues, by each individual between times when the PDC is together. The following outline of PDC meetings and sessions can be used as a guide in establishing a meeting format. These are suggestions, please modify them as needed. Possible session outlines are included in Appendix B Session Agendas.

Length

It is recommended that each meeting be between one and three hours in length.

Climate

Because of the personal nature of the PDC discussions, it is important to establish a climate of acceptance and trust. Each person needs to know that whatever they say will be honoured and will be held in confidence within the group, that they will not be criticized or judged, and that there will be no advice offered to solve perceived problems. Competition or control issues do not belong in the PDC. Patient, careful listening will greatly aid the process. Questions can be asked for clarity, but should not be asked out of curiosity or in the manner of an interrogation. Because of the need to receive information about the inquirer, there is a real danger that the discussion can become an inquisition of sorts. It is recommended, to the degree that is practical, that all members share their experiences and points of view in response to the questions. For the sake of continuity, it is most helpful if each member can attend every session.

Structure

The following is a suggested meeting format.

- Opening prayer
- Check-in and update status
- Reflection on Scripture or suggested reading
- Discuss content

- Evaluate
- Closing prayer

These elements are explained below and then illustrated in session outlines.

Opening and Closing Prayer

By beginning and ending with prayer, we place ourselves in God's hands and submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (See BCP pp. 39-61 or BAS pp. 675-684 for suggestions).

Reflection on Scripture or suggested parts of liturgical rites

Read together the suggested portions of Scripture, the Catechism or ordination services which relate to the task at hand.

Check-in and update status

Before entering into discussion, it is usually helpful to review the progress to date, briefly state the goals for the current session and allow each person in the group a moment to offer observations or significant occurrences since the last session. This time at the first session with the inquirer can be primarily an opportunity for each member to introduce themselves.

Discuss Content

Discuss the reading material and/or questions designated for that session.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of each session. Near the end of the meeting, take time to review the highlights of what was discussed and shared. It is recommended that a few quiet moments be provided at the end of each session so that each PDC member may take time to make personal notes for future reference. Much of the PDC discernment process is based on impressions which are easily lost a week or a month later.

PDC Process

The first task of the PDC is to come together as a group, to develop trust, and to assist one another in understanding how to go about discerning a call to ministry for the inquirer. The PDC's work is definitely much more than a matchmaking process in which the inquirer's gifts are matched to the talents needed for a particular ministry. This is work that touches on the divine, work that is done with minds and hearts in prayer, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is good to keep in mind that the PDC process is only the beginning of the effort to assist the Inquirer and the Diocese in learning about God's call for this person. Since

members of a congregation are not normally experienced in ministry discernment, the PDC sessions will be a learning experience for all involved. At times there may be a feeling of not knowing what to do. It is important to trust your intuition as to what God would have you do and not be afraid of making mistakes. The stages that follow the PDC discernment offer a safety net for errors in judgment due to lack of experience in these matters; however, the PDC's report is of great value to those who follow you.

Outline of Sessions

SESSION I: Orientation

PDC meets with the incumbent and the territorial archdeacon who chairs this meeting.

Preparation: Read the Guidelines for the Parish Discernment Committee including "The Community Discerns a Call to Ordination" from the Ministry Discernment Handbook, p. 29.

SESSION II: Spiritual Journey – Faith and Spiritual Development

Preparation: Prepare Spiritual Journey Statement, read "Discerning a Personal Call" from the Ministry Discernment Handbook, p. 15, the Catechism in the BCP pp. 544-555, and "The Congregation" from the Ministry Discernment Handbook, p. 10.

SESSION III: The Ministry of the Baptized - The Whole People of God

Preparation: Read Chapters One, Two and Four from the Ministry Discernment Handbook, p. 8, p. 10, p. 21, Holy Baptism, BAS pp. 153-165, Confirmation, BAS pp. 623-630.

SESSION IV: Perceptions of Christian Ministry – Call to Ordained Ministry

Preparation: Read Perceptions of Christian Ministry and Call to Ordained Ministry in these Guidelines. Also read chapters five and six from the Ministry Discernment Handbook.

SESSION V: Intellectual, Emotional and Leadership Capacities

- Capacity to learn
- Emotional health
- Responsibility and authority
- Communication skills

Preparation: Read Appendix A - Seeking out Aspirants

SESSION VI: Evaluation Session WITHOUT the Inquirer

Preparation: Read Evaluation Session in these guidelines. Session VI is held WITHOUT the inquirer present. Review notes you made during the previous sessions.

SESSION VII: Review of the PDC Report with the Inquirer

Preparation: Once the final report is prepared, at least two members of the PDC will review the report with the inquirer prior to its submission to the parish corporation.

Preparing for Each Session

SESSION I - Orientation

Each PDC member should have a copy of this directive well in advance of the first meeting in order to become thoroughly familiar with their content. In addition, members may be asked to read other materials referred to in these guidelines including the Ministry Discernment Handbook. Please keep in mind that the committee should use this document as a guide for discussion, not as something to be slavishly followed. Don't feel constrained to ask every question – and allow room for the Holy Spirit to also guide the conversation! Topics that will be covered at the orientation meeting with the incumbent and the archdeacon include:

- Explanation of the purpose and task of the committee.
- Exploration of each member's understanding of ordained ministry.
- Discussion of the importance of this committee's work. This will give the PDC information on how to structure its work, allow members to get to know one another, and recognize each individual's contribution to this ministry.
- Discussion of the biases or tensions each member brings to this committee's work. An honest exploration of each member's attitudes, values, and biases will enable the committee to recognize when they are interfering with the process of discernment.
- Time should also be spent discussing the PDC's role in the discernment process, particularly its relationship with the Commission on the Diaconate, vocational chaplains, the Bishop and the parish.

PDC's Relationship with the Commission on the Diaconate / Vocational Chaplains

The Commission on the Diaconate and vocational chaplains work as advisory bodies to the Bishop, appointed by and serving completely at his/her discretion. The Bishop seeks advice on the suitability of aspirants, postulants and candidates for ordination to the priesthood and to the diaconate. In carrying out that charge, these groups will consider carefully the work and report of the Parish Discernment Committee. The report of the PDC is included in the individual's file and is reviewed by the appropriate groups which assist in guiding discernment.

When a PDC is formed, the Archdeacon will meet with the group in Session I. The Archdeacon will be available to answer questions about the process which emerge as the Committee engages in its work. The report of the PDC is one of a number of evaluative materials that are considered.

PDC'S Relationship with the Incumbent

The incumbent appoints the PDC with the concurrence of the parish corporation. Before appointing the PDC, the incumbent should consult with the inquirer and the corporation with regard to potential members.

Once the PDC has been appointed, it is recommended that the incumbent attend the first meeting along with the archdeacon. The PDC should then meet alone with the inquirer during the discernment phase of their work together.

At the conclusion of their meetings with the inquirer, the PDC completes a report on its observations and recommendations, meets with the Inquirer to review the report and sends a copy of the report to the parish corporation. The form for this report is in Appendix C. It is important that the Inquirer be affirmed and supported as one who has a calling to ministry through Baptism and who is valued as a person and child of God.

The Parish Corporation then makes a decision as to whether or not to recommend the Inquirer for aspirant status (deacon or priest). The PDC may recommend a specific lay ministry in lieu of commendation and nomination to Holy Orders. This decision is prayerfully based on the work of the PDC and the observations of its members. If the Corporation wishes to recommend the Inquirer for status as an aspirant, the form for that purpose is completed and sent to the Bishop. It may be that through the discernment process the Inquirer has received some clarity that he or she is not called to ordained ministry. Here the PDC can be very helpful in working with the person to look at the next steps he or she might take in deepening his/her lay ministry.

SESSION II - Spiritual Journey – Faith and Spiritual Development

Spiritual Journey Session Preparation

As a preparation for the discussion in Session II, each member of the PDC, including the Inquirer, should prepare a brief (10 minute) “spiritual journey” statement. This is a brief account of each individual’s life viewed through their relationship to God. There are many possible ways to construct such a statement, a few of which are listed below.

- Make a list of significant events in your life that are related to your relationship with God.
- Consider the theme of relationship with God and briefly illustrate how that theme has been present in your life.
- Divide your life into 10 or 15 year segments and select a phrase that describes a major theme for each segment that reflects your relationship with God for that time period.

- Consider a person in your life who has been a role model for, or has been significant influence in, guiding your relationship with God and briefly explain that influence.

At this session, which is the first with the Inquirer, begin with introductions and a discussion of how the group will function and everyone's expectations. Discuss how the Committee will work together to build a climate that encourages risk-taking, sharing and caring; a climate that discourages judgment, competition, and advice.

Also spend a few minutes sharing members' expectations about what you are beginning. An inquirer's attitude and expectations toward this step of the process are a key factor in its outcome.

Faith and Spiritual Development

The first and most important criterion in discernment of ministry is the faith of the Inquirer. Some sense of the depth of faith can be pursued in a full group discussion of personal faith. Some information may be drawn from the sharing of spiritual journeys. The PDC may also gain a deep sense of this from the way the Inquirer answers other questions. For example, family life and goal setting are topics that are not usually focused on spiritual relationships. If an inquirer brings God, prayer life, or some such reference into the discussion, it may speak much louder than the answers to questions directly asked about spirituality. Consider the answers to these questions when forming an impression about the inquirer's spiritual development.

1. How well does this person understand the faith expressed in Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer? (See BCP pp. 544-555)
2. What evidence of having a personal relationship with God does the inquirer give in word and deed?
3. Has this person done any teaching in the parish? Would I entrust my own religious education to him or her?
4. What has each member established as his or her Rule of Life and how successfully is it followed? What benefits are derived from it? What is the inquirer's Rule of Life, how well is it followed, and what benefits are derived from it?
5. What indication is there that the inquirer is still questioning, searching, and probing the mysteries of the faith?
6. How do the inquirer's financial commitments reflect his or her spiritual commitment?

SESSION III - The Ministry of the Baptized - The Whole People of God

This is a discussion of the ministry of the Whole People of God shared by both lay and ordained members of the Christian community. Members of the group should

find opportunities to learn about their own calling to service and find encouragement in one another who often identify gifts we ourselves do not see.

1. Discuss the perceived ministry of each member of the group. Try to reflect the ministries of others as you see them. Especially assist the inquirer in formulating an account of his or her own current ministry as a lay person.
2. It has been said that a church without mission is dead. What importance do you attach to mission and how does it affect the life of the parish?
3. What elements of difference between the ministry of the baptized and the ministry of the ordained are most evident to you? Explore both positive and negative aspects of both.
4. What is your understanding of the Christian ministry?
5. How do you view the ministry of the whole Body of Christ?
6. How are gifts of ministry developed and manifested in the Church? Discuss talents and gifts given to each of us by our Creator. What are the inquirer's gifts? How are these gifts and personal characteristics being used?
7. With an awareness of each person's involvement in employment, family, and church community, focus on the inquirer's involvement in these areas. What are this person's current ministries in those areas? How does she or he tie together the secular and sacred realms of life?

SESSION IV - Perceptions of Christian Ministry – Call to Ordained Ministry

This is a discussion of ministry and orders. The following questions may be helpful to stimulate discussion, as well as explore the inquirer's views on these issues.

1. How do you differentiate between the ministries of lay persons, deacons and priests?
2. What do you see as the primary function of the ordained minister?
3. How do you understand the central task of pastoral care? (Solving other people's problems? Giving answers? Helping one come to a resolution of one's problems?)

Call to Ordained Ministry

The discernment of a call from God requires careful listening to what is said directly and what is said indirectly. A sense of a call from God may be to any order of ministry – lay, episcopate, diaconate, or priesthood. A call is different from a conventional decision to pursue a new career or vocation. A call heard from God carries with it a kind of imperious constraint – it must be pursued. The task at hand involves listening first for a sense that it is a call from God, and then striving to determine the type of ministry to which the individual is called. It should be emphasized that a call to a committed lay ministry may be very likely. Consider these questions about the inquirer's recognition of a call from God to ordained ministry.

1. What does it mean to each member to be “called” by God?
2. What evidence do you have that this person is called by God to the ordained ministry?
3. What is the difference between a call to Christian service and a call to ordination?
4. Are the inquirer’s primary interests congruent with the function of an ordained minister?
5. Are the inquirer’s innate abilities commensurate with the demands of the ordained ministry?
6. Why does the inquirer want to be ordained? What can the inquirer do as a priest or deacon that he or she cannot do as a committed lay person?
7. How does the prospect of extended schooling and training mesh with the inquirer’s family life and employment/income sources? Does the inquirer have family support for following such a pathway?

SESSION V - Intellectual, Emotional and Leadership Capacities

Capacity to Learn

The ordination process for the priesthood includes graduate level education that requires the abilities to understand and analyze complex ideas, speak articulately, write clearly, and be open to new concepts. The ordination process for the diaconate in this Diocese includes a commitment to training that requires the same abilities. The ordained minister must have a lifelong commitment to learning and personal growth. Consider these aspects of the inquirer’s attitude about, and capacity for, learning.

1. What is this person’s capacity to learn?
2. What is his or her academic record?
3. How open is she or he to questioning, self-exploration, and reality testing? What openness have you seen during the session? Have you seen the inquirer grapple with a difficult issue and emerge with a new viewpoint?
4. What evidence is there of his or her continuing commitment to learning and intellectual growth?

Emotional Health

PDC members may feel uncomfortable assessing an inquirer’s emotional health. It is realized that most PDC members are not competent to make a professional assessment. The Diocese relies on a consultant for the assessment of emotional health. You are asked to respond on the basis of your feelings and observations, just as you might respond to a member of your family. The questions that follow are primarily a guide for the committee’s reflection after each session. Some direct

discussion may be appropriate, e.g., discussion of what makes one happy, angry, sad, or how one deals with those feelings.

1. Does the inquirer have a realistic view of the world?
2. How aware is she or he of her or his own feelings?
3. How well does he or she express strong positive and negative feelings?
4. How well is the inquirer able to work under pressure, with conflicting demands and/or stress? Talk about the pressures of your lives. What pressures have there been in the inquirer's life? How does the inquirer respond to pressure? Is there a current situation, such as pending or recent divorce, or other unresolved issue that might indicate waiting or delaying entry into the process until such issues are resolved?
5. How does the inquirer deal with conflict? Flight or fight? "Non-anxious presence?"
6. To what extent is she or he aware of and comfortable with her or his own sexuality?
7. Are there any indications that he or she aspires to the ordained ministry as a way of solving personal problems?
8. Does he or she have a level of maturity and ability to adapt that is commensurate with a chronological age?
9. Does the inquirer have a healthy relationship with family and friends?

Leadership Capacities

Leadership skills are essential for persons entering ordained ministry. The characteristics of leadership which the Diocese seeks are listed in Appendix A. Consider these general questions concerning leadership.

1. How does this person make important decisions that will affect others as well as herself or himself?
2. Does he or she show initiative, self confidence, enthusiasm, flexibility, trust?
3. Can he or she motivate others, drawing them together to elicit the use of their spiritual gifts and resources?
4. Is she or he aware of and at ease with a variety of leadership styles and able to use them as the situation indicates?
5. How does she or he function in interpersonal relationships?
6. How comfortable is she or he as a person with whom authority rests?
7. How has her or his leadership already been evidenced in prior or current lay ministries in school, work, or church settings?
8. How do other people respond to his or her leadership?
9. How does she or he respond to the leadership of others?

Responsibility and Authority

1. How does the inquirer view issues of authority in the institutional Church?
2. How comfortable is he or she with being a person in whom authority rests? Can that authority be claimed and used appropriately?
3. How comfortable is she or he being under the authority of the Bishop and others who may have supervision over her or him?

The group might utilize some “What if...?” scenarios to prompt discussion of reactivity to authority.

Communication Skills

Presentation of a clear message with a caring and pleasant delivery is essential for persons whose ministry is often focussed on preaching, teaching, offering pastoral care, and facilitating others in ministry. In meeting with the aspirant, be aware of how ideas are expressed and how well the person listens to others.

1. Does this person express ideas clearly, both in speaking and in writing?
2. What listening skills does the inquirer make use of? How do I feel when this person is listening to me?
3. Can this person read other people’s nonverbal cues accurately and tailor a response of appropriate length and complexity?
4. When dealing with his or her feelings, do physical gestures and movements (body language) match the words spoken?
5. Does this person interrupt, override, or attempt to verbally dominate others?
6. Does the inquirer take the time to listen to each person and respond appropriately, without regard for age or status of the person?

SESSION VI - Evaluation Session WITHOUT the Inquirer

The purpose of the evaluation session is to review the progress to date and come to a decision and recommendation, as well as form the statements for the written report of the PDC. Please note that there may be other times during the process that the PDC members wish to meet without the inquirer in order to evaluate progress. This might be scheduled for the end of one or two sessions, or a few minutes might be taken at the end of each session. Except for the final evaluative session, it is recommended that the inquirer participate in the majority of the evaluations in order to avoid an adversarial relationship.

At this session the Committee considers what type of ministry they feel would be appropriate for the Inquirer in this period in his or her life. Ask yourselves, “Can I envision this person as a priest or a deacon? ...as my priest or deacon? If you have some feelings that you would not be able to turn to this individual as your priest or deacon, your feelings should be explored with the group. They may point to deeper feelings, perhaps shared within the group that there is hesitation about the

individual proceeding toward ordination. The Committee needs to be careful not to think only in terms of their particular parish ministry. There are many types of parishes. Also, there may be a variety of positions for priests and deacons that are not associated with parishes.

Ask yourselves, “Do we want to present the inquirer to the Corporation for approval?” If you have reservations, decide whether or not the areas of doubt include skills, experience, or characteristics that have a reasonable potential for improvement. If so, state your reservations clearly on the report form with your recommendation for either delay for improvement, or to go ahead with the understanding that there are areas to work on.

A formal report will be composed in the format provided, a summary of which to be shared with the Parish Corporation. (Appendix C). It is very helpful to the Bishop if reservations are stated clearly in the report and explanation provided about any difficulties in coming to final conclusions. The report should be read to the Inquirer by a minimum of two people from the PDC before it is presented to the Parish Corporation. It may be necessary to assist your brother or sister to recognize that the PDC understands his or her call differently than he or she envisions it. Explain how you understand the call, with both its challenges and areas of satisfaction. Reiterate the inquirer’s talents as they have been revealed to you and relate them to the call as you see it. Additional meetings of the group may be needed for this.

Another very real possibility is that the person is a very capable lay minister. In this case, the Committee will need to review their discussions of whether or not the Inquirer is responding to a call from God for ordained ministry. If it becomes very difficult for the members to make such a discernment, or if you are still unsure of the recommendation it is advised to consult with the incumbent and then, if necessary, with the Archdeacon who met with you at the introductory meeting.

The PDC delegates the tasks involved in preparing the report and makes arrangements for its final drafting following the format in Appendix C.

Discuss from a broad point of view what changes in your attitudes or concepts of Christian ministry have occurred in these meetings. Perhaps some PDC members would like to share these perceptions with the congregation (remembering to preserve confidentiality) through a newsletter article or a discussion at a parish meeting or event.

Determine what you need to do to conclude this series of meetings between yourselves, the Inquirer, and the Incumbent. Also determine if you would like to continue some kind of relationship with the inquirer in the future, e.g., facilitating

her or his entry into new lay ministry, or becoming a liaison with the parish for him or her if continuing in the process toward ordination.

PDC Service

You have served the Inquirer, the Parish, and the Diocese in a very important way. Your report will be passed on to the Parish Corporation, the Commission on the Diaconate or vocational chaplains as appropriate and the Bishop. It is hoped that committee members realize how much that service is valued. At the same time, you are asked to understand that your recommendation is only one part of a broader discernment process. Others involved in the various stages also seek to discern God's will for the inquirer. At times inquirers recommended by a PDC are redirected to another ministry or delayed at later stages of the discernment process.

It may be disheartening when this happens to someone in whom you have invested a lot of time. It is especially important that you trust the persons who are continuing the discernment process you began in the Parish. You can be of most help to the inquirer by guiding her or him to see and consider what truth is present in the judgment of others. And remember, the goal of all your work is to further the ministry and mission of the Church. Please continue to support the inquirer in the coming months!

SESSION VI - Conclusion

Representatives of the PDC (or the entire committee) meet with the Inquirer to read and review the report prior to the summary to the Corporation and submission to the Bishop.

Issued 12 November 2008

Appendices:

Appendix A Seeking Out Aspirants

Appendix B Session Agendas

Appendix C Report of the Parish Discernment Committee

Appendix D Parish Commendation and Nomination for Holy Orders

Appendix A

Seeking out Aspirants

The first step in any process leading to ordination is identification of those entering the process. In recent years that step has been seen almost exclusively as the responsibility of the Inquirer. The way in which an potential candidate for ordination is identified is when someone goes to his or her priest and says, "I want to be a priest."

Clearly that self-identification will continue. However, a new emphasis needs to be placed on raising up or recruiting people who seem to be appropriate candidates for the specific calling of the ordained ministry. The initiative must come from the Church as well as from individuals. The extent to which that initiation actually happens will depend to a large degree on the clergy and laity who serve in worshipping communities. Clergy and laity need to be educated and encouraged to raise up high quality people who are well suited for ordination.

Two factors need to be clearly stated and seriously considered in recruitment: The first is what the Church seeks in terms of character of those who will be its priests. The following is intended as a starting point for those praying to discern whom God might be calling to ordained ministry:

- Sense of self: self-knowledge, psychological health.
- Personal integrity: authenticity, trustworthiness, dependability.
- Spiritual depth: a tended relationship with God in Christ.
- Intelligence: the ability to learn and think reflectively and theologically.
- Leadership: initiative, vision, willingness to risk, ability to motivate others.
 - Ability to handle conflict.
 - Ability to deal with people.
 - Ability to engage and participate in community/group.
 - Ability to communicate.
- Loving heart: capacity and inclination to be close to and care for others.
- Sense of the fitness of things: judgment, boundaries – both personal and community.
- Loyalty to the institution of the Church: a healthy respect for the tradition and authority of the Church from a position of challenge as well as from a position of support.
- Intelligence: intellectual grasp of concepts and practical applications and implications of them.
- Commitment to continuing personal, professional and spiritual growth and study.
- Awareness of the power of sacrament, word and liturgy - willingness to become a symbol bearer.
- Humility: understanding and acceptance of his or her humanity and ultimate dependence on God.
- A sense of humour.
- A mature and appropriate sexuality.
- Ability to manage finances.

The second factor has to do with the mission of the Church. Put simply: What does the Church need in its leadership in order to live out its mission in this and the next generation?

As the Church in a Canadian context seeks to serve and proclaim the Gospel in an environment of ever increasing diversity, the ordained leadership itself must reflect increased diversity.

A relevant question for those entering the process of ordination is, "Are you willing and able to serve where needed?"

The Church needs leaders committed not only to the nurture of a community, but also to the calling of that community to a broader ministry of proclamation and service.

Revised 14 February 2008

Appendix B
Parish Discernment Committee
Session Agendas

Session agendas are included for Sessions I - IV. These can be copied and used at the discretion of the Convener and may be found useful for distribution to all attendees prior to each meeting as a reminder of preparation needed, the date of the meeting and, as an indication of the content of the upcoming session.

It is assumed that Sessions V-VII will follow a less formal structure with specific focussed tasks.

Revised 08 July 2009

Parish Discernment Committee

Session I - Orientation

_____ Date

Preparation

- Read: Directive 7.1 The Parish Discernment Committee
- "The Community Discerns a Call to Ordination" (Ministry Discernment Handbook, p. 29.)

Attending

- Incumbent
- Members of the PDC
- Archdeacon, Chair

Opening Prayer

Introduction and status

- Member introductions
- Purpose of the PDC (Chair)
- Outline of the Agenda

Reflection

- Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-10
 - What is at the heart of Christian ministry? How does this relate to the goal of the PDC?
 - What is the responsibility of the whole Church in determining an authentic call to ministry?

Discuss content

- Clarification of details of process and PDC Guidelines
- Member understandings of ministry, lay and ordained
- Importance of the work of the PDC
- Biases or tensions
 - interferences with the process of discernment
- PDC's role and relationships
 - confidentiality
 - inquirer
 - Commission on the Diaconate
 - vocational chaplains
 - Bishop and diocese
 - parish corporation
 - parish - discernment education
- Committee tasks
 - overview of suggested session outlines
 - select a convener
 - format for the meetings with the inquirer
 - record-keeping needs and reporting procedures
 - options for ongoing relationships with the inquirer

Evaluate

Closing prayer

Parish Discernment Committee

Session II - Spiritual Journey – Faith and Spiritual Development

_____ Date

Preparation

- Read:
 - The Catechism (BCP pp. 544-555)
 - “The Congregation” (Ministry Discernment Handbook, p. 10)
- “Spiritual journey” statement. This is a brief account (10 minutes) of each individual’s life viewed through their relationship to God. Possible ways to construct such a statement include:
 1. Make a list of significant events in your life that are related to your relationship with God.
 2. Consider the theme of relationship with God briefly illustrate how that theme has been present in your life.
 3. Divide your life into 10 or 15 year segments and select a phrase that describes a major theme for each segment that reflects your relationship with God for that time period.
 4. Consider a person in your life who has been a role model for, or has been significant influence in guiding your relationship with God and briefly explain that influence.

Attending

- Members of the PDC
- Inquirer

Opening Prayer

Introductions

- Committee and inquirer introductions
- Spiritual Journey statements

Reflection

- Read the Catechism “The Christian Faith” (BCP p. 545) and Supplementary Instruction (BCP p. 552)
 - As you read the Catechism, what elements especially stand out for you at this time in your Christian journey?

Discuss content

- How would you describe your level of understanding of the faith expressed in Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer?
- What evidence of having a personal relationship with God is visible in the word and deed of others? Are there specific examples you would name?
- Have you established a Rule of Life (BCP p. 555) and how successfully is it followed? What benefits are derived from it?
- Discuss briefly your understanding of “discernment” and especially the participation of the community and wider Church.

Evaluate

Closing prayer

Parish Discernment Committee

Session III - The Ministry of the Baptized - The Whole People of God

_____ Date

Preparation

- Read:
 - “Ministry” (Ministry Discernment Handbook p. 8)
 - Holy Baptism (BAS pp. 153-162)
 - Confirmation (BAS pp. 625-630)
 - “The Ministry of the Baptized” (Ministry Discernment Handbook p. 21)

Attending

- Members of the PDC
- Inquirer

Opening Prayer

Check-in and update status

Reflection

- Read Ephesians 4:7-13
Spend some time discussing the vision of ministry found in this passage.

Discuss content

- Read again and discuss the Baptismal Covenant (BAS p. 158 or Ministry Discernment Handbook p. 5) What parts do you find most challenging?
- Discuss the ministry of each member of the group. Try to reflect the ministries of others as you see them. Attempt to verbalize an account of your own current ministry as a lay person.
- It has been said that “a church without mission is dead” and that “the Church exists primarily for those outside of it.” What importance do you attach to mission and how does it affect the life of the parish? Consider success in your own parish of “ministry beyond church doors.”
- What elements of difference between the ministry of the baptized and the ministry of the ordained are most evident to you? Explore positive and negative aspects of both.
- How do you view the ministry of the whole Body of Christ?
- How are gifts of ministry developed and manifested in the Church? Discuss talents and gifts given to each of us by our Creator.

Evaluate

Closing prayer

Parish Discernment Committee

Session IV - Perceptions of Christian Ministry – Call to Ordained Ministry

_____ Date

Preparation

- Read:
 - The Form and Manner of Making of Deacons (BCP pp. 638-644)
 - The Ordination of a Deacon (BAS 652-664)
 - The Form and Manner of Ordering Priests (BCP pp. 644-656)
 - The Ordination of a Priest (BAS pp. 643-651)
 - Preface to Ordination Rites (BAS p. 631)
 - The Diaconate (Ministry Discernment Handbook p. 25)
 - The Priesthood (Ministry Discernment Handbook p. 27)

Attending

- Members of the PDC
- Inquirer

Opening Prayer

Check-in and update status

Reflection

- Read and explore the "Examination" in one of each of the rites of the ordination of a deacon and the ordination of a priest. What elements do you find most important or challenging?

Discuss content

- What differences and similarities can you identify between the different rites (deacon/priest and BAS/BCP)? How are these roles different in the Christian community.
- How do you differentiate between the ministries of lay persons, deacons and priests?
- What do you see as the primary function of the ordained minister?
- How do you understand the central task of pastoral care? (Solving other people's problems? Giving answers? Helping one come to a resolution of one's problems?)
- What does it mean to each member to be "called" by God?
- What is the difference between a call to Christian service and a call to ordination?

Evaluate

Closing prayer

Parish Discernment Committee

Session V - Intellectual, Emotional and Leadership Capacities

_____ Date

Preparation

- Read:
"Discerning a Personal Call" (Ministry Discernment Handbook, p. 15)

Attending

- Members of the PDC
- Inquirer

Opening Prayer

Reflection

- Read: Isaiah 42:1-9
What is at the heart of the call to servanthood in this passage?
Identify aspects of the grace (help and assistance) that accompanies a call to ministry.

Check-in and update status

Discuss content

- Read: Appendix A - "Seeking out Aspirants" Discuss each of the points of reference as they relate to several capacities needed for ministry:
 - Capacity to learn
 - Emotional health
 - Leadership capacities
 - Responsibility and authority
 - Communication skills
- As the PDC prepares to begin formulating the report, questions relating to these areas may be useful to explore specifically with the inquirer.
- Discuss next steps and the time line for completion and review of the PDC report to the corporation.

Evaluate

Closing prayer

Appendix C
Report of the Parish Discernment Committee

TO: The Bishop of Fredericton, Commission on the Diaconate or Vocational Chaplains

DATE: _____

INQUIRER: _____

PDC CONVENER: _____

The finding of the Parish Discernment Committee based on the questions furnished by the Diocese of Fredericton are as follows:

Please consider the following questions in each of the categories. This should be a general format for the finished report. When answering these questions, please be as specific as possible and provide examples to support your response. A summary of this report with the Committees recommendations should submitted to the parish Corporation prior to consideration of commendation.

1. CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

a) How have you experienced the inquirer's ability to articulate his/her understanding of Christian Ministry?

b) How does the inquirer see himself/herself fitting into Christian Ministry?

2. GROWTH IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

a) In what ways is the inquirer able to describe his/her spiritual journey and growing relationship with Christ? Give examples.

3. CURRENT MINISTRIES

a) Describe the inquirer's current ministries within the parish community, home and workplace (if applicable).

b) Describe the inquirer's ability to interact with the parish family and to develop relationships with others.

c) Describe the qualities the inquirer brings to his/her current ministries that make them especially effective.

4. CAPACITY FOR LEADERSHIP

a) In what ways has the inquirer demonstrated his/her leadership skills in the parish?

b) How do people respond to his/her leadership?

c) How does he/she respond to the leadership of others?

5. EMOTIONAL HEALTH

a) How have you experienced the inquirer's overall emotional health in the periods before and during the PDC process?

b) What is your sense of the inquirer's ability to work under pressure, with conflicting demands/or under stress?

c) How have you experienced the inquirer's ability to recognize appropriate boundaries, e.g., regarding issues of leadership, finance, sexuality, sense of responsibility?

d) From your observation, is the inquirer comfortable with his/her sexuality?

6. OTHER

a) In what ways can you envision this person as your deacon or priest? / as a deacon or priest?

b) Do you have any reservations about the inquirer? Please explain.

c) From your observation, are there any areas of growth that the inquirer should pursue prior to or during theological education (other than the normal course of study)?

d) Describe how the inquirer responded within the group, e.g., his/her willingness to share personal concerns and commitments, openness to differences of opinions, willingness to consider new insights.

7. We recommend that _____ pursue:

1. Lay Ministry in the area(s) of _____

2. Diaconate

3. Priesthood

8. Additional Comments: *Please be specific.*

Parish Commendation and Nomination for Holy Orders
and Aspirant Status in the Diocese of Fredericton

To the Bishop of Fredericton, Commission on the Diaconate or Vocational Chaplains:

We, the undersigned, being at least two-thirds of the _____ members of the
number of members

Corporation (or otherwise appointed governing body) of the

Parish of _____, commend and nominate
parish name

name of inquirer

to the diocesan discernment process as aspirant in the process leading to ordination to the

- Vocational Diaconate Priesthood

in the Diocese of Fredericton. We further commit ourselves and the congregation(s) to involve ourselves in the preparation for ordination. We will give our support through the process leading to ordination.

Given at a meeting on the _____ day of _____ in the year of our Lord _____.

Name of incumbent or member of the clergy in charge of the parish

Signature