

# The Discernment Journey



## Commission on Ministry Manual of Policies and Procedures Diocese of Southwest Florida

Revised March 2024

*LORD, you have searched me out and known me;  
you know my sitting down and my rising up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.*

*You trace my journeys and my resting-places  
and are acquainted with all my ways.*

*Indeed, there is not a word on my lips,  
but you, O LORD, know it altogether.*

*You press upon me behind and before  
and lay your hand upon me.*

*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is so high that I cannot attain to it.*

*Where can I go then from your Spirit?  
where can I flee from your presence?*

*If I climb up to heaven, you are there;  
if I make the grave my bed, you are there also.*

*If I take the wings of the morning  
and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,*

*Even there your hand will lead me  
and your right hand hold me fast.*

*If I say, "Surely the darkness will cover me,  
and the light around me turn to night,"*

*Darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day;  
darkness and light to you are both alike.*

*For you yourself created my inmost parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

*I will thank you because I am marvelously made;  
your works are wonderful, and I know it well.*

*My body was not hidden from you,  
while I was being made in secret and woven in the depths of the earth.*

*Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb;  
all of them were written in your book;  
they were fashioned day by day,  
when as yet there was none of them.*

*How deep I find your thoughts, O God!  
how great is the sum of them!*

*If I were to count them, they would be more in number than the sand;  
to count them all, my life span would need to be like yours.*

*Psalms 139.1-17*

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## I. Introduction

*“However that may be, let each of you lead the life that the Lord has assigned, to which God called you.” 1 Corinthians 7:17*

This manual of guidelines, policies and procedures has been designed to assist individuals exploring a sense of call to ordained ministry. It is also designed to assist those persons who will be called to walk with him/her on this spiritual journey: the Discernment Group, the Bishop, spiritual companions/directors, family members, Commission on Ministry (COM), Standing Committee and many others. This manual is the latest revision and complies with, and gives local application to, the current Canons of the Episcopal Church. It is the result of much listening, study, discussion, and consultation - not only with those in the Diocese of Southwest Florida but also with the wider Church.

The goal of this manual is to provide overall guidance and specific steps in the discernment process that are based on the **Baptismal Ministry of all persons**; to focus on the spiritual and personal development of those seeking ordination; and all to be guided by the leadership needs and realities of this Diocese and of the Church at large.

Realizing that discernment is a life-long process, we are grateful that you are responding to a possible call to serve God as a Deacon or a Priest. It is the commitment of the Diocese - in prayer and with faith, trust, and candor - to assist you as you explore and “test” your call within your congregation, family, and larger community of the Diocese. Remember that even if you feel your sense of call is clear, strong, and unwavering, this process is about your **discernment within community** - where all people involved are led by God’s Holy Spirit to greater awareness and clarity. Awareness of this communal aspect will offer you strength, courage, and calmness to remain open to tough questions and challenges along the way. No matter how the discernment process unfolds for you, remember that the whole process of responding to a call confirms that you are called to committed service as a beloved member of the Body of Christ.

The Commission on Ministry encourages you to read this manual thoroughly so you will understand the process, know the questions to ask, and request help when and where you need assistance. It also encourages you to stay in prayer, meet regularly with a spiritual companion/director, discuss the process with your family and clergy, and stay deeply aware of how you are strengthening/renewing/re-energizing your relationship with God in Jesus Christ.

Your discernment process may at times seem time consuming, complex, or frustrating. We pray that the process is also replete with joy and hope that God’s Holy Spirit is doing something new and exciting in your life - whatever that may be! The Bishop, the diocesan transition minister, the COM, Diocesan Staff, and the Standing Committee are ready to assist you in any way you need, and we urge you to contact us with questions or concerns. We are honored and blessed to walk this spiritual, emotional, and physical journey with you.

Faithfully in Christ,  
The Commission on Ministry/Bishop’s Advisory Panel

## **II. Call to Ministry**

**“Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?  
Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?  
Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?”**

**“I will with God’s help.”**  
*(Baptismal Covenant)*

### **A. Baptismal Ministry**

By virtue of our Baptism, we are first called to be ministers of the Christian faith. Whether or not one feels called to the Diaconate or the Priesthood, and whether or not discernment takes someone on that path, we are first called to be part of the foundational ministry of the Laity. This cannot be emphasized enough as one walks this journey of discernment – to remember the crucial role all Christians have to bring the presence of Christ into homes, workplaces, churches, and communities. The Diocese encourages, honors, and celebrates the extensive array of gifts that the Laity offers, and is committed to raising up energetic, spiritual, welcoming, and faith-filled lay persons to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The COM realizes that the Laity of the church sometime need encouragement in not only realizing specific gifts and talents, but also in acknowledging those gifts, allowing them to come forth, sharing them (often for the first time), and joyfully integrating them into the life of the church and the greater community. To that end the COM sponsors special workshops for baptized Christians to come together once or twice a year to discuss Baptismal Ministry, Formation, Discernment, Spiritual Growth, and to review all aspects of lay and ordained ministry. These workshops may be held in the evening or on a Saturday to allow people to balance family and professional responsibilities. (The dates and times of these Vocation Informational Sessions can be found on the Diocesan website.)

Specific instruction and workshops are also held for lay persons desiring to procure a specific license to become a: Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Preacher, or Worship Leader. At this point in your discernment journey, you may already be ministering in one or more of these areas. Indeed, they may have even inspired you to explore ordained ministry.

## B. The Order of Deacons

*“As a deacon in the Church, you are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example, to those among whom you live, and work, and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world...” (BCP, 543)*

The word “*deacon*” is derived from the Greek meaning “*servant*” or “*envoy*.” The unique role of a Deacon among the ordained is to represent Jesus Christ and His redemptive love in the world – specifically by interpreting the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world outside the doors of the church. The role of a Deacon requires very special gifts as well as a serious formation process in order that the ordained person may serve as an “*ordained messenger of the faith*” outside the walls of the congregation and to raise awareness of these needs to the parish as a whole.

Deacons must learn to be in the church and in the world as servants, and to energize and inspire servanthood in others – helping the Laity to discover places where they can connect with God in Christ beyond worship services in the church. Deacons, together with Laity and other clergy, are not expected to do the work alone but rather to lead, guide, encourage, inform, equip, and raise the awareness of all people.

Deacons must be academically trained in Holy Scriptures and be able to integrate scripture into their ministry and the liturgy – which may include preaching. They must be conversant in Christian ethics and societal/cultural issues. Deacons must also possess theological understandings of – and the ability to discuss – the Paschal Mystery, the Incarnation, Baptismal servanthood, and the Eucharistic community. Above all, they must possess a deep and abiding love of Jesus Christ.

If you are feeling called to Diaconal Ministry, it is of utmost importance that you understand how to maintain a balance in your life – especially if you intend to remain working in your current profession, care for family, and also serve as a Deacon in the Church. This is always a challenge when balancing spiritual, emotional, and physical health factors. It is important you understand that Deacons serve directly under the Bishop and are assigned by the Bishop to serve anywhere in this Diocese.

Deacons, not unlike priests, are expected to create and live a Rule of Life which includes: prayer, immersion in Scripture, ongoing self-examination, regular study, spiritual direction, and components of life that will strengthen your emotional and physical wellbeing.

Those seeking to be ordained a Deacon in this Diocese must enroll in the Diocesan School for Ministry (only after being made a Postulant – see pages 15-16.) They must also complete a course/experience in Clinical Pastoral Training (CPT) (200 hours), and complete three semesters of field education.

**The Canons of the Episcopal Church (Title III, Canon 6.5(f))** summarize this in the following: Deacons must be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas. These include:

1. Academic Studies (Holy Scripture, Theology, and the tradition of the Church)
2. Diakonia and the Diaconate
3. Human awareness and understanding
4. Spiritual development and discipline
5. Practical training and experience

### C. The Order of Priests

*“As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor...” (BCP, 531)*

The ministry of the Priest, as a representative of Christ and his Church, is customarily, though not exclusively, within a designated congregation where the Priest serves primarily as pastor, celebrant of the sacraments, and interpreter of scripture and the traditions of the faith. Increasingly, in the context of the emerging Church, Priests are also practicing their ministry outside the traditional parish model and are serving in other organizations (such as prison ministry, college chaplaincy, and others), or planting or discovering other faith communities. Sometimes Priests play a dual role in balancing work in a secular profession with the work of a faith community (referred to as bi-vocational priesthood).

With all of this in mind, Priests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need not only to recognize and deepen their own unique gifts, but also to be aware and open to gifts and skills necessitated by the needs of the Church and the cultural and faith context in which the Priest serves. Perhaps one of the greatest challenges for a Priest is to demonstrate leadership qualities that allow and encourage people to actualize their full potential in Christ – equipping the laity for mission in a complex, unpredictable, and often risky world.

Priests are also participants in the College of Presbyters and assist the Bishop in the councils and committees of the Diocese.

Essential components of a Priest’s life that will nurture all these ministries and more are the creation and practice of a Rule of Life – which includes prayer, regular study of Scripture, self-examination, spiritual direction, and an awareness of the need for holistic health – physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally. The foundation of all of this – that the sacerdotal life is lived with integrity and depth – is a deep and abiding love of Jesus Christ, following him as a model in all words and actions.

Those who have been recommended by the Bishop to become Postulants must be in conversation with the Bishop prior to making application to the program of preparation for ordination to the priesthood.

In addition to study, those seeking ordination to the Priesthood must:

- 1) be a member in good standing of a community of faith,
- 2) complete one unit (400 hours) of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or alternative program that meets Bishop approval, and
- 3) take part in recommended Diocesan and/or seminary field education/internship experience.



**The Canons of the Episcopal Church state (per Title III, Canon 8.5 [a-g]):**

- a. The Bishop and the Commission shall work with the Postulant or Candidate to develop and monitor a program of preparation for ordination to the Priesthood and to ensure that pastoral guidance is provided throughout the period of preparation.
- b. *Pre-theological education.* If the Postulant or Candidate has not previously obtained a baccalaureate degree, the Commission, Bishop, and Postulant or Candidate shall design a program of such additional academic work as may be necessary to prepare the Postulant or Candidate to undertake a program of theological education.
- c. *Formation.* Formation shall take into account the local culture and each Postulant or Candidate's background, age, occupation, and ministry.
- d. Prior education and learning from life experience may be considered as part of the formation required for the Priesthood.
- e. Whenever possible, formation for the Priesthood shall take place in community, including other persons in preparation for the Priesthood, or others preparing for ministry.
- f. Formation shall include theological training, practical experience, emotional development, and spiritual formation.
- g. Subject areas for study during this program of preparation shall include:
  - 1) The Holy Scriptures
  - 2) History of the Church
  - 3) Christian Theology
  - 4) Christian Ethics and Moral Theology—including environment ethics and theology
  - 5) Christian Worship according to the use of the Book of Common Prayer, The Hymnal, and authorized supplemental texts
  - 6) The Practice of Ministry in contemporary society, including leadership, evangelism, stewardship, ecumenism, interfaith relations, mission theology, environmental stewardship, and care of creation, and the historical and contemporary experience of racial and minority groups.

### **III. Beliefs, Gifts and Qualities this Diocese and the Greater Church Seek in Priests and Deacons**

- Be firmly grounded in one's relationship with God, as revealed through Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Demonstrate personal commitment to Jesus Christ and a desire and capacity to communicate the Gospel in word and action.
- Accept the authority of the Bishop and have an open mind and a loving heart for those within and outside our Church, who struggle with their beliefs.
- Show an understanding of the Christian faith, a desire for deeper understanding, and always be open to mystery and God's new revelation.
- Love the Church in all its Anglican/Episcopal expression, also recognizing its constant need for renewal.
- Firmly believe the vows one will take at ordination regarding the Holy Scriptures and conformity to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church.
- Be committed to a Rule of Life – incorporating prayer, study, spiritual direction, self-examination, and the care of body, mind, and spirit.
- Be a life-long learner – demonstrating this through good listening skills, ongoing personal growth (educationally and spiritually), curiosity, awareness of the emerging Church, and cultural attentiveness to trends and issues both locally and globally.
- In the vows for Priesthood (BCP, 531) Priests are called to *“love and serve the people among whom they work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor.”* To live into those vows, one must be compassionate, welcoming, empathetic, humble, and approachable.
- Demonstrate servant-leadership qualities, especially: to listen and collaborate; to embrace conflict and change; to communicate both the message of the Gospel and the vision and goals of the organization; to nurture, love, and care for God's people; to speak for those in the margins of life; to maintain a sense of humor, and to be the hands and feet of Christ.
- Know how to reach out to your Bishop, family, colleagues, spiritual director, and mentors when you need help.
- Be at least twenty-four (24) years of age upon ordination, sufficiently mature and stable to show ability to sustain the demanding role of an ordained minister, and to face change and pressure in a flexible and balanced way. [Title III, Canon 8, Section 7(a)(2)]

## IV. Journey through the Discernment Process

The purpose of this outline is to offer you, the baptized Christian, a specific look at the steps you would follow if you feel a call to ordained ministry.

*Please use the following as a checklist.*

### A. Sense of Call

This period of time, during which you sense that God is calling you to something new, may be very recent or something you have felt for years. It may be a private feeling or something you have verbalized to only one or two people. It may have come from within yourself or is something seen/felt by others who have shared their perceptions with you. Stay in prayer during this time – as you rest and reflect on whether you should begin to seriously explore this sense of call.

### B. Exploring Your Call

- \_\_\_ Stay in regular prayer and worship.
- \_\_\_ Share thoughts with your spouse, family, and close friend.
- \_\_\_ Discuss with your Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge.
- \_\_\_ Begin meeting with a spiritual director.
- \_\_\_ Participate in regular Bible Study.
- \_\_\_ Participate in a retreat.
- \_\_\_ Read *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (Farnham, Gill, McLean, & Ward, Morehouse Publications).
- \_\_\_ Attend a Diocesan Vocation Information Day/Evening with your priest and your spouse, if married.
- \_\_\_ Read through the Discernment Dictionary in this manual (**Appendix A**) and the list of Resources (**Appendix L**).
- \_\_\_ Produce a first draft of your spiritual autobiography (minimum of 2500 words).

### C. Affirming Your Sense of Call

- \_\_\_ Complete the “Notice of Interest” (**Appendix B**) and mail to Diocese.
- \_\_\_ Create a Rule of Life, including regular prayer, study of scripture, and care of self and family.
- \_\_\_ Continue to involve your spouse/family as you converse with your priest and Bishop.
- \_\_\_ Read through this manual very carefully.
- \_\_\_ Continue meeting with a spiritual director/companion.

#### D. Discovering Your Call Within Community

- \_\_\_ After discussion with your spouse and Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge, complete the “Application to Form a Discernment Group” (**Appendix C**).
- \_\_\_ While you wait to hear from the COM that your application has been received, discuss with your priest who might be appropriate to have on your Discernment Group. It should be composed of five to nine persons (excluding the Liaison, who is *ex officio*) ensuring an odd number of members, representative of the congregation. It is advisable to include someone from another congregation who does not know you. These members are selected by you and your priest. (**See Appendix D for The Role of the Liaison in the Discernment Process and Appendix E for the specific guidelines for Group Discernment.**)
- \_\_\_ After confirmation from the COM of the receipt of your application, the COM will assign you a Liaison who will guide you through the process and answer questions along the way. Please wait to hear from your Liaison before convening your Discernment Group.

#### E. Pre-planning for the Discernment Group - Orientation and Organizational Meeting (This must take place prior to the first meeting of the Discernment Group and involves only the Applicant, Liaison, and Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge.) (See Appendix E.)

- \_\_\_ Following COM approval to form your Discernment Group contact your Liaison and Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge and explore possible dates for the Orientation and Organizational Meeting.
- \_\_\_ Meet with your Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge and agree upon composition of the group. It may be helpful to include a member of the Vestry, since it is the Vestry which officially nominates someone to the COM. A Chair of the group should be appointed in advance of the first meeting. **Appendix E** outlines the role of the Chair.
- \_\_\_ Meet for the first time (to organize and plan).
- \_\_\_ Invite Discernment Group members.
- \_\_\_ If money is available, purchase *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* for everyone in the Discernment Group. The questions on pages 91-97 have been found to be very helpful to discernment groups starting out for the first time.
- \_\_\_ Provide copies of the current COM Manual – making sure it is the latest edition.

#### F. Gathering to Explore, Reflect, and Discover Your Call Within Community

- \_\_\_ Meet with your full Discernment Group and Liaison for the first time.  
\*\*\**Your Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge is not part of these meetings.*\*\*\*
- \_\_\_ Review the Guidelines for Discernment Groups (**Appendix E**).
- \_\_\_ Review and commit to the Confidentiality Statement (**Appendix F**).
- \_\_\_ Realizing that you will be meeting over the course of five to eight months, create a timeline for your gatherings, making sure the time of day is good for all. Some groups meet in the evenings beginning with a light supper. Meetings should not be held more than twice a month to allow necessary space for reflection and prayer. **Discernment of how God is calling you is not a process that should be rushed so stay in prayer**

**and take the time needed.**

- \_\_\_ Craft a written sense of call statement.
- \_\_\_ After the final meeting, the Discernment Group provides a written report to the Vestry (**Appendix G**), along with your sense of call statement. Note: The Discernment Group is not the deciding body.

### **G. Vestry Involvement in Your Call**

- \_\_\_ The Vestry will review the report from your Discernment Group.
- \_\_\_ If you are recommended for Nomination, the Vestry may Nominate you (requires two-thirds majority).
- \_\_\_ Your Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge must approve Nomination also, and if so, completes and mails to the Bishop the “Certificate of Nomination” (**Appendix H**).
- \_\_\_ Remember that you, the Nominee, must also officially accept this nomination by completing and mailing to the Bishop the “Acceptance of Nomination” (**Appendix I**).

### **H. Formal Testing of Your Call Begins**

- \_\_\_ Forward a copy of the Discernment Group Report to the Bishop and COM.
- \_\_\_ Forward a copy of the written sense of call statement to the Bishop and COM.
- \_\_\_ You, the Nominee, will meet with the Bishop.
- \_\_\_ Your spouse should write a letter to the Bishop sharing how they support (or not) your call to ordained ministry, how it will impact your lives, and include any other reflections, questions, or concerns they have. (The Bishop may also ask to meet with you and your spouse.)
- \_\_\_ Plan to meet the Bishop in-person, together with your Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge. The purpose of the meeting is to allow the Bishop an opportunity to get to know you, and it provides the Bishop with an opportunity to discuss the process, including the Rector and Vestry’s ongoing role in the discernment and formation of the Nominee (possibly soon to be Postulant). This also provides time to discuss how formation decisions are made for those that proceed to Postulancy. It is important to note that any decisions regarding formation requirements (residential seminary, hybrid, local formation, etc.) are made by the Bishop in consultation with the COM.
- \_\_\_ Should the Bishop allow you to proceed further with your call, you will be invited to the Bishop’s Advisory Panel (BAP).
- \_\_\_ Stay in touch with your COM Liaison, Spiritual Director/Companion, and spouse/family as your discernment deepens and continues.

### **I. Prior to Attendance at the Bishop’s Advisory Panel**

- \_\_\_ You must submit to COM Staff Liaison Office the following – no later than three (3) weeks before the BAP (see also the same list in **Appendix J**).
  1. Copies of Baptism and Confirmation or Reception certificates
  2. Spiritual Journey (minimum of 2500 words)
  3. Written Sense of Call statement.

4. Medical Report
5. Psychological Report (see **Appendix K**).
6. Background Check (done by the Diocese)
7. Academic transcripts from undergraduate and graduate institution(s) if applicable
8. Certificate of Completion of “Safeguarding All God’s Children”
9. Employment Record of the last ten (10) years (including employers’ contacts)
10. Statement of Financial Health (form provided by the COM Staff Liaison Office)

#### **J. Exploring, Discussing, and Reflecting Upon Your Call with the BAP**

- \_\_\_\_\_ The BAP/COM will make a recommendation to the Bishop. It is important for you to know that the BAP/COM acts only as an advisory group to the Bishop. The Bishop has sole discretion to make someone a Postulant.

#### **K. Postulancy Status**

- \_\_\_\_\_ The Bishop will contact you some time following the BAP to let you know if you have been made a Postulant in the Diocese. Following that, the Bishop will schedule a meeting with you to discuss educational options and other training, the specific steps below in Section V, and your continued formation. If you do not become a Postulant, the Bishop will discuss with you your continued discernment as a baptized Christian.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Postulants, once a plan of formation is agreed upon, and a program of preparation is determined, the Rector or other designated official on behalf of your parish (or worshipping community) must confirm and specify in writing how they will support you during your time of formation. A “Parish Confirmation of Student Financial Support” form can be obtained through the COM Staff Liaison Office.

## **V. The Journey as a Postulant**

**This time as a Postulant is an important time of deepening prayer life, spiritual formation, continued discernment, and academic and clinical preparation.**

### **A. Living into Your Call as a Postulant**

During this time, the following requirements must be met:

#### **\_\_\_\_ For the Diaconate (Canon 6)**

- 1) Attendance at the diocesan School for Ministry
- 2) Clinical Pastoral Training (CPT) (200 hours)
- 3) Field Education (3 semesters)
- 4) Knowledge of Title III (Ministry)
- 5) Required Ember Day Letters to the Bishop: Every postulant or candidate for holy orders in the Episcopal Church is required by canon to report to the bishop four times a year. The report must be made in person or by letter and must include reflection on the person's academic experience as well as personal and spiritual development. Ember Days occur four times a year: the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after St. Lucy's Day (Dec. 13), Ash Wednesday, the Day of Pentecost, and Holy Cross Day (Sept. 14).

#### **\_\_\_\_ For the Priesthood (Canon 8)**

- 1) Attend program of preparation for ordination to the priesthood— after conversation with the Bishop.
- 2) Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) (400 hours) or alternative program — after conversation with the Bishop.
- 3) Field Education (3-4 semesters)
- 4) Knowledge of Title III (Ministry)
- 5) Required Ember Day Letters to the Bishop (See item 5, above under Diaconate)

### **B. Formal Completion of Your Postulancy (preparing for Candidacy Status)**

\_\_\_\_ After a time determined by the Bishop, you may make formal application to the Bishop to become a Candidate for Holy Orders. This includes:

- 1) **Your letter of application to the Bishop**
- 2) **Vestry letter of support**
- 3) **COM Certificate of your continued academic preparation, formation, and training**

\_\_\_\_ The Standing Committee is also required to give the Bishop its official approval in writing after the above three (3) documents (letter of application, Vestry letter of support and COM Certificate) have been received. Therefore, the Standing Committee will schedule an interview with you to hear your discernment journey, discuss seminary or School for Ministry experiences, discuss CPE/CPT experience, review any pertinent documentation, and in general understand better your call to ordained ministry.

\_\_\_\_ The Bishop exercises sole discretion and may name the Postulant a Candidate.

## **VI. Living into Your Call as a Candidate**

Candidacy is a period of time during which the Candidate continues to satisfy all canonical requirements for ordination. Prior to applying to the Bishop for Ordination, you must submit various documents and letters. After receiving a favorable recommendation from the Standing Committee – certifying that the Candidate has indeed satisfied all requirements under Canon Law – the Bishop may ordain the individual.

### **During Candidacy:**

**\_\_\_ 1) Academic preparation is completed and evaluated:**

- For Deacons: Diocesan Canonical Evaluation
- For Priests: General Ordination Exams (GOE)

**\_\_\_ 2) Clinical Pastoral Training is completed and evaluated:**

- For Deacons: Clinical Pastoral Training (CPT) and Supervisor's Report
- For Priests: Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) or alternative and Supervisor's Report

**\_\_\_ 3) Formation is reviewed:**

- For Both: School Evaluations
- For Both: Field Education reports

**\_\_\_ 4) Candidate has an affirmative responsibility to know the requirements of:**

- Title III (Ministry) of the Diocese of SWFL, and Episcopal Church
- Ember Day Letters

**\_\_\_ 5) Completion of canonically required training regarding:**

- prevention of sexual misconduct against both children and adults
- civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse
- the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church, with special regard to the Disciplinary Canons (Title IV) thereof
- the Church's teaching on racism

**\_\_\_ 6) Prior to Ordination, check the following canonical requirements:**

- \_\_\_ Medical report may not be more than 36 months old
- \_\_\_ Psychological report may not be more than 36 months old
- \_\_\_ Background check may not be more than 5 years old
- \_\_\_ Safeguarding All God's Children training must be current  
(Diocesan requirement)



## **Appendix A**

### **Discernment Dictionary**

#### **Bishop's Advisory Panel (BAP)**

The role of the BAP is to act as an advisory body to the Bishop. In that role, it assists the Bishop in gaining a deeper knowledge of a Nominee's sense of call and general readiness for ordination (spiritually, mentally, and intellectually). The members of the Bishop's Advisory Panel are the same members of the Commission on Ministry (COM), who are assisted by the Bishop, the Canon to the Ordinary, and Diocesan Staff. The BAP/COM are comprised of lay persons, deacons, and priests who are all appointed by the Bishop. Also included is a liaison from the Standing Committee.

#### **Call** (from *Listening Hearts*)

God continually tries to guide us and communicate with us through the events, situations, and relationships of our life - through our thoughts, feelings, senses, imagination, and intuition. This can be understood as God's voice or God's call.

#### **Candidacy**

This period of time is the final stage of the canonical process leading to ordination as a deacon or priest. After a period of time as a Postulant, the person may apply to the Bishop for admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders. Candidacy is a time when the Candidate continues to satisfy all canonical requirements for ordination. Prior to applying for Ordination, the Candidate must submit to the Diocese various documents and letters (see page 16 of the manual). After receiving a favorable recommendation from the Standing Committee – certifying that the Candidate has indeed satisfied all requirements under Canon Law – the Bishop may ordain the individual.

#### **Commission on Ministry (COM)**

A group appointed by the Bishop (subject to Convention approval) and composed of lay persons, deacons, and priests. This group acts in an advisory capacity (as the BAP) to assist the Bishop with a Nominee's sense of call, his/her general readiness, and other issues, policies and procedures integral to the discernment and formation of all baptized ministers in the Diocese.

#### **Discernment** (from *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*)

The verb “to discern” - meaning to sort out, to sift through, to distinguish – is widely used in the secular world as well as in the church. The noun “discernment,” however, is used almost exclusively in religious circles, but suggests different things to different groups of people, including:

- 1) Discernment of Call – to distinguish the voice of God from other voices in the world
- 2) Discernment of Gifts – to know what our gifts are and to make conscious use of them
- 3) Discernment of Spirit – being supple in God's hands and open to the action of God's Spirit and where it may be leading us.

## **Discernment Group**

A group of people called together not only to assist someone in his/her deeper understanding of a call, but also to learn about one another's unique gifts and how they are being used to minister to God's people. In this Diocese the Discernment Group is composed of 5-9 people, not including the Liaison (ensuring an odd number) who meet over a period of 5-8 months and whose responsibility it is to make a recommendation to the Vestry concerning nomination.

## **Formation**

Formation is a life-long process for all baptized Christians – with joys and challenges as one seeks to strengthen one's relationship with God in Christ. Formation is also a process that affects us as a whole human being, not separating the growth and formation of body, mind, and spirit. For those seeking a call to ordained ministry, formation takes on a more serious depth of growth of the spirit in ways that will lead, guide, and shepherd God's people in healthy, balanced, and prayer-filled lives.

## **Liaison**

Following the receipt of an "Application to Form a Discernment Group," (**Appendix C**) the COM appoints someone from the COM to be the Liaison from the COM to the Nominee. The Liaison's role is to walk with the Nominee through the process, not to advocate for the Nominee, nor to make decisions on behalf of the Nominee. Rather, it is a person who 1) keeps in regular contact with the Nominee during his/her discernment about ordained ministry; 2) takes part in the discernment group meetings – often guiding this process in its beginning stages; 3) listens to any concerns or questions the Nominee might have; and 4) updates the COM as to the Nominee's progress.

## **Ministry (from *Listening Hearts*)**

When we respond to God's call, what we do as a positive response is considered ministry. This includes the way we relate to people at home, in the workplace, in the church, and in the wider community, as well as ways in which we reach out to address the needs of all creation. For some persons, this includes a professional vocation in the church as a deacon, priest, or bishop.

## **Spiritual Director**

A person of faith – also on a spiritual journey – who is able to listen, pray with, and guide someone seeking to deepen/strengthen their faith. In the case of someone exploring a call to ordained ministry, a Spiritual Companion is strongly encouraged. Henri Nouwen's definition of spiritual direction is helpful to hear as well: "Spiritual direction is a relationship initiated by a spiritual seeker who finds a mature person of faith willing to pray and respond with wisdom and understanding to his or her questions about how to live spiritually in a world of ambiguity and distraction." Nominees seeking to find a Spiritual Director may call the Diocesan Office for names or ask their Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge for recommendations.

## **Written Sense of Call**

One page (or less) briefly describing your recognition of call to ordained ministry and to what order (Deacon or Priest) you feel called, and why.

**Appendix B**  
**“Notice of Interest”**

*The purpose of this Notice of Interest is to inform and enable the timely sharing of information, especially for those who are in the earliest stages of discernment. It does not imply any status granted by the Bishop under Title III of the Canons of the Episcopal Church, nor does it imply that the person named below is in the ordination process.*

***Return this form to: COM Staff Liaison Office  
Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida, 8005 25<sup>th</sup> Street East, Parrish, Florida 34219***

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Communicant in Good Standing in the Episcopal Church since: \_\_\_\_\_(month/year)

Current Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been worshipping in this congregation? \_\_\_\_\_years/months

Highest Degree Earned \_\_\_\_\_Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever earned a degree in Theology? MDiv/STM/etc.? Y or N (Circle)

Have you in the past, ever participated in a formal discernment process for Holy

Orders? Y or N (Circle) If yes, which Diocese? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please attach a separate letter discussing the summary of that process.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rector/Priest-in-charge \_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix C**

### **Application to Form a Discernment Group**

**Application to form a Discernment Group, with the assistance of the Commission on Ministry, following the guidelines required by the Diocese of Southwest Florida**

*The purpose of this document is to inform and enable the Discernment Group to be formed under the guidance of, and in accordance with the procedures required by, the COM of the Diocese of Southwest Florida. Undertaking this procedure in no way implies any status granted by the Bishop under Title III of the Canons of the Episcopal Church or that the Applicant named below is part of the ordination process.*

***Return this form to:  
COM Staff Liaison Office  
Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida  
8005 25<sup>th</sup> Street East  
Parrish, Florida 34219***

In accordance with the Commission on Ministry Discernment Group guidelines:

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

hereby requests permission to form a Discernment Group for

Applicant's Name \_\_\_\_\_

We understand that we will need to appoint five to nine (5-9) people (ensuring an odd number) to form a diverse, representative group of the congregation and perhaps a member of another congregation and that this group will make a recommendation to the Vestry, who may officially nominate by resolution (two-thirds vote).

Applicant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix D**

### **The Role of the Liaison in the Discernment Process**

Following the receipt of an “Application to Form a Discernment Group,” (**Appendix C**) the Commission on Ministry appoints someone from the Commission to be the Liaison to the Aspirant.

The Liaison’s primary role is to walk with the Aspirant through the discernment process and to ensure that the committee and the Aspirant conform to the guidelines set forth in the Commission on Ministry’s Manual of Policies and Procedures; “The Discernment Journey.”

The Liaison does not advocate for the Aspirant, nor makes decisions on behalf of the Aspirant. Rather, the Liaison is the person who keeps in regular contact with the Aspirant during discernment; takes part in the Discernment Groups meetings - often guiding this process in its beginning stages; listens to any concerns or questions the Aspirant or the Discernment Group might have; and continuously updates the Commission on Ministry as to the Aspirant’s progress.

In the initial phase, the Liaison will facilitate introductions and review confidentiality with the Discernment Group. Every member of the group will be required to sign a “Confidentiality Agreement.”

The Liaison reminds the group of its role in helping the Aspirant explore and discover their call, being good listeners, refraining from any prejudices, and that its ultimate decision of whether to recommend the Aspirant to the Vestry is not about their readiness for ordination now, but rather about their potential for ordained ministry.

In almost every case, the Liaison will continue to walk with the Aspirant through their formal formation toward ordination.

## Appendix E

### Guidelines for the Formation and Facilitation of the Discernment Group

The Diocese requires each potential Nominee to establish a Discernment Group (in conversation with one's Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge) and to follow the guidelines outlined on the next few pages. Remember that your exploration of call and your sense that God might be calling you to ordained ministry is a crucial part of discernment and must be done within community. Although this group's main goal is to assist you in your exploration and clarification of call, it is also important for all members to listen to how each person in your group is responding to his/her call as baptized Christians as well. Hopefully, as individuals share their sense of call, your specific exploration of whether you possess a call to lay or ordained ministry will become clearer.

#### Overall Logistics

- 1) After you have submitted the application to the Diocese to form this group, meet with your Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge to discuss the group's composition.
- 2) The group should be composed of five to nine (5-9) persons, with usually one of those being a member of the Vestry. It is advisable to include someone from another congregation who does not know you. In addition to the 5-9, your COM Liaison will take part in these meetings as an *ex officio*. Your Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge will only be at the orientation/organizational meeting – where the Liaison will facilitate and help you to organize.
- 3) In advance of the first meeting, one individual should be appointed Chair of the Discernment Group. The chair will help organize meetings, facilitate discussion, and is responsible for compiling the Discernment Group Report to the Vestry.
- 4) Not including the first orientation/organizational meeting, you should gather at least four (4) to five (5) more times. These times of discussion should not be rushed, as your exploration of call is a unique and sacred time in your life. If you need more time for discernment and discussion, discuss with your Liaison and set up additional meetings. Also, bear in mind that the standard length of preparation time for Ordination in this Diocese is from four (4) to five (5) years.
- 5) Your group will meet over the course of 5-8 months, gathering no more than twice a month to allow sufficient time for reflection, reading and prayer.
- 6) Meetings should last between one and 1 ½ hours.
- 7) Given the realities of working people, some of these groups prefer to meet in the evenings and begin the meetings with a light supper.
- 8) The COM encourages you to purchase the book *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* and give to group members prior to your first meeting. (See Appendix L – Resources)
- 9) Also, prior to your first meeting of the Discernment Group, members must review this manual – on Diocesan website or hard copy – and bring to all meetings.

## **Suggestions for Organizing and Facilitating Specific Meeting Times**

*“Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered in his Name, you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us, granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen. (A Prayer of St. Chrysostom)*

### **A. Pre-planning - Orientation and Organizational Meeting** (Participants: COM Liaison, Applicant and Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge)

- 1) Open and close with prayer.
  - a. Discuss possible group membership and who might serve as Chair.
  - b. Discuss how you might proceed with the next 5-6 gatherings of the full group. (e.g., How will people share their spiritual journeys? How will the applicant specifically share his/her journey with the group? What questions will be asked? Who will ask them? Should a light supper be available before the meetings begin?)
- 2) Decide how the group will get the COM manual and read prior to its first meeting.
- 3) Decide if *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* will be purchased and read.
- 4) Create a draft timeline of your meetings.
- 5) Discuss how confidentiality will be ensured.
- 6) Discuss how group members might share the opening and closing of prayer each time you meet.
- 7) Officially invite members of the Discernment Group.
- 8) After acceptance, create an email & phone contact list of the whole group.

### **B. First Gathering of the Discernment Group**

- 1) Open and close with prayer.
- 2) Liaison facilitates introductions and reviews confidentiality.
- 3) Liaison reminds the group of its role in helping the applicant to explore and discover his/her call, being good listeners, refraining from any judgments, and that its ultimate decision of whether or not to recommend the applicant to the Vestry is not about his/her readiness for ordination now, but rather about his/her potential for ordained ministry.
- 4) Ask if there are any questions or concerns after reading the COM Manual.
- 5) As a possible interactive activity (during this gathering or subsequent ones), have each person in the group draft a timeline of their life/faith journeys and discuss. Pay close attention to major changes in life, turning points, people who influenced/guided them, celebrations, milestones, and spiritual impact of these.
- 6) Ask the group to prepare questions for the next meeting. Use ideas from *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*, pages 91-97, and/or from the suggestions following each of these sections.
- 7) Please review and consider the “Suggested Questions” on page 25 of this manual.
- 8) **Before the next gathering, the applicant should send a copy of his/her Spiritual Journey to all members of the group to be read prior to next gathering.**

### C. Second Gathering of the Discernment Group

- 1) Open and close with prayer.
- 2) Discuss thoughts, themes, and issues from first gathering.
- 3) Discuss the applicant's Spiritual Journey.
- 4) Utilize thoughts and ideas from previous Section B (page 24).
- 5) Use questions from page 25.

### D. Third, Fourth, Fifth and Any Future Gatherings of the Group

- 1) Open and close with prayer.
- 2) Reflection on previous discussions.
- 3) Additional discussion and reflection on applicant's Spiritual Journey.
- 4) Specific areas that the COM recommends the group discuss with the applicant to determine his/her understanding of Christian Ministry.

#### **How does this person:**

- View the ministry of the whole Body of Christ?
- Differentiate between the ministries of lay and ordained persons?
- Understand the ordained person's central task in pastoral care?  
(Solving problems? Fixing things? Giving answers? Helping someone to discuss options and alternatives and resolving their own problems?)
- Does this person strike you as one who is growing in the Christian faith?
- How well does he/she understand the basics of the faith?
- Is there evidence of this person having a strong relationship with God in Christ?
- How does his/her spirituality – or lack of it – manifest itself to you?
- Is this person still questioning, searching, and probing the mysteries of the faith?

### E. Final Gathering of the Discernment Group

Because every applicant's journey is unique and groups process in very different ways and lengths of time, your final gathering may be the fourth time together, or the sixth time together – or more. Whenever that final time is determined, the following must take place, in addition to any other discussions, conversations, or events.

- 1) Open and close with prayer.
- 2) Group members return Spiritual Autobiographies to the applicant
- 3) The applicant is asked to leave the room so that the group may discuss and vote (or reach consensus) on a recommendation to the Vestry regarding the ministry to which *they have discerned* the applicant is called and why. The group must remember that a recommendation for Holy Orders (diaconate or priesthood) is NOT a recommendation for Ordination, but a recommendation to move the applicant toward a process of **continued discernment and formation, beginning with Nomination**.
- 4) The Discernment group writes a **confidential** report for the Vestry (**using the form in Appendix G**) that conveys:
  - composition of the group: names of members and individual parish affiliations
  - dates of meetings



- the answers to the following
  1. To what ministry do you recommend this individual, i.e. lay, diaconate, or priesthood?
  2. Describe the Applicant's call to ministry.
  3. How has the Applicant exhibited diligence in the study of the Scriptures and prayer, reading and study or participation in study groups, workshops, conferences?
  4. Is the individual able to serve all persons? With what groups is the Applicant most comfortable? Least comfortable?
  5. In what ways has the Applicant exhibited leadership among fellow ministers to build up the family of God?
  6. Where does the Applicant find support and nurture both within and outside the Church?

#### **F. After the Final Gathering and Recommendation of the Group**

- 1) The Vestry receives the Discernment Group Report and takes time to discuss.
- 2) Recommendation for Holy Orders (diaconate or priesthood)
 

If the Discernment Group recommends Holy Orders *and* the Vestry votes to certify Nomination for Holy Orders (two-thirds majority), the following two forms must be completed, addressed to the Bishop, and mailed to the COM Staff Liaison Office at the Diocesan Office.

  - a. **Certificate of Nomination** (from the Vestry) (**See Appendix H.**)
 

*This form indicates congregational support (represented by a two-thirds vote of the Vestry) pledging financial support and involvement in preparation for the Nominee's ordination. This also requires support of the nomination and signature by the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge.*
  - b. **Acceptance of Nomination by Nominee** (*must accompany Certificate of Nomination from Vestry, Discernment Group Report, and written sense of call statement*) (**See Appendix I.**) The Nominee is advised that the Canons of the church require ordination to take place not less than eighteen (18) months of receipt of this written acceptance.

Note to Nominee: Once nominated, the COM expects all Nominees to disclose all their positions in parish or diocesan leadership to avoid any potential conflicts of interest at later stages of the discernment process. The Bishop may require resignation from such positions.
- 3) Recommendation for Lay ministry
 

If the Discernment Group recommends Lay ministry, the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge must be made aware of the need for pastoral support for the applicant, and further discernment of the applicant's lay ministries.

### **Suggested Questions to Prepare for the Group**

(These are ideas and thoughts to formulate questions for the applicant after reading his/her Spiritual Journey. Remember that these are suggestions only, and may be added to others in *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*, pages 91-97.)

- 1) Where in his/her life's journey has he/she lived out Baptismal Ministry? Is he/she currently involved in ministries? If so, describe the ministry and his/her involvement. What are the joys and challenges of these?
- 2) Where in his/her life did he/she feel a call to ordained ministry? How did that feel? To what aspect of ordained ministry does he/she feel called? Parish? Prison? Outreach? Pastoral? Preaching? Celebration of the Eucharist? etc.
- 3) What circumstances and events have shaped this person's life?
- 4) What pressures are currently impacting him/her? How is he/she handling current pressures? How are spouse and family members responding to this call?
- 5) Is this person confusing a call to Christian service with a call to ordination?
- 6) Does the applicant have primary interests (or profession) that are compatible with the responsibilities of a priest or deacon?
- 7) Does this person try to live a balanced life – spiritually, emotionally, physically? How does he/she demonstrate that balance?
- 8) Does he/she understand the demands of ordained ministry? Discuss.
- 9) Does he/she show a capacity for leadership? Examples in past professions?
- 10) Is there a sense of initiative, self-confidence, positive energy, and enthusiasm?
- 11) How has this person motivated others in his/her life? Examples?
- 12) What is his/her leadership style? How does he/she describe leadership?  
Examples of leadership styles used in church, community, or professional settings?  
How does he/she deal with change – both planned and sudden?
- 13) How is “authority” understood?
- 14) How does this person understand pastoral care?
- 15) Offer an example of a conflict in his/her life and how it was handled. Would he/she have changed anything in retrospect?

## Appendix F

### Confidentiality Statement – for all members of the Discernment Group

This agreement outlines the confidentiality expectations and responsibilities for all members of the group. **By signing below, each member acknowledges and agrees to the terms outlined herein.**

#### What should be kept confidential?

- All proceedings of the committee meetings
- Personal spiritual journeys of the members and Aspirant
- Individual evaluations
- Vote tallies

When asked by a member of the congregation, "How are things going with the discernment committee?" A member might respond: "We are enjoying getting to know one another and working together." If further questions ensue, this may be an appropriate response: "I appreciate your concern, but since our work is confidential, I prefer not to talk about it. I hope you understand."

**Information about someone may be public or private.** For example: If a parishioner asks how many siblings the Aspirant has, it is OK to say "Two." This is public knowledge. If a parishioner asks if the Aspirant has ever suffered from depression, this is private knowledge. If there is any doubt whether an issue is in the private or public domain, then treat the information as confidential.

**Under no circumstances should a member of the group take it upon themselves to discuss with the Aspirant any problem or observation which has arisen during a meeting where the Aspirant is not in attendance. Such observations are only shared with the Aspirant within the committee meeting or by the convener if directed by the committee as a whole.**

**Should any pastoral or ethical concerns arise in the course of the meetings, the Chair should inform the Rector/Vicar or member of the clergy or leader exercising oversight.**

Discernment Group Members have a sustained and intimate contact with the Aspirant and develop a personal bond with them. Openness, candor, and support are encouraged, but it is also important to balance these qualities with objectivity.

#### Signatures:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

## Appendix G

### Report of the Discernment Group

At the completion of the Discernment Group's work, the Discernment Group will write a confidential report to the Vestry that conveys the following information on this form including responses, in narrative form, to the six questions below. A copy of the Applicants "Sense of Call Statement" should be attached to this report as well.

Name of Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Applicant's Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge \_\_\_\_\_

Name of COM Liaison: \_\_\_\_\_

Members of the Discernment Group and their Parish affiliation: Please designate the Chairperson.

\_\_\_\_\_,  
Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Meetings: 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (6) \_\_\_\_\_

1. To what ministry do you recommend this individual, i.e., lay, diaconate, or priesthood?
2. Describe the Applicant's call to ministry.
3. How has the Applicant exhibited diligence in the study of the Scriptures and prayer, reading and study or participation in study groups, workshops, conferences?
4. Is the individual able to serve all persons? With what groups is the Applicant most comfortable? Least comfortable?
5. In what ways has the Applicant exhibited leadership among fellow ministers to build up the family of God?
6. Where does the Applicant find support and nurture both within and outside the Church?

## Appendix H

### Certificate of Nomination

(to be accompanied by **Appendix G**, Discernment Group Report and written Sense of Call statement)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TO THE BISHOP: Pursuant to (Check one please)

\_\_\_\_ Title III, Canon 6: "Of the Ordination of Deacons"

\_\_\_\_ Title III, Canon 8: "Of the Ordination of Priests"

We, representing at least 2/3 of the eligible members of the (Bishop's Committee) or (Vestry) of:

Church: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Do hereby certify that (Full Name): \_\_\_\_\_,

hereafter known as "the Nominee," is a confirmed communicant member in good standing of this congregation (or community of faith) and we hereby, pledge to

1. contribute financially to the Nominee's preparation, in the following ways (please check any/all that apply):

- ☐ during each academic year: \$\_\_\_\_\_ toward tuition and  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ toward textbooks, housing, or other living expenses
- ☐ covering student's travel for diocesan meeting
- ☐ covering student's initial psychological exam
- ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

2. involve the congregation (or community of faith) in the Nominee's preparation for ordination.

Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Rector/Vicar or Member of the clergy or leader exercising oversight

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Clerk of the Vestry or Bishop's Committee

***N.B. The COM will consider this certification incomplete if the procedures contained in the Discernment Group Guidelines issued by the COM have not been followed. To complete this Nomination, the Nominee must accept the Nomination in writing and submit a complete Acceptance of Nomination Form (found in Appendix I).***

Mail To: The Bishop of the Diocese of Southwest Florida c/o Canon to the Ordinary  
8005 25<sup>th</sup> Street East Parrish, Florida 34219

## Appendix I

### Acceptance of Nomination by Nominee

(to be accompanied by **Appendix G**, Discernment Group Report, and written Sense of Call statement)  
(Please note that the Acceptance of Nomination is a four-page document.)

*(In accordance with Canon III.6.2. (b) – Diaconate and Canon III.8.2.(b) – Priesthood, and following the Parish Discernment Group procedures required by the Diocese of Southwest FL)*

To the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida:

Accepting nomination from my congregation, I hereby submit the following:

#### I. Biographical Information

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street, City, State, Zip)

Contact Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Work Mobile

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a U.S. citizen? Yes ☐ No ☐ If you are not a U.S. citizen, what is your status? \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status: Single: ☐ Married: ☐ Separated: ☐ Widowed: ☐ Divorced: ☐

If Married: (Provide Spouse Name, Date of Birth, Date of Marriage and Names of Children with their Date of Birth)


If divorced or previously divorced, list previous marriages: (Provide Name, Date of Marriage and Date of Divorce)

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Do you have a medical/emotional health condition that requires special attention? If so, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

---

I have been a member of the Episcopal Church since: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of another denomination? Yes: ☐ No: ☐ *If yes, please explain:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have resided in the Diocese of Southwest Florida since: \_\_\_\_\_

I am a member in good standing of the following Congregation:

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Location of Baptism: \_\_\_\_\_

I was baptized by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and Location of Confirmation: \_\_\_\_\_

I was confirmed by: \_\_\_\_\_

I have (\_\_\_\_) / have not (\_\_\_\_) previously applied for admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders.  
*If the answer is affirmative, please state details on separate attachment.*

I intend to seek ordination to (\_\_\_\_) the Diaconate (\_\_\_\_) the Priesthood.

## II. Education History

Name of College/University and Location, Years Enrolled, Major/Degree/Year Earned

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe in a separate attachment other training you have received that you believe is relevant.

Have your official academic transcripts sent directly to the Bishop's Office.

### III. Representations and Authorizations

- I authorize the designated member of the Bishop's staff to release to the COM and to the Bishop those reports from the discernment program which are specifically designated for this reporting purpose
- I understand that I am under a continuing obligation to provide the COM with any information that would correct any representations to the COM on any applications or other documents in its possession that are or become inaccurate at any time during the period after my being accepted as a Postulant for Holy Orders, and that failure to do so shall constitute grounds for my removal from the Register as a Postulant or Candidate.
- I authorize the Bishop of Southwest Florida and the COM to request from me any further information which is deemed relevant to determining my suitability or fitness for Holy Orders, or my continuing progress in the ordination process. If I am accepted as a Postulant, I understand that the COM, the Bishop, and the Standing Committee of the Diocese have a responsibility to seek, receive, and review any information which they reasonably determine they must have in the exercise of their duties.
- In every possible case, my permission and signed release will be sought for such an inquiry. And wherever possible, questions arising from such information will be discussed with me. However, I also understand that information may come to the Bishop, to the COM, or to the Standing Committee, without my knowledge or express permission.
- I affirm and attest that all statements, answers, and information contained in this application and any addendum are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge, information and belief and furnished in good faith. I understand that falsification, misrepresentation, or omission of any fact(s) requested will be sufficient cause for denial of this application and removal from the program.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_



**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Please comment on the following two areas:

1. Please describe how you will provide financial support for yourself and your family during the educational program required for ordination.

2. In your opinion, are these expectations realistic?

Link for assistance in financial planning:

<http://www.cpg.org/clients/seminarians/financiallifeplanning.cfm>

## **Appendix J**

### **Preparing for the Bishop's Advisory Panel (BAP)**

After your Discernment Group has completed its work and recommended you for Nomination, the Vestry has nominated you to the Bishop, and you have submitted your acceptance of nomination, you will be invited to attend the Bishop's Advisory Panel. The BAP – consisting of the same membership as the Commission on Ministry – acts as an advisory group to the Bishop as the Bishop makes decisions concerning persons seeking Postulancy. It remains the Bishop's decision to make someone a Postulant.

The BAP meets as needed. The interview time will also allow you to ask the BAP questions or gain clarification about discernment and any part of the process. Following the interview, the BAP meets to discuss and reflect upon your responses in the interview, and to come to consensus regarding a recommendation for Postulancy to the Bishop.

**Prior to your attendance at the BAP, the following documents must be submitted to the Diocese (Office of COM Staff Liaison) no later than three (3) weeks prior to the BAP:**

1. Copies of Baptism and Confirmation/Reception certificates
2. Spiritual Autobiography (minimum of 2500 words)
3. Written statement of call.
4. Medical Report
5. Psychological Report (**see Appendix K**)
6. Background Check (done by the Diocese)
7. Academic transcripts from undergraduate institution(s) if applicable
8. Certificate of Completion of "Safeguarding All God's Children"
9. Employment Record of the last ten (10) years (including employers' contacts)
10. Statement of Financial Health (form provided by the COM Staff Liaison Office)

## **Appendix K**

### **Mental Health Screening Process**

The Purpose of this Appendix is to familiarize the Nominee with the protocol for the required Psychological Report and Medical Report.

Church Pension Fund overview of the Required Forms

#### **A. CANONICAL DOCUMENTS**

- 1) Church Pension Fund Required Medical Exam Form
- 2) Background Screening Form
- 3) Psychological Evaluation Report Summary Form

#### **B. PREPARATORY DOCUMENTS**

- 1) Church Pension Fund Life History Questionnaire, Church Pension Fund Behavior Screening Questionnaire, Authorization and Release to Diocese
- 2) Authorization for release to Applicant only

The office of the Canon to the Ordinary provides the necessary forms with instructions.

#### **C. PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

Clinical screening is part of ordination, which compliments the endorsing work of the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry.

Clinical screening and evaluation are conducted by a licensed clinical psychologist. A clinical report is prepared by the psychologist, which is shared with the applicant.

The applicant signs or declines to sign a release for the clinical report to be released to the Bishop

The clinical report is the property of the Bishop and remains in the Diocesan Office in a secure location.

The costs associated with the clinical session/report is paid by the applicant at the time of the service.

In the event the applicant has a prior history of psychiatric issues and/or treatment, or any abnormalities arise in the testing protocol, a psychiatrist will conduct a clinical consultation with the applicant and inform the Bishop of his or her findings.

If the psychiatric evaluation is needed, the cost of this consultation is paid by the applicant.

## **Appendix L**

### **Resources**

***The Anglican Vision.*** J. Griffiss. The New Church's Teaching Series. Cowley Publications, Cambridge, MA, 1997.

***The Art of Discernment: Making Good Decisions in Your World of Choices.*** S. Kiechle. Ave Maria Press, Inc., Notre Dame, IN, 2005.

***A Brief History of the Episcopal Church.*** D. Holmes. Trinity Press International, Harrisburg, PA, 1993.

***In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership.*** H. Nouwen. Crossroad Publications, New York, NY, 1989.

***Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation.*** P. Palmer. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2000.

***\*Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community.*** S. Farnham, J. Gill, R.T. McLean & S. Ward. Morehouse Publishing, New York, NY, Revised 2011.

***Opening the Bible.*** R. Ferlo. The New Church's Teaching Series. Cowley Publications, Cambridge, MA, 1997.

***Opening the Prayer Book.*** J. Lee. The New Church's Teaching Series, Cowley Publications, Cambridge, MA, 1999.

***The Practice of Prayer.*** M. Guenther. The New Church's Teaching Series, Cowley Publications, Cambridge, 1998.

***Saint Benedict's Rule.*** P. Barry. Hidden Spring of Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ, 1985.

***Saint Benedict's Toolbox.*** J. Tomaine.

***Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting.*** H. Whitcomb. Augsburg Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2005.

***Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walk of Faith.*** H. Nouwen. Harper One, New York, NY, 2006.

***Strength for the Journey: A Pilgrimage of Faith in Community.*** D. B. Bass. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2002.

***What to Expect in Christian Spiritual Direction.*** T. Hart. Spiritual Directors International, Bellevue, WA, 2007.

***The Wounded Healer.*** H. Nouwen. Doubleday, NY, Revised, 1990.

## A Prayer of Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.  
Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that  
I think I am following your will does not mean that I am  
actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you  
does in fact please you.  
And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.  
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.  
And I know that, if I do this, you will lead me by the right road,  
though I may know nothing about it.  
Therefore I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost  
and in the shadow of death.  
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,  
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

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