

Guidelines for Discernment of Ministry

The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i

Commission on Ministry | 2016

DESCRIPTION

A guide to discernment for lay and ordained ministry, with recommendations for ways to conduct discernment committees.

*Information about the ordination process can be found on the diocesan website:
<http://www.episcopalhawaii.org/ordination-process.html>.*

*Lay Ministries which are licensed – Preachers, Eucharistic Ministers and Visitors, Catechists, Worship Leaders, and Pastoral Leaders – are also described on the website:
<http://www.episcopalhawaii.org/licensed-ministries1.html>.*

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MINISTRY IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Lay and Ordained Ministry

Baptism itself constitutes a “call to ministry,” as a person is initiated into the Christian life and into the Church and commits oneself to serve God in whatever way one may be called to do so. An actual “job description” for a Christian, in a sense, can be found in the Baptismal Covenant (pages 304–305 in the *Book of Common Prayer*):

- To continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers
- To persevere in resisting evil, and when one sins, to repent and return to the Lord
- To proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ
- To seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving one’s neighbor as oneself
- To strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

Truly to live out this “job description” is no easy task! How and where one specifically fulfills each of these promises — for example, how and where one serves Christ in all persons — is a matter for discernment. For example, one person might be called to be an elementary school teacher, in which case one is serving Christ in others by helping one’s students learn to the best of their abilities. Another person’s gifts may be technical in nature. He or she might serve those same young students by creating computer hardware or software that is beneficial and educational. Another person might be called to be an architect; this person might serve Christ in those same young students by designing an attractive school building with facilities conducive to the students’ learning. Another person might be an excellent administrator or secretary. Ensuring the smooth and efficient operation of the school is this person’s way of serving Christ in the students.

Thus, “ministry” is not confined to working in the church or serving on church committees, and it is not confined to the activities of ordained persons. Instead, ministry is whatever one does that serves Christ, bears witness to him, and furthers his work in the world. The teacher, computer technician, architect, and secretary used as examples above could do their work in ways that do not serve Christ or bear witness to him.

Discernment is needed not only to determine how and where God calls each person to ministry, but also to help a person wade through some of the thorny ethical dilemmas that can arise in applying one’s Christian faith to one’s work. Congregations are encouraged to assist their members in addressing such ethical dilemmas and the interplay between one’s faith and one’s work. In addition, each person is encouraged to look at one’s ministry in the context of one’s congregation or community of faith, the Diocese of which one is a part, and the world at large.

One is not baptized in isolation, however. To be baptized means to be part of the Christian Church as a whole and also a member of a specific, local Christian church. Each baptized person is called to take part in the life of that church, through worship, prayer, and the giving of treasure, time, and talents. Discernment can help each person determine the nature and intensity of his or her involvement in the local church, which may vary over time.

Even within the church, there are different forms of ministry. Some involve special training according to diocesan guidelines and must be licensed by the Diocesan Bishop. These are the ministries of Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher (if one is not a priest), Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Catechist, and Evangelist as described in the Canons (Title III, Canon 4). Other ministries are commissioned by the local church, such as Altar Guild members, Wardens and Vestry/Bishop's Committee members, and Sunday school teachers. Still others may be ministries to which one is simply welcomed, such as office volunteer, coffee hour host, or the person who weeds the church's flower beds.

Thus, each baptized Christian is called to ministry, including some form of ministry within the church. The Catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer* describes the ministry of the laity as follows: "The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church." [*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 855]

Those who are called to ordination exhibit a call and a desire to work in particular kinds of leadership within the ministry of the church. More information about ordained ministry is in the section that follows, "Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church."

It should be noted that when a person experiences a yearning to live a more "spiritual" life or seeks more in-depth education or formation in the realms of the Spirit, the Bible, theology, etc., this is not necessarily a call to ordination. Laity, as well as clergy, are called to worship, pray, learn, and in general seek a more in-depth life with Christ.

Congregations and their clergy should offer rich formation experiences (or direct their members toward resources elsewhere) so that people of a variety of needs and desires can find the experiences that will help them grow and serve as faithful baptized Christians. Individuals and discernment committees should listen carefully for the underlying motivations and the movements of the Spirit should an individual express a desire to be ordained. (See sections on "Discernment" below.)

Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church

The Episcopal Church has maintained the "threefold order of ministry"; in other words, ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church consists of bishops, priests, and deacons. While this is not the only way to structure ordained ministry, it has a long precedent in church history. In the discernment process, especially in trying to discern a possible call to ordained ministry, it is

vital to understand the difference between the various orders. It is especially important to understand the role of the Diaconate. Often when people experience what they believe is a call to ordination, they assume that God calls them to the Priesthood. It is possible that they are truly called to be ordained, but as a Deacon. What follows here is a brief outline of the ministries of the three orders, as well as an explanation of the use of the term “Deacon” in the Episcopal Church.

The *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) contains two resources for understanding the ministries of bishops, priests, and deacons. One is in the Catechism (pages 855–856), which describes these ministries, in addition to that of the laity. The other resource is the ordination rites themselves (pages 511, 524, 536). The Examination in each of these rites contains a type of “job description.” The rites also contain the promises one must make upon ordination. Anyone discerning a call to ordination, as well as members of discernment committees, should read carefully the ordination rites.

Although each order has specific responsibilities, the following are expected of each:

- To pattern one’s life “in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so [as to be] a wholesome example”
- To be faithful in prayer and in reading and studying the Scriptures
- To conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church

Bishops

Bishops “carry on the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the Church” (BCP, p. 510). The word bishop comes from the word episcopal, meaning “overseer.” A Bishop represents Christ and his Church as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese. The ministry of the Bishop is as follows:

- To guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church
- To celebrate and provide for the administration of the Sacraments
- To ordain priest and deacons and to join in ordaining bishops
- To be a faithful pastor and wholesome example
- To share with other bishops in the leadership of the Church
- To act in Christ’s name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church

The locus of the Bishop’s responsibility is the diocese — the geographic entity including many congregations and local communities of worship and service

Priests

The priest exercises the ministry of Christ on behalf of the local community, “particularly as a pastor to the people.” A priest is the bishop’s representative in the local congregation or other community of faith (such as a school or a hospital). The ministry of the priest is as follows:

- To proclaim in preaching and in the conduct of one’s own life the Gospel of Jesus Christ
- To administer the Sacraments

- To bless and declare pardon in the name of God
- To share with the bishop and other priests in the counsels of the Church

The locus of the Priest's responsibility is the parish, mission, hospital, educational institution, prison, or other institutional structure within which the Word is preached, the Sacraments administered, and the faithful equipped for their service in the world.

Deacons

The Deacon serves as a bridge between the church and the world, exercising the ministry of Christ and the Church in the world, "particularly as a servant to those in need." The ministry of the deacon is as follows:

- To "make Christ and his redemptive love known" to the world, and to "interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world"
- To "assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments"

The locus of the Deacon's responsibility is that fluid boundary between the church and the world, in the workplace and soup kitchen, the hospital and home — wherever there are people in need of Christ's compassion. Even though the Deacon may serve in a local congregation, the Deacon is directly under the supervision of the Bishop. The Bishop may assign supervision to the Priest in charge or other leader exercising oversight of a congregation of other community of faith (see Title III, Canon 7, Section 4). However, the Deacon's ministry in the congregation is symbolic of his or her ministry of service in the wider community.

Ordained Ministry Today: What Can an Ordained Person Expect?

Applicants and Discernment Committees should be aware that the Church is undergoing rapid change, reflecting changes in society. Increasingly, churches find they are unable to pay a full-time salary, with full pension and benefits, to a Priest. This is increasingly the reality in which the Church as a whole lives.

Deacons in the Diocese of Hawai'i are already non-stipendiary. In other words, they are not paid for their services as a Deacon. These days, people newly ordained to the Priesthood can no longer expect a full-time position for life, with full stipend and benefits. It may be that their stipend might be a house, or health insurance, or contributions to a 401(k), but that they will receive no "salary." Or they might receive a nominal salary, but no benefits. Or over the course of their ordained ministry as a Priest, they will probably fluctuate between full-time, fully stipended, positions or part-time positions, or non-stipendiary positions. Priests would do well to have another skill on which they can draw for a full- or part-time job, perhaps over the course of their ministry, perhaps as a fallback position.

This warning is not meant to discourage applicants from considering ordination nor congregations from recommending those in whom they sense God working as a Deacon or Priest. If anything, we need now more than ever people who are truly called by God to serve in such capacities, who can bring the saving message of Jesus Christ to a world sorely in need of his grace, mercy, and truth. We need people who might consider this as an uncertain but exciting time to be ordained in the Church.

Being ordained, especially being a Priest, is no longer a “career,” a means to a position of power in society, with the salary to match. Instead, stripped of such accretions, it is what it has always been intended to be: a way to serve God in Christ through serving God’s people, in an exciting, unpredictable life of listening to and following God’s Holy Spirit in all things.

DISCERNMENT

We face many decisions in our lives for which we might long for guidance. What is the right thing to do? What does God desire of me in this situation? And specifically applied to ministry: How and where does God call me to serve? What does God want me to do with my life?

These are matters that require discernment. The process of discernment is based on the assumption that God is not distant or uninvolved in our lives, but rather that God has a desire for each of us. We are listening for the movement of the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us to God's deepest desire for us in any particular situation or in response to any particular question. In discernment we are answering the question: "What can I do in this situation that allows me to be most true to God's purposes and to be who God made me to be?"

Discernment can be accomplished alone, but it is often helpful to involve others. Other people — chosen specifically according to certain criteria, to be detailed below — can supply different perspectives, ask pertinent questions, and help us to pick up on movements and manifestations of the Spirit. In the discernment of a ministry of leadership in the church (whether lay or ordained), it is imperative to involve other people. A call to such ministry is a dual call both to the individual and to the church as a whole. The individual may experience an inner sense that God is calling him/her to a particular form of ministry, but because that ministry is on behalf of the church as a whole, the church must affirm the call.

Discernment Committees

Discernment Committees are groups of people within a church who help individuals discern their own particular calls to ministry. Standard practice used to be that congregations formed a Discernment Committee only when an individual stepped forward expressing a call to ordination. The Commission on Ministry now encourages congregations to develop Discernment Committees that operate on an ongoing basis. These committees would meet with anyone who desires to clarify how God calls them to participate in the ministry of Christ and the Church. The Discernment Committee also would actively seek out and solicit persons who might be called to leadership, whether lay or ordained. If the congregation has no ongoing Discernment Committee, and a person comes forward who wishes to discern a call, the member of the clergy in charge of the congregation will form a Committee to meet with that person.

The person meeting with a Discernment Committee is called an Applicant. A Discernment Committee and an Applicant typically meet together over the course of six or eight months, together addressing a series of questions and issues that will help them listen to how God is working in a given individual. The meetings might be held once a month; or the group might decide to meet on a more intensive basis, perhaps every week or two, for fewer months. Groups are encouraged, however, not to hurry the process, however alert they may be to a

start date for a formation program. Discernment may require that ideas and discussions "percolate" for a while in people before the movement of the Holy Spirit can be heard, felt, or understood.

This flexibility in the length of time discernment takes illustrates one important feature of the discernment process: it is not predictable. Discernment in fact continues through formation and ordination, and indeed through one's lifetime of service. But the Holy Spirit of God does not operate according to the timetables and expectations that we might wish to impose on the process. One of the requirements for effective discernment in any situation is to shed as much as possible any preconceptions and expectations as to the process, its length, and its outcome. Applicants and Committee members alike are encouraged to enter into the discernment process with open hearts and minds so that they can more easily hear the call of God and perceive the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The work of the Discernment Committee is to provide an environment in which the Applicant and Committee members may freely and openly discuss the Applicant's call to ministry. There must be a high level of confidentiality in the group. It is also noted that while a Discernment Committee comes together to support an Applicant's journey, the Committee members will embark on a spiritual journey of their own, and it is strongly suggested that time be given to the Committee's life as well as to the Applicant's process. It has happened that a participant in a discernment committee other than the Applicant discerned a call to ordination!

The Composition of Discernment Committees

The persons serving on a Discernment Committee carry an important responsibility toward the Applicant, the congregation, and the Church as a whole. They therefore should be selected with care. The clergy person in charge of the congregation is responsible for selecting and appointing the members of the Committee.

A member of a Discernment Committee should be a person who:

- Is a good and authentic listener
- Has good pastoral skills
- Looks at ministry as a totality, and understands that a call to ministry does not necessarily mean a call to ordination
- Understands the roles and ministries of laity, priests, and deacons
- Participates in the life of the congregation and has a ministry there
- Understands his or her own ministry
- Lives the Baptismal Covenant in his/her own life and ministry
- Is able to be vulnerable
- Is able to keep confidences
- Does not have to have canonical membership in the congregation but should be a communicant there
- Is not ordained

The committee should include a comparable number of male and female members with a range of ages and ethnic diversity. The Committee may include a Vestry member but does not need to.

The Committee should not include an ordained person. Ordained persons are more likely to bring a biased perspective; in addition, it is easy for the Committee as a whole to rely on the perspective and input of the ordained person. In particular, the priest in charge of the congregation should not be a member of the Committee or attend its meetings. The priest in charge of the congregation, however, may attend the first meeting of the Discernment Committee in order to help it get started. Or the priest may call on the Commission on Ministry to send one of its members to help the Discernment Committee understand its task and start its work.

General Topics of Discussion for Discernment Committees

There is no one specific way to conduct a discernment process. Remember, the process requires flexibility and openness! However, Discernment Committees are not expected to operate in the dark. Discernment for ministry generally focuses on several key areas, which should enter into the discussion at some point in the process:

- Self-knowledge and awareness
- Leadership skills
- Faith development
- Awareness of the traditions of the Episcopal Church

Sample topics might include the following:

- What is the Applicant's understanding of Christian ministry and what is her/his current ministry?
- In what ways and experiences is the Applicant growing in the Christian faith?
- What further growth do you think is needed, and does the Applicant have the capacity to achieve such growth?
- How does this Applicant's cultural background bear on the discernment process?
- Describe this Applicant's emotional health.
- Describe this person's leadership skills.
- If the Committee is discerning a possible call to Holy Orders: In what ways does this Applicant envision his/her Diaconate/Priesthood?

Specific Methods for Discernment Committees

The topics and questions above provide a general framework for discussion. It can be helpful, however, to use a specific method for discernment. The Commission on Ministry recommends several methods that a Discernment Committee can use to help persons discern how God is

calling them to ministry, whether lay or ordained. The method used depends upon several factors. Below are three different methods. Discernment Committees, in consultation with the priest in charge of the congregation, can either choose the one that best suits their needs, or the Office of the Bishop or a member of the Commission on Ministry can help them choose.

Use the Book *Listening Hearts*

The book *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*, teaches the basic principles of discernment, especially for groups helping specific individuals discern their call. The members of every Discernment Committee should read it. In addition to describing discernment in general, it also describes a method for working as a group.

This method is best used when a committee is focused on a single individual, or maybe two, at most. It is also especially appropriate when individuals who have presented themselves as “hearing a call” to ordination, and this call needs to be probed in order to discern whether it is truly a call from God and whether the congregation wishes to sponsor the person for ordination.

Use the Book *Ears to Hear*

The book *Ears to Hear: Recognizing and Responding to God’s Call*, by Edward S. Little (Morehouse, 2003), takes characters from the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., Abraham, Deborah, David, Jeremiah) to illustrate the many ways in which God calls people to ministry. Each chapter focuses on one character, contains several specific points about how God calls people, and is followed by several discussion questions.

If a group uses this book, the members should read a chapter before the group meeting. The group can then discuss the questions at the end of the chapter. The questions help the group see how the points made in the chapter might be reflected in their own lives.

This book is especially appropriate for groups in the following situations:

- The group is not focused on a specific individual, but instead is discerning how God calls each of them to ministry.
- The group is gathered to help several people discern their call.
- The group is working with someone who would be uncomfortable being the focus of attention.

Be aware, however, that in the last two cases, if the group does discern a call to ordination for some individual, some of the “hard questions” outlined in *Listening Hearts* will eventually need to be asked. Experience shows that the individual at some point will even welcome those hard questions, before committing themselves to the path toward ordination.

Use a Study Guide

Another method is to use a study guide whose purpose is to aid discernment. Appendix A contains a “Prayer, Bible, and Theology Study Guide for Congregational Discernment Committees,” which has been adapted from materials from the Diocese of Colorado. It outlines

twelve sessions using resources from the *Book of Common Prayer* and Scripture to focus on the Church, ministry, and prayer. The guide outlines resources for worship for each session and questions to help focus discussion.

This study guide would be useful for a group focused on either an individual or several individuals, or that is examining ministry in general.

Part of its method is to examine the differences among the ministries of a layperson, a deacon, and a priest, so this method may be helpful when a person is trying to discern whether he or she is called to ordination at all, and is unsure whether it is as a deacon or a priest. The Study Guide is also useful for teaching discernment committees the difference between the two.

The group should read the resources together (preferably put together as worship, such as a modified Morning or Evening Prayer), rather than asking members to read them alone before the meeting.

Understanding Baptism as the primary initiation rite into Christian ministry means that if at any point an Applicant who has expressed a desire to be ordained is encouraged instead to pursue and amplify his or her lay ministry, this is not interpreted as a rejection, but rather seeing how God is working in a person's life and how God is calling that person to ministry, and what form that ministry should take.

The Next Step

Discernment is an ongoing process. At some point, however, the Discernment Committee will come to some clarity as to the Applicant's call to ministry. It then prepares a report to the priest in charge of the congregation and to the Vestry/ Bishop's Committee. The recommendation should include whether or not the Committee believes the Applicant should be nominated for Postulancy in the ordination process.

The Vestry/ Bishop's Committee then chooses whether they wish to officially nominate the Applicant to the Bishop for the ordination process. They must state in their letter to the Bishop that they agree to assist the person financially in the ordination process, such as by helping them with a portion of the cost of seminary or other formation program. At least two-thirds of the members of the Vestry/ Bishop's Committee must sign the letter of nomination. It also must be signed by the priest in charge of the congregation.

The priest is encouraged to write an additional letter of support and recommendation to the Bishop. If the congregation or other community of faith has no clergy person, the recommendation and the appropriate letters of support must be made by a Priest of the Diocese who is acquainted with the Nominee and with the congregation or community of faith.

The involvement of these various groups or individuals demonstrates the necessity for discernment at several levels: by the Applicant, pastoral discernment by the Applicant's Priest,

discernment by the community, and diocesan discernment. The Commission on Ministry, and later the Standing Committee, have the responsibility of discernment at the level of the Diocese, on behalf of the Bishop.

At this point, the Applicant becomes a Nominee. For a full description of how to nominate someone for the ordination process and the forms to use, see the Ordination Process information available on the diocesan website.

Discernment Committees Keep Meeting

Whether or not a Nominee is accepted as a Postulant, it is expected that the Discernment Committee will continue to function. The Discernment Committee will provide pastoral care and help as the Nominee either continues in the process or discerns how best to live out his/her life and call in lay ministry. The work of the Discernment Committee does not end until the Nominee has been ordained or has a more clarified and focused lay ministry.

Saying “No” when Needed

It is imperative for the sake of the Applicant and the Church as a whole that if the Discernment Committee truly feels that this Applicant is not called to ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church, the Committee must be able to say so. This is not a rejection of the individual or of his/her ministry; it is a clarification of how God calls the individual to ministry. In addition, if the priest in charge of the congregation cannot in good conscience support the Applicant in the ordination process, he/she should say so from the beginning. Although these statements are difficult to make, it is far better that they be said at an early stage rather than allowing the Applicant to continue a lengthy process for a ministry that isn't truly supported by the Church.

Characteristics to Look For in Applicants for Church Leadership

Discernment Committees may well ask just what they are supposed to look for in Applicants with whom they meet. What characteristics in a person would indicate a possible call to leadership in the church or to ordination?

The Committee should first pay attention to what the person's gifts are and what he/she enjoys doing. God gives us gifts for a purpose, to use in service to Christ and his Church.

In addition, those called to positions of leadership within the church (whether lay or ordained) should exhibit the following characteristics:

- *Dedication:* Does the person show a high level of dedication to his/her faith and to his/her responsibilities and commitments?
- *Faithfulness:* Is the person rooted and grounded spiritually and does he/she live a disciplined spiritual life? Does this person live the Baptismal Covenant and encourage others to do so?
- *Reliability:* Is this person true to his/her word? Can others count on this person?

FISH

When Bishop Robert L. Fitzpatrick took office as the Diocesan Bishop, he told the Commission on Ministry that he expected all persons called to ordained ministry to “have FISH.” In his letter to the Commission on Ministry, he defines FISH as the following qualities:

Faith. The People of God should expect that their ordained leader, as preacher, teacher, and theologian, has a deep personal faith in God the Creator who saved us through Jesus Christ and dwells with us through the Holy Spirit. This faith is not an intellectual datum but a radical reality with consequences for all aspects of life. “The life of God—precisely because it is triune—does not belong to God alone. God who dwells in inaccessible light and eternal glory comes to us in the face of Christ and the activity of the Holy Spirit. Because of God’s outreach to the creature, God is ... essentially relational, ecstatic, and alive as passionate love. Divine life is therefore also our life. The heart of the Christian life is to be united with the God of Jesus Christ by means of communion with one another.” Do not put forward any person in the ordination process that cannot express in some way faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, Savior and God.

Integrity. The People of God should expect that their ordained leader be trustworthy and lead the life of faith that he or she preaches and teaches. Integrity is a hallmark of leadership. We need complete accountability, transparency, and consistency in administration of the Church and personal action. Though some think it a bit childish, I still try to judge my actions by the question, “What would Jesus do?” Do not put forward any person in the ordination process that you are not convinced is a person of integrity – someone who walks the talk of faith in Jesus Christ.

Scholarship. The People of God should expect that their ordained leader studies and teaches. The primary area of study and teaching is the Bible as the text of our faith. A regular and consistent regimen of study is part of the vocation, not something to be stolen at odd hours. There must be times when the people experience the fruit of the study. It is through teaching and preaching that the People of God begin to experience the vision of God’s call to us all. Do not put forward anyone who you are not convinced has the capacity and desire – understanding individual abilities and learning styles – to study (particularly the Bible) and to teach the faith.

Humility. The People of God should expect that their ordained leader is humble. The beginning of ministry is being a servant. What Kenneth Leech, a priest of the Church of England, writes: “Simplicity is different from naivety, immaturity and false innocence. It is a condition, which comes from a refusal to be sidetracked by trivia; an avoidance of unnecessary clutter; an ability to see the wood through the trees; to discern the true amid conflicting claims of illusion. Simplicity is therefore inextricably linked with discernment, the ability to maintain in the midst of turmoil and overcrowding of spirit a devotion to the inner light, the divine light. The chief enemy of simplicity and of the simple light is distractedness and fragmentation of spirit. As pastors we are called to be

light--bringers, little manifestations of the Christ light, and we can only do this if we are continually standing in the light, reflecting the light of the Lord.”

To this simplicity, one might add the ability to ask for forgiveness, to seek wisdom from others, and to realize that all authority truly belongs to Christ. Humility is best displayed in humor and a delight for life. Do not put forward anyone who is angry or cynical, or who fails to understand that they are called to be the servant of all of God’s people regardless of language, class, race, culture, ethnic heritage, etc. There is no room for pomposity or self-aggrandizement when Jesus Christ is our model for life.

Bishop Fitzpatrick concluded this description by saying, “How well a deacon, priest or bishop proclaims the Gospel with FISH can only be ascertained by others and by observing the fruit of the ministry. I suggest that without FISH there is no proclamation of the Gospel.”

In addition to the above characteristics, those called to ordained leadership would exhibit a capacity for *spiritual leadership* in the Church. While many lay people are outstanding leaders within and outside the church, those called to ordination — whatever their particular leadership style might be — must be able to bring a community to life in Christ.

A Deacon acts out the servant ministry of Christ in the wider community, brings its needs to the attention of the Church, and helps to train and educate others for such ministries. Therefore, those called to the Diaconate would show evidence of spiritual leadership in the area of service.

A Priest is a minister of Word and Sacrament and is a representative of others, calling forth the priesthood of all believers and providing an example of what a faithful life in Christ looks like. In these capacities, a Priest serves to bring God to the people and to hold up the people before God. Thus, those called to the Priesthood show leadership capabilities particularly in the realm of the ministry of Word and Sacraments: being a pastor, priest, and teacher.

Along with leadership, a person to be ordained should exhibit charisma. He or she should have a quality that makes people want to listen to them or follow them, even if that quality is quietly and subtly expressed. At the same time, charisma is a gift that can be misused; thus the individual should exhibit awareness of the traps to one’s own ego inherent in being charismatic. Discernment Committees should beware of putting forward for ordination anyone who exhibits an inclination to manipulate others through the power of his/her own charisma.

A way to summarize these characteristics is to say that those called to ordination exhibit a leadership that is iconic. In other words, the person shows a capacity and a willingness to become an icon for Jesus and the Gospel. Icons are windows through which one is able to perceive the divine. People are not meant to look at icons in and for the icons themselves; instead, icons serve to point worshipers beyond the icons themselves to God. In the same way, those called to ordination should be persons through whom others can more easily see God and perceive the truth and power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Two additional words are useful to characterize such leadership: *sacramental* and *servanthood*. Both are necessary in persons ordained as priests and deacons. Their ministry should be sacramental in that it helps others to see the grace of God in the ordinary stuff of life and how the Gospel of Christ relates to their daily lives. At the same time, the person to be ordained should remain aware always that he/she is first and foremost a servant of Christ and Christ's people. Such awareness helps to guard against the ego traps mentioned above that can become tempting to someone who serves in a position of iconic leadership.

One way to summarize all of these characteristics, and to express what Bishop Fitzpatrick expects in those to be ordained, is to say that they should be evangelists. They should exhibit a passion for Jesus Christ and a desire to communicate his gospel, in whatever manner God has created them to best make known the power and truth of Jesus Christ. The need for ordained leaders to be evangelists is more evident and urgent now than in the past several centuries, as people are increasingly unfamiliar with Jesus and the Christian faith.

Finally, it should be noted that Committees are looking for these characteristics as potentialities. For a person called to ordination, it is a rare person who would exhibit all the desired characteristics, fully developed, before he/she has even begun the discernment and formation involved in the ordination process. Instead, Committees should look for the beginning of their development and the capacity for growth.

Deacon or Priest?

Often Applicants and Discernment Committees who sense that God calls a person to ordination automatically expect that the person should be a Priest. The distinctive ministry of the Deacon, however, may be a better expression of the ministry to which the person is called. Discernment Committees and Applicants should read the Examinations in the ordination rites, on pages 531 and 543 of the *Book of Common Prayer*. When Discernment Committees make a recommendation for ordination, they are expected specifically to refer to one of these Examinations and show how the Applicant they are recommending fits with the "job description" described.

Nomination Steps

When a Discernment Committee is ready to make a recommendation to the congregation's Priest and Vestry or Bishop's Committee, the following steps should be followed in order to nominate someone to the Bishop for the ordination process. Please first note these prerequisites!

- The Nominee must be baptized.
- The Nominee must for a year be a confirmed adult communicant in good standing in the congregation nominating him/her.

The **Discernment Committee** writes a report to the priest in charge of the congregation and to the Vestry/Bishop's Committee. The report includes the following items:

- A description of how often and how long the Discernment Committee and the Nominee met
- A description of the process that the Discernment Committee followed
- An explanation of why the Discernment Committee is making the recommendation that they are. If they are recommending that the person proceed in the ordination process, they must specify to which order (deacon or priest) they feel the person is called, and explain why they believe this. The explanation should refer to the ordination rites from the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Examination in the ordination rite outlines the characteristics and expectations of each order. The Discernment Committee is essentially answering the question, "How does the Nominee fit these expectations?"

Then **the Vestry/Bishop's Committee** decides whether to nominate the person to the Bishop for proceeding in the ordination process. If yes, they write a letter to the Bishop. The letter includes the following promises:

- A pledge to contribute financially to the Nominee's preparation for ordination
- A commitment to involve itself in the Nominee's preparation

The letter must be signed by at least 2/3 of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee, as well as the Rector/Vicar (or other Member of the Clergy or leader exercising oversight of the congregation). To prevent later questions as to whether 2/3 of the Vestry signed it, the best method is to type the name of each member of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee with a space for each to sign above his/her name. The signature space should be left blank for those who are not present or do not agree.

The **Nominee** accepts the nomination. The Acceptance of Nomination Form is found online (please visit the Ordination Process page on the website for the link).

The **Bishop** then does the following:

- Determines that the Nominee is a confirmed adult communicant in good standing
- Confers in person with the Nominee
- The Bishop will consult with the Nominee regarding financial resources available during the preparation for ordination
- If the Bishop admits the Nominee to Postulancy, the Commission on Ministry will then meet with the person to review the application and prepare an evaluation of the Nominee's qualifications.

FORMATION

The formation program affirms any proficiency that Nominees for ordination may bring to the formation process. The Commission on Ministry recognizes that individuals may come to the process with a variety of previous experiences and education that is pertinent to their formation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long does the ordination process take?

Applicants often ask this question, perhaps computing if they have the will, the resources, or the time to devote to the process. There is no hard and fast rule about the length of time required, as each person may encounter different circumstances.

However, the following requirements may be useful to remember: A person must have been resident in the diocese for a minimum of a year and be a confirmed adult communicant in good standing in her or his congregation or other community of faith. The initial discernment process takes perhaps six months to a year. Following nomination by one's Vestry or Bishop's Committee, a person may not be ordained any sooner than eighteen (18) months from his or her official, written acceptance of nomination. Formation for the Priesthood takes three years (whether one attends seminary or is a student in the local formation program).

Can I return to my home congregation to serve after ordination?

This is sometimes allowed, at the Bishop's discretion. The Bishop will generally require, however, that a person's first ministry will be in a different congregation. Long experience has shown that those who have attempted such a return have found that it is difficult to switch roles from an involved layperson to an ordained leader, no matter how good everyone's intentions are.

Likewise, it is not permitted for a seminarian to do field work in his/her home congregation. For breadth of formation experience, it is better to serve in this capacity in a different congregation.

Do I have to go to seminary?

Preparation for both the Diaconate and the Priesthood requires study and formation experiences. The Commission on Ministry recognizes that many people already have had significant formation experiences, perhaps in college, in their congregation or other community of faith, or in other life experience. Such formation experiences will generally be recognized by the COM. Both those preparing for the Priesthood and for the Diaconate may attend seminary, especially if they are young, or they may participate in the local formation program.

Is CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) required?

Many dioceses and many denominations require for ordination the completion of one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). This program of approximately twelve weeks may take place in a variety of ministry settings, but most often occurs in a hospital. Essentially, the student serves as a hospital chaplain for a summer, while also engaging a variety of group and learning experiences. CPE is intended to help students (1) develop skills for ministry, especially with persons in need or in crisis, and (2) develop the capacity to reflect theologically on the situations one encounters in ministry.

CPE is not specifically required for ordination, though it may be recommended in certain circumstances, especially for ordination to the Priesthood.

For more information on CPE, see the web site for the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. at www.acpe.edu.

What if I am ordained in a denomination other than the Episcopal Church?

Clergy from other denominations who seek Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church take part in every step of the ordination process. Those ordained in denominations in Historic Succession may qualify to have their orders received into the Episcopal Church; those not ordained in the Historic Succession would be required to be ordained in the Episcopal Church. (See Canon 10 of Title III.) If the clergy person is accepted into the ordination process, the Commission on Ministry will recommend certain coursework or professional/spiritual development activities for the person's formation. The Commission on Ministry also will make a recommendation to the Bishop as to whether the Commission believes the person should be received into or ordained in the Episcopal Church. The Bishop will then decide whether or not to receive the orders of or ordain such persons, set requirements for any further work such persons need to complete beforehand, and decide the timing of these events.

What if I already have a seminary degree? Do I have to go through the whole process?

Occasionally, Applicants begin the ordination process after they have completed seminary. Such persons must go through all the steps in the ordination process, meaning discernment, nomination, postulancy, and candidacy. The formation required will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

What if I am already ordained a Vocational Deacon and I feel called to be a Priest?

One reason for the intensive discernment time at the outset of the process is to help an Applicant clearly discern whether he/she is being called to the Diaconate or the Priesthood. It does happen that a person ordained a Deacon may experience a call to the Priesthood, or others experiencing him/her in the role of Deacon may sense a call to the Priesthood. Should this happen, the person would be expected to start again in the ordination process, beginning with a discernment process in his/her congregation or other community of faith, and proceeding through postulancy and candidacy, including formation for the Priesthood.

APPENDIX A: DISCERNMENT STUDY GUIDE

A Prayer, Bible, and Theology Study Guide for a Congregational Discernment Committee from the Commission on Ministry (Adapted from the Diocese of Colorado)

The following provides a framework for a 12-session study with a Congregational Discernment Committee, using resources in the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP) and in Scripture. Following this outline (beginning on the 4th page) are suggested questions to stimulate discussion for each session.

I. The Church

1. Thanksgiving to God for Parish Life in Christ

Collect	“For the Unity of the Church”	BCP pg. 255
Scripture	Deuteronomy 7:6-8 Colossians 3:12-17 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 Luke 24:13-35	
Reading	An Outline of the Faith (The Catechism) The Church The Sacraments	BCP pg. 854-855 BCP pg. 857-858
Prayer	“A Litany of Thanksgiving”	BCP pg. 836-837

2. The Ministry of the Laity

Collect	The Prayer – Confirmation Service	BCP pg. 418
Scripture	Deuteronomy 10:12-15 1 Corinthians 12:12-28 Ephesians 4:1-16 Matthew 28:16-20	
Reading	The Catechism The Christian Hope	BCP pg. 861-862
Prayer	A Song of Creation	BCP pg. 88

II. The Ordained Ministry

1. The Ordination of a Priest

Collect	For the Ministry II	BCP pg. 256
Scripture	Isaiah 6:1-8 Ephesians 4:7, 11-16 or 1 Peter 5:1-4 or Philippians 4:4-9	

	Matthew 9:35-38 or John 6:35-38; 10:11-18	
Reading	The Ordination of a Priest The Examination	BCP pg. 531-532
Prayer	The Litany for Ordinations	BCP pg. 548-550
2. The Ordination of a Deacon		
Collect	For the Ministry II	BCP pg. 256
Scripture	Jeremiah 1:4-9 or Ecclesiasticus 39:1-8 Psalm 84 or 119:33-40 2 Cor. 4:1-6 or 1 Tim. 3:8-13 or Acts 6:2-7	
Reading	The Ordination of a Deacon The Examination	BCP pg. 543-544
Prayer	The Litany for Ordinations	BCP pg. 548-550
3. The Pastoral Ministry		
Collect	A Prayer of Self-Dedication	BCP pg. 832
Scripture	Isaiah 55 1 Corinthians 4 1 Peter 5:1-11 Matthew 7:7-12	
Reading	The Celebration of a New Ministry: The Induction and Prayer	BCP pg. 561-563
Prayer	A Prayer attributed to St. Francis	BCP pg. 833
4. The Priesthood		
Collect	For the Ministry I	BCP pg. 256
Scripture	1 Samuel 2:35 Hebrews 4:14-5:10 John 15:1-17	
Reading	The Ordination of a Priest The Consecration	BCP pg. 533-534
Prayer	Christ Our Passover	BCP pg. 83
5. The Diaconate		
Collect	For Social Service or Vocation in Daily Work	BCP pg. 260 BCP pg. 261
Scripture	Isaiah 42:1-4 or Isaiah 52:13-53; 12 1 John 4:7-12 Matthew 25:31-46	

Reading	The Ordination of a Deacon: The Consecration	BCP pg. 545
Prayer	The Song of Simeon	BCP pg. 93

6. The Cost of Ministry

Collect	Holy Cross Day	BCP pg. 244
Scripture	Revelation 5:6-14 2 Corinthians 5:17-6:16 Matthew 9:35-10:39	
Reading	The Catechism Sin and Redemption	BCP pg. 848-849
Prayer	A Song of Penitence	BCP pg. 90

7. The Discipline of Ministry

Collect	Second Sunday of Easter	BCP pg. 224
Scripture	Exodus 20:1-20 1 Corinthians 9:16-27 John 21:15-19	
Reading	The Catechism The Ministry	BCP pg. 855-856
Prayer	The Song of Zechariah	BCP pg. 92

III. Prayer and Ministry

1. The Prayer of Union

Collect	Of a Saint III	BCP pg. 250
Scripture	2 Chronicles 6:12-21 John 17	
Reading	The Catechism God the Son	BCP pg. 849-850
Prayer	The Second Song of Isaiah	BCP pg. 86

2. Prayer for One Another

Collect	Proper 22	BCP pg. 234
Scripture	Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-19 Philippians 1:3-11 Colossians 1:9-23 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12	
Reading	The Catechism The Holy Spirit Prayer and Worship	BCP pg. 852-853 BCP pg. 856-857
Prayer	The Solemn Collects: Good Friday	BCP pg. 277-280

3. The Faithfulness of God

Collect	For Quiet Confidence	BCP pg. 832
Scripture	Lamentations 3:21-33 Romans 8:31-39 Matthew 5:1-12; 6:19-34	
Reading	The Catechism Human Nature God the Father	BCP pg. 845-846 BCP pg. 846
Prayer	You are God	BCP pg. 95

A Suggested Outline for Study and Discussion Sessions in the Congregational Discernment Process

Commission on Ministry, Diocese of Hawai'i
(Adapted from the Diocese of Colorado)

The following questions may be helpful for each of the sections. They are intended to assist in opening possible areas of consideration. Most do not have any “right” answers, but are only meant to stimulate thought and discussion.

The Church

Thanksgiving to God for Parish Life in Christ

- What does it mean to be God’s chosen people? Chosen for what?
- How does a group of people become “bound together in love by the one Spirit?” What does this mean?
- What is the relationship of individual and communal discernment of God’s will for our lives?
- Why did the disciples on the road to Emmaus not recognize Jesus? What may have gotten in the way? What gets in the way for us?

The Ministry of the Laity

- How have we discerned God’s will for us in our own present vocations?
- What are our responsibilities as Christians in our present vocations?
- What gifts do we have that could add to the unity and wholeness of the Body of Christ?
- How can we be more open to Christ’s presence with us?

The Ordained Ministry

The ordination of a Deacon and a Priest

- In what way do the ministries of all the baptized, the diaconate and the priesthood differ from one another?
- What are some indications of being “called” to any particular vocation? To the ordained ministry?
- What kind of leader is a shepherd? What qualities are needed to be a dictator? To be an example?

The Pastoral Ministry

- What are “pastoral “responsibilities”?”
- How can one’s image of God and relationship with God affect pastoral ministry?
- Is there a difference in the call to pastoral ministry for the laity and the ordained ministry? If so, what is it?

The Priesthood

- What makes a priest? What can we learn from Jesus as High Priest about the role of priest?
- Is there a role for priest in areas other than specific “parish work” and if so, in what ways?
- What does it mean, and what difference does it make that it is Christ who chooses us first and not we who first choose Christ?

The Diaconate

- What makes a deacon? What can we learn from Jesus as Servant Lord about the ministry of a deacon?
- If we are all called to be engaged in serving others (diakonia), why should deacons be ordained?
- How do deacons carry on Christ’s Servant Ministry?

The Cost of Ministry

- How can we differentiate “taking up your cross” versus being a self-styled martyr (developing a martyr syndrome)? What are the differences in attitude?
- How are Christ’s instructions to the apostles related to taking up one’s cross, surrendering one’s willfulness?
- In what way does the news that we are reconciled make us a new creation? How in our own lives does this good news relate to taking up our own crosses?
- What is the relationship of “taking up your cross” to self-examination and increased self-awareness?

The Discipline of Ministry

- In what way do our lives reflect the new covenant of reconciliation?
- How do we reflect God’s place in our lives? How do we feed Christ’s sheep?
- In what way can we prepare ourselves and nourish ourselves for being ministers of the new covenant?

Prayer and Ministry

The Prayer of Union

- With whom (or what) do we desire to become united in prayer of union?
- What are some ways we can open ourselves to, or increase our awareness of, the presence of God, Christ, within us?
- In what way can the prayer of silence, non-verbal or listening prayer be a prayer of union – with God – with others?

Prayer for One Another

- What are some ways we recognize the Holy Spirit within others, within creation, within ourselves?
- How can we increase our awareness of the needs of others, rather than our own projections of what we think they need?

- What are various types of intercessions used in your own verbal or non- verbal prayer for others, and for yourself? What has been most helpful?

The Faithfulness of God

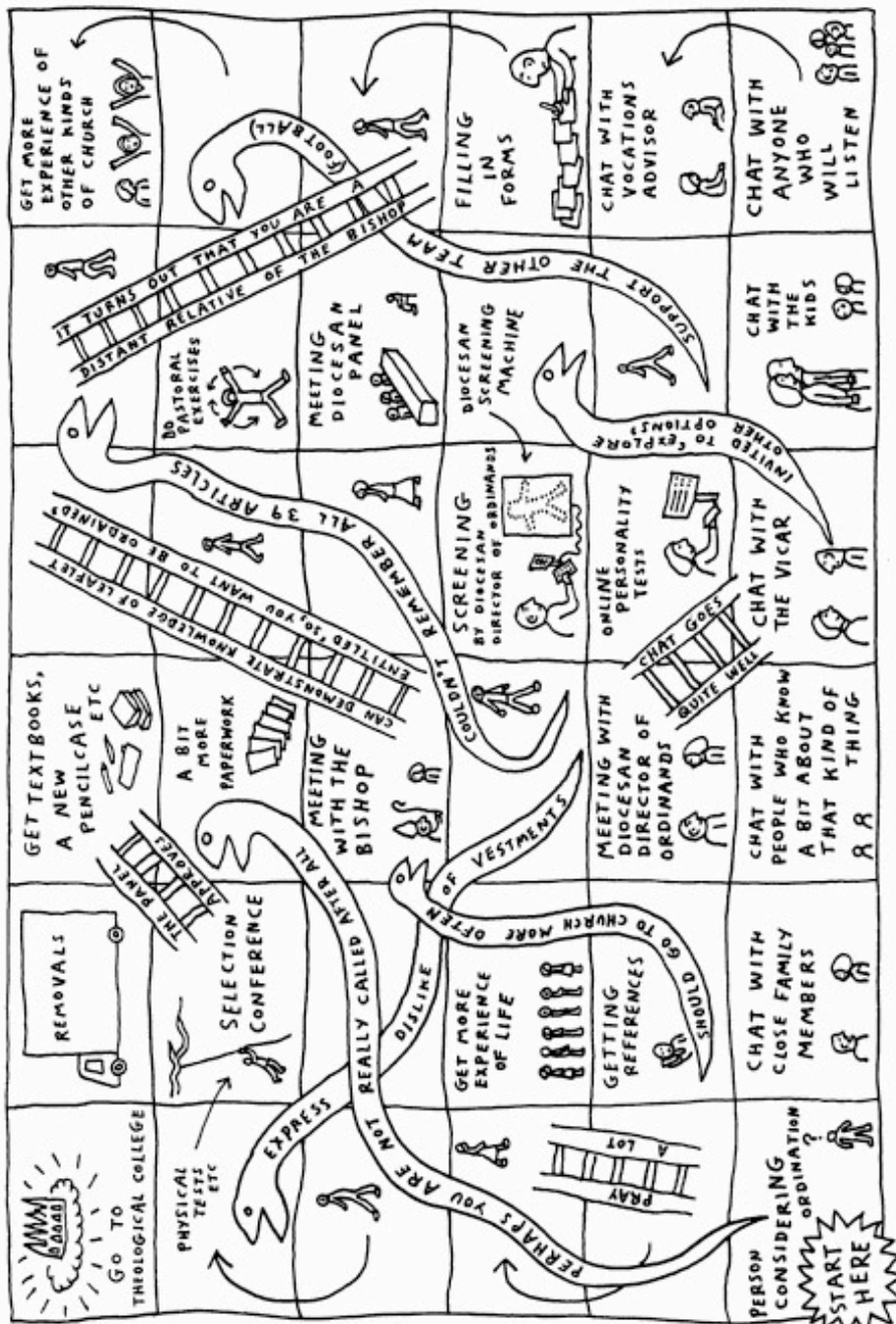
- In what way can “sitting in solitude and silence” increase awareness of God’s faithfulness, God’s love?
- What are some of the ways we learn how to trust in God?
- What are some of the experiences you have had which have increased your faith and trust in God?

FOR A LAUGH

To help us all keep the “ordination process” in perspective, we finish off these *Guidelines* with a cartoon. The terms are those used in the Church of England. (Cartoon by Dave Walker; reprinted with permission.)

THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

HOW TO BE SELECTED AS A MEMBER OF THE CLERGY



CartoonChurch.com