

MINISTRY DISCERNMENT TEAM

-THE ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF SAN JOAQUIN-

Vision Statement

To Lead an Apostolic Community, Under Authority, That Brings People to Jesus Christ.

Mission Statement

**To equip, train, support, and encourage clergy
and lay leaders to bring people to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ**

Core Values

Accountability, Collegiality, Transparency

The call by God to Holy Orders in the Anglican Church in North America is a sacred and holy process involving the individual, the congregation's clergy & laity, the diocese and the bishop. In order that this process be based on more than an internal feeling it is important that the call be discerned and affirmed by many people through prayer, reflection, self and group examination along with the exercise of ministerial direction. This booklet is designed to assist individual aspirants and congregations in the first steps of this very important process of discernment.

On behalf of the Commission on Ministry and myself I want to thank you for using this process for the raising up new men and women for the ordained ministry.

Your Servant and Bishop,
The Rt. Rev. Eric Vawter Menees

What is a parish discernment committee?

A small committee of laity chosen by the minister-in-charge at each local parish.

In conjunction with the Bishop, the diocesan Commission on Ministry, and their minister-in-charge, the parish discernment committee helps a person determine whether he or she has a call to Holy Orders.

Why is a parish discernment committee necessary?

A call to Holy Orders requires active discernment, nurture, and testing all of which occur within local parish life. Since the parish community is in the unique position of being familiar with the individual, its participation is vital for a successful discernment process.

What are the responsibilities of a parish discernment committee?

In conjunction with their minister-in-charge, a parish discernment committee is responsible for the following:

- Conduct an initial interview with each individual who is seeking a call to Holy Orders.
- Provide the individual with basic information about the discernment process.
- Actively discern the individual's call over a period of 6 months.
- Assist in opening ministry avenues for their participation
- Conduct a 6-month interview with each person who is seeking a call to Holy Orders.
- Make a determination. Accordingly, complete and submit diocesan paperwork for the individual's application to Holy Orders.

Please note all of the above must be completed before an individual can progress to the diocesan stage of discernment for Holy Orders.¹

¹ See Appendix for initial interview and 6-month interview sample questions.

What are the Holy Orders of the Anglican Church in North America?

The Holy Orders include the following:

1. Bishop

The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese. He is to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church. He is to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry

2. Priest

The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people. He is to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

3. Deacon

The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need. He/she shall also assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Please note that the focus of the parish discernment committee will be for those seeking a call to the priesthood or diaconate.

What are the general requirements for an individual seeking a call to Holy Orders?

The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

1 Timothy 3:1-14a

In accordance with scripture and the canons of the church, the following are objective requirements for persons seeking a call to Holy Orders.

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation in the Anglican Church of North America
3. Marital Fidelity
The individual will not be admitted into Holy Orders if he or she has divorced and remarried.²
4. Successful Management of Household
The individual will not be admitted into Holy Orders if he or she clearly exhibits a lack of oversight in his or her personal affairs. This includes, but is not limited to, personal finances, relationships, physical and mental wellness, and, if applicable, child-rearing.

If an individual does not meet these objective requirements, **DO NOT** move him or her forward in the discernment process for a call to Holy Orders.

² *On application made to him by the Bishop, the Archbishop may, upon showing of good cause and particularity in light of the exceptions in Matthew 19 and 1 Corinthians 7, make exception to this requirement. (Title III. Canon 2. Section 6) If a ministry discernment team believes a situation warrants exception, email the current Vocations Officer or Diocesan Administrator before continuing with the individual's 6 month period of discernment.

What are the common characteristics of an individual seeking a call to Holy Orders?

The office of deacon or priest is a weighty calling that requires a willingness “to be a messenger, watchman, and steward of the Lord; to teach, and to warn, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family; and to seek for Christ’s sheep that are dispersed abroad, and for his children who are in the midst of this fallen world, that they may be saved through Christ forever. *The ACNA Ordinal, Page 11*

Given the scope of these responsibilities, an individual seeking a call to Holy Orders should exhibit the following characteristics:

1. **Love for God- the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit**
The individual should possess a deep personal love for God as demonstrated by his or her submission to the Holy Scriptures, an active prayer life, the practice of spiritual disciplines such as fasting or bible study to promote spiritual formation, and a dynamic personal experience of God’s grace and growth in his or her Christian walk.
2. **Love for the Church and Sacraments**
The individual should possess a clear love for the people in the body of Christ and the sacraments of the church. This is demonstrated through the practice of servant leadership, faithfulness to the church body and its spiritual and practical needs, a desire to disciple others in the faith, and disciplined participation in the sacraments including the sacrament of reconciliation (a.k.a. confession).
3. **Love for the Community**
The individual should possess an earnest love for the community-at-large as demonstrated by a desire to see those who are not in the church come to faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. In particular, persons seeking a call to the diaconate should possess a burden to serve and bless those outside of the church.
4. **Godly Character**
The individual should possess values in accordance with Holy Scripture as demonstrated through the practice of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).
5. **Quality of Leadership**
The individual should be well respected, possess an ability to teach and communicate, as well as a competency to cast vision for the church and motivate others toward it. In particular, persons seeking a call to the priesthood should possess conflict resolution and problem solving skills.³

³ Mannoia, Kevin W., and Larry Walkemeyer. 15 Characteristics of Effective Pastors: How to Strengthen Your Inner Core and Ministry Impact. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2007.

How does a parish discernment committee examine whether an individual has a call to Holy Orders?

O God, you led your holy apostles to ordain ministers in every place: Grant that your Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may choose suitable persons for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, and may uphold them in their work for the extension of your kingdom; through him who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
BCP p.256

After the initial interview, the parish discernment committee enters a 6 month period of active discernment to determine whether the individual has a call to Holy Orders. The following are guidelines for discernment.

1. Pray

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.
Psalm 32:8

Pray individually, as a committee, and with the individual seeking a call to Holy Orders. Ask God for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

2. Empower

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?"
James 2:14a

Provide the individual seeking a call to Holy Order with multiple opportunities to practice and learn skills for ordained ministry. Examples include service as a licensed Lay Eucharistic Minister or lector, leadership of a bible study or discipleship group, participation in pastoral visits and administration of the sacraments to shut-ins, and observation of vestry or bishop's committee meetings.

3. Test

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
Romans 12:2

Individually, as a team, and with the individual seeking a call to Holy Orders reflect on the fruit of his or her ministry service and whether it confirms or contradicts his or her calling. Honestly examine his or her spiritual gifts and whether his or her particular gifts are suitable for ordained ministry and the greater needs of the Church as a whole.

What if a ministry discernment committee determines an individual does not have a call to Holy Orders?

If an individual seeking a call to Holy Orders does not meet the general requirements or does not demonstrate characteristics and gifting suitable for ordained ministry, do not move him or her forward in the discernment process for a call to Holy Orders. In consultation with your minister-in-charge, determine how the committee can offer continued support for the person as they discern their calling in the Church.

As examples, over the 6 month period a parish discernment committee may find 1) an individual seeking a call to Holy Orders who has the gift of teaching but not the gift of leadership or 2) an individual who has the gift of leadership but not a love for the sacraments or 3) an individual who has a love for the sacraments but not a passion for Holy Scripture. In these cases, it would be appropriate for a parish discernment committee to encourage an individual to seek out the various ministries of the laity. Respectively, this may include using a gift of teaching to catechize new believers in the church, or using a gift of leadership in service on the vestry, or exercising one's love for the sacraments through licensed Lay Eucharistic ministries.

The call of a layperson to the ministries of the laity is of no less importance than the call of a layperson to Holy Orders. Holy Scripture and the Canons of the Church concur:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone.”
(Corinthians 12:4-6)

“...the people of God are the chief agents of the Mission of the Church to extend the Kingdom of God.”
(Canon 10, Of the Laity)

What if a ministry discernment committee determines an individual does have a call to Holy Orders?

Complete and submit diocesan paperwork for the individual's application to Holy Orders. Continue to pray for, empower, and support the individual as he or she moves forward in his or her call to ordained ministry.

Please contact the diocesan Vocations Officer or Diocesan Administrator with any questions.

THANK YOU FOR SERVING ON YOUR MINISTRY DISCERNMENT TEAM.

APPENDIX

Sample Questions for the Initial Interview⁴

PERSONAL FAITH

1. Please share your testimony about how you came to know Jesus Christ.
2. What does your personal relationship with Jesus Christ look like today?
3. What is your daily devotion and discipline? Describe your prayer life.
4. How do you continue to grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ?
5. In what context do you most commonly talk about Jesus with others? Examples: Bible study, witnessing to the lost, worship, prayer, casual conversation, etc.
6. When you talk about God with others, what do you say about Him? How do you articulate who He is and why it matters?
7. Have you ever led a person to Christ? Describe.
8. How have you shared in the past, and how are you currently sharing, the power, love, might, and grace of Jesus Christ? In your family? In your church? In your community?

THE CALL

1. Have you been baptized? Have you been confirmed in the Anglican Church of North America?
2. Are you married? Have you previously been married?
3. Please describe your family and other relevant household matters. Examples: personal finances, physical and mental wellness, etc.
4. What are your spiritual gifts?
5. What are your natural abilities? Examples: Guitar, public speaking, computers.
6. How have you previously practiced, and how are you currently practicing, these spiritual gifts and natural abilities? What has the outcome been?
7. Describe your leadership style.
8. Describe your leadership experiences in the church and/or the community. Have you previously led a bible study, worship, a community outreach, etc.?
9. How do you resolve conflict? Please provide examples.
10. Describe your call to Holy Orders. I.e. How has God specifically called you to Holy Orders?
11. How has this call been confirmed? Prayer? Ministry growth? Confirmation from others?
12. How do you envision what your call will look like? Examples: Rural ministry, church planting, ministry to the homeless, bi-vocational parish ministry.
13. Read Title III, Canon 1- Section 2 and Canon 3- Section 2. If you proceed to Holy Orders, will you be willing and able to submit to these authorities and declarations?

⁴ Please note the date of the initial interview

THE NEXT 6 MONTHS

1. Identify areas in need of growth over the next 6 months. Examples: Communication, conflict resolution, bible knowledge, familiarity with the Sacraments, etc.
2. How can we support/provide opportunities for your spiritual growth? Identify multiple opportunities and strategies for “testing” the individual’s call. Examples: Provide a spiritual director. Provide opportunities to shadow a deacon/priest. Support the start of a new ministry or bible study. Provide opportunities for serving as a LEM or lector. Invite attendance at Vestry/Bishop’s committee meetings.
3. How can we specifically be praying for you over the next 6 months? Examples: “I need prayer for clearer discernment, consistent daily devotion, health, finances, the need for more spiritual community, etc.”
4. How can we check in with you and be available to you over the next 6 months? Examples: Email, coffee after church, “I need someone to call when I’m struggling,” etc.
5. What questions do you have? What are your hopes? What are your concerns?

Sample Questions for the 6-Month Interview⁵

THE 6-MONTH INTERVIEW

1. During the last 6 months, how has your relationship with Jesus changed or grown?
2. Have you been able to maintain your daily devotion, discipline, prayer life?
3. During the last 6 months, have you shared your faith with another? Please describe.
4. What have you learned over the last 6 months? What has surprised you?
5. What has been your greatest challenge? How did you handle it?
6. What has been your greatest joy? Why?
7. How have you grown in the specific areas identified during our first interview? Provide examples of growth.
8. What has been the fruit of the opportunities we provided for your spiritual growth? Examples: "I am now comfortable with distributing the elements." "My bible study grew to 6 people." "I now meet regularly with my spiritual director for accountability."
9. Describe where and how you have demonstrated leadership during the last 6 months. Please be specific.
10. What have you learned about the quality of leadership and your own personal leadership style?
11. Do you still discern a call to Holy Orders?
12. Do you now have a different or more specific vision of what your call will look like? Example: "Yes. I thought I was called to parish ministry, but have realized my gifts and heart are for the lost outside the church."
13. During the last 6 months of active discernment, how has your call again been confirmed?
14. For our own information as the ministry discernment team, what support/opportunities that we provided were most helpful for the discernment of your call to Holy Orders?
15. As the ministry discernment team, share any concerns or encouragements you may have after observing the individual for 6 months. Provide opportunity for response.

⁵ Please note the date of the 6-month interview.

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