

**DISCERNMENT FOR HOLY ORDERS
IN THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA**

*Responding to God's Call:
A Handbook for the Parish in Discernment*



The Episcopal Diocese of Pennsylvania
COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

This guide has been designed to help Sponsoring Priests and Parishes in the formation, preparation, and implementation of Parish Discernment Groups (PDG). New materials have been supplemented with information gathered from previously published diocesan handbooks and from guides published by other dioceses, including the Episcopal Diocese of Washington.

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A Guide for Parish Discernment Groups

*Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me,
and bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling....*

Psalm 43:3

*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.*

Book of Common Prayer, p. 256, *For the Ministry (Ember Days)*, II. *For the choice of fit persons for the ministry*

The Parish Discernment Group is at the heart of a person's discernment of a call to the ordained ministry. It is within the common life of the parish that each of us finds the space, encouragement, and courage to hear the various ways that God is calling us to serve. The work of the Parish Discernment Group is to create this same kind of holy space and loving support for the discernment of ministry for one of your members. This work, in turn, provides the opportunity for prayer and holy discernment for each member of the group. You are, in the words of the writer of the letter to the Ephesians, working "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." May God bless you in this important work.

What are Parish Discernment Groups?

Ministry happens in community, and so it naturally follows that the call to ministry comes also through the community. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are committed through our Baptismal Covenant to support one another in ministry, whatever form that ministry takes. Therefore, it makes sense to begin the discernment of call within the community of the person being called, where he or she is well-known. The work of a Parish Discernment Group (PDG) is to aid in discerning the call to ministry of a member of that community.

The Individual, along with the members of his or her home parish, is looking to answer the fundamental question of whether ordination is the form his or her Christian ministry should take. Answering this question requires a time of exploration, reflection, and evaluation. The role of the PDG is to assist in the consideration of the Individual's call to ministry and to determine whether this call is to a lay or ordained ministry. The Individual and the PDG come together in these meetings to listen carefully for God's guidance and to prayerfully delve into the crucial questions of call and vocation, the Individual's potential for leadership, and his or her spiritual, emotional, physical, and personal readiness to pursue the path to ordination.

While this work is certainly focused on the Individual in discernment, the work of the PDG has the potential to be mutually beneficial for all involved. PDG members should, through their prayer and

study, learn more about the ministries of the Church as well as their own gifts for ministry. This process also provides a means to carry the discussion about ministry into the larger parish community. While the specific content of the PDG's conversations with the Individual is strictly confidential, the discernment process as a whole can serve as a training course in ministry and faith development for the entire parish.

The members of the PDG are asked to enter into a special relationship with the Individual on behalf of the parish and the larger church. This requires a commitment of time and energy, a willingness to share of themselves, and the courage to lovingly ask honest and sometimes challenging questions of one another. This kind of commitment calls for deep humility and a readiness to be open and candid – to speak truth with love – in the context of a sacred, caring community.

Who should serve in a Parish Discernment Group?

If you have been asked to serve on a PDG, your priest has seen in you the capacity for this kind of deep spiritual work. Your willingness to serve is an act of faith and generosity, and you have demonstrated unique gifts to offer this process. While we all have gifts to offer in the Kingdom of God, not everyone is best suited for this kind of intense spiritual work. Some basic qualifications for this ministry are:

- being a follower of Jesus Christ who manifests a commitment to prayer and to faithful discipleship in his or her own life
- knowing a sense of one's own ministry and vocation
- being well-known and trusted by the congregation
- having knowledge and experience of the Anglican tradition
- being willing to make a sustained commitment to prayer and to the discernment process

The Sponsoring Priest, in consultation with the church wardens or vestry, will appoint from six to eight members of the congregation to the PDG, who serve at the priest's discretion. Membership on the PDG should include:

- The Individual in discernment.
- The Companion – a member of the faith community who agrees to walk with the Individual through the discernment process, serving as spiritual friend and guide. This person should be one who can both support and challenge the Individual and therefore needs to be spiritually mature and self-aware. The Companion should have been a member of the faith community for at least one year.
- A vestry member – this person represents the formal lay leadership of the parish and will be responsible for reporting back to the vestry, along with the Sponsoring Priest, when their approval is required.
- Two or three members of the faith community – these members should represent the breadth and diversity of the community itself. If possible, they should include members who know the individual as well as those who do not.
- Two diocesan discernment representatives – these members come from the diocesan discernment team, a group of lay and ordained ministers who have a charism for spiritual discernment, as well as a deep knowledge of the theological grounding and charism of each order. These representatives, who have been raised up and trained by the diocese, will be appointed by the Canon for Transition Ministry in consultation with the Commission on Ministry (COM).

Membership of the PDG should reflect the diversity of the congregation in terms of sex, age, race, and life circumstances. If possible, it should include persons who do not know the Individual, as well as persons who do. It is strongly recommended that members of the PDG attend Diocesan Antiracism Training.

Since the Sponsoring Priest remains the pastor to both the PDG and the Individual, it is strongly suggested that he or she not be present at the sessions; however, the Sponsoring Priest will be included in the committee's first gathering.

The Convenor is a member of the PDG whose primary task is to help facilitate the work of the committee. The responsibilities of the Convenor are to:

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

The PDG will select a Convenor at their first gathering. While the entire Group is responsible for completing the final report, it is the Convenor who then presents this report to the Sponsoring Priest and Vestry.

How does the Parish Discernment Group work?

The primary work of the PDG members is holy listening. During the PDG's meetings, the group will be gathering information, forming impressions, and searching within themselves regarding their perceptions of the Individual's call; all of this work is grounded in a quality of holy receptivity both to what each person says as well as to what God is speaking into the moment. In order to create this atmosphere of prayerful holiness, the PDG will undergo some serious, sacred work of preparation in order to develop a sense of trust and mutual understanding. The PDG's work is definitely much more than a matchmaking process in which the Individual's gifts are compared with those needed for a particular ministry. This is work that touches on the divine, work that is done with minds and hearts in prayer, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is good to keep in mind that the PDG discernment process is only the beginning of the effort to assist the Individual and the diocese in learning about God's call for this person. Since this kind of ministry discernment may be new to some members of the group, the PDG sessions may be somewhat of a learning experience for those who are involved. At times, there may even be a feeling of not knowing what to do. It is important to listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to reach out for help if needed. The PDG's report is of great value in the discernment process because of its unique perspective; however, this report is not the only factor which determines whether or not the Individual moves forward in the process. Discernment is accomplished in community, and this community includes not only your particular parish but also the community of the Diocese of Pennsylvania.

As the PDG begins to engage in conversation, members need to be guided by their own discerning hearts. If any member feels uneasy about the process at any stage, he or she should share those feelings with the group, voicing concerns in an honest and caring manner. At times, it may be beneficial to seek the guidance of the Sponsoring Priest or a representative from the advisory body to the Bishop, the COM. Hopefully, by using all the resources available, the PDG will be able to

conduct its work in a mutually supportive, healthy atmosphere and make its recommendation without reservation.

How does the PDG work with the COM?

As mentioned earlier, the COM is an advisory body to the Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania. The Committee advises the Bishop on the suitability of Individuals, Postulants, and Candidates for ordination to the priesthood and to the diaconate. In carrying out that charge, the COM considers carefully the work and report of the PDG; hence it is very important that a strong and open relationship exist between these two bodies of discernment. The report of the PDG is included in the Individual's file and is read and discussed by all members of the COM.

When a PDG is formed, a member of the COM will join with the group at the PDG's initial meeting, sharing with them some thoughts about the discernment process and explaining the work of the COM and its relationship with the PDG and the Bishop. That person will become the liaison between the PDG and the COM and will be available to answer any questions about the process which emerge as the committee engages in its work. This person may also be tasked, with the Bishop's approval, to report back to the PDG about the COM's deliberations if the Individual is eventually invited to attend the Bishop's Discernment Retreats; however, it should be noted that some of those deliberations may be confidential. The COM and the offices of the diocese will do everything possible to be open, communicative, and helpful during this discernment process.

And how does the PDG work with the Sponsoring Priest?

The Sponsoring Priest has already been meeting with the Individual for some time before he or she moves to appoint a PDG. If a PDG is currently being formed, it means that the Sponsoring Priest has seen the beginning signs of a call to ordained ministry and feels confident the PDG would be a helpful tool in further discernment for the Individual. PDG's are appointed by the Sponsoring Priest, with Vestry concurrence and in conversation with the Individual. The Sponsoring Priest should attend the first meeting along with the representative from the COM. The PDG should then meet alone with the Individual during the discernment phase of their work together.

At the conclusion of their meetings with the Individual, the PDG completes a report of its observations and recommendations and sends that report to the Sponsoring Priest and Vestry. It is important that whatever the recommendations are with regard to lay ministry, the diaconate or the priesthood, the Individual be affirmed and supported as one who has a calling to ministry through baptism and who is valued as a person and child of God.

The Sponsoring Priest and the Vestry then make a decision as to whether or not to recommend the Individual for Postulancy for the diaconate or for the priesthood. They make this decision prayerfully based on the report of the PDG and their own observations. If they wish to recommend the Individual for Postulancy, they complete the diocesan form for that purpose and send it to the Bishop. At this point, the Individual will officially become a Nominee. He or she will be asked to complete additional paperwork for the Diocese and will be invited to attend the diocesan Bishop's Discernment Retreats.

It may be that through the parish discernment process the Individual has received some clarity that he or she is not called to ordained ministry. Here the PDG can be very helpful in working with the

person to look at the next steps he or she might take in deepening his or her lay ministry. In this case, the PDG writes a short report to the Sponsoring Priest and Vestry about its work with the Individual.

How can I best prepare for service on the PDG?

The PDG is, first and foremost, grounded in prayer. There are many instances throughout Holy Scripture of individuals engaging in prayer, fasting, and reflection prior to undertaking a task. These are important attitudes and practices to cultivate, both at the beginning and throughout this ministry of discernment. Each member of the PDG should have a copy of this manual as well as *Responding to God's Call: First Steps*. They should read both of these documents in advance of the first meeting in order to be thoroughly familiar with their contents. In addition, members may be asked to read other materials related to vocation, some of which are listed in a Bibliography for Discernment, which can be found on the diocesan website. It may also be helpful to interview other lay and ordained ministers in the Diocese to broaden the members' understanding of what deacons, priests, and committed lay persons do in the daily context of ministry.

The bulk of preparation for the work of the PDG, outside of the reading of these materials, will be accomplished in the first meeting. This meeting will be led by a representative of the COM. He or she will discuss practical issues of forming the group as well as provide guidance for the deep work of discernment. He or she will also help the members of the PDG to see their place in the larger work of discernment, particularly in how the PDG relates to the COM and to the Sponsoring Priest of their parish.

What do the meetings of the PDG look like?

The PDG process should include at least nine meetings, the contents of which are detailed later in this handbook. The outline of PDG meetings (included below) can be used as a guide in establishing a basic format for the work of each gathering. Meetings need to be long enough to allow time for the group to review, reunite, refresh their memories about the past discussions, and move ahead in its exploration of pertinent issues. In addition, ten to fifteen minutes at the end of each session should be spent in reflection. This process requires a minimum of two hours and more likely three hours to explore issues and experiences to the degree in which feelings can be expressed.

The PDG is asked to meet every two to four weeks until these meetings are completed. The process should feel spacious, and each person should have enough time between meetings for prayer and contemplation of the topics at hand. There is no need to rush; take the time that you need to have these conversations together and to have them well. At the same time, having the meetings close enough together to keep a sense of forward momentum and consistency is also important. It is recommended that the process take somewhere between 4 and 9 months.

Because of the personal nature of the PDG discussions, it is important to establish a climate of acceptance and trust. All members need to know that whatever they say will be honored and held in strict confidence within the group, that they will not be criticized or judged, and that there will be no advice offered to solve perceived problems. Patient, careful listening will greatly aid the process of sharing and will encourage risk taking in expressing feelings. Questions can be asked for clarity but should not be asked out of curiosity or in the manner of an interrogation. A sense of Christian love and learning is vital if these meetings are to be productive for all concerned. Such an open and

accepting climate also allows room for the Holy Spirit to enter and work in each person involved. It is strongly recommended that each PDG adopt a Group Covenant which details the way the group will interact with each other both inside and outside the meeting space. Examples of such a covenant are included in Appendix A of this document.

For the sake of continuity, it is most helpful if each member can attend every session. When one member is absent, that person not only misses the discussion, but the group is weakened by the loss of that point of view. The group should take time to plan sessions in advance to ensure as much as is practical that all members can attend. If a member is unable to attend a session, the Convenor should be notified and a decision made as to whether to reschedule the session for another date.

Many PDGs have found it helpful to establish a structure for their meetings that includes the following elements: Opening Prayer, Engagement, Status Update, Discussion of Content, Reflection, Closing Prayer, and Evaluation. These elements are explained below.

Opening Prayer (3-5 minutes each)

Beginning with prayer helps to set the focus on God's presence within the group and throughout the entire process. Placing the group into God's hands and submitting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit requires intentional effort. Prayers can include thanksgivings and intercessions as well as a humble invocation of the Holy Spirit. The responsibility for praying during meetings should be shared as much as possible among the group. The group may also consider asking the person appointed to pray at the beginning of the meeting to intentionally continue to pray for the duration of the meeting. This person may also be tasked with pausing or interrupting the meeting for a moment of prayer should that feel helpful or necessary.

Engagement (15 minutes)

Following the opening prayer, the group can then participate in a brief exercise that will help to collect the individual members from the diversity of their separate lives to the common purpose of the PDG. This may be a simple check-in which connects what is happening in each person's life with an awareness of God's grace, a statement of gratitude and/or prayer needs, or other kinds of conversations. 15 minutes may seem like a lot of time, but with at least seven people in the group, this time will go quickly! Sharing should be concise, but there should be enough time for each person to share and connect to the conversation. This may also be a time to reflect on the scripture passage suggested for each meeting. What words or phrases stick out to the listener? Where does the scripture passage touch each person's life? How might God be speaking to them in those holy words?

Status Update (3-5 minutes)

Before entering into discussion, it is usually helpful for the Convener to review the progress to date, to receive any reports that the group may have assigned, and briefly to state the goals for the current session. It is suggested that, after the second meeting, this time conclude with the reading aloud of the ordination vows for the particular order (diaconate or priesthood) about which the Individual and the PDG are in discernment.

Meeting Format and Content (60 minutes)

This time is the very the heart of the matter. This discussion should include a period of reflection on the biblical verses appointed for the meeting, as well as on the Individual's writing sample or other project, which all should have had a chance to read before the meeting. These two points should lead naturally into a discussion of the meeting's topic –

outlined for each meeting below, with appropriate questions for conversation. You may find that you need a break in the middle of this discussion – if you do, take one! You’ll all be better contributors if you have a chance for a bit of rest and refreshment.

Reflection (15 minutes)

Thoughtful group reflection is an important part of each session. Near the end of the meeting, take time to review – in the presence of the Individual – the highlights of what was discussed and shared. It may be helpful to list on newsprint what helped or hindered the meeting, how the meeting format for that day was or was not useful, what subject areas need to be explored further, and what additional resources or information may need to be gathered for the next meeting. Ask yourselves specific questions about the meeting itself. How did it go? Was everyone engaged? Were people upholding the Group Covenant? Are there any procedural elements to be considered before the next meeting? What should the group be praying about in the coming days? What should be the goals for the next session?

Closing Prayer (3-5 minutes)

The person appointed to pray for the meeting offers a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing as the group travels home and continues their work. A holy and intentional silence may also be appropriate. At the conclusion of this prayer, the Individual is dismissed.

Evaluation (15 minutes)

It is recommended that at least fifteen minutes be allotted at the end of each session for the PDG to share their impressions and continue their evaluation of the Individual’s call on an ongoing basis. In each working session of the PDG (excluding the first session), the group will be provided with questions members should answer together. You will find these questions listed by meeting topic at the end of this document in the final evaluation form. The last fifteen minutes of each meeting should be a chance for the PDG, outside of the presence of the Individual, to offer its thoughts in answer to this question. One person should be tasked to be the recorder of these thoughts and to write a response on behalf of the entire group. These responses will be collated by the Convenor at the end of the PDG’s work into the final report that is sent to the Sponsoring Priest and the COM.

Content for PDG Sessions

The following topics for the nine meetings of the PDG are provided for you to use as a guide. Your group may find that you need to make adjustments to this schedule or to include additional topics for conversation. Please feel free to be flexible if it helps all parties to discern God’s call more clearly. The hope is that each PDG will include *at least* these many points of conversation for their time together.

Meeting 1 PDG Initial Meeting

Includes: all PDG members, the Individual, the Individual's spouse or partner, the Sponsoring Priest, and a representative from the COM

Scripture for the Day: Isaiah 43:1-4a or Isaiah 42:1-9

Assignment: All read this handbook, as well as *Responding to God's Call: First Steps* from the diocese

This initial meeting is an opportunity for the members of the PDG to get to know one another, as well as to hear from the diocese directly about the hopes and expectations for their work. The group should take the time to reflect on the scripture for the day, to share a little bit about themselves (a deeper spiritual sharing will come later), and to ask questions of the representative of the COM, particularly about the PDG's role in the discernment process and its relationship with the COM and with the Sponsoring Priest and Vestry. After this meeting, the PDG will meet on its own, without the COM representative or the Sponsoring Priest, so this meeting is the best opportunity to clarify procedures and goals.

This meeting is also an important time for the PDG to get to meet the Individual's spouse or partner. This person will be invited to join the Individual at a later meeting, so introducing each member to him or her now will allow for greater ease and openness at that later, important meeting. Please do all you can to make him or her feel valued and like the vital part of the process that he or she is.

At some point during this first meeting, the Sponsoring Priest will commission the PDG for its important and holy work. After this, the Sponsoring Priest and COM representative will leave the meeting. The remaining time should be spent on the following:

- Exploring the members' understanding of ordained ministry, including the reading of the ordination vows found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (pages 531-532 for the priesthood, pages 543-544 for the diaconate).
- Discussing the document *Responding to God's Call: First Steps*
- Discussing the strengths that each member brings to this committee's work. This will give the PDG information on how to structure its work, allow members to get to know one another, and recognize each individual's contribution to this ministry.
- Discussing the questions or growing edges each member brings to this committee's work. An honest exploration of each member's questions or even biases will enable the committee to recognize if these ever begin to interfere with the process of discernment.

This meeting also provides an opportunity for the PDG to create a Group Covenant. Models for this covenant are included in Appendix A of this handbook. These covenants can be somewhat flexible, but it is important that they include guidelines for confidentiality and procedures to help each person in the group contribute to the conversation. It is also very important that each member of the PDG agree to this covenant, either by voice or in writing. Accountability and shared responsibility is only possible if each member believes that the covenant is appropriate and worthwhile.

During this meeting the PDG should decide upon a Convenor. This person is responsible for communicating meeting times and changes as well as collating the meeting's reports into the group's

final report to the Sponsoring Priest and Vestry. The group may also wish to decide to appoint a timekeeper for each upcoming meeting, either ahead of time or at the beginning of each meeting. This prevents the entire group from feeling responsible for watching the clock! The group should also discuss the question of food during meetings – do you want to provide snacks? If so, how will you divide this responsibility? If you do provide food, it is recommended that you take time for a break mid-meeting so that you can both enjoy your fellowship and also be entirely focused on the conversation when it is happening.

By the end of this meeting, the group should have scheduled Meeting 2 and should feel well-prepared for their work together. The COM and the Sponsoring Priest are, of course, always available should the PDG feel like it needs help in the weeks and months to come, but for the most part, after this meeting, the PDG functions on its own.

Meeting 2 Vocation and Spiritual Stories

Includes: all PDG members and the Individual in discernment

Scripture for the Day: Psalm 139: 1-18

Assignment for the Individual: Write your own spiritual autobiography

This meeting should be a time for each member of the PDG, including the Individual, to share his or her spiritual story. You can do this in several ways. You can simply give each member a certain amount of time to talk about their life in spiritual terms, always answering the question of where God was in their lives during seminal moments or decision points. You can also invite each member (including the Individual) to make two timelines of his or her life. The first includes major life events in his or her personal and professional life, including peaks, valleys, and plateaus, from birth until the present moment. The second timeline, which is superimposed over the first, is a spiritual timeline, representing his or her life with God. When have you felt closest to God? When have you felt distant or resistant to God? There are several more examples of how to create a spiritual autobiography in the document *Guide for Writing a Spiritual Autobiography*, which can be found on the diocesan website.

Whichever model is chosen, the group should have time to discuss the relationships they are seeing in their own lives and in others. What calls are being seen? What ministries are being lived out? Where do they see God's grace in each other lives or in their own?

No one in the group needs to share anything that makes him or her uncomfortable, but all are encouraged to share as much as they can about how they perceive God to have been active in their own lives.

Note: While this is the only meeting entitled “Spiritual Stories,” this kind of story-sharing can be an important way of engaging in conversation in all of the following meetings. If, for example, a member is trying to get at an understanding of leadership styles, he or she may share an experience from his or her own life that illustrates the point. It is the hope that these meetings will be an opportunity for sustained and continuing sharing of stories for all of the members.

Meeting 3 The Nature of Christian Ministry

Includes: all PDG members and the Individual in discernment

Scripture for the Day: John 13: 1-7, 12-15 or Acts 6:1-6 (diaconate)
John 21: 15-19 (priesthood)

Assignment for the Individual: Write a two-page paper on your understanding of the orders of Christian ministry. To what order of ministry do you think you might be called? Why? What gifts do you have to bring to this ministry?

or

Imagine that you are working in a parish that has recently called a new deacon. Write a letter to your parish explaining the role of this person within the congregation. In your letter, imagine that you are representing the order of ministry to which you feel called, *e.g.* if you are in discernment for the priesthood, write the letter as if you were the rector inviting a new deacon into the congregation, and if you are in discernment for the diaconate, write the letter as if you were introducing yourself to the congregation for the first time. Be specific about the particular vocation of the deacon as it relates to both the priesthood and to the ministry of the laity.

Remembering their own stories and the fact that, by virtue of our baptisms, we are all called to Christian ministry, the members of the PDG should begin by discussing the four-fold ministry of the Church. This is a good opportunity to read through some sections of the *Book of Common Prayer*, including the Catechism (p. 845ff) and the ordination vows (pages 531-532 for the priesthood, pages 543-544 for the diaconate). The conversation should then focus on what gifts the Individual brings to ministry, and what vision for ministry the Individual has in mind.

Suggested Questions

- If a newcomer to the Church asked you about Christian ministry, how would you describe it? How would you describe the ministry of the whole Body of Christ? How would you describe the differences between the ministries of lay persons, deacons, and priests? How have you seen those differences lived out in your own experience?
- What gifts do you have for ministry? Describe an instance where those gifts were put to use in the Church. Were they used well? Why or why not? Tell us how your gifts were developed in this parish. What gifts do you see in the other people in the PDG?
- What other vocations are you living out in your life? Are you called to teach, or to be a spouse or a parent? How do you know this is a true vocation?
- Give an example of how you live out your baptismal ministry currently. Why would ordination be a truer representation of your gifts for ministry? What could you do as a priest or deacon that you cannot do as a lay minister, and why would that matter to you, the Church, and to God?
- Tell us the story of your call. When did it start? Who was involved in it or influenced it? What important conversation partners have you had (including books or passages from scripture).

Things to Think About

- Can the Individual talk about the ordained ministry in a clear and compelling way? How

does he or she understand the unique qualities of each ministry? What does he or she still have to learn?

- What experiences have been most meaningful to this Individual in his or her vocational life so far? What do they tell you about his or her call?
- What do you hear in the Individual's story? Does he or she talk easily about his or her relationship with Jesus Christ and with God's place in his or her call?
- How does the Individual articulate his or her call? With joy? Hesitation? Reluctance? Passion?

At the conclusion of this meeting, the group should confirm the order for which they think the Individual is in discernment – the priesthood or the diaconate. The group should then commit to reading the examination and ordination vows for that order together at each of the following meetings. This does not, however, mean that the question of other kinds of calls cannot still be addressed. In fact, this is one of the chief tasks of the PDG – to determine not only *if* the Individual is called, but *to which* order of ministry he or she is called. There may be the discovery during the course of your meetings that the Individual is actually called to a different order. If at some point it becomes clear that the Individual is truly called to be a deacon instead of a priest or vice versa, the group should adjust their work together accordingly.

Meeting 4 Spirituality and Faith

Includes: all PDG members and the Individual in discernment

Scripture for the Day: Isaiah 55:6 -11; Philippians 4:4-9; or Gal 2:16-21

Assignment for the Individual: Write your own Rule of Life. What are the practices you employ now for discipline and growth in your life of faith? If you do not already have a Rule of Life, begin to craft what that Rule needs to be as you move forward from this point in the process.

or

Write a sermon for your congregation on the importance of having a Rule of Life. What scripture passages would this sermon use as its foundation? What would you encourage your congregants to consider as they craft a Rule of Life, and how would you recommend they go about doing so? What are the parameters of such a rule for us as disciples of Jesus Christ?

The first and most important criterion in discernment of ministry is the faith of the Individual. Those who are considering ordination must love God with heart, mind, and soul, and who know and love the person of Jesus Christ and seek to make him known. There are many ways the PDG can gain a sense of the depth of the Individual's faith life and discipleship. Remember, the group has already shared deep spiritual stories in the second meeting. At this meeting, the group may wish to have a discussion of each member's current faith practices. The group will also gain a deep sense of the integration of the Individual's faith life from the way he or she answers other questions. For example, if the Individual brings a discussion of discipleship, his or her prayer life, or another such reference into the discussion, it may speak just as loudly as the direct answers to questions asked about spirituality.

Suggested Questions

- Talk about your Rule of Life. How has it changed? Why is it important for you? Tell us about a time when you felt your Rule supporting and transforming your life.
- Imagine that someone new to the church asked you who Jesus is. What would you say? Be specific and personal in your response.
- Tell us about your relationship with the Book of Common Prayer. How do you use it in your prayer life? Tell us of a time when you found the BCP to be uplifting, or challenging, or both.
- How often do you read the Bible? How do you read the Bible? How would you describe the Bible and its place in the Church's life? What does the Bible have to offer to people who are non-church-goers?
- What questions do you still have about your faith? About Jesus? About the Church? What do you do with these questions?
- Tell us about your work with your Spiritual Director. Tell us, as much as you are able, of a time when that work was transformative in your relationship to yourself, your neighbors, or God.

Things to Think About

- How well does the Individual articulate an understanding of the faith expressed in Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer? (See the Catechism, BCP p.845ff).
- What evidence of having a personal relationship with God do all the members of the PDG give in word and deed? ...does the Individual give in word and deed?
- Has the Individual done any teaching in the parish? If so, how well did this teaching instruct and inspire other parishioners?
- What has each member, including the Individual, established as his or her Rule of Life and how successfully is it followed? What benefits are derived from it?
- What did you hear the Individual say about his or her continuing questioning, searching, and probing the mysteries of the faith?
- How do the Individual's specific prayer practices shape his or her life? How would they support him or her in a life of ordained ministry?
- How does the Individual relate to his or her spiritual director? How is this practice supporting his or her discernment?

Meeting 5 Growth and Maturity

Includes: all PDG members and the Individual in discernment

Scripture for the Day: Philippians 2:1-8

Assignment for the Individual: Write a two-page paper on growth in your life. How do you grow intellectually? How do you grow spiritually? What are the challenges to your growth in either of these areas? Include an example of a period in your life when you saw clear growth of some kind in yourself.

or

Write a poem or a song describing an important period of growth in your life. What

were the circumstances that led to the growth? How did that period feel? Where did you feel Christ walking beside you during that time?

The ordination process demands growth in multiple areas of a person's life – spiritual, intellectual, and emotional. This meeting is intended to get at the potential for growth that lies within the Individual in all of these realms.

Formation for ordination includes graduate level education that requires the ability to understand and analyze complex ideas, speak articulately, write clearly, and be open to new concepts. The ordained priest or deacon must have a lifelong commitment to learning and personal growth. Growth in the ordination process, of course, is not limited to intellectual growth. The process of forming priests and deacons should also lead to profound personal, emotional, and spiritual growth. This process of intentional discernment should help members of the PDG and the Individual become more of who they were created to be – mature, self-differentiated children of God who are aware of their strengths and their challenges and also of what they need in their lives to support their work, pray, and play. Remember, your work here is not to analyze the Individual in a clinical way, but simply to consider how his or her character, maturity, and integrity lends itself to life as an ordained person in the Church.

Suggested Questions

- Tell us about your intellectual life. Do you enjoy writing? Reading? Speaking in public? Describe an experience of academic work that has been particularly rewarding or challenging for you.
- Are you looking forward to seminary or other coursework in pursuit of ordination? Why or why not? What hopes do you have for this work?
- Tell us of a recent time when you learned something important about yourself. How did this realization occur? What impact did it have on your life?
- In what areas – intellectual, emotional, spiritual, or other – do you hope to grow in the coming years? Why? What impact would that growth have on your life as an ordained person?
- Describe a time in your life when you were under intense emotional stress. What were the circumstances? How did you handle it? How did you pray about it? What did you learn, and what mistakes did you make? Where were the places you found support during this time?
- How do you balance and integrate your work and free time now? Give us an example of when you had to make a difficult decision regarding this balance.
- How do you take care of yourself? What activities or practices feed your soul? What are the most important practices of love of self for you to take into this process of discernment?

Things to Think About

- What evidence do you see for the Individual's capacity to learn?
- How well is the Individual's writing that you've seen so far able to express clear and compelling thought?
- How open is he or she to questioning, self-exploration, and reality testing? What openness have you seen during the sessions? When and how have you seen the Individual grapple with a difficult issue and emerge with a new viewpoint?
- What evidence is there of his or her continuing commitment to learning and intellectual growth?

- How have personal and spiritual growth been apparent in the Individual's life in the past? What challenges to growth has he or she experienced in the past? What challenges does he or she experience now? What inhibits the ability to grow?
- How do you see the Individual growing during the course of this discernment process? How do you see growth in each other?
- Does the Individual have a realistic view of the world or of him or her own self?
- How aware is she or he of her or his own feelings? How have you seen him or her express this understanding?
- How have you heard the Individual talk about working under pressure, dealing with stress, or managing conflicting demands?
- Does the Individual have a level of maturity and ability to adapt that is commensurate with his or her chronological age? How do you know this? What have you seen him or her do that makes you feel this way?
- Is there anything that makes you uncomfortable around this person? Is this because of your own life and history, or is it something else?

Meeting 6 Relationships

Includes: all PDG members, the Individual in discernment, and the Individual's spouse or partner. Unmarried or unpartnered Individuals may choose to bring in a friend or family member to help them discuss this topic.

Scripture for the Day: I Corinthians 13

Assignment for the Individual: Write a two-page paper on how you foresee this process impacting your relationships, particularly with your spouse, but also with your friends and family of origin. What will be the blessing there? What are the challenges? What would you and your spouse need to help make this kind of transition?

or

Conduct and record a series of interviews with your spouse, partner, or other key person in your life. Ask them about the impact this discernment is having on their own identity and spirituality. What are they most excited about in this process? What do they most fear? What are they learning about themselves as they watch the Individual discern and grow? Bring the recording to the meeting, or write it up as an interview as if for a church newsletter.

If the Individual has a spouse or partner it is vitally important that the PDG meet with him or her to discern whether he or she is supportive of the Individual's pursuit of a vocation as a priest or a deacon. This should be a gentle and joyful conversation in which the spouse or partner's feelings and desires for the future of the union with the Individual are foremost.

Suggested Questions for the Couple

- What gifts for ministry do you see in your spouse? How can you see your spouse or partner as a Deacon or Priest? Why?
- How do you imagine your time together will change during the ordination process? Once your spouse/partner is ordained?

- How will your finances change because of this process?
- Are you enthusiastic about this new chapter of your lives together? Fearful? Fearfully enthusiastic?
- Are you (the Spouse or partner) an active member of your church? If so, how do you imagine your role in the church changing once your spouse or partner is ordained? If you are not an active member of your church, how do you imagine your role in your spouse or partner's church once he or she is ordained?
- What resources do you have as a couple to help you in this process? What additional resources might you need during the period of formation or early ordained ministry?
- How do you both care for each other? How do you care for yourselves? How might this practice of care change and grow in the years to come?
- If you have children, how have you seen this vocation of parenthood manifested in your lives? Is this something to which you feel called – either now or in the future? Tell us of a time when you have felt God's presence in this part of your lives.
- Outside of your primary relationship, what other relationships sustain and support you both? Give an example of a time when one of these relationships was of particular importance to you in your life.
- Are there relationships in your life that you would like to cultivate more? Tell the group of your hopes regarding these new or newly-important relationships.

If the Individual does not have a spouse or partner, it might be helpful for him or her to bring in a close friend or family member to talk about the impact of the discernment process and ordination on their relationship and on all important relationships in the Individual's life. It might also be helpful to ask the Individual questions about future relationships, including:

- Do you hope to find a romantic partner someday, or do you think you may be called to a celibate life?
- What challenges and opportunities might ordination present to meeting someone to share your life with? What questions would you have of that person when you begin dating?
- How do you order your sexual life now? How would you order your sexual life when you meet a romantic partner?
- What are your hopes for your primary relationships in the future? What would be the greatest blessing for you in this area of your life?

Things to Think About

- How does the Individual talk about his or her primary relationships? How does he or she describe their importance, their challenges?
- Do you see evidence that the Individual has a pattern of healthy relationships in his or her life? Destructive ones? Has he or she demonstrated the ability to get help with relationships when needed?
- How could the pattern of this Individual's household be seen as a sign of faithful discipleship and of the presence of God?
- Are there areas of the Individual's life that you would recommend he or she speak with the Bishop about?

Note: It is important to remember that the PDG is not, at its heart, a therapy group. The point of these questions about relationships is simply to see how the Individual's relationships impact his or her discernment to a holy vocation. There may be elements of his or her life that are necessarily off-

limits to a group like the PDG. In this case, the Individual should discuss these issues directly with his or her Sponsoring Priest or with the Bishop. It is true that the whole of the Individual's life is important when discerning a vocation to the ordained ministry; it is also true that the whole of that life might not be open to discussion with the PDG. The COM and the Canon for Transition Ministry can be helpful in this area; please feel free to call on them if necessary.

Meeting 7 Leadership, Collaboration, and Communication

Includes: all PDG members and the Individual in discernment

Scripture for the Day: Isaiah 50:4-5 or John 13:12-18

Assignment for the Individual: Write a two-page reflection on your leadership project in the parish. What has gone well? What felt natural? What were the challenges? What have you learned about the parish and about yourself? Include a potential evaluation tool for your project, a survey or other questionnaire that you could provide to those with whom you served.

or

Create a video presentation of your work with your leadership project. Include interviews with those with whom you served. Imagine that this is something you might put on a parish website to publicize a particular ministry or mission.

Holy leadership and the capacity for collaborative work and good communication are essential for persons entering ordained ministry. Under the Sponsoring Priest's direction, the Individual will be completing a ministry project as one of the steps in the discernment process. As the project takes shape, the PDG should reflect on this experience in the life of the Individual and the congregation to gain additional insights into the Individual's qualifications for leadership and collaborative ministry. It will be helpful to identify the actions taken by the Individual, what leadership was demonstrated, how effective it was, other possibilities that might have been tried, and the ability of the Individual to evaluate his or her own work. Another approach to assess leadership skills might be the use of case studies with role playing to allow for the Individual to give examples of how he or she might act within a situation that a deacon or priest might realistically encounter. A critical part of good leadership is good communication. Knowing one's own communication preferences and styles is vitally important in gaining the appropriate trust and openness in communication with others. Some of the group's conversation in this meeting should be about the Individual's communication style, along with his or her gifts and challenges in this area.

Suggested Questions

- Tell us about your parish leadership project. What has been the greatest joy for you in this work, and the greatest challenge? Why? What have you learned about yourself in this work? How have you experienced God in this work? Give us an example of an experience you had in this project and how it informs your understanding of yourself and of Christian leadership.
- Tell us of a time when you helped someone in your life to discern a call or a spiritual gift. How did you empower him or her to claim his or her spiritual gifts and resources?
- Tell us of the leadership styles of various people you've known or worked with. How did these styles work for you? Are they similar or different to your own style? Are they

- helpful or harmful to the Church? Why?
- Tell us of a time when you collaborated on a project or a ministry. What did you enjoy about that experience? What was difficult about it? How do you imagine collaborating with others when you are a deacon or a priest? What would be the same, and what would be different? Why?
- Describe a time when you had to claim your authority, in school, work, or in ministry. Was that easy for you? Challenging? What did this teach you about yourself?
- Describe a time when you had to lead in a creative or new way. What was that experience like for you?
- Describe a time when something you worked on failed. What was that experience like for you? What did you learn from that experience? Is that something you see as having value in the Church? Why or why not?

Things to Think About

- How does the Individual describe making important decisions that will affect others as well as herself or himself? How will this process serve him or her well in ordained leadership? How will it be challenging?
- Does the Individual demonstrate initiative, appropriate self-confidence, enthusiasm, flexibility, and creativity?
- Have you seen evidence that he or she can motivate and inspire others?
- Is she or he aware of and at ease with a variety of leadership styles and able to use them as the situation indicates?
- How comfortable is she or he with being a person in whom authority rests? To what extent is he or she ready to claim and use that authority appropriately?
- How has her or his leadership already been evidenced in prior or current lay ministries in school, work, or church settings?
- How do other people respond to his or her leadership?
- How does she or he describe the leadership of others?
- Does the Individual express ideas clearly, both in speaking and in writing?
- What listening skills does the Individual make use of? How do I feel when he or she is listening to me?
- Can the Individual read other people's non-verbal cues accurately and tailor a response of appropriate length and complexity?
- When dealing with his or her feelings, do the Individual's physical gestures and movements (body language) match the words spoken?
- Does he or she listen thoughtfully, or does he or she sometimes interrupt, override, or attempt to verbally dominate others? Does the Individual take the time to listen to each person and respond appropriately, without regard for age or status of the person?

Meeting 8 Final Meeting

Includes: all PDG members and the Individual in discernment

Scripture for the Day: Isaiah 43:1-4a

Assignment for the Individual: Write a two-page paper outlining your learning from this process.

or

Create a lesson plan for an adult forum at your parish about this experience. What would be the most important things to communicate about your discernment? Where have you seen the Holy Spirit at work in this process? What has this process taught you about yourself, your parish, and the Church? Be specific, and include both your own learnings and perceptions as well as what questions you would ask the congregation to engage them in their own reflection.

This meeting should serve both as a kind of catch-all meeting as well as a time for reflection. If there are topics of discussion that you feel you need to flesh out more fully, or questions that still need to be asked, now is the time to do so. This meeting, though, should also provide you with time to reflect upon your learning. In this time together, what have you learned about yourselves? The Church? The Individual? Take the time to discuss together your next steps moving forward – are there changes you'd like to make in your life? Do you hear the Holy Spirit calling you to something new? What is the most important thing you are taking away from this time?

This meeting should also be an opportunity for the group to discuss with the Individual how best to be involved in his or her life and ministry going forward. If the Individual is recommended for ordination, how can the PDG support him or her over the coming years? If the Individual is not recommended for ordination, how can the PDG help to continue to support his or her ministry, and possibly to help him or her discern a new kind of call? Ideally, the PDG's work does not end with these series of meetings, but continues until the Individual is settled in a new ministry and beyond.

This is also a time to celebrate! The PDG and the Individual have undertaken this important and holy work for months now, and you should take the time to say thank you to each other and to God. Enjoy this time together, and show your appreciation in the best way you know how.

Meeting 9 PDG Evaluation Meeting

Includes: all PDG members, without the Individual

Scripture for the Day: I Corinthians 12:4-13 or Romans 12:3-11

Assignment for the PDG: Review all of the writing that has been done so far.

The purpose of the evaluation session is to review the progress to date and come to a decision and recommendation about the call of the Individual, as well as to finalize the statements for the written report of the PDG.

After many sessions of discussion, you undoubtedly have developed a more intimate knowledge of how each PDG member views himself or herself, how each views the world and his or her relationships in it, the talents and skills each person possesses, how each contributes to and relates to the community of your parish, and especially how each person functions in relation to God. Now it is time to consider what type of ministry you feel would be appropriate for the Individual in this period in his or her life.

Ask yourselves, "Can I envision this person as a priest or a deacon? ...as *my* priest or deacon?" If you have some feeling that you would not be able to turn to the Individual as your priest or deacon, your

feelings should be explored with the group. This feeling may indicate that there is some hesitation within the group about the Individual's proceeding toward ordination; however, this is not always the case. These feelings may also indicate that the Individual is in fact called to ordination but in a new and groundbreaking way. The committee needs to be careful not to think only in terms of their particular parish ministry. There are many types of parishes, and a variety of positions for priests and deacons that are not associated with parishes.

Ask yourselves, "Do we want to present the Individual to the Vestry and Sponsoring Priest for approval?" If you have reservations, decide whether or not the areas of doubt include skills, experience, or characteristics that have a reasonable potential for improvement. If so, state your reservations clearly on the report form with your recommendation to either delay for improvement or to go ahead with the understanding that there are areas for continued work. Another very real possibility is that the person is called to serve as a lay minister. If it becomes very difficult for the members to make such a decision, or if they are still unsure of their recommendation, consult with your Sponsoring Priest and then, if necessary, with your COM liaison.

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

A formal report to the Sponsoring Priest and Vestry should be composed in the format provided by the Diocese (included at the end of this document). It is very helpful to the Bishop, the COM, and the Standing Committee if you state the group's opinions – including reservations – clearly in your report and explain any difficulties in coming to your final decision. The report should be read to the Individual by a minimum of two people from the PDG before it is presented to the Sponsoring Priest and to the Vestry. It may be necessary to assist the Individual to recognize that the PDG understands his or her call differently than he or she envisions it. Explain how you understand the call, with both its challenges and areas of satisfaction. Reiterate the Individual's talents as they have been revealed to you and relate them to the call as you see it, and call on your Sponsoring Priest for counsel and support.

Note: It is possible that meetings 8 and 9 can be combined, based on the kind of follow-up needed following meeting 7. If this seems appropriate, feel free to condense these final two meetings into one, but do allow the group the extra time if needed.

Completing Your PDG Service

As a member of a PDG, you have served the Individual, the parish, and the diocese in an important way. Your report will be passed on to the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the Bishop. We hope you realize how much your service is valued by them. At the same time, we ask you to understand that your recommendation is only one part of a broader discernment process. Others involved in the various stages also seek to discern God's will for the Individual. At times Individuals recommended by a PDG are redirected to another ministry or delayed at later stages of the discernment process. We know how disheartening it is when this happens to someone in whom you have invested a lot of time. It is especially important that you trust the process and see all those involved in discernment as persons who are continuing the discernment process you began in the parish. You can be of most help to the Individual by guiding him or her to see and consider what truth is present in the judgment of others, and by continuing to support him or her in the coming months and years.

REPORT OF THE PARISH DISCERNMENT GROUP

TO: The Sponsoring Priest and Vestry of

DATE: _____

INDIVIDUAL:

PDG CONVENOR: _____

The findings of the Parish Discernment Group (PDG) based on the questions furnished by the Diocese of Pennsylvania are as follows:

(When answering these questions, please be as specific as possible and provide examples to support your response.)

Spiritual Stories

1. In what ways is the Individual able to describe his or her spiritual journey and growing relationship with Christ? Give examples.
2. How have you heard him or her speak in a personal, thoughtful, and compelling way of his or her experience of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit?

The Nature of Christian Ministry

1. How does the Individual articulate his or her understanding of Christian Ministry? Is this understanding based in scripture, tradition, and reason? Are there areas of understanding that he or she still needs to learn? If so, does this impact his or her readiness for the ordained ministry?
2. What gifts do you perceive in this Individual for ordained ministry? What challenges?
3. Does the Individual have a pastoral and kind presence? Give examples of what kind of presence you saw in the group's meetings. How have you seen the Individual loving God, neighbor, and self?
4. Do you believe that he or she will be able to do the practical work of ministry, managing time well and prioritizing work?

Spirituality and Faith

1. Briefly describe the Individual's prayer life and Rule of Life. How does this life prepare him or her for life as an ordained person?
2. Does the Individual display a loyalty to and love for Jesus Christ and the Church? Does he or she understand the role of holy obedience in the life of an ordained person?

Growth and Maturity

1. Do you feel the Individual has grown during his or her experience of the PDG? If so, how?
2. At the level appropriate to his or her training, does the Individual display an adequate intellectual grasp of theological concepts? Does he or she have the ability to express his or her faith theologically, to think reflectively, and to articulate his or her understanding within the context of the Anglican and the Episcopal tradition, given his or her formation thus far?

If there are challenges here, what might your recommendations be?

3. Is this person self-differentiated and mature enough to handle the challenges of the ordained life? Is he or she possessed of personal integrity, authenticity, and reliability? Does he or she display sound judgment? Why or why not? Give examples.

Impact on Relationships

1. Describe the Individual's relationship with his or her primary partner. Does the couple have a realistic picture of the gifts and challenges of the formation process and the ordained life? What support do they have or will they need to meet these challenges?
2. Does the Individual display an appropriate sense of humor, a mature sense of appropriate Christian sexual behavior, and the ability to manage finances, both personally and professionally?

Leadership, Collaboration, and Communication

1. Describe the Individual's current leadership project within the parish community. How effective has the Individual's leadership been? How well is the Individual able to reflect on his or her leadership skills? How do people in the parish respond to his or her leadership?
2. Describe the qualities of effective leadership, collaboration, and communication that the Individual brings to his or her current ministries. Does he or she articulate a clear vision and possess the capability to motivate others to share in that vision?

Final Evaluation Questions

1. In what ways can you envision this person as a deacon or priest, either in your or another context?
2. Do you have any reservations about the Individual? Please explain.
3. From your observation, are there any areas of growth that the Individual should pursue prior to or during theological education (other than the normal course of study)?
4. Describe how the Individual responded within the group, e.g. his or her willingness to share deep personal concerns and commitments, openness to differences of opinion, willingness to consider new insights.

We recommend that _____ pursue:

_____ Lay Ministry in the area(s) of _____
_____ Diaconate
_____ Priesthood

Additional Comments (*Please be specific*):

Appendix A: Models for a Group Covenant

Small Group Guidelines

1. The primary purpose of our discussions is to listen for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and lovingly share what we have heard.
2. Speak specifically and personally. Use *I* language. For example, “When you/she said *this*, I felt *this way*.”
3. Be responsible for yourself in the group.
4. Be an active listener. Ask questions. Watch your assumptions. You are not here to convince, advise, or judge. Try to hear the feeling behind others’ words.
5. It’s okay to pass, but try to claim your share of the discussion.
6. Be lean in your speech. Everyone should have a chance to contribute.
7. Attend every meeting with very few absences. This is your commitment. Continuity of your contribution is very important for the life of the group.
8. Maintain the confidentiality of the group, both by refraining from discussing specific matters of the COM outside of the group and also by refraining from discussing COM matters with just a few members at times other than our official meetings.
9. Focus on the conversation at hand and avoid sideline discussions.
10. Remind other group members of the covenant when they are not observing it. Speak the truth in love.
11. Seek and serve Christ in each person in the group, especially those most different from you.

Discernment Listening Guidelines

(from *Grounded in God*)

The goal of spiritual discernment is to receive God's guidance.

1. Take time to become settled in God's presence.
2. Listen to others with your entire self (senses, feelings, intuition, imagination, and rational faculties).
3. Do not interrupt.
4. Pause between speakers to absorb what has been said.
5. Do not formulate what you want to say while someone else is speaking.
6. Speak for yourself only, expressing your own thoughts and feelings, referring to your own experiences. Avoid being hypothetical. Steer away from broad generalizations.
7. Do not challenge what others say.
8. Listen to the group as a whole—to those who have not spoken aloud as well as to those who have.
9. Generally, leave space for anyone who may want to speak a first time before speaking a second time yourself.
10. Hold your desires and opinions—even your convictions—lightly.

Appendix B: The Qualities We Seek in Our Ordained Leaders

The ordained leadership in the Diocese of Pennsylvania must first be grounded in the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Leaders in this corner of the Church should find the beginning, middle, and end of their calls in the obedience, passion, expectation, and hope of those who are disciples of Jesus of Nazareth. These leaders must also possess certain gifts that can be used to guide and shepherd God's holy people. The gifts and qualities described here are not exhaustive, nor are these qualities exclusive to the ordained ministry. The discernment process of the diocese will focus on discerning the presence, or the potential presence, of these qualities and abilities in each person.

1. A visible love for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the Church

The Diocese of Pennsylvania seeks to raise up clergy who love God with heart, mind, and soul, and who know and love the person of Jesus Christ and seek to make him known. Those seeking ordination must place Jesus Christ as the center of all they do, say, and feel. Their discipleship should be evident in their speech and action, their choices, and their relationships with friends, community, and family. We are looking for clergy who demonstrate a visible love of the Gospel and of God's people. Ordained leaders in this diocese should show a genuine, holy love for those whom they serve and those who are in their care, a love that gives them the strength and compassion to give freely of themselves to others, even to give their own lives for their people and for the sake of the Gospel. Clergy in this diocese will have both a deep reverence for the sacraments at the heart of our liturgical life as well as an understanding that the world itself is a visible sign of God's love and care and is therefore worthy of our good stewardship.

2. The ability to communicate the truth of the Gospel in ways that lead to connection and transformation

Clergy in the Diocese of Pennsylvania are called to be communicators of God's love to God's beloved. Ordained leaders in this diocese must have the capacity to clearly articulate how Jesus transforms their lives, the Church, and the world. In order to do this, our clergy need to speak several languages – both figuratively and literally – whenever they speak from the pulpit, in personal or pastoral conversations, and through various forms of social media. Clergy in this diocese are called to minister in a wide variety of contexts and among all sorts of people. The Diocese of Pennsylvania seeks to raise up clergy who have the skills for honest, open, and effective communication that demonstrates a love of both God and neighbor.

3. Spiritual maturity, self-awareness, and authenticity

The work of the ordained ministry is a great gift and blessing; it also can be complex, challenging, and exhausting. To be an effective clergy person requires a strong spiritual center, physical and mental resilience, a deep knowledge of one's own spiritual gifts, a profound sense of humility, a commitment to a healthy integration of work and play, and a willingness to grow and learn alongside others. All of this is grounded in a life shaped by a discipline of personal prayer, public worship, and

other holy conversation. We seek to raise up clergy to be servants of the Gospel, who will be able to persevere in challenging circumstances, recognize areas for personal growth, and be willing to learn new skills and ask for help in doing so. We pray that all of our ordained clergy will “lead a life worthy of the calling to which [they] have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1)

4. The ability to lead, organize, and equip others in ministry

“Leadership is authentic self-expression which creates value for others,” says the Rev’d Doug Travis. Clergy in this diocese must not only possess a depth of faith and spiritual devotion but also the ability to lead others to find the same depth and devotion in their own lives. They should have a vision for the ministry of the Episcopal Church and the wisdom to guide others into discovering and using their own gifts in the service of the Gospel. The Diocese of Pennsylvania seeks to raise up clergy who have a heart for this kind of mutual ministry and vocational discernment. Ordained leaders in this diocese should be wise mentors and guides who are motivated by the desire to help others find the place for their gifts in the Kingdom of God.

5. A capacity for creative leadership

The Diocese of Pennsylvania seeks to raise up leaders who are able to develop and employ their sense of creativity in ministry. Our clergy must be able to thoughtfully discern new paths in the life of the Church through a careful listening to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. They must also have the courage to follow where these paths may lead. Ordained leaders in the church should have gifts to listen, learn, gather support, and then lead their congregations in taking risks for the sake of the Gospel. Our clergy must be courageous enough to make honest mistakes and humble enough to learn from them. We are looking for priests who see opportunity and hope where others see decline, who find assurance and inspiration in the knowledge that Christ is present and active in the Church today.

6. The ability to lead congregations through change

We live in a rapidly changing world, and our congregations live in that world as well. This means that all of our congregations will face adaptive challenges as they seek to proclaim the Gospel in this world. We seek to raise up priests who can help our congregations to respond faithfully to God’s calling of them into this unknown future. These priests see Grace in the process of transformation and change and possess the skills to help others see this Grace as well.

7. A willingness and ability to be vocationally flexible

The churches in the Diocese of Pennsylvania are in a variety of contexts in a variety of locations and with a variety of needs. We seek to raise up leaders who will be able to respond to this variety with

flexibility and creativity. Few priests in this diocese are likely to serve in one role at one type of church in one city for their entire vocation. We recognize, too, that a growing number of parishes require clergy leaders who do not depend on them for their entire livelihood; therefore, we need to raise up priests who can offer their presence and their gifts in a part-time or non-stipendiary capacity. We are looking for clergy who can demonstrate flexibility in their vision of professional ministry in order to respond to God's call to them and to the Church in our world.