

# **The Diocesan Discernment Process**

*Listening to God's Call Together*

*(Revised 2015)*

## Introduction

God is calling you. That is why you have opened this manual. Through the waters of Baptism the Holy Spirit calls every Christian to meaningful, important service. The Diocesan discernment process is designed to help clarify this call. We do not ask, "Are you called?" Instead, we ask, "To what are you called?" By entering this process you commit to participating in a period of careful, faithful listening.

Some are called to lay ministry, some to the diaconate, and others to the priesthood. Each order of ministry is equally important in the Body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit guides and equips each of us to serve in one of these orders. Hearing our call means to listen carefully. In some traditions, this means that individuals listen for God's voice in their heart. We believe this to be true, but we also believe that our call reverberates in the voice of the community. That is why so much of this process involves listening together in different contexts.

The stirrings in your heart may have been going on for a long time. Maybe this is a relatively new experience for you. You may have already discussed your thoughts and feelings with family and friends. The first official step in the diocesan discernment process involves an extended series of conversations with your priest about your life journey, the nature of ministry, and your sense of God's calling on your life. Your priest is not your advocate for ordination. He or she is your guide and friend in a process of listening. If he or she believes that you may be ready for further discernment, you (and your spouse if applicable) and your priest will have a preliminary meeting with the Bishop (appropriate paperwork for this meeting is found in this manual, as is paperwork for all subsequent steps of the process).

If the Bishop discerns a potential call to ordained ministry, he will direct the priest to form a Congregational Discernment Group (previously called a Congregational Discernment Group). With training provided by the Commission on Ministry, the Congregational Discernment Group enters into a process of mutual discernment with you. The power of such groups is that everyone is listening for God's call together. Again, the question is: to what are you called?

After the Congregational Discernment Group's time together has come to an end, the Group presents its recommendation to the Priest and to the Vestry or Bishop's Committee. The Priest and Vestry/Bishop's Committee then discerns whether or not to recommend you to the Bishop for further discernment.

If further discernment is not recommended, the process toward ordination is discontinued and you and your priest will explore lay ministries suitable to your sense of calling. When further discernment is recommended, the Bishop may concur or may, for various reasons, decide that lay ministry is your calling. However, if the Bishop senses the need for further discernment, you will be directed to undergo psychological and medical exams as well as background checks. With this additional information in hand, the Bishop decides whether further discernment toward ordination is needed or direction in lay ministry is appropriate.

The next step in discernment toward ordination is an interview with the Commission on Ministry. This interview (along with the appropriate paperwork) is the basis on which the Commission will recommend or not recommend to the Bishop that you will be granted the status of Postulancy. Only Postulants may proceed to seminary. The Bishop will make the final decision. If you are made a Postulant, the Bishop will discuss with you which seminaries you may attend.

Additional steps and requirements for seminarians are outlined in the following manual. You need not worry about them at this time. For the present, be prayerful, be open, and listen for the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ's Love,

The Right Reverend Jacob W. Owensby, Ph.D.  
Fourth Bishop of Western Louisiana

## The Diocesan Discernment Process in Outline

1. **Discussion with Rector/Vicar:** The person sensing a call must discuss this call thoroughly and at length with the priest of the congregation. Before beginning this discussion, the person must have been an active, confirmed communicant in good standing in the congregation for at least one year. During this time the priest should direct the person sensing a call to attend the annual Vocations Conference.
2. **Application to Diocesan Discernment:** If the priest concludes that the person should continue in the formal process toward ordination, the priest writes a letter to the Bishop describing in detail the canonical inquiry he or she has made with the person (now called a Nominee) and confirming that the Nominee has been an active member in good standing for over one year. The Nominee writes a letter to the bishop, submits a 500 word essay outlining his/her goals and intentions for ministry, and returns the completed Diocesan Discernment Application form.

**Spiritual Autobiography:** Include information on the various "chapters" of your life such as education, military or work experience, marriage or significant personal relationships, spiritual turning points, and major life changes. There is no format to follow, but please think about these autobiographical statements carefully, so that you include all the important turning points in your life, without writing more than a five pages.

3. **Initial Meeting with Bishop:** The Nominee together with his or her priest (and spouse where applicable) will meet with the Bishop for an initial exploration of the Nominee's interests and purposes, and for an introduction to the ordination process in the Diocese of Western Louisiana. The Bishop will at this point decide whether discernment continues toward ordination or toward lay ministry.
4. **Congregational Discernment Group:** If the Bishop invites the Nominee to continue in formal discernment, the priest forms a Congregational Discernment Group. The Commission on Ministry will provide training for this group. This group listens to God's call with the Nominee in a process outlined later in this manual. They are neither a screening committee nor an advocacy group. Instead, they act as spiritual friends to help the Nominee clarify God's call. Following their work, they will recommend to the priest in writing whether or not they believe further formal discernment is called for. Drawing upon the Discernment Group's report, the priest completes a written report recommending that formal discernment either draw to a close or go to the next step. Formal discernment proceeds only when both the Discernment Group and the priest support the the Nominee is applying for Postulancy. In this event, the priest shares both reports with the Vestry/Bishop's Committee. This body then votes whether or not to certify the Nominee as a candidate for Postulancy. If so, the Nominee submits an application for Postulancy. (Nominees who determine that their vocation lies in an area other than the ordained ministry are encouraged to continue an exploration of this decision with their Congregational Discernment Group and their clergy. The Nominee is also asked to notify the Bishop in writing that he or she will/will not be continuing in the process toward ordination at this time.)
5. **Application for Postulancy:** Following certification by the Vestry/Bishop's Committee, the Nominee submits the Application for Postulancy. The priest submits his report, the Discernment Committee's report, and the Vestry/Bishop's Committee certification to the bishop.
6. **Exams and Background Checks:** After submitting all materials for application to Postulancy, the Nominee will arrange for a *physical examination* with his or her personal physician and arrange for a report to be sent to the diocesan office. The Nominee will contact the diocesan office

to make arrangements for a psychological examination and background checks. The fee to the diocese for the *psychological examination* and *background checks* is \$250 and is due prior to scheduling the exam and background checks. It is suggested that the congregation bear this cost for the Nominee. Finally, the Nominee is to submit to the Diocesan Office (attention: Ms. Holly Davis) a copy of a recent *credit report*. Results of all texts and background checks remain completely confidential.

7. **Bishop's Postulancy Review:** Following receipt of all postulancy application materials, physical psychological examinations, background checks, and credit report, the Bishop will determine whether or not the Nominee should continue in formal discernment. For the next step in formal discernment, the Bishop provides the Commission on Ministry a copy of the Postulancy Application, but the results of the physical and psychological examinations as well as the background checks remain confidential.
8. **Commission on Ministry Discernment Interview:** Nominees moving forward in discernment toward ordination will be contacted by the Commission on Ministry for a date and time to gather with the Commission for one of their Postulancy Discernment meetings. Following this meeting, the Commission on Ministry will decide whether or not to recommend for Postulancy.
9. **Postulancy Interview with Bishop:** Following the Discernment interview with the COM, the Nominee will meet with Bishop Owensby to discuss the Commission's recommendation.
10. **Postulancy and Formation:** Unless previous arrangements are made for local formation, Postulants seeking ordination to the *transitional* Diaconate and Priesthood will attend an accredited three-year residential Episcopal seminary, approved by the Bishop, leading to a Master of Divinity degree.
11. **Candidacy:** The Postulant will make formal application for Candidacy at the beginning of their Middler year or the equivalent. Interviews with the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee take place during that year or its equivalent. Forms are available through the Diocesan Office.
12. **Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate:** Candidates apply for ordination to the Transitional Diaconate in the autumn of Senior year. Pending approval, Candidates will be ordained to the Transitional Diaconate in December of their Senior Year. Forms are available through the Diocesan Office.
13. **Ordination to the Priesthood:** Candidates apply for ordination to the Priesthood in the spring of Senior year. Pending approval, Candidates will be ordained to the Priesthood in June following completion of their formation process. Forms are available through the Diocesan Office.

(Forms for application to this process and to Postulancy are found in this manual. All others are available in the Diocesan Office.)

## **Congregational Discernment Groups\***

### *Guidelines for Forming a Discernment Group*

After the Bishop has authorized the formation of a Discernment Committee, the Priest will form a Congregational Discernment Committee of three to eight. Membership should be a cross-section of the congregation. It is often helpful to include a lay person from another congregation in the group, especially someone with a perspective on the broader Anglican community. The priest is not a member of this group.

Members are required to participate in Commission on Ministry training for the task of discernment and to attend each meeting.

While the Priest-in-Charge **is not a member of the Discernment Committee**, he/she will participate in the Commission on Ministry training in order to be pastorally supportive of the Nominee and the committee members.

### *Introduction to Discernment*

What is discernment? Discernment is defined as “distinguishing between” or “sorting out.” It is something we are faced with regularly. We discern what choices to make throughout our lives – where to go to college, what profession to pursue, what job to take. Discernment is not new to us, although we may not have intentionally called our decision-making process “discernment.” For our purposes, we will simply be intentional about discernment. We will be intentional about hearing God’s call.

We hear God’s call in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings. We listen, using all of our senses, our history, our culture, and the context of our lives. We hear God in the settings of our lives at work, when we worship, study the Bible, pray and participate in coffee hour fellowship, just to name a few. Where have you heard God’s call in the past?

Congregational Discernment Groups in the Diocese of Western Louisiana are formed to answer the open-ended question, “To what ministry is God calling me?” Some Discernment Groups may face the more specific question: “Is that calling to lay or ordained ministry?” If that calling is to ordained ministry, then: “Is it a calling to be a Priest or Deacon?” The Discernment Group is asked to intentionally listen, reflect on the past, and envision the future with the Nominee.

## **Discernment Groups**

### *The Charge to the Discernment Group*

The goal of this discernment group is two-fold: 1) The discernment group comes to consensus along with the Nominee about what calling is being heard from God; and 2) The Nominee is able to thoroughly articulate the calling God has placed on his or her life.

A Discernment Group IS about the business of

- Articulating God's call
- Reflecting back to the Nominee
- Using "I" language (I feel, I think, What I hear you saying)
- Articulating basic Anglican core values
- Contemplating the Nominee's spiritual issues
- Being leaven in the larger congregation

Discernment group is NOT

- Diagnostic
- Support group
- Psychological counseling
- Screening
- Interviewing
- Interrogating
- About life issues that would be better off being discussed with a pastor or counselor

### *Two Essentials*

For the Congregational Discernment Group there are only two essentials in this handbook:

- 1) A discernment group meets with the Nominee.
- 2) A report is produced for the Vestry/Bishop's Committee and Commission on Ministry (COM) that articulates the Nominee's call.

Although all other materials pertinent to the Congregational Discernment Group in this handbook, besides the above two essential, can be considered a suggestion, the Commission on Ministry strongly encourages Congregational Discernment Groups to use the information gathered here to clearly discern the Seeker's call.

## **Outline of the Step-by-Step Discernment Group Sessions**

### Forming a Discernment Group

A discernment group is selected at the Priest-in-Charge's discretion. Suggestions for forming a discernment group:

- There may be three to eight people in the discernment group.
- Members are a cross-section of the congregation.
- It has been found helpful to have easy access to a clergy person (priest or deacon) as a reference for questions about ordained ministry. The Priest-in-Charge should remain an objective pastoral presence for the Nominee and not participate in the discernment group.
- Having an "outsider" as a member of the discernment group allows for a variety of perspectives of the wider Anglican community for which an ordained person serves.

- It is okay that some group members are friends and/or acquaintances of the Nominee.
- At least one (possibly two) facilitator(s) are designated. Facilitators help to keep the group focused and provide opportunity for open participation.
- Remembering that discernment group meeting contents are confidential, an editor may be designated for the purpose of summarizing material for the report to the Priest-in-Charge, Vestry or Bishop's Committee, and COM.

The discernment group is trained by COM representatives. The Nominee is invited to be present for the training. Trainers are available for follow-up consultations as necessary.

How long will all of this take? Approximately 3-6 months.

### *Suggested General Practices*

- Sessions may be at least 1-1 1/2 hours each. Sessions are suggested to occur once every 2 weeks but not less than once every 4 weeks so as to maintain continuity between sessions.
- Beginning and ending each session with silence and prayer upholds the spiritual nature of discernment.
- Bible study and reflection are a regular part of the group's life. Discernment Groups are encouraged to agree on scripture for daily reflection. Suggested texts are each Sunday's Gospel reading or scripture from the ordination and/or baptismal services from the BCP.
- "Check-in" is a random point in discernment sessions when any member of the group requests that each group member conveys their understanding of the Nominee's calling up to this point. The purpose of a "check-in" is to ascertain where people in the group are in their prayerful consideration and whether or not there is consensus within the group.
- Verbally summarizing each session during the last few minutes before the closing silence and prayer allows the group to determine what the issues, topics, and questions are to talk about *next time*.
- Members are asked to covenant with one another in maintaining confidentiality of all discernment sessions and materials.

### *Discernment Sessions*

There are two main focuses of each discernment session within their spiritual framework: 1) identifying and understanding what ministry is (i.e. all Baptized/deacon/priest/bishop); and 2) identifying and understanding the Nominee's calling to ministry. The former is educational in nature, while the latter is reflective.

The following seven sessions are a suggested model for coming to a consensus on answers to the questions in the Discernment Response.



The process you are entering as a group is a delicate one. The questions posed in each of the sessions are meant to help the members of the group “sift through” their individual and collective experience of themselves and of the seeker. The Diocese is not requiring you to report the responses to the questions, but there is a need for the group to make a report of its findings. Of course, confidentiality and discretion is essential and there should be an agreement, a covenant, that the content of the discussions are not to be shared with anyone outside the group. We suggest that when issues arise that seem beyond the scope of the committee’s task they be raised jointly with the sponsoring priest, committee chair, and the seeker.

## SESSION ONE: Listening

***Focus:** During this first session, the structure of the meetings is introduced, including its educational and reflective styles. If members of the group do not know each other, this is a good time to do some basic introductions.*

### **Introductions**

**Prayer:** A Prayer for Quiet Confidence, BCP p. 832

What is Ministry? What is the ministry of each member of the Discernment Group? What is the current ministry of the Seeker?

What is Listening? How do you listen for God? How do you know what God wants of you? What are the impediments to the discernment of listening for God? What conditions help us discern God's call?

You may want to invite visitor(s) who are deacons, priests, and active lay people doing ministry to give a presentation about their ministry and answer questions. Ask them also to share their story of how they discerned their call into this ministry.

The Facilitator should present a schedule of meetings at this point. End the session with a few minutes of silence.

*Note: The Nominee should begin working on the Spiritual Autobiography. The written document (4-10 pages double spaced) should be shared with the CDG at least one week prior to Session Four.*

**Closing Prayer:** Compline

## SESSION TWO: Service

***Focus:** This session answers, in more depth, "What is Ministry?" from Session One.*

**Opening Silence** closing with **Prayer of Vocation in Daily Work, BCP p. 261**

### **Exercise A**

Have individuals in the group list on newspaper print priestly leadership skills & responsibilities as they perceive them to be. Compare this list with the "Examination of Priest" from the Book of Common Prayer (p. 531). The goal of this exercise is to clarify our understanding what priests are really ordained to do. This exercise may be repeated focusing on all of the baptized, deacons, and bishops.

### **Exercise B**

Read aloud with one member of the group taking the role of "celebrant" the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, BCP pages 292-294.

Which of these vows are easy for each member of the group to fulfill? Which are harder, if not impossible? When do you succeed in "seeking and serving Christ in all persons?" Where do you (and the Church)

fail? Share personal stories. How do you proclaim by word and example the Good News? Which is easier for you, word or example?

Who have been examples in your local community of servanthood? What qualities do they exhibit? When do you feel called to serve? Whom do you feel you are not called to serve?

Reflect on the Examination in the service of ordination: of a deacon (BCP page 543); of a priest (BCP page 531).

**Closing Prayer: Prayer for Social Service, BCP p. 260.**

SESSION THREE: Mission

***Focus:** This session continues with the question from Session One “What is the ministry of each member of the Discernment Group” and expands it to include future ministry possibilities.*

**Opening Silence** closing with **Prayer for the Mission of the Church, BCP p. 816**

**Exercise A**

Read together Matthew 28

How do you know the Resurrection of Jesus? Who was your Mary, the one who told you of Jesus rising from the dead? Review the three “mission” questions on the top of page 855 in the BCP.

What is Good News for you? How do you share it? In what ways do you exhibit an Easter attitude?

**Exercise B**

Reflect on the Nominee's vision of ministry. The vision statement is a brief outline of what the Nominee believes God's calling into ministry is for him/her. This may be vague or detailed, but it gives the group a brief introduction as to where the Seeker is in discernment.

**Exercise C**

The spouse or partner of the Seeker may be invited to this session to explore future ministry possibilities.

**Silence**, closing with **Collect for the Second Sunday of Easter, BCP p. 224**

SESSION FOUR: Growth, Transformation, Transfiguration

***Focus:** This session focuses on spiritual formation and attention to self-health. The Nominee will present his or her Spiritual Autobiography. It is the Nominee's responsibility to provide members of the CDG in advance of this meeting with enough time for each member to read and reflect upon the document.*

**Opening Silence** closing with **Collect for the Last Sunday of the Epiphany**

Our Baptismal vows call upon us to “continue in the apostle's teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers.” (BCP pg. 304). In what ways has each member of the group sought to edify themselves and their faith in Christ? Bible Study? Holy Reading? Retreats? Daily Office? How has your

prayer life changed/deepened since your baptism or confirmation? How do you deal with periods of spiritual crisis, dryness and tedium?

At ordination the ordained promises to “be diligent in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures, and in seeking the knowledge of such things as may make you a stronger and more able minister of Christ.” (BCP pg. 532).

How does your parish support your priest in fulfilling this vow? Why is this vow necessary for the life and health of the Church?

How have you experienced failure in this life? Disappointment? Tragedy and Grief? Regardless of the completeness of your healing, how have you been changed into someone more resembling Christ through the experience?

Reflect on the Nominee's Spiritual Autobiography. What key situations, people, events shaped the Seeker's spiritual journey? What might be the influences of the Seeker's current vocational passion? Where has growth and transformation occurred?

**Silence**, closing with

**Prayer – “O God of Unchangeable Power...” BCP p. 291**

#### SESSION FIVE: Holiness

***Focus:** This session focuses on self-awareness and openness. Church leaders sometimes have public roles that force them into living in a “fish bowl.” Church leaders are often faced with issues of conflict management and interpersonal communication styles.*

**Opening Silence** closing with **Collect at Baptism, BCP, p. 254**

Read together Matthew 5:48 and Philippians 3:7-13.

What is the Holy Life? What does it look like? Who is perfect? What does it mean to “pattern your life (and that of your family) in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?” How is life in the Church a “school for holiness?” Married life? Describe someone in your life who is an example of holiness.

How well do you know yourself? Share a time when you were brought up short and an unattractive part of yourself was disclosed to you.

Are you, the seeker, aware of your effect on the people around you?

How do you perceive the others in your group? In what ways do they exhibit godliness? To what extent do you buy into the myth that ordination is the ticket to holiness?

How tolerant are you of ambiguity and uncertainty? What is your taste for mystery? In other words, how big is your box for God? How big is your box for your neighbors who differ from you due to race, economic class, health, sexual orientation or gender?

**Silence** closing with **Collect for the Second Sunday after Christmas Day. BCP p. 214**

## SESSION SIX: Leadership

***Focus:** This session focuses on self-awareness and leadership style. There are many leadership styles and there are many settings for ministry. What leadership style matches the leadership needs of a particular ministry setting (e.g. Rector of a corporate-size congregation; a hospital chaplain, etc.)?*

**Silence** closing with **Collect for the Church. BCP p. 816**

Read together Numbers 11:16-17, 24-25 and Matthew 9:35-38

How do these lessons characterize leadership? What is the nature of Christ's leadership? Directive? Non directive? Builder of consensus? Democratic?

How would you characterize the relationship of Jesus to his disciples?

Does your congregation find a focus in its priest? Does it derive its identity from the priest, or its inspiration? Is your church more accustomed to a "top-down" style of leadership, consensus building, or a combination of both? Does the authority of the priest derive from the position/status granted to him/her by the church, or does the authority come from the person? How anxious is the seeker when placed in leadership roles?

What qualities does each member of the discernment group demonstrate that either exhibits leadership or enhances it in others both in the church and in the world?

**Silence** closing with **Collect for Prayer 29. BCP p. 236**

## SESSION SEVEN: Obedience

***Focus:** During this session, the group, including the Seeker, is wrapping up the previous six sessions. Listening deeply is the focus.*

**Opening Silence** closing with **Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, BCP p. 225**

The word obedience derives from the Latin word to "hear or listen deeply."

Name/explore some persons in the Bible who are examples of this kind of obedience. Abraham, Sarah, Ruth, Samuel, Jesus, Peter, Paul. In each case, there were some heavy prices to pay for their obedience that preceded whatever reward came to them.

What are the limitations, restrictions, and other realities in the person's life that must be reckoned with and obeyed? These may take the form of responsibilities and obligations (to marriage, commitments, children, family, self) that must be honored prior to making the sacrifices of the ordained ministry. Ordination never rescues a person from these more fundamental places of faithfulness.

Have the seeker, the members of the group been faithful in their sacrificial giving to the church in time, talent and treasure? What challenges and what blessings have resulted in such exercises of obedience?

How has the seeker displayed commitment in the face of hardship?

**Silence** closing with **Prayer of St. Chrysostom, BCP p. 126.**

\*Thanks are due to the Diocese of Missouri, from which most of this session of the manual is drawn.

## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### Application to Diocesan Discernment

Date

The Rt. Rev'd Jacob W. Owensby, Ph.D.  
Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana  
P. O. Box 2031  
Alexandria, LA 71309

Dear Bishop Owensby:

I respectfully submit my name to you, identifying my desire to begin the formal diocesan discernment process.

I have made known my intent to my Rector/Vicar, \_\_\_\_\_.  
We have been meeting regularly to discuss my qualifications and he/she has encouraged me to begin this process.

I have enclosed a resume and a brief essay (500 words or less) outlining my goals and intentions about ordination. I will contact your office to schedule an appointment for me, my spouse, and my priest.

Sincerely yours,

cc: The Rev'd (your Rector/Vicar)



**APPENDIX B**

*The Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana*

**Application for Postulancy**

This application is intended to help the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry as they share with you in the interview process. It will help the Commission on Ministry make their recommendation to the Bishop.

You have already advised the Bishop of your intent. Beforehand, you should have had a time of preparation and discussion with your priest. The Commission on Ministry feels the joint efforts of Nominee and priest should continue, so we suggest you work on this with your priest, and we require that he or she complete the last page of this form prior to submission.

**Name**

**Address**

**Phone** (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Work) \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Application** \_\_\_\_\_ **Birthdate** \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital Status** \_\_\_\_\_ **Number of previous marriages?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Spouse's name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Names and ages of children (if applicable):**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Social Security Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please circle order of ministry:**      **Deacon**      **Priest**

**Have you previously applied for Discernment toward Holy Orders? Yes** \_\_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_\_

**If so:**

**When** \_\_\_\_\_ **Where** \_\_\_\_\_ **To whom** \_\_\_\_\_

**How long have you been resident in this Diocese?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Experience:** Provide job titles, employers, and duration of employment.

**Educational background:**

**Secondary - Give the name of your school and mention any special educational circumstances such as overseas study or specialized secondary curricula.**

**Collegiate -**

Name of College	Years enrolled	Degree	GPA	Major/Minor
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1.

2.

3.

4.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Graduate** and other, including continuing education, language school or any organized study after college: on a separate sheet, describe any graduate work you have had or other special training or intellectual development, including your chief academic or intellectual interests.

**Church membership:**

Baptism	Church name	Location	Date
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By whom Confirmation	Location	Date
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Bishop Officiating \_\_\_\_\_

If you were not raised from infancy as an Episcopalian, describe briefly how you came to join this Church. If you were, describe briefly why you have stayed.

**Present congregational affiliation:** give the name of the parish or mission, the length of time you have been a member there, and a simple list of your activities there during the past year only.

List affiliations prior to your present one including the name of the church, dates of affiliation, and level of involvement.

**Vocational Identity:** On a separate sheet, summarize your understanding of the diaconate and priesthood, the difference between them, and your own reasons for feeling called to the particular Order sought.

**Rector's/Vicars Comments:** While your rector or vicar will have opportunity to comment on his or her own form, we also ask that he or she review your responses and make any comments of clarification or perspective about them in this space.

Rector's/Vicar's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee's signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this material and the Rector's/Vicar's form to the Office of the Bishop, P. O. Box 2031, Alexandria, LA 71309.

Thank you for your willingness to explore this process and to provide this important information.

**APPENDIX C**

*(Please note this form is sample only)*

***The Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana***

**Application for Postulancy**

***RECTOR'S/VICAR'S RESPONSE***

A member of your church is applying for the ordination process, and has advised the Bishop of your support. In preparation for the interviewing process with the Nominee, you are asked to fill out these response sheets. The purpose is to make interviews substantial. Thank you for your help!

**Nominee's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Name**

How long have you known the Nominee?

Did you or the Nominee first raise the issue of Holy Orders? What were the circumstances of this beginning? And how long did it take to move from there to this application?

In what kinds of ministerial activities have you observed the Nominee? While understanding that the Nominee may just be beginning in ministry, how did he or she do? (This question is about what you have actually observed; the next question has to do with the Nominee's possibilities.)

Please describe the Nominee's chief strengths, including matters such as integrity, emotional stability, boldness, personal and intellectual maturity, etc.

The Commission is concerned that Nominees be as clear as possible about the difference between deacon and priest and about the specificity of their own calling. Do *you* see the Nominee as called specifically to the diaconate/priesthood? How do the Nominee's actual and potential gifts fit with the diaconate/priesthood?

Please describe the Nominee's growth areas or areas of weakness. Is the Nominee clearly aware of these? How does she or he deal with them?

Are there either major changes occurring in the Nominee's life that might disrupt or hinder a discernment process? Are there ongoing patterns of life that might do so?

Do you perceive the Nominee as an inspiring, faithful, loving servant leader? Will people follow him or her and will he or she joyfully serve every sort and kind of person? Are you excited about the prospect of the future ordained ministry of this person? Explain your answer.

**APPENDIX D**  
**Report of the Congregational Discernment Group**

Nominee's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

To: The Rector/Vicar and Vestry/Bishop's Committee of \_\_\_\_\_  
(Parish/Mission Name and Location)

Please type all responses. Provide concrete examples from the applicant's life and witness to support your statement. The priest-in-charge will be completing a similar form, which will be a separate report from the discernment group's report.

- 1) **All are called to respond to their baptism as ministers of the Church (BCP p855). How does the applicant exhibit a response to his/her baptism?**
- 2) **What excites you about his/her future ministry?**
- 3) **What is the applicant's vision for future ministry?**
- 4) **In what ways does the applicant exhibit a call to the priesthood? What aspects of the applicant's vision for ministry suggest priesthood?**
- 5) **What are the applicant's strengths?**
- 6) **What are the applicant's growing edges?**
- 7) **How does the applicant exhibit a passion for working with people? Please provide examples.**
- 8) **How does the applicant exhibit a trajectory toward a spiritual life? Please provide examples.**
- 9) **In what ways has the applicant demonstrated a spirit of reconciliation? Please provide examples.**
- 10) **In what ways has the applicant demonstrated openness to continual learning – intellectually, skill-based, and spiritually? Please provide examples.**
- 11) **Priests are called to be pastoral leaders who discern Christ's presence in the Eucharist and among the people. How does the applicant currently exhibit both parts of this type of leadership? Please provide examples.**
- 12) **What leads you to believe that the applicant will be an effective priest?**

\_\_\_\_\_ RECOMMEND FOR LAY MINISTRY Comments (*please be specific*)

\_\_\_\_\_ RECOMMEND TO CONTINUE AS A PARTICIPANT IN THE MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROGRAM Comments (*please be specific*)

\_\_\_\_\_ RECOMMEND OTHER ALTERNATIVES AT THIS TIME Comments (*please be specific*)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_, Convener  
For the Congregational Discernment Group

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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX E**  
**EVALUATION**

The Commission on Ministry places a high value on the experience your Congregational Discernment Group has had. The foregoing procedure was developed out of considerable work with other dioceses studying ministry. We believe we have a lot to learn and solicit your candid remarks concerning the strengths and weaknesses of this procedure.

Strengths of this process:

Weaknesses of this process:

For me, personally, the most important thing about this process has been:

A new dimension of my own ministry that has come alive for me during these meetings is:

Please mail this evaluation form to the Office of the Bishop, P. O. Box 2031, Alexandria, LA 71309.

**APPENDIX F**

**Permanent Record File Agreement**

I understand that all materials pertaining to the Screening Process, including my physical examination, pastoral counselor, and psychiatric/psychological evaluations, will be read and utilized by the Bishop, the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee for the determination of my applicancy for Postulancy and Holy Orders.

If I wish others to review this file, e.g., my parish or fieldwork supervisor, a personal written release must be provided by me to the Office of the Bishop.

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(Nominee)

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(Date)



**APPENDIX G**

**Recommendation of a Nominee for the Postulancy Meeting**

**The Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana**

To the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana:

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The procedures of the Commission on Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana require a recommendation from the Rector/Vicar and Vestry/Bishop's Committee of the Parish of which the Nominee is a communicant, setting forth the grounds upon which they judge him/her to possess such qualifications as would fit him/her to begin the process towards ordination and to attend the Bishop's Screening Conference, and whether their judgment is based on personal knowledge or on evidence satisfactory to them.

In accord with this procedure the grounds for our judgment are as follows:

This judgment is based upon

Therefore, we, whose names are hereunder written testify to our belief that

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Nominee)

is sober, honest, and godly, and that he/she is a communicant of this Church in good standing. We do furthermore declare that, in our opinion, he/she possesses such qualifications as fit him/her to be admitted to attend the Bishop's Screening Conference as the beginning of the process toward ordination.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_  
Rector/Vicar of the Parish/Mission to which Nominee belongs.

Vestry/Bishop's Committee

(signatures)

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Or a majority of all members thereof

Attestation of the Foregoing Certificate

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee of \_\_\_\_\_ Parish/Mission, duly convened at

\_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_\_

and that the names attached are those of all (or a majority of all) the members of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_  
Rector/Vicar of the Parish/Mission or Clerk of Vestry/Bishop's Committee

**APPENDIX H**

*The Episcopal Diocese of Western Louisiana*

**Financial Statement**

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

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

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

Dependents (Please list by name and give ages of children):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sponsoring Parish: \_\_\_\_\_

It is important to be realistic about the costs of your possible seminary education. This will be your responsibility. Diocesan aid is limited. Most seminaries do have scholarship funds, however, you should consult seminary catalogs regarding availability.

In answering these questions, please state specific sources and amounts.

How will you pay for three (3) years of seminary?

<u>Anticipated Expenses</u>	<b>(PER YEAR)</b>	<u>Income</u>
School (tuition, books supplies, fees, etc.)	_____	Earnings _____
Living (housing, food insurance, transportation, medical, dental, etc)	_____	Personal Savings & Investments _____
Other (specify) _____	_____	Spouse's Employment _____
_____	_____	Parents/Relatives _____
TOTAL	_____	Scholarships from: _____
		Aid from Sponsoring Parish _____
		Other (specify) _____
		TOTAL _____

Total for Three (3) Years

EXPENSES \_\_\_\_\_ INCOME \_\_\_\_\_