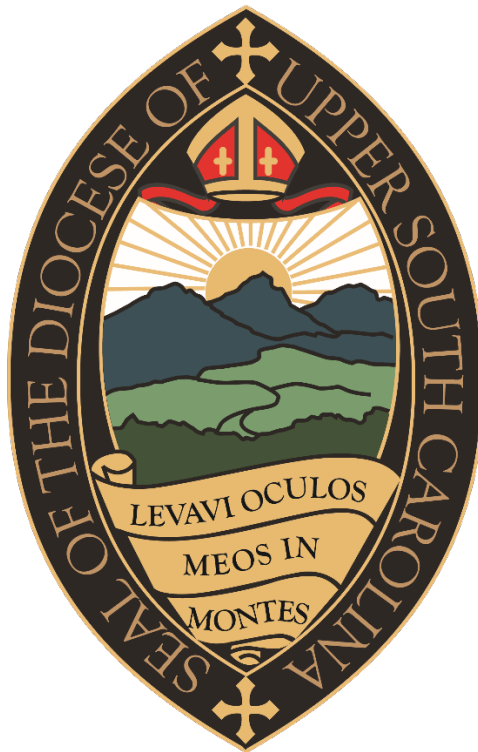


THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA



VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT GUIDE

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AN INTRODUCTION TO DISCERNMENT IN THE EDUSC

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina (EDUSC) has fashioned a formal discernment process to assist those who feel a general call to ministry better understand and articulate their gifts, their sense of God's call on their lives, and to invite the community to discern their call alongside them. While the discernment process often raises difficult and sometimes uncomfortable issues, each person who feels God is calling them to walk the path of discernment is supported on their journey with careful, respectful, and intentional listening, love, and prayer.

The purpose of our formal discernment process is twofold: (1) to determine the nature of an individual's call to serve (lay ministry or ordained ministry), and (2) if the call is to ordained ministry, to determine to which vocation he or she is called. The identification of a call is a process that requires time, patience, deep individual discernment, as well as deep discernment within the greater community, for the Church must both hear God's call and issue a call as well. There are a number of stages in our discernment process appropriate to the journey, each of which is detailed later in this guide.

The first step is to attend the Diocesan Day of Discernment which is required to enter the formal discernment process in the EDUSC. However, prior to attending the

Diocesan Day of Discernment, you should have three years of experience in The Episcopal Church as a confirmed or received member. **You must also first speak with your Rector or Vicar, share your sense of call, and inform him or her of your intention to attend.**

Once those conversations have happened and you have registered for the Diocesan Day of Discernment, it is important to evaluate and explore the gifts God has given you and how they might best be offered in service to the Church. As Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 12:4-12,

“... there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of powerful deeds, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.”

A Spiritual Gifts Assessment can be a useful tool to give you greater insight as to the gifts God has given you. On the following pages you will find a Spiritual Gifts Assessment that will lead you through a series of questions and then assist you in arranging and understanding your answers. This exercise will give you greater insight into what gifts you may have to offer in service to the Church. It is important to understand that there are no “right” or “wrong” answers, and there are no “right” or “wrong” gifts for ministry.

The Spiritual Gifts Assessment should be completed before you attend the Diocesan Day of Discernment.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

Used with the permission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Written by Neal Boese and Patricia Haller.

Finding Your Spiritual Gifts

God has given each Christian two vitally important gifts. The first is the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, his work of redemption, and thus forgiveness of sin. The second is the gift of one or more special abilities, which are to be used for the purpose of unifying the body of Christ and for the growth of God's Kingdom. These abilities are called spiritual gifts, and they are received through our baptism.

Like other presents, it is impossible to fully appreciate and make use of our spiritual gifts until they have been opened. This tool will help you begin to open your spiritual gifts by guiding you through the following three activities:

Scripture Review: highlighting scripture references that both support the existence of spiritual gifts and identify those which are commonly found in service today.

Self-Assessment: a list of 60 questions which will help you identify which gifts you have received in greatest measure.

Exploration of Use: suggestions for the various types of ministries you might be most effective in because of your spiritual gifts.

These three activities will begin to help you discover and employ your spiritual gifts. May the special abilities God has given you be deployed in areas of ministry where they will be most effective for the good of the entire church body. These gifts should also be affirmed by the body and utilized by the one who is gifted.

Scripture Review:

The Apostle Paul addresses the presence of spiritual gifts in three main sections of scripture: Romans 12, I Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. Peter also verifies their existence in I Peter 4:10. Through these sections of scripture, we learn that all Christians have been given at least one spiritual gift. The purpose of spiritual gifts is twofold: (1) to unify Christians in their faith and (2) to produce growth within the church, both numerical and spiritual. These gifts are to be used out of love for one another, and in service to one another.

We do not choose which gifts we will receive. God bestows them upon us through the work of the Holy Spirit. Not all of the gifts identified in scripture are used in this inventory. Since the objectives of spiritual gift deployment are to unify and produce growth through service, only the service-related gifts have been included.

The Spiritual Gifts Assessment begins on the next page.

Spiritual Gifts Assessment

As with other gifts, it is impossible to fully appreciate and make use of our spiritual gifts until they have been opened. This tool will help you begin to open your spiritual gifts by guiding you through a self-assessment inventory. These 60 questions will help you identify which gifts you have received in greatest measure.

Instructions: For each of the 60 questions which follow, shade in the box to the right of the question

corresponding to the number of the response that most closely matches how you perceive yourself.

Categories are presented across the top of the inventory.

- 4 consistently true
- 3 frequently true
- 2 occasionally true
- 1 infrequently true
- 0 rarely true

	4	3	2	1	0
1. When presented a goal, I immediately think of steps that need to be taken in order to achieve the desired results.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I express myself through artistic means.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. My faith requires me to seek out God's will and purpose in all circumstances that arise in my life.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I am able to convey the gospel message to non-believers in ways that they are able to easily understand.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I am moved by those who, through conflict or sorrow, are wavering in faith.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I am certain of the Spirit's presence in my life and in the lives of others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I am blessed by God each day and gladly respond to these blessings by giving liberally of my time and money.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. I enjoy meeting new people and becoming acquainted with them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I know that God hears and responds to my daily prayers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I feel compelled to learn as much as I can about the Bible and faith.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I am a take-charge person. When others follow my direction, the goal or task will be completed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. When I see a person in need, I am moved to assist him or her.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. I love to sing and enjoy inspiring others through song.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. I find joy in and express myself by playing a musical instrument.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I am motivated to provide spiritual leadership to those who are on a faith journey.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. I like working behind the scenes to ensure that projects are successful.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	4	3	2	1	0
17. I enjoy working with my hands in a trade or skill that requires considerable experience to perfect.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. My great joy is to communicate biblical truth in such a way that it becomes real and understood by others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. When a challenge is presented, I am usually able to identify an appropriate solution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. I am able to take a thought or idea and put it into a clear and inspiring written form.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. I enjoy organizing thoughts, ideas, hopes and dreams into a specific plan of action.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. I can translate into artistic form what I first see in my imagination.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. I have assisted others as they sought to discern whether or not their personal decisions were helpful and in accordance with God's will for their lives.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. I enjoy being with non-believers and like having the opportunity to encourage them to faith and commitment.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. When I know someone is facing a crisis, I feel compelled to provide support and care.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. My trust in the Spirit's presence, when I encounter times of personal crisis, is a source of strength for others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. I manage my time and money so that I am able to give much of it to the work of the church or other organizations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. I am often asked to open my home for small-group gatherings or social occasions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. I often become so absorbed in my prayer life that the doorbell or phone can ring and I will not hear it.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Not one day would be complete without biblical study and thought.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. When I am in a group, others will often look to me for direction.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. I feel an urgency to provide housing for the homeless, food for the starving, comfort for those in distress.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. I have sung before groups and felt a real sense of God's presence.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. By my playing a musical instrument, inspiration has been provided for both myself and others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. I have responsibility for providing spiritual guidance to an individual believer or group of believers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. People tell me that without my willingness to do the unnoticed jobs, their work would be more difficult.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. I am good at building, repairing or restoring things, and I find satisfaction in doing so.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38. I want to express my faith by assisting others to discover the truths contained in the Bible.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	4	3	2	1	0
39. People come to me for help in applying Christian faith and values to personal situations.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. I often feel moved to write about my thoughts and feelings so others may benefit from them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. I have been successful in organizing, directing and motivating people to achieve a goal.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42. My artistic work has given spiritual strength to both believers and non-believers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43. In the congregation, I am often asked if a direction being discussed is in accordance with God's will and purpose.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44. I do not find it difficult to share what Jesus means to me with non-believers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45. Those who are struggling with life questions have come to me for guidance and help.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. I can see great things happening in my congregation and am not derailed by the pessimism of others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. When I receive money unexpectedly, one of my first thoughts is to share this gift through the church.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48. I enjoy welcoming guests and helping them to feel at ease.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
49. Believers have asked me to pray for healing in their lives and have evidenced God's healing power.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50. My study of the Bible has proven helpful to others in their faith journey.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
51. People have said they like to work with me because the task will be successfully completed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
52. People have been surprised by how at ease I am while working with those who are suffering in mind, body or spirit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
53. I am grateful and humbled that my singing has provided inspiration and hope for others on their faith journey.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
54. Others have told me they were moved by my playing a musical instrument.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
55. People have come to me for spiritual help, and it has developed into a long-term relationship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
56. When I turn out the lights, take tables down, work in the kitchen or put chairs away, I feel that I have served the Lord.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
57. My knowledge of building, maintenance or repair has been a special value to the church and others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
58. Students have told me that I can take the most difficult idea or concept and make it understandable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
59. When direction is needed at work or in the congregation, I am generally asked for my opinion.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
60. My written work has been helpful to others in understanding life's truths.					

Spiritual Gifts Assessment Scoring Grid

Note: Even though the term *scoring* is used, it is purely so that you can determine where your gifts are strongest. No other value is placed on the gifts you have or don't have. Remember, all gifts are given by the Holy Spirit.

The grid you will use is on page 14. Before you enter your responses, however, look at this sample grid.

After you complete the grid on page 14, you will have the opportunity to explore your own "gifts cluster."

Sample Grid

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Questions 1, 21, 41													Administration
Questions 2, 22, 42													Artistry
Questions 3, 23, 43													Discernment
Questions 4, 24, 44													Evangelism
Questions 5, 25, 45													Exhortation
Questions 6, 26, 46													Faith
Questions 7, 27, 47													Giving
Questions 8, 28, 48													Hospitality
Questions 9, 29, 49													Intercession
Questions 10, 30, 50													Knowledge
Questions 11, 31, 51													Leadership
Questions 12, 32, 52													Mercy
Questions 13, 33, 53													Music (Vocal)
Questions 14, 34, 54													Music (Instrumental)
Questions 15, 35, 55													Pastoring
Questions 16, 36, 56													Service
Questions 17, 37, 57													Skilled Craft
Questions 18, 38, 58													Teaching
Questions 19, 39, 59													Wisdom
Questions 20, 40, 60													Writing

Sample Assessment

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
												Administration
												Artistry
												Discernment
												Evangelism
												Exhortation
												Faith
												Giving
												Hospitality
												Intercession
												Knowledge
												Leadership
												Mercy
												Music (Vocal)
												Music (Instrumental)
												Pastoring
												Service
												Skilled Craft
												Teaching
												Wisdom
												Writing

My Spiritual Gifts Assessment Scoring Grid

Instructions: Total the rating numbers for the three questions in the column on the left. For each gift there is a set of three questions, which could have a potential score of 0 to 12. The rectangular blocks will total your score as you shade in the number 0 1 2 3 4 for each of the three questions. For example, in the category of Administration, the answers to the three questions equal the numbers 2+4+3 total 9. The bar will be shaded in up to the number 9. Once the grid is completed, note that the longer the bar the stronger the corresponding gift.

The strongest gift(s) will generally have a total score of "7" or more. If you have more than one gift with a total of seven or more, then all of these gifts can be referred to as your "gift cluster." Notice how each gift within the cluster has the potential to compliment and support another. The gifts within the cluster will need to be further explored to determine which ones you have truly been blessed with.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Questions 1, 21, 41													Administration
Questions 2, 22, 42													Artistry
Questions 3, 23, 43													Discernment
Questions 4, 24, 44													Evangelism
Questions 5, 25, 45													Exhortation
Questions 6, 26, 46													Faith
Questions 7, 27, 47													Giving
Questions 8, 28, 48													Hospitality
Questions 9, 29, 49													Intercession
Questions 10, 30, 50													Knowledge
Questions 11, 31, 51													Leadership
Questions 12, 32, 52													Mercy
Questions 13, 33, 53													Music (Vocal)
Questions 14, 34, 54													Music (Instrumental)
Questions 15, 35, 55													Pastoring
Questions 16, 36, 56													Service
Questions 17, 37, 57													Skilled Craft
Questions 18, 38, 58													Teaching
Questions 19, 39, 59													Wisdom
Questions 20, 40, 60													Writing

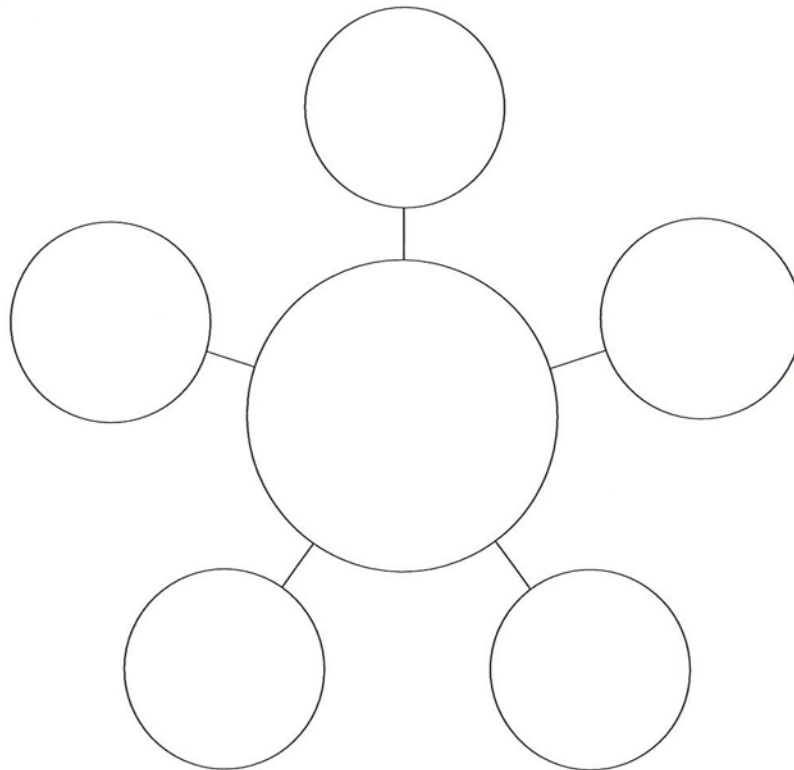
Spiritual Gifts Cluster

Now that you've completed the scoring grid, let's examine your spiritual gifts cluster. In the center circle of the cluster chart, write the spiritual gift that had the highest rating. In the remaining circles, write the other gifts which you rated a 7 or more. This is your gifts cluster.

Note: If you have several gifts with the same score, you will need to discern further which gift is most natural for you and best complements the other gifts that will make up your gifts cluster. In this case you also might ask a person who is close to you to review your inventory with you. That person's perception of your strengths may be useful in identifying the gifts with which you have been truly blessed.

Look at your completed gifts cluster and ask yourself these questions.

- How will I use this information?
- What surprises lie in my gifts cluster?
- How does my gifts cluster explain the way I have been operating as a Christian?
- How will my ministry/my congregation be affected now that I am aware of my gifts?



These next steps are to explore what the Holy Spirit is up to in blessing you with these gifts. Taking these steps often will help you approach the answers.

Pray as you seek the Holy Spirit's guidance as you explore your gifts.

Study to provide a solid foundation from which to use your gifts effectively. Study Scripture references, definitions and how each gift functions in the body of Christ. Remember, the mission is ultimately what's important.

Take time and make space to examine how you feel about each of the gifts in your cluster. Traditionally, the next step in some assessments after identifying your spiritual gifts would be to receive a list of tasks assigned to a particular gift. For example, if you have the gift of hospitality, the list might include greeter, usher or fellowship hour host. These are important tasks and should not be ignored or left undone. However, the Holy Spirit is calling the body of Christ beyond the church walls for the sake of the world. To begin to think outside the box, start with questions like "Where is my passion?" "Where is the greatest need?"

Celebrate and use your spiritual gifts. The mystery of these gifts is that, the more you use them, the more confident you become in them and the more effective your ministry is. Pay close attention to what happens when you are fully engaging your gifts and when you are not.

Listen! As you use your spiritual gifts, others may provide affirmation. The Holy Spirit finds many ways to speak, so listen when others recognize your gifts and express thankfulness for a job well done. The Holy Spirit is not the type to give a gift with no strings attached, and those affirmations are a kind of string. These are not strings to control you or your gifts, however, but strings to assist you in using them.

Spiritual Gifts Cluster Exercise

This exercise will help you to explore what gets in the way of your ability to use your gifts. Follow these instructions:

1. Take a few minutes to look closely at your scoring grid and cluster diagram.
2. If you are in a group, find your "Gift Mates." These are people with the same center gift. Record the group's answers on newsprint. (If no one else has the same center gift or you are doing these activities alone, skip to step 4.)
3. Share with the group the other gifts in your gifts cluster. Listen for the diversity in the combinations.
4. Begin a discovery process with the following discussion starters.
 - Did you know this gift (in the center circle) was your strongest gift?
 - Were there any surprises?
5. Now turn to these questions about your strongest gift.
 - How have I used this gift?
 - What gets in the way of my using this gift effectively?
 - What do I/we put in the way of this gift being used to its fullest in the community of faith?
6. Answer these bonus questions if you have time.
 - How do I make room in my life so that all my gifts can be used?
 - How do I enable others to make room to use all their gifts?

Appendix

Spiritual Gifts Descriptions

The work of the Holy Spirit is an awesome mystery for us. Because of the way these spiritual gifts are given to us and manifested in individuals, it is better to provide a description rather than a narrow, one-size-fits-all definition. These descriptions will give you a picture in words that will lead you to an image of your spiritual gifts.

Each entry contains a description, general characteristics, cautions and biblical references. Like the spiritual gifts assessment, these descriptions are not definitive but paint a beautiful tapestry of the Holy Spirit at work in God's people.

The gifts are listed in alphabetical order for easy reference.

ADMINISTRATION: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to formulate, direct and carry out plans necessary to fulfill a purpose.

People with this gift are usually: organized, goal-oriented, thorough, objective, efficient, responsible, conscientious.

Cautions for people with this gift: being open to adjusting their plans so that they don't stifle a leader's vision; not using people simply to accomplish goals without concern for their growth in the process.

Biblical references: 1 Corinthians 12:28, Acts 14:23

ARTISTRY: The spiritual gift that gives the receiver the skill to create artistic expressions which produce a spiritual response of strength and inspiration.

People with this gift are usually: expressive, imaginative, artistic, creative, unconventional, sensitive, idea-oriented.

Cautions for people with this gift: remembering that art is not for art's sake, but to glorify God and edify others; finding constructive criticism difficult to accept; being uncooperative and needing to work at being a team player.

Biblical references: Exodus 31:1–11, Psalm 149:3a

DISCERNMENT: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to seek God's will and purpose and to apply that understanding to individual and collective situations affecting the faith community.

People with this gift are usually: perceptive, insightful, sensitive, intuitive, decisive, challenging, truthful.

Cautions for people with this gift: being harsh when confronting others instead of speaking truth in love; confirming perceptions before speaking.

Biblical references: John 16:6–15, Romans 9:1, 1 Corinthians 2:9–16

EVANGELISM: The spiritual gift that moves the receiver to reach nonbelievers in such a way that they are baptized and become active disciples in the Christian community.

People with this gift are usually: sincere, candid, respected, influential, spiritual, confident, commitment-oriented.

Cautions for people with this gift: remembering that the Holy Spirit, not guilt, is the motivator in a person's decision for Christ; needing to listen carefully, because the same approach is not appropriate for everyone.

Biblical references: Matthew 28:16–20, Ephesians 4:11–16, 2 Timothy 4:1–5

EXHORTATION: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to encourage others so as to strengthen, comfort or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering in their faith.

People with this gift are usually: positive, motivating, challenging, affirming, reassuring, supportive, trustworthy.

Cautions for people with this gift: being overly optimistic, too simplistic or flattering; being aware where others are in their faith journey and what they really need.

Biblical references: 2 Timothy 1:16–18, John 14:1, 3 John 1:5–8

FAITH: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to see the Spirit at work and to trust the Spirit's leading without indication of where it might lead.

People with this gift are usually: prayerful, optimistic, trusting, assured, positive, inspiring, hopeful.

Cautions for people with this gift: remembering that those who speak with reason and desire to plan do not necessarily lack faith; jumping to action.

Biblical references: Mark 5:25–34, Genesis 12:1–4a, 1 Thessalonians 1:8–10

GIVING: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to recognize God's blessings and to respond to those blessings by generously and sacrificially giving of his or her resources (time, talent, and treasure).

People with this gift are usually: responsible, resourceful, trusting in God, charitable, disciplined, sensitive, stewardship-oriented.

Cautions for people with this gift: remembering that the church's mission is guided by its leaders and not determined by the giver's gift; greed.

Biblical references: Luke 21:1–4, 2 Corinthians 9:6–15

HOSPITALITY: The spiritual gift that causes the receiver to joyfully welcome and receive guests and those in need of fellowship, food, lodging or care.

People with this gift are usually: friendly, gracious, inviting, trusting, caring, responsive, warm.

Cautions for people with this gift: viewing their gift of hospitality as just "entertaining"; remembering to ask God whom to befriend and serve.

Biblical references: Romans 12:13, Romans 16:23a, Luke 10:38

INTERCESSION: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to pray consistently on behalf of others with the certainty that prayer is heard and that, when requests are made, answers will come.

People with this gift are usually: caring, sincere, trustworthy, advocating, burden-bearing, spiritually sensitive.

Cautions for people with this gift: feeling that their gift is not valued; diminishing the spiritual contribution to the body of Christ that comes from this ministry; using prayer as an escape from fulfilling responsibilities.

Biblical references: Matthew 6:6–15, Luke 11:1–10, Ephesians 6:18

KNOWLEDGE: The spiritual gift that drives the receiver to learn, analyze and uncover new insights with regard to the Bible and faith.

People with this gift are usually: inquisitive, responsive, observant, insightful, reflective, studious, truthful.

Cautions for people with this gift: being cautious of this gift leading to pride, remembering that it is God's message, not theirs, when they speak.

Biblical references: 1 Corinthians 12:8; 1 Corinthians 14:6, Romans 12:2

LEADERSHIP: The spiritual gift that gives the receiver the confidence to step forward, give direction and provide motivation to fulfill a vision or complete a task in advancing ministry.

People with this gift are usually: influential, visionary, diligent, trustworthy, persuasive, sensitive, goal-setting.

Cautions for people with this gift: remembering that servant leadership is the biblical model - the greatest leader being the servant of all; waiting for a "leadership position" to use this gift.

Biblical references: Romans 12:4–8, John 13:12–17, Luke 22:24–26

MERCY: The spiritual gift that moves the receiver to feel deeply for those in physical, spiritual or emotional need and then to act to meet that need.

People with this gift are usually: empathetic, caring, responsive, kind, compassionate, sensitive, burden-bearing.

Cautions for people with this gift: feeling "unappreciated" when the people they have helped don't show appreciation in expected ways; becoming defensive and angry about the sources of others' pain.

Biblical references: Luke 7:12–15, Luke 10:30–37, Matthew 25:34–36

MUSIC (VOCAL): The spiritual gift that gives the receiver the capability and opportunity to present personal witness and inspiration to others through singing.

People with this gift are usually: expressive, imaginative, insightful, inspiring, reflective, sensitive, creative.

Cautions for people with this gift: remembering that music is not for music's sake but to glorify God and edify others; finding evaluation and constructive criticism difficult to accept.

Biblical references: Psalm 96:1–9, Psalm 100:1–2, Psalm 149:1–2

MUSIC (INSTRUMENTAL): The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to express personal faith and to provide inspiration and comfort through the playing of a musical instrument.

People with this gift are usually: expressive, imaginative, insightful, inspiring, reflective, sensitive, creative.

Cautions for people with this gift: failing to see that their gift is significant and one that makes a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ; remembering that music is not for music's sake but to glorify God and edify others.

Biblical references: Psalm 33:1–5, Psalm 150, 1 Samuel 16:14–23

PASTORING (SHEPHERDING): The spiritual gift that gives the receiver the confidence, capability and compassion to provide spiritual leadership and direction for individuals or groups of believers.

People with this gift are usually: discipling, supportive, protective, relational, influencing, guiding, and nurturing.

Cautions for people with this gift: passing judgment when they feel others are neglecting or abusing their responsibilities; finding it difficult to say "no" because of the desire to support others.

Biblical references: 1 Timothy 3:1–13, 2 Timothy 4:1–2, 1 Timothy 4:12–16

SERVICE (HELPS): The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to work gladly behind the scenes in order that God's work is fulfilled.

People with this gift are usually: available, willing, helpful, loyal, reliable, dependable, having a whatever-it-takes attitude.

Cautions for people with this gift: remembering that doing practical deeds is a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ; finding it difficult to say "no" because of the desire to support others.

Biblical references: Luke 23:50–54, Romans 16:1–16, Philippians 2:19–23

SKILLED CRAFT: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to create, build, maintain or repair items used within the church.

People with this gift are usually: creative, resourceful, helpful, design-oriented, practical, handy, and used to functioning behind the scenes.

Cautions for people with this gift: failing to see that their gift is significant and one that makes a spiritual contribution to the body of Christ; using people to get things done instead of helping them grow in the process.

Biblical references: Exodus 30:1–6, Exodus 31:3–5, Ezekiel 27:4–11

TEACHING: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to communicate a personal understanding of the Bible and faith in such a way that it becomes clear and understood by others.

People with this gift are usually: analytical, disciplined, perceptive, teachable, authoritative, practical, articulate.

Cautions for people with this gift: becoming too detailed when teaching and losing sight of the reason for teaching; remembering that their spirituality is not measured by how much they know.

Biblical references: 1 Corinthians 12:28, Matthew 5:1–12, Acts 18:24–28

WISDOM: The spiritual gift that allows the receiver to sort through opinions, facts and thoughts in order to determine what solution would be best for the individual believer or the community of believers.

People with this gift are usually: sensible, insightful, practical, wise, fair, experienced, possessing common sense.

Cautions for people with this gift: failing to share the wisdom that God has given them; being patient with others who do not have this gift.

Biblical references: 1 Corinthians 2:6–13, James 3:13–18, 2 Chronicles 1:7–11

WRITING: The spiritual gift that enables the receiver to express truth in a written form, a form that can edify, instruct and strengthen the community of believers.

People with this gift are usually: expressive, studious, insightful, inspiring, reflective, truthful, and observant.

Cautions for people with this gift: remembering that it is God's message, not theirs; being proud.

Biblical references: 1 John 2:1–6, 12–14, 1 Timothy 3:14–15, Jude 3

THE ORDERS OF MINISTRY

The Ministry of the Laity

The term “the laity” is derived from the Greek word λαός (laos), “the people.” Scripture teaches that all baptized Christians are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Peter 2:9-10), and that all baptized persons are members of the Body of Christ, the Church, but have different functions and ministries (Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12) which grow out of the different ways we each live out our baptismal covenant (see BCP, pp. 304-305). The “ministers of the church” are not limited to bishops, priests, and deacons alone, but also include the laity as an order of ministry (BCP, p. 855). The ministry of the laity is “to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church” (BCP, p. 855). Clericalism unfortunately caused some to view the ordained orders as the only real ministers of the church and to regard the laity as inferior to the clergy. However, a renewed emphasis on the significance of the baptismal covenant has led to an increasing appreciation of lay ministry and a growing understanding that the various orders of ministry are necessary to support, uphold, and serve one another. The orders of ministries in the church are to be complementary, and the Book of Common Prayer encourages the participation of all orders of ministry in the worship and life of the church.

The following Licensed Lay Vocations do not require ordination, and those who have a call to lay ministry will be referred to a Lay Ministry Retreat for an in-depth exploration of different opportunities in lay ministry.

Licensed Lay Vocations

A **Pastoral Leader** is a lay person authorized to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility in a congregation under special circumstances, as defined by the bishop.

A **Worship Leader** is a lay person who regularly leads public worship under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A **Preacher** is a lay person authorized to preach. Persons so authorized shall only preach in congregations under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A **Eucharistic Minister** is a lay person authorized to administer the consecrated elements at a celebration of Holy Eucharist. A Eucharistic Minister should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A **Eucharistic Visitor** is a lay person authorized to take the consecrated elements in a timely manner following a celebration of Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, were unable to be present at the celebration. A Eucharistic Visitor should normally act under the direction of a Deacon, if any, or otherwise, the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

A **Catechist** is a lay person authorized to prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception, and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows, and shall function under the direction of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation or other community of faith.

An **Evangelist** is a lay person who presents the good news of Jesus Christ in such a way that people are led to receive Christ as Savior and follow Christ as Lord in the fellowship of the Church. An Evangelist assists with the community's ministry of evangelism in partnership with the Presbyter or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation, or as directed by the bishop.

Lay Religious Life and Monastic Vocations

Vocations to the Religious Life

Another way to live out one's call as a layperson is through a monastic vocation. Yes, religious life has been well established and active in The Episcopal Church since the 1850s!

Monastic and canonical orders were discontinued in England by Henry VIII but restored in the Anglican Communion during the nineteenth century. A renewal of Anglican monasticism was encouraged by the Oxford Movement. In England, E. B. Pusey heard the vows of two women who started a religious community in 1845. Other religious communities formed in England in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Rev. Charles C. Grafton, a native of Boston and later Bishop of Fond du Lac, was one of the founders of the first Anglican monastic orders for men after the Reformation, the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE) in England in 1866.

In the U.S., Episcopal monasticism began in the mid-nineteenth century when the Community of St. Mary (CSM) was founded by Mother Harriet and her companions in 1865 on Feb. 2, the Feast of the Presentation. The Martyrs of Memphis, who died in 1878 and who are commemorated in our calendar on September 9, were members of the Community of Saint Mary.

The first American monastic order for men in the Episcopal Church was the Order of the Holy Cross (OHC), founded by the Rev. James O. S. Huntington in New York in 1884.

Religious life in The Episcopal Church takes two distinct forms:

1. Members of "Religious Orders" live in community, give up ownership of their possessions under a vow of poverty, and are celibate. All live under a common rule of life and daily schedule for prayer, work, and service. Some Orders are more contemplative and others more active in ministry.

The canon for Religious Orders reads as follows: "A Religious Order of this Church is a society of Christians (in communion with the See of Canterbury) who voluntarily commit themselves for life, or a term of years, to holding their possessions in common or in trust; to a celibate life in community; and obedience to their Rule and Constitution." (Title III, Canon 14, section 1)

2. Members of "Christian Communities" live in their own homes, either alone or with their families, take a vow of poverty interpreted as simplicity and carefully discerned use of resources but do not give away all of their possessions, and take a vow of chastity usually interpreted as respectful relationship with all people. They choose

whether to be celibate or to live in a committed relationship with a spouse or partner.

The canon for Christian Communities reads as follows: “A Christian Community of this Church is a society of Christians (in communion with the See of Canterbury) who voluntarily commit themselves for life, or a term of years, in obedience to their Rule and Constitution.” (Title III, Canon 14, section 2)

Religious vows may be expressed and interpreted slightly differently, and often include poverty, chastity, and obedience. The Benedictine vow is usually expressed as obedience, stability, and conversion of life. There is always a process of discernment, formation, and stages of incorporation into the Order or Community, until a well-discerned and prayerful decision is made to take a life vow.

There have been Religious Orders in The Episcopal Church since the mid-1800s, and Christian Communities formed somewhat later. The members of both have served the church in many capacities: hospitality, retreat leading, spiritual direction, chaplaincy, and parish ministry as ordained clergy and as laity, and their ministries have often been prophetic in the church, such as peace activism, social justice work, and inclusive/expansive language in worship. Members of Religious Orders and Christian Communities both center their lives on prayer and worship.

Most Religious Orders welcome non-members to become associates or oblates. These programs provide spiritual guidance and fellowship with the members and with other associates or oblates. Religious Orders and Christian Communities also have members who are experienced guides for writing a rule of life, spiritual directors, and confessors.

To learn more and to research individual communities, see:

Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas: caroa.net.

National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities: naecc.net.

For resources, history, and more information visit: religiouslifesunday.org and www.youtube.com/@religiouslifesunday.

Reading list on religious life and vocational discernment:

Memoir and Biography

Joan Chittister, *The Way We Were: A Story of Conversion and Renewal* (2005)
and

Called to Question: A Spiritual Memoir (2009)

Thomas Merton, *Seven Storey Mountain* (1976)

Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk* (1996)

Henry Nouwen, *Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey* (1990)

Ellen Stephen, OSH, *Together and Apart: A Memoir of the Religious Life* (2008)

Benet Tvedten, *The View from a Monastery* (2006)

Religious and Communal Life – History and Current Reflections

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (2009)

Isabel Losada, *New Habits: Today's Women Who Choose to Become Nuns* (1999)

Elizabeth Rapley, *The Lord as their Portion: The Story of the Religious Orders and How*

They Shaped our World (2011)

Michael Schut (ed.), *Simpler Living, Compassionate Life: A Christian Perspective* (2009)

Nicholas Stebbing (ed.), *Anglican Religious Life: A Well-kept Secret?* (2003)

Vocation and Discernment

Susanne G. Farnham, et al., *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (1991)

Marie Theresa Coombs and Frances Kelly Nemeck, *Called by God: A Theology of Vocation and Lifelong Commitment* (1992) and

Discerning Vocations to the Apostolic Life, the Contemplative Life and the Eremitic Life (2018)

James Martin, SJ, *Becoming Who You Are: Insights on the True Self from Thomas*

Merton and Other Saints (2006)

Mark McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth* (2004)

William C. Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (2005)

Sam Portaro, *Transforming Vocation* (2008)

The Ministry of the Diaconate

The terms “diaconate” and “deacon” are derived from the Greek word δίακονος (diakonos) meaning a servant who acted as an intermediary and spoke for a superior. A deacon is a member of one of three distinct orders of ordained ministry along with bishops and presbyters. In the Episcopal Church, a deacon exercises a special ministry of servanthood directly under the authority of the bishop, serving all people and especially those in need (BCP, p. 543). This reflects the practice of the early church in which the deacon was not ordained to the priesthood, but to the service of the bishop, to do that which he [or she] commanded. (Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition, 8). Christian deacons were agents of the bishop, often with oversight of charity. Since ancient times the liturgical functions of deacons have suggested the activity of angels: they proclaim the gospel, lead intercessions, wait at the eucharistic table, and direct the order of the assembly, acting as sacred messengers, agents, and attendants. The revival of the order of deacons in the twentieth century has emphasized social care and service as part of the diaconal vocation with many bishops expecting their deacons to promote the care of the needy outside the church. In addition to those who are ordained a deacon as a permanent vocation, there are also those who are ordained as “transitional deacons,” who serve for a time as a deacon before being ordained a priest.

The Diaconal Ordination Rite

The examination and the vows of the diaconal ordination rite differentiate the Sacred Order of Deacons from the other orders. Please read them carefully as they reveal the heart and the unique vocation of a deacon.

The Examination

*All are seated except the ordinand, who stands before the Bishop.
The Bishop addresses the ordinand as follows*

My *brother*, every Christian is called to follow Jesus Christ, serving God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit. God now calls you to a special ministry of

servanthood directly under your bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.

As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example, to those among whom you live, and work, and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time. At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.

My *brother*, do you believe that you are truly called by God and his Church to the life and work of a deacon?

Answer I believe I am so called.

Bishop Do you now in the presence of the Church commit yourself to this trust and responsibility?

Answer I do.

Bishop Will you be guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of your bishop?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you be faithful in prayer, and in the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you look for Christ in all others, being ready to help and serve those in need?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you do your best to pattern your life [and that of your family, *or* household, *or* community] in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that you may be a wholesome example to all people?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you in all things seek not your glory but the glory of the Lord Christ?

Answer I will.

Bishop May the Lord by his grace uphold you in the service he lays upon you.

Answer Amen.

The Bishop then says this Prayer of Consecration

O God, most merciful Father, we praise you for sending your Son Jesus Christ, who took

on himself the form of a servant, and humbled himself, becoming obedient even to death on the cross. We praise you that you have highly exalted him, and made him Lord of all; and that, through him, we know that whoever would be great must be servant of all. We praise you for the many ministries in your Church, and for calling this your servant to the order of deacons.

Here the Bishop lays hands upon the head of the ordinand, and prays

Therefore, Father, through Jesus Christ your Son, give your Holy Spirit to *N.*; fill *him* with grace and power, and make him a deacon in your Church.

The Bishop then continues

Make *him*, O Lord, modest and humble, strong and constant, to observe the discipline of Christ. Let *his* life and teaching so reflect your commandments, that through *him* many may come to know you and love you. As your Son came not to be served but to serve, may this deacon share in Christ's service, and come to the unending glory of him who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.

The Ministry of the Priesthood

The terms “priesthood” and “priest” are ultimately derived from the Greek word πρεσβύτερος (presbyteros) meaning “elder” or “old man.” In the New Testament, “presbyter” usually indicated a leader of the local church and the “presbyterate” referred to the collegial leadership of the presbyters of the Church. In the early Church, it appears that the presbyters were at first indistinguishable from bishops as the term “presbyter” was often used interchangeably with “bishop” (see Timothy 1: 5-7). By the second century, the terms were more distinct with the presbyters clearly deriving their authority from the bishop, joining with the bishop in an advisory council, and assisting the bishop in the bishop's ministry of pastoral oversight, administration, and liturgical leadership. By the third century, the bishop came to delegate primary daily pastoral responsibility in a congregation or area to the presbyters. The presbyters were responsible for teaching and preaching, administration, and sacramental ministry in that place, under the oversight of the bishop.

After the Reformation, some protestant churches began to use the term “presbyter” for the minister who preaches the word and administers the sacraments, but the Church of England retained the term “priest” for the second order of ministry. The 1979 Book of Common Prayer uses both terms. For example, directions for “The Ordination of a Priest” require that “at least two presbyters must be present” (p. 524). The Catechism notes that “the ministry of a priest or presbyter” is “to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God” (BCP, p. 856).

The Priestly Ordination Rite

Likewise, the examination and the vows of the priestly ordination rite differentiate the Sacred Order of Priests from the other orders. Please read them carefully as they reveal the heart and the unique vocation of a priest.

The Examination

All are seated except the ordinand, who stands before the Bishop.

The Bishop addresses the ordinand as follows

My *brother*, the Church is the family of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. All baptized people are called to make Christ known as Savior and Lord, and to share in the renewing of his world. Now you are called to work as a pastor, priest, and teacher, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.

As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God’s forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God’s blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ’s Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.

In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ’s people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.

My *brother*, do you believe that you are truly called by God and his Church to this priesthood?

Answer I believe I am so called.

Bishop Do you now in the presence of the Church commit yourself to this trust and responsibility?

Answer I do.

Bishop Will you respect and be guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of your bishop?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you 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?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you endeavor so to minister the Word of God and the sacraments of the New Covenant, that the reconciling love of Christ may be known and received?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you undertake to be a faithful pastor to all whom you are called to serve, laboring together with them and with your fellow ministers to build up the family of God?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you do your best to pattern your life [and that of your family, *or* household, *or* community] in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that you may be a wholesome example to your people?

Answer I will.

Bishop Will you persevere in prayer, both in public and in private, asking God's grace, both for yourself and for others, offering all your labors to God, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and in the sanctification of the Holy Spirit?

Answer I will.

Bishop May the Lord who has given you the will to do these things give you the grace and power to perform them.

Answer Amen.

The Bishop then says this Prayer of Consecration

God and Father of all, we praise you for your infinite love in calling us to be a holy people in the kingdom of your Son Jesus our Lord, who is the image of your eternal and invisible glory, the firstborn among many brethren, and the head of the Church. We thank you that by his death he has overcome death, and, having ascended into heaven, has poured his gifts abundantly upon your people, making some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the building up of his body.

Here the Bishop lays hands upon the head of the ordinand, the Priests who are present also laying on their hands. At the same time the Bishop prays

Therefore, Father, through Jesus Christ your Son, give your Holy Spirit to *N.*; fill *him* with grace and power, and make *him* a priest in your Church.

The Bishop then continues

May *he* exalt you, O Lord, in the midst of your people; offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you; boldly proclaim the gospel of salvation; and rightly administer the sacraments of the New Covenant. Make *him* a faithful pastor, a patient teacher, and a wise councilor. Grant that in all things *he* may serve without reproach, so that your people may be strengthened and your Name glorified in all the world. All this we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.

The People in a loud voice respond Amen.

THE STAGES OF THE FORMAL DISCERNMENT PROCESS

The Inquirer

Testing the Waters (Diocesan Day of Discernment Every September)

The Inquirer may have had a personal “call experience” or may have been identified by others as having a call to ministry. For some, they may be feeling God unexpectedly tugging at their lives which is resulting in a deep sense of spiritual disquiet. Others may have a greater sense of the purpose to which God might be calling them. During the Inquirer stage, the Inquirer is asking the preliminary question, “Am I being called?” first of himself or herself, then of close friends, family, his or her clergy. This eventually leads to questions about discerning a call in community as part of a formal discernment

process. However, at this stage, the Inquirer is not committed to enter formal discernment, only to seek opportunities to ask questions and gather information. The Diocesan Day of Discernment is for individuals who are at the Inquirer stage and not yet ready to commit to a formal discernment process. However, attendance at the Day of Discernment is required as the first step in the formal diocesan discernment process should the Inquirer choose to enter it. The Inquirer is expected to have a conversation with their Rector or Vicar and inform them in advance that they intend to attend the Diocesan Day of Discernment.

The Aspirant

Discerning a Call in Community (September - April)

The Inquirer has attended the Diocesan Day of Discernment and has prayed, read materials on discernment, spoken with friends, family, and his or her Rector or Vicar, and has decided to enter the formal discernment process. The Inquirer completes a Declaration of Intent to enter formal discernment and files the same with the Commission on Ministry. The Inquirer is now considered an Aspirant. The Aspirant begins meeting regularly with his or her Rector, as well as meeting regularly with a spiritual director, writes a spiritual autobiography, and develops a Rule of Life. An initial Discernment Committee is formed, and the Aspirant begins regular meetings with them. The Aspirant continues to be faithful in public worship, private prayer, and completes a suggested reading list.

Commission on Ministry Preliminary Interview (Every April / May)

After submitting certain written materials, the Aspirant and his or her spouse or partner meets with different subgroups of the Commission on Ministry and the Bishop to discuss his or her progress in discernment, and to begin to discern a call to lay or ordained ministry. If the Commission on Ministry and the Bishop hear a clear call to lay ministry, the Aspirant will be given information about the next Lay Ministry Retreat where specialized training will be offered to help them live into their call. If a preliminary call to ordained ministry is heard, the Aspirant seeks to become a Nominee.

The Nominee

Discerning a Call to an Ordained Vocation (April - October)

Before becoming a Nominee, the Aspirant meets with the Rector and Vestry of his or her home congregation and requests they nominate the Aspirant for Holy Orders, specifying the order to which the Aspirant feels called at that time. If the Rector and Vestry agree, they nominate the Aspirant for Holy Orders, specifying either the Diaconate or the Priesthood, and the Aspirant then becomes a Nominee. The Nominee notifies the Bishop in writing of their acceptance of the nomination. The Nominee then undergoes a medical examination, a psychological examination, and a background check. These costs are usually borne by the Nominee's congregation. The nominee continues attending public worship, maintains an active personal prayer life, and keeps meeting regularly with a spiritual director and the Rector or other clergy person assigned to the Nominee. The Nominee will be expected to visit other congregations to experience the breadth of the Diocese, writing reflections on his or her experiences and submitting them to The Commission on Ministry. A recommended reading list is completed and reflections on the readings are written and submitted to the Commission on Ministry.

Commission on Ministry Vocational Discernment Retreat (Every October)

After submitting certain written materials, the Nominee and his or her spouse or partner meets with the Commission on Ministry and other invited guests to discuss his or her progress in discernment. The retreat is held at Diocesan House and at the Cathedral, often on a Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. The Nominee and his or her spouse or partner will meet with smaller and larger groups during the retreat for conversation and evaluation, including a private meeting between the Bishop and the Nominee and his or her spouse. This retreat is a time of deep discernment as to vocational call and suitability for that call. At the conclusion of the retreat, the Commission on Ministry will make a recommendation to the Bishop as to each Nominee's vocational call. If the Bishop agrees with the Commission on Ministry's recommendation, the Bishop will admit the Nominee to Postulancy in the appropriate vocation and will inform the Nominee in due course. If the decision is inconclusive, if

issues and complications arise during the course of the weekend, or if the Commission on Ministry hears a clear call to lay ministry and not to ordained ministry, the Nominee will be informed of this result as well. **Each Nominee who attends the Vocational Discernment Retreat will have a vocational answer by the end of October.**

A SUMMARY OF THE POSSIBLE RESULTS OF DISCERNMENT

Discernment is by definition an uncertain process and can lead to many places. In discernment, no answer is predetermined: prayerful consideration of the question must guide the inquiry, not an expected or hoped-for answer. With this in mind, there are a number of possible outcomes of entering a formal discernment process which could come at any point in the process.

You Have a Clear Call to Lay Ministry

The Commission on Ministry and the bishop hear a clear call to continued lay ministry or a new lay ministry. You will be encouraged and supported to develop skills appropriate to that calling and serve in the lay ministry to which you are called.

You Have a Clear Call to a Monastic Vocation

The Commission on Ministry and the bishop hear a clear call to a monastic vocation. You will be encouraged and supported to further discern such a call and to which community you might be called.

You Have a Clear Call to the Diaconate

The Commission on Ministry and the bishop hear a clear call to the Diaconate. Those who are admitted to Postulancy for the Diaconate will be recommended for a formal

program of Diaconal study and formation at Bexley Seabury under the supervision of the Commission on Ministry. This is usually a two to three-year process.

You Have a Clear Call to the Priesthood

The Commission on Ministry and the bishop hear a clear call to the Priesthood. Those who are admitted to Postulancy for the Priesthood will be recommended for formal program of study and formation at The School of Theology at The University of the South (Sewanee) under the supervision of the Commission on Ministry. This is usually a three-year process. While Bishop Richards may consider other seminaries or, on rare occasions, hybrid programs, there must be unique circumstances to justify deviation from the Diocesan standard.

Your Call is Uncertain or Inconclusive at this Time

The Commission on Ministry and the bishop are unclear as to the call you are articulating. This is often addressed by asking the Aspirant or Nominee to continue discernment in a variety of ways such as self-development practices, seeking therapy for unresolved issues, further interior work with a spiritual director, seeking additional education, deeper theological reflection, spending more time in The Episcopal Church, or sometimes even changing congregations. If the call is uncertain or inconclusive, the Aspirant will not be moved forward in the process and may be asked to revisit a former stage of the process for more discernment work.

The Call Raises a Significant Concern

The Commission on Ministry and the bishop share a concern about the health and well-being of the Aspirant or Nominee and work with the Parish Leadership to get the Aspirant the help they may need to once again thrive as a member of the Body of Christ.

GETTING STARTED

Are you ready to discern a call in community?

For information on the next Diocesan Day of Discernment and for registration information, please use the following link:

<https://www.vancoevents.com/us/DPVN>

or scan the QR code below.





THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA

SAMPLE DECLARATION OF INTENT

To The Bishop and Commission on Ministry:

I hereby declare my intent to enter the formal discernment process.

Full Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ City/State of Birth: _____

Permanent Address: _____

City/State/ZIP Code: _____

Preferred Telephone Number: _____

Preferred Email Address: _____

Congregation: _____

Your Rector or Vicar: _____

Former Denomination(s) (if applicable): _____

I am: ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Partnered ☐ Separated ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed

Spouse's/Partner's Name (if applicable): _____



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF UPPER SOUTH CAROLINA

If married, is this your first marriage? If not, how many times have you been married? _____

Date of your Baptism: _____ Denomination: _____

Name of Church and Location: _____

Name of Officiant: _____

Please submit a copy of your baptismal certificate or baptismal register.

Date of Confirmation or Reception into The Episcopal Church: _____

Location of Confirmation or Reception: _____

Confirming or Receiving Bishop: _____

Please submit a copy of your confirmation certificate or confirmation register.

I believe I may have a call to: ☐ Lay Ministry ☐ Ordained Ministry ☐ I am unsure

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please submit a JPEG or GIF of you photograph of yourself with this form.

This Declaration and all supporting documentation must be submitted no later than [DATE]

Please return the completed form in PDF format to:

The Rev. Canon Stephen J. Rhoades

srhoades@edusc.org

Vocational Discernment Suggested Reading List

Holy Scripture

A Touch of God, *Maria Boulding (Triangle, 1988)*

Being Salt: A Theology of an Ordered Church, *George Sumner (Wipf & Stock, 2007)*

Called or Collared, *Francis Dewar (new edition, SPCK, 2000)*

Consider Your Calling: Six Questions for Discerning Your Vocation, *Gordon T. Smith (IVP, 2016)*

Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge, *Mark A. McIntosh (Crossroad, 2004)*

How to Find your Vocation, *John Adair (Canterbury Press, 2000)*

Invitations: God's Calling for Everyone, *Francis Dewar (SPCK, 1996)*

Let Your Life Speak, *Parker Palmer (Jossey-Bass, 1999)*

Listening Hearts, *Farnham, Gill, McLean & Ward (Morehouse 1991)*

Live for a Change, *Francis Dewar (DLT, 1988)*

Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All, *William Countryman (Morehouse 1999)*

On Call, *Stuart Buchanan (BRF, 2001)*

The Call, *Os Guinness (Spring Harvest, 2001)*

The Road to Daybreak, *Henri Nouwen (DLT, 1989)*

The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer and the Witness of the Spirit, *Gordon T. Smith (IVP, 2003)*

The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making, *Elizabeth Liebert (Westminster John Knox Press, 2008)*

This is our Calling, *Charles Richardson (SPCK, 2004)*

Notes

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