

Minnesota Discernment Process

- Session 1 Getting Acquainted
1. Discerner distributes a written draft of his/her autobiography and call.
 2. Group establishes overall organization and schedule for the meetings.
 3. Group (including discerner) discusses what it is to have a sense of “call” in one’s life – how it is known, sensed, experienced, heard, learned, etc. and how we respond to it.
 4. Group becomes sensitive to the following characteristics (especially in the discerner, but also in each other):
 - Communication skills
 - Ability to relate to others
 - Personal integrity and self-esteem
 - Physical health and energy
 - Intellectual gifts and abilities
- Session 2 Biography of Discerner
1. Discerner reflects on his/her autobiography, giving insight into personality, strengths and weaknesses.
 2. Group discusses (with discerner) the significant life experiences that have shaped the discerner’s present identity and life direction.
 3. Group becomes sensitive to the discerner’s sense of strengths and weaknesses (limitations).
 4. Discerner re-writes autobiography after the session.
- Session 3 Insights into Ministry
1. Discerner distributes his/her re-written autobiography.
 2. Group discusses the distinctions between the ministries of the laity, deacons, priests, and bishops.
 3. Group (with discerner) discusses the meanings and differences that distinguish the various ministries.
 4. Group becomes sensitive to new ideas, concerns and points of confusion, discovering each other’s understanding of ministry.
- Session 4 Discerner’s Present Ministry and Theology
1. Discerner presents a description of his/her current ministry.
 - How is this ministry being validated?
 - How is this different from the ministry of deacon, priest or bishop?
 - Would the discerner’s ministry be enriched by ordination?

2. Discerner shares and group discusses how they relate to
 - Prayer
 - The sacraments
 - Scripture
 - Authority
 - Obedience

Session 5 Discerner's Sense of Call

1. Discerner distributes a description of his/her sense of "call".
 - From God
 - From the community
 - In the context of his/her family and friends
2. The group (with discerner) sensitively discusses what had been written, recognizing that the ability to struggle with and express the deep sense of personal relationship with God and others is central to creative ministry. The discerner is challenged to risk and speak deeply about his/her call.

Session 6 What does the Discerner Bring to this Call

1. Discerner presents written insights and reflections on "moral character"
 - What that means to the discerner
 - How what that means shows in his or her life.
 - How the discerner copes with failure to live up to his/her standard of behavior.
2. Discerner's work experiences – how these experiences relate to the discerner's sense of call?
3. What vision does the discerner bring to the future ministry? (To what extent is it open-ended?)
4. Does the discerner have any burdensome financial obligations?

Session 7. Whom Does the Discerner Bring to the Call?

1. Discerner's spouse or partner also attends the session.
2. How does the discerner's family relate to the call?
 - Realistic vision?
 - What is the role of the family in the decision to explore ordination to the priesthood?
 - What about the potential personal and financial stress with the seminary training?
3. Are there other family pressures involved in the decision?

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Session 8

Committee Reflection

1. Group meets without discerner.
 - Each committee member brings written observations/reflections to share.
 - An outline of the reflections is prepared to share with the discerner.
2. Group meets with discerner
 - Outline is shared with the discerner
 - Discussion
 - Discerner has the opportunity to discuss areas he/she feel/thinks have been discovered or unexplored.
3. Committee chair drafts letter for the Vestry following the outline prepared in this session; the draft is circulated among committee membership before Session 9.

Session 9

Final Meeting of the Committee

Committee meets, possibly, over dinner to review comments and suggest improvements for the letter drafted by the chair.

Final Task.

Chair presents the letter to the Vestry and responds to their questions.

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