

Welcome

Introduction

Letter from Our Bishop

Introduction

Has anyone ever told you that you would be good at doing such and such ministry? Do you wonder how you can best be of service to others? Have you wondered how to listen to God, to open yourself to God's guidance?

This handbook offers some information that may be useful as you seek to listen to God and be open to God's guidance in your life.

This activity is often called *discernment*. Discernment is a process of placing ourselves in God's hands and listening for the direction in which God is calling us. Discernment is making choices through the eyes of faith, and in doing so deepening our awareness of God. Since we are always being called to grow in our relationship with God and in our service to others, discernment is best understood as a life-long process. Sometimes an individual wants to know whether the call is to an ordained ministry. Openness to God's call leads us to ministry of many kinds, not always ordained.

Discernment has both individual and communal aspects. It may begin in solitude, with listening for the voice of God. Yet as members of a community of Christians, we also draw upon the wisdom of the community as we listen for God's direction. This handbook is a guide. The first part focuses on individual aspects of discernment; the second, on the formation and function of a group of people, called a *discernment team*, who gather to listen to God along with the individual discerners; and the third part is appendices which provide useful information on discernment.

Our hope is that this handbook will help many people who seek to discern God's will for their lives. It provides a series of steps, starting with the writing of a spiritual autobiography and continuing through other activities, some to do on one's own and some to carry out with the companionship of a discernment team.

Help with the process of discernment and answers to questions may be obtained through members of the Commission on Ministry (COM) of the Diocese of Iowa. Please call the Diocesan Office for assistance 515-277-6165.



March 2006

Dearly Beloved Seeker,

Off to one side of my office there is a small porch, where I hold most of my one-on-one meetings with people. It has its own entrance into the Chapel of the Epiphany, and it is, for me, one of the holiest spots in my ministry. For it is here that I am privileged to hear the numerous stories of people's journey with God. And it is here that I share in their process of discernment that often has begun long before they arrive in my presence.

In such moments of discerning together, God's presence has been palpable. And I am reminded that with all our strategizing, planning and processing, it is sheer grace that truly moves in the lives of human beings and leads us into the way of God's plans. I don't believe that discernment is a game of hide and seek with God, who knows what will be done anyway, but rather is an invitation to talk with the Holy One about the endless possibilities of our lives directed and dedicated to the service of Christ. Into that conversation we bring our knowledge of Christ and his love as expressed in the Gospels and the mission such love must live for. In turn God brings God's own sense of who we are as Christ's beloved, and who we can become in the power of the Holy Spirit. As these two come together, discernment happens.

Discernment is a very human endeavor. It exists in the cauldron of Incarnated truth. Its outcomes and ways are as varied as we are unique in our creation. No fingerprint is alike, and so each of our ways with God are peculiar to ourselves. That is why even personal discernment requires community. When we let God guide us through trusting the prayerful, holy listening of others, we have already begun the journey that moves us deeper into the awareness of the Kingdom of God. We are beginning to experience the life of the Body of Christ, which is the Church, and we are learning to trust it and trust ourselves within it.

God could do it all in a different way. God could simply order us about, and often because God does not do that, there are enough of us in the name of the Church willing to fill that particular void! But the very nature of the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ should tell us what risks in discernment and what respect in the ability of humans to discern truth our Creator and Loving God is willing to demonstrate among us. Our own call to discernment of ministry - or to figure out what Jesus wants to do through us and with us personally and collectively - is a call to follow Him fully. Everyone needs to be in discernment. This handbook is a guide to the process. It is useful for individuals and for communities of faith. It is for all of us to use as a way of discovering God's fullest purpose for our lives. Its methods can be used for job searches, vocational questions, relationship ventures, or simple inner turmoil.

I am grateful to the various members of the Commission on Ministry who have labored hard to seek to define the indefinable. What they offer is a wonderful sample of possibilities. There might not be a definitive method for discernment, but this is a wonderful resource to get you started. I am convinced that it will lead you to holy places with each other from which you will emerge lost in wonder, love and praise.


Bishop Alan Scarfe

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA ✱ IN MISSION WITH CHRIST THROUGH EACH AND ALL

DIOCESAN HOUSE ✱ 225 - 37TH STREET ✱ DES MOINES IA 50312-4305
WWW.IOWAEPISCOPAL.ORG ✱ TEL: 515-277-6165 ✱ FAX: 515-277-0273

Section 1

Discerning Individual Direction

Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography

Individual Discernment Questions

Conversations with a Clergy Person

Writing Your Spiritual Autobiography

This exercise is usually completed individually. One may seek direction and help from a clergy person, the Commission on Ministry, an Education for Ministry (EFM) mentor, or a trusted friend. A person might want to set aside several hours to complete this exercise. It has proven helpful to consider the first piece to be a draft which is put aside for a while and then reviewed to make sure it says what the person intends it to say. This particular guide is taken from Common Lesson A of the Education For Ministry program. This can be used as a guide with variations and adaptations made for each individual.

A spiritual autobiography is the story of the significant events, people, and places that have influenced your relationship with God. It tells the story of how you have come to hold your own beliefs. Your spiritual autobiography describes the patterns, themes, and motifs by which you recognize the flow of your life.

There are many ways to tell your story. This process provides you with one way to do that. Your spiritual autobiography is a continual resource for connecting your life story with the story of the people of God.

A skeletal structure or outline helps when writing your autobiography, because without one, the experiences, thoughts, and themes of your life become more than you can tell.

Begin by framing your life in fifteen-year segments. The first segment would begin with the time of your birth and end on your fifteenth birthday; the rest of the segments would continue likewise.

In each of the segments consider the following

Significant Persons

Your life has been shaped by certain persons – parents, teachers, siblings, church leaders, characters in books, etc. Beginning with the first fifteen-year segment of your life, consider who the people are who contributed to your understanding of yourself and of God during this time. Name each person, and describe as best you can his or her importance in your life. Perhaps you can recall and describe a particular event which has special significance for you.

When considering the significant persons of this time frame, you may recall some who did not constructively influence you. It is important that you recall these people also. Several persons will have influenced different time periods, but for now record only what the person meant to you during each of the fifteen year segments of your life. Perhaps you can recall someone who was a special mediator of grace to you. How did this happen?

Material and Economic Life

Material surroundings involve the obvious things such as houses, neighborhoods, and valuable possessions. They also include the technologies that influence and define our situations. “Economy” is basically defined as the system used to distribute resources. Record the description of your material and economic circumstances during each of the fifteen year segments of your life. If changes in these situations occurred during the time periods, note them as well.

Pleasures and Recreations

How you have fun is a very important part of your story. Each of us finds pleasure in remarkably different activities, and during our lives our pleasures and recreations are likely to change. Think back to each time period of your life to what was fun for you – what kind of entertainment you sought out and enjoyed.

Religious Atmosphere

In considering this aspect of your life story, it is helpful to think beyond your formal religious experience. The religious atmosphere of your life necessarily is affected by your cultural and family context. Was religion something you addressed one day of the week, never addressed, or did you live in a religious atmosphere which permeated every event in your life? What religious beliefs were presented to you? Did you attend a church-affiliated school? Were your friends from families with like-minded religious attitudes? What was your community’s notion of religion? Again, consider this aspect during each fifteen-year period of your life.

Themes and Motifs

As a final consideration for the segments of your life story, record any themes, symbols, underlying values, or motifs which name the reality of your life during certain times. There may be several.

Individual Discernment Questions

Individuals who are considering entering into a more formal discernment process with a group of listeners will need to take some time in personal discernment prior to forming a group. The following questions provide topics for a person to explore. It is not intended that each person reflect on every single suggested question in this list, however, it is important that quality time is given to as many of these as it takes to feel confident that one has explored sufficiently as an individual and is ready to share his/her feelings with a group of people. The process does not need to be rushed. It would be advisable to take some time each day to spend in quiet with one of these questions (or others) until a person feels the confidence to move to the next stage.

Before beginning any formal process of discernment, take some time to explore the following questions in your personal meditations. These are meant to stimulate your thoughts so be aware of where these questions may lead you – maybe into more questions. You might want to journal or make notes about some of these questions.

As you think about what God may be asking of you, does a particular image or vision come to mind? Take some time to look at the potential benefits and potential risks around the direction toward which you are feeling pulled.

Talk to your family about your thoughts on what God may be asking of you. How do they feel about this direction for your life? Do they have any ideas about how your direction will affect them?

Try to quiet the thoughts in your mind and focus on the feelings in your heart. Can you name these feelings? Can you describe the intensity of these feelings?

How does this perceived direction fit with any goals you may have already identified in your life?

Can you remember how long you have been feeling and thinking about this direction God may be leading you? Why would these feelings/thoughts be surfacing now?

Think through your present commitments. How much of your time and energy do you feel is already committed in some way? Do you feel over committed; not involved enough?

Think about your life journey at this point. Can you identify tasks that you feel you need to complete; steps you need to take in order to complete a part of your journey? Are you feeling rushed or the need to experience some movement?

Does your need for love or desire for approval unduly influence you?

When you think about the direction you are trying to identify, do you find thoughts of money, or glory or a reputation influencing your potential decisions?

Think of people whom you trust, have they influenced your perceptions/thoughts about this direction?

Can you relate how you are feeling to any scripture?

What serious concerns do you have about the needs of others? Who and where are these people?

What causes you to feel deep joy? great hope? What kinds of things make you feel angry? make you cry? make you tense or stressed?

As you go about your daily life, what issues or topics do you repeatedly find most engaging?

Conversations with a Clergy Person

Prior to beginning a congregational discernment team, plan to spend several sessions with a clergy person in a congregation before forming a discernment team.. This is a time for the discernor to open him/herself to another person. The conversations may be the first time these feelings and thoughts have been spoken aloud. It is an opportunity to organize and articulate feelings and thoughts and determine if there are other areas or ideas that may need to be considered before beginning a group process. These conversations may mean meeting an hour a week for up to a month.

These conversations may focus on some of the following.

- Writing your spiritual autobiography. (See page 1 - 1.)
- What formation experiences have led you to this place of questioning?
- Practice telling your faith story. (Appendix D)
- If you are thinking about ordained ministry you may want to explore the meaning of ordination and try to identify what God may be asking you to do that requires ordination. (Book of Common Prayer [BCP] p. 531, 545, 855-856 The Ministry)
- You may want to explore your family history and how your family is part of your discernment.
- Identify and reflect on your ministry up to this point in your life.
- Identify the various ministries within the church and what kinds of focus they have. These could include the ordained ministries of priest and deacon as well as ministries available to all people such as any of the licensed ministries. You may want to be trained in one or more of the licensed ministries and exercise these ministries in your congregation. (Canons of the Episcopal Church III.4; BCP p. 855-856)
- You may want to participate in spiritual direction with a trained director.
- Explore with your clergy your current leadership roles in the congregation.
- Go over the diocesan process toward ordained ministry.
- Work together on developing a congregational discernment team.

Once you have reflected on some of the “Individual Discernment Questions” (section 1-3), and have had the conversations about a call with a clergy person described here, you both may feel it is time to take the next step; forming a congregational discernment team. The next section describes the work of this team and is designed to be helpful to both the discerner and the team.

Section 2

A Congregational Discernment Team

The Purpose and Composition of a Team

Orientation for the Discernment Team

Possible Roles in a Discernment Team

General Guidelines for a Discernment Session

Closure: The Report to the Vestry/
Bishop's Committee

The Purpose and Composition of a Team

Purpose of a discernment team

- To help the discerner hear more clearly God's call and how this call is played out in the discerner's spiritual journey.
- To walk with the discerner, to support and encourage the questions.
- To be a sounding board for the thoughts and questions being raised.
- To know the person, his/her background, his/her present ministry, his/her understanding of a call and where he/she feels led by this call.

Note: The congregational discernment team is **NOT** a support group or an advocacy group lobbying for the discerner. The team is rather a group interested not only in the discerner but in the life and ministry of the Episcopal Church.

Size of a discernment team

Usually 3 to 6 person is a good size. The discerner suggests some people and the clergy person suggests some. All persons suggested must be acceptable to both the discerner and the clergy. The team should reflect the diversity of the congregation and its ministries. They can have varying degrees of relationship with the discerner. People do not have to have had prior experience with discerning.

It is wise to think of the following as you and the clergy person build the team: You may want to include:

- Some people from outside the congregation, another denomination or faith.
- Someone from another Episcopal Church.
- Some people who know you.
- Someone who represents the interest of the congregation (Vestry person, etc.).
- People who will challenge you..
- People of integrity – can keep confidentiality.
- A clergy person on the team might be helpful – example, a pastor from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) or the United Methodist Church (UMC).–The clergy person from your congregation doesn't have to be on the team.
- People who can articulate their own vocation and ministry in the context of the work of the Church.
- People willing to walk with the discerner.
- People open to God's movement in their lives.
- People who have the gifts of frankness and courage.
- People who have the welfare of the larger Church always in mind.
- Persons of prayer, humility, confidentiality, and openness to the working of the Holy Spirit within the Church.
- Someone who may have experience in the type of ministry you may be feeling a call to.

Orientation for the Discernment Team

The first session in any process will be an introductory session. Team members will introduce themselves and the overall process will be presented. It will be very helpful for the team to invite a member of the diocesan COM to help with this. The clergy person should also be part of this initial meeting. This is a time to get process questions answered. This would also be the time to agree on what each session will look like.

For the first meeting the group will need the following materials

Copies of this notebook for each person in the group

Process toward Holy Orders (outline from the Diocese)

Resource books (optional)

Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community, Farnham

Discerning God's Will Together, Morris and Olsen

Discernment, Wolfe

Understanding discernment

It is important that the team understand what discernment is and what type of process the team will use. Some time will need to be spent in dialogue about the general topic of discernment in order to make sure all members are familiar with what is expected and what will happen.

Included in the Appendices are some definitions and some processes that vary in their structure. The team will want to spend some time dialoguing about these processes and come to consensus on what process it will use.

Setting meeting times and dates

Each discernment session usually lasts 1 ½ to 2 hours.

A discernment process can take from 9 to 18 months. This length, of course, may vary depending on the individual and the team. In smaller congregations, people may know each other well enough that some of the discernment has already happened through interactions in daily life. In larger congregations, the team will likely not know each other well enough and the length of time may be longer. It is important that the team decide when the discernment is finished. A consensus will generally emerge and the group will sense when it is finished.

Asking Reflective Questions

There are some samples of Reflective Questions included in Appendix C. Reflective questions often provide the opening for deeper conversation. Asking reflective questions is a technique that the team can develop. This type of reflective dialogue also requires listening in a way to draw conclusions from examples.

The discernment team will want to keep the following attributes and dispositions of the discerner in mind throughout the entire process. These attributes and dispositions will be revealed in a variety of ways in the conversations rather than by asking direct questions about them.

- Communication skills
- Ability to relate to others
- Personal integrity and self-esteem
- Physical health and energy
- Intellectual gifts and strengths
- Sense of own strengths and limitations

Working as a team

The team will want to spend some time on deciding how to function together as a team. What are the roles that will be helpful to the process with this group of people? Having this discussion at the beginning helps keep the focus of the team on the work to be done rather than on group dynamics that can arise and interfere with the process. There are various roles described in Section 2 - 5 of this packet. The team will decide which are important to use.

Choosing a discernment process

During the initial session it will be necessary to decide what process would be most helpful for this discernment group. The Team needs to consider the discerner's approach to self reflection. Some people will be able to reflect on their lives and draw conclusions because their thought processes are built this way. Some people will be more direct and concrete in their self expressions. Finding a process that is comfortable for the discerner and takes into account the person's learning and processing style is important in order for the experience to be helpful. It may be necessary to "walk" through each of the suggested process to feel which one will best serve this discerner. Several processes are outlined in Appendix G.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is extremely important. It will be necessary to keep this in mind when choosing team members. The team will need to have a conversation about confidentiality and make a covenant with one another as to keeping the content of the discernment sessions confidential.

Note: Discerning is very personal. The topics discussed can be very sensitive. The team needs to balance sensitivity with inquiry. It is unfair to accept a conversation at a level that does not ask the group and the discerner to struggle. This struggle with and the expression of the deep sense of personal relationship with God and others is central to the practice of creative ministry.

Knowing when to end the discernment

There are several ways the team knows the discernment is finished.

- The discerner has reached the clarity he/she was seeking.
- The team feels any progress has stopped and it may be necessary to stop meeting or to take an extended break.
- There seems to be an impasse due to personalities on the team.
- It is discovered that the discerner needs to seek a different type of help.

There should be a consensus before proceeding to the next step. The discerner may:

- Decide to pursue the strengthening of a more clarified call to his/her lay ministry.
- Decide to pursue a call to an ordained ministry.
- Decide to take some time in study and practice in a variety of ministries.
- Decide that there are other issues in his/her life that need more resolution before proceeding.

In any case, the team and the clergy may want to help the discerner develop whatever plans seem to be emerging.

Reporting to clergy and to the Vestry

The team will need to keep the clergy and the Vestry informed concerning the progress of any discernment team meeting in a congregation. The outcome will need to be conveyed to the clergy and the Vestry. It is important to respect the confidentiality of the discernment process and not to divulge personal information of the discerner that would compromise confidentiality. The focus of the report to the Vestry or Bishop's Committee should be:

- The process that was undertaken to discern the discerner's calling.
- The outcome of that process.
- Any further recommendations for the discerner and the development of his/her ministry.

If the discernment indicates the direction is toward ordained ministry, formal papers from the diocese need to be completed; these are included in the discernment packet from the diocese.

Possible Roles in a Discernment Team

In the orientation session, the team will want to discuss and decide upon the structure of the team and how it will operate together. It may be advisable to have defined roles. The roles could rotate through the team or remain with one person for the duration. The team will decide if it needs all of the following roles or just some of them. At the very least, it would be advisable to have a facilitator. The team may be willing to share all the rest of the responsibilities during each of the sessions.

Convener

- Notify people of the sessions.
- Make sure the meeting place is reserved.
- Assign roles for each gathering.

Facilitator

- Keep the session on track and schedule.
- Make sure everyone who wants to speak has the opportunity to speak.
- Observe the tone and spirit of the gathering.
- Know if and when to take a break.

Worship Leader

- Select prayers/devotional material for the session.
- Lead prayers for the session.
- Lead Bible study (see Appendix F for suggested passages).

Recorder

- If the team decides it needs notes, take the official notes of the session.
- Prepare the report to the clergy and Vestry with agreement from the team.

Process Observer

- Be aware of positive and negative dynamics in the group.
- Calls a break to discuss group dynamics, if necessary.
- Keeps track of the rate of progress.
- Observes the behaviors in the group and suggests changes if necessary.

Guidelines for Discernment Sessions

It is best to limit each session to 1 ½ to 2 hours in length.

Meeting once a month seems the most appropriate.

Choosing a general structure that each session follows is helpful for continuity.

A facilitator for each session is necessary in order to keep the session moving. This role may rotate among members, if desired. (See “Team Orientation” for the role of the facilitator.)

A Suggested Session Outline

Gather and check in with each other. This is a brief updating so that the group knows what is going on with each person. *10 -15 minutes*

Prayer, meditation, Bible study. The person assigned for this role may decide how the group will pray together. *15-20 minutes*

Prayers for self and others.

Meditation on scripture or devotional reading.

Brief Bible study. (See appendix for suggested passages)

Note: The use of Scripture has long been a traditional way of helping us to become aware of God’s action and will. Various methods have been used. Be present and open to the scene and to that person’s experience, being sensitive to the insights and movements given by the Holy Spirit.

How do these insights increase your awareness of the meaning and role of the Church, the ordained ministry, and prayer and ministry as Christians? How does all this relate to the vision and call of this individual to ministry?

Focus for the session *60 minutes*

Reflection on the session (see appendix for suggested reflection questions) *15 minutes*

Closing prayers

Reminder about the next session

Closure: The Report to the Vestry/Bishop's Committee

When a congregational discernment team reaches closure, a letter needs to be written to the Vestry/Bishop's Committee. This letter may be kept in the discerner's file. If the discerner is called to Holy Orders, a copy of this letter will be forwarded to the Diocesan COM to be kept in the discerner's file at the diocesan office.

The team needs to include in the letter the following information:

- A statement of the outcome of the discernment process; the conclusion reached about the ministry to which the discerner is called.
- A description of the process used for discernment.
- A statement indicating the relationship between the discerner and the members of the team – how long each member has known the discerner and in what capacity.
- Statements about the indicators which led to the identification or clarification of the discerner's call to ministry.
- A description of the discerner's gifts for ministry and the way these gifts have been used in the congregation.
- Descriptions of relevant dispositions and qualities of character observed during the process.

If the team identifies a call to ordained ministry, the letter will include the following:

- How will the gifts for ministry identified in this person enhance his/her ordained ministry?
- What factors might inhibit this person's ordained ministry? Will remedial work or further training overcome those limitations?
- If the discerner is in a committed relationship, what did the team assess about the relationship and the partner's ability to relate to the ordination process?
- In what ways has the discerner shown him/herself to be a "wholesome example" in the local congregation, in the work place, and in the community at large?
- Describe the discerner's attitude towards servant leadership, pastoral leadership, evangelism, stewardship and the facilitation of lay leadership in a congregational setting.
- How does the discerner react to and interact with those in authority?

Include any additional information that the team feels might be helpful to the diocesan COM.

Section 3

Discerning Congregational Direction

Section 4

Diocese of Iowa Ordination Process

The Ordination Process
Ordination or Reception of Clergy from Other Churches
Ministry Development Teams
Roles of Participants in the Discernment/Ordination Process

Appendices:

- A. Glossary
- B. Process Checklists (Priest, Vocational deacon, Ministry Development Team)
- C. Nomination Form
- C. Spiritual Autobiography
- E. List of Episcopal Seminaries
- F. Information regarding E-Seminary
- G. COM interview process

DIOCESE OF IOWA ORDINATION PROCESS

The Ordination Process

Initial Discernment

Discernment of a vocation to ordained ministries in the Episcopal Church begins on the local level. When a person responds to a call to consider ordained ministry in the Diocese of Iowa, the initial discernment process takes place in the congregation or other supporting agency, where those who have known the discerner over time are best able to assist in the process.

Initial Conversation:

Ordinarily, this process would begin with a frank discussion with the pastor or other local priest who knows the aspirant well. When the pastor and the discerner agree that it is appropriate to continue, a discernment committee would be set up. They would normally work together to choose the committee members. A broad range of persons may be considered for this committee. The Diocese of Iowa will make available materials that will be helpful in this process, along with the necessary forms needed to proceed beyond the local level.

Vestry Endorsement:

If in the judgment of the discernment committee the discerner should proceed to the next step, the committee shall prepare a written report for the Vestry. This report will give details of the process undertaken, along with critical questions dealt with along the way. It will include a specific recommendation regarding the discerner. The Vestry will then be asked to recommend or nominate the discerner. At this point there should be some clarity regarding the nature of the vocation.

Nomination:

Assuming the Vestry makes the nomination, a nomination form will be sent to the Bishop, along with the written report and recommendation from the discernment committee. The nomination form will include information required by the national Canons, concerning the nominee’s age, length of residence in the diocese and evidence of baptism and confirmation. {Canon III.6 (b)} The aspirant will provide a biographical summary, including educational information, and a spiritual autobiography (See appendices C & D).

Upon receipt of the nomination form, the Bishop will schedule an interview with the nominee. If the Bishop desires to continue the process, psychological and physical examinations will be scheduled. Background checks will typically be done at this point, and in all cases will be completed prior to ordination. Upon completion of these examinations, a follow-up interview will be scheduled with the Bishop. If after reviewing the results of these exams, the nominee desires to continue, the Bishop may arrange an interview with the Commission on Ministry.

Deacon Nominees

What is a deacon?

“The ministry of the deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need, and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.” (BCP p. 856)

Postulancy:

”Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and may initiate the formal preparation for ordination. Postulancy involves continued exploration of and decision about the Postulant's call to the Diaconate.” (Canon III.6.3)

An interview will be scheduled with the Commission on Ministry when both the nominee and the Bishop agree to proceed. (See Appendix G – Commission Interview Process.) On the basis of the interview, the nominee may be recommended by the COM for Postulancy. Recommendations may also be made regarding special training. Deacons are expected to participate in the educational process as developed and administered by the diocese. Other requirements for preparation may be based upon the special nature of the diaconal ministry envisioned.

Candidacy:

“Candidacy is a time of education and formation, in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate, established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission, the Standing Committee and the congregation or other community of faith. (Canon III 6.4)

When the postulant and the Bishop are agreed that the time is right, application may be made for candidacy. Again, the local Vestry must endorse this application. The COM and the Standing Committee will interview the postulant. Upon their recommendation, the Bishop may grant Candidacy.

Required Preparation: Candidates for ministry as deacons are expected to attain proficiency in the following areas: {Canon III.6.f,g}

- Academic studies, including The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the church
- Diakonia and the diaconate
- Human awareness and understanding
- Spiritual development and discipline
- Practical training and experience (This may be determined to a large extent by the nature of the projected ministry of the individual.)

In addition, the following mandated trainings are required of all:

- Prevention of sexual misconduct

- Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse
- The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, in particular Title IV (Disciplinary Canons)
- The Church's teaching on Racism
- Any other mandated training

Ordination:

A minimum of 18 months will have elapsed from the time of acceptance of nomination until the time of ordination. If more than 36 months have gone by, the required physical and psychological checks and criminal background check will need to be updated.)

An ordination examination will be conducted at the end of the training period. With the evidence that the candidate is proficient in the requisite canonical areas, application may be made for ordination. The local Vestry will again endorse the application, along with the COM and the Standing Committee. Ordinations will ordinarily take place during the festival Eucharist at the Diocesan Convention.

Ongoing formation: { Canon III.4(g), 5 }

Mentor: Each newly ordained deacon shall be assigned a mentor by the Bishop, in consultation with the Commission on Ministry. This mentor will usually be a deacon. For at least one year, the mentor and the deacon will meet regularly.

Continuing Education: The Bishop will authorize a continuing process of formation lasting for a period of two years following ordination. The Bishop and the COM will provide for this continuing education and shall maintain a record of such education.

Priest Nominees

What is the ministry of a priest?

“The ministry of a priest 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)

Postulancy:

“Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and may initiate the formal preparation for ordination. Postulancy involves continued exploration of and decision about the postulant's call to the priesthood.” (Canon III 8.3)

An interview will be scheduled with the Commission on Ministry when both the nominee and the Bishop agree to proceed. (See Appendix G, Commission Interview Process.) On the basis of the interview, the nominee may be recommended by the COM for postulancy. This recommendation will include suggestions and directions regarding preparation for the nominee. In the Diocese of Iowa, a three-year residential seminary

normally will be the venue for such preparation. In certain exceptional circumstances an alternate equivalent may be undertaken under the direction of the Commission and the Bishop. Even in these circumstances, it is likely that some seminary experience will be expected. (See Appendix E: Episcopal Seminaries.)

Candidacy:

“Candidacy is a time of education and formation in preparation for ordination to the priesthood, established by a formal commitment by the candidate, the Bishop, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the congregation or other community of faith.” (Canon III 8.4)

At approximately the midpoint of the training (for seminarians, midway through the middler (second) Year) application may be made for the granting of candidacy. The Vestry of the sponsoring congregation will endorse the application. Consideration will be given to the academic work and (for seminarians) the middler evaluation from the seminary. The Bishop’s Office will request these endorsements and evaluations. A new interview will be scheduled with the COM, at which point an assessment will be made of the individual’s progress, both academic and experiential. At this point further recommendations may be made. If the COM recommends Candidacy, an interview will be scheduled with the Standing Committee. With the Standing Committee’s approval, the Bishop may grant candidacy.

Transitional Diaconate:

Assuming that preparation is proceeding satisfactorily, it has become the custom in the Diocese of Iowa for seminarians to be considered for ordination to the transitional diaconate at about the mid-point of their senior year. An application for ordination will be endorsed by the sponsoring Vestry. The candidate may be interviewed again by the COM and/or the Standing Committee. Upon the recommendation of COM and the consent of the Standing Committee, it is the Bishop’s prerogative to schedule the ordination.

Required Preparation:

Normally, discerners for the priesthood will have a bachelor’s degree and will pursue a course of studies in an approved seminary. In exceptional circumstances, the educational requirements may be deemed to have been satisfied in other ways, though even then, one year of seminary will normally be required.

Proficiency in these areas shall be assessed on the basis of the General Ordination Examinations, along with seminary transcripts and perhaps a portfolio of academic projects. (Canon III.8.5 [g])

- (1) The Holy Scriptures
- (2) Church history, including the ecumenical movement
- (3) Christian theology, including missionary theology and missiology
- (4) Christian ethics and moral theology
- (5) Studies in contemporary society, including the historical and contemporary

experience of racial and minority groups, and cross-cultural ministry skills
Cross cultural ministry skills may include the ability to communicate in a contemporary language other than one's first language.

- (6) Liturgics and church music: Christian worship and music according to the contents and use of the Book of Common Prayer and the hymnal and authorized supplemental texts
- (7) Theory and practice of ministry, including leadership, and the ministries of evangelism and stewardship

In addition to proficiency in the above areas, the following mandated trainings are required:

- Prevention of sexual misconduct
- Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse
- The constitution and canons of the Episcopal Church, in particular Title IV (Disciplinary Canons)
- The Church's teaching on racism
- Other mandated training

Clinical Pastoral Education (C.P.E) will normally be required at some point during the preparation for ordination.

Ordination to the Presbyterate:

Upon satisfactory completion of the preparation, a transitional deacon may apply for ordination to the priesthood. This application must be endorsed by the sponsoring parish. The COM and the Standing Committee may schedule interviews with the applicant at this point,; or they may simply review the files. With the recommendation of the COM and the consent of the Standing Committee, the Bishop may ordain the individual as a presbyter in the church, provided that:

1. At least six months have elapsed since ordination to the transitional diaconate.
2. The individual will have been appointed to serve in a recognized parochial cure or other recognized ministry judged appropriate by the Bishop.
3. If more than 36 months has elapsed, the required background checks, psychological and physical examinations must be updated.

Ongoing Formation: {Canon III.9.1-2}:

Mentor:

For each newly ordained priest, the Bishop, in consultation with the COM, will appoint a mentor. The mentor and the new priest will meet regularly for at least a year and will use these meetings as an opportunity for guidance, information and continued formation. In addition, the newly ordained priest will be expected to participate in the diocese's "Fresh Start" program.

Continuing Education

The Bishop and COM shall require and provide for the continuing education of priests and shall keep a record of such education.

Ordination or Reception of Clergy from Other Churches {Canon III.10}

General Requirements:

Required checks:

Prior to reception or ordination, the following must be provided:

1. A background check, according to criteria established by the Bishop and Standing Committee
2. Medical and psychological evaluations

If more than 36 months elapse between the completion of these requirements and ordination or reception, the required checks will need to be updated.

Special Training:

Evidence will also be required that the individual has received training in the following areas:

- Prevention of sexual misconduct
- Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse;
- The constitution and canons of the Episcopal Church, in particular Title IV (Disciplinary Canons)
- The Church's teaching on racism
- Other mandated trainings

Mentor:

Prior to ordination or reception the Bishop will assign each clergy person a mentor priest, in consultation with the COM. The mentor and clergy person shall meet regularly for sustained dialogue regarding ministry in the Episcopal Church

Clergy from Churches in Communion with the Episcopal Church{III.2(a)}

(Note: The provisions of these canons apply to clergy from other member churches of the Anglican Communion; they also apply to clergy from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and to various other churches.)

Evidence of Valid Credentials and Good Standing in Previous Church:

Before being permitted to officiate in the Episcopal Church, a member of the clergy of a church in Communion will need to provide a recently dated certificate from the originating diocese that his/her credentials are in order; and that there is satisfactory evidence of moral and godly character and of theological qualification. Prior to taking charge of a congregation in the Episcopal Church, letters dismissory (or equivalent) shall be required from the appropriate authority of the previous church or diocese.

Evidence of Preparation:

Prior to reception as a member of the clergy in the Episcopal Church, the individual will be examined by the Bishop and at least one presbyter concerning his/her knowledge of

Episcopal Church history, worship and government. The Bishop will also be satisfied with the person's theological qualifications.

Promise of Submission:

The individual will promise in writing, witnessed by two presbyters of the Episcopal Church, that he or she will submit to the discipline of the church and uphold its teachings (See Article VIII regarding Holy Scriptures and the doctrine, discipline and worship of this church).

When these requirements have been fulfilled, the Bishop may receive the person into the diocese as a member of its clergy. Persons who are received as deacons will not be ordained as priests until one year has elapsed and all the requirements of Title III.8 have been fulfilled.

Mentor:

A mentor will be assigned by the Bishop to continue to meet with the new cleric and provide ongoing support and guidance.

Clergy Ordained in a Church whose Bishops are in the Historic Succession but that is not in Communion with the Episcopal Church:

Application:

An applicant for Holy Orders in this category will provide the following information:

1. Evidence of confirmation and communicant standing in a congregation of the Episcopal Church
2. Evidence of valid credentials and previous ministry in the church of origin
3. Letters attesting the applicant's moral and godly character
4. Transcripts of all academic and theological studies
5. Statements from at least two Episcopal priests attesting that they believe the person's departure from the previous communion was not related to any unfavorable circumstance of moral or religious character
6. Certificates signed by the clergy and Vestry of a local Episcopal Parish supporting the person's application
7. A written statement of the applicant's reasons for seeking ordination in this church

Educational Preparation:

Generally speaking, the applicant's educational preparation is expected to be the same as that of priests ordained originally in the Episcopal Church. If the applicant has been functioning successfully as a cleric in the previous communion and can show evidence of satisfactory theological training, the applicant will be examined by the COM with respect to proficiency in the following subjects:

1. Church history: the history of the Anglican Communion and the Episcopal Church
2. Doctrine, as set forth in the Creeds and the Outline of the Faith
3. Liturgics and principles of worship expressed in the Book of Common Prayer

4. Practical theology
5. The points of doctrine, discipline, polity and worship at variance with those of the church from which the applicant comes

Special Training:

The applicant will submit evidence that he or she has received training in the following areas:

- Prevention of sexual misconduct
- Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse
- The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, in particular Title IV (Disciplinary Canons)
- The Church's teaching on Racism
- Other mandated trainings

Certificate from the Standing Committee:

Prior to the examination above, the applicant shall receive from the Bishop and from the Standing Committee a certificate that he/she is acceptable as a member of the clergy of the Episcopal Church.

Promise of Submission:

The applicant will promise in writing, witnessed by two presbyters of the Episcopal Church, that he or she will submit to the discipline of the church and uphold its teachings (See Article VIII regarding Holy Scriptures and the doctrine, discipline and worship of this church)

Ordination:

Upon satisfaction of the above requirements, the Bishop may, with the consent of the Standing Committee do one of the following:

1. Receive the applicant into Episcopal Church in the orders to which he or she has already been ordained by a bishop in the historic succession
2. Confirm and make the applicant a deacon, and, when at least four months have elapsed, a priest
3. Ordain the applicant as a deacon, and when at least six months have elapsed, ordain him or her conditionally (if there is some question regarding the status of the Bishop who conferred the previous ordination)

Mentor:

The newly ordained clergy person shall be assigned a mentor priest to facilitate continued discussion and formation.

Clergy Ordained in a Church whose Bishops are not in the Historic Succession:

Application:

The applicant will show evidence of the following:

1. Status as a confirmed communicant of a congregation of the Episcopal Church

2. Evidence that the applicant has served in the previous communion with diligence and has maintained a good reputation
3. Evidence of the extent of the applicant's training and education
4. Evaluation of the necessary preparations for ordination in the Episcopal. In some cases, the COM may require an additional year of studies at an approved seminary, leading to a certificate in Anglican Studies. The General Ordination Examinations may also be required as a tool for assessment.

Process:

Nominations will be made with the endorsement of the Vestry of the applicant's congregation. Postulancy and candidacy will proceed in the usual way, overseen by the COM and the Standing Committee. Once candidacy has been granted, however, the minimum period of candidacy may be shortened.

Evaluation:

The applicant will be evaluated on the subject matter as listed above for clergy ordained in the historic succession. In addition, they will show evidence of training in the following areas:

- Prevention of sexual misconduct
- Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse
- The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, in particular Title IV (Disciplinary Canons)
- The Church's teaching on Racism
- Other mandated training.

Ordination:

When these canonical requirements have been fulfilled, and assuming that twelve months have elapsed since Confirmation, the Bishop may with the consent of the Standing Committee ordain the person as a deacon in this church. When at least six months have elapsed, the person may be ordained a priest at the Bishop's discretion.

Mentor:

As with all new clergy, a mentor priest will be assigned to provide ongoing guidance and support.

Ministry Development Teams

What is a Ministry Development Team?

A Ministry Development Team is a committed group of people whose vocations are discerned by their larger congregation. In the process of discernment, members of the team may be identified as priests or deacons. In addition, other specific ministries may be discerned for members of the team. These include, but are not limited to, the roles of administrator, pastor, catechist, evangelist, and preacher.

Discernment:

The formation of Ministry Development Teams in the local congregation begins with a period of congregational discernment in conversation with the Bishop and the COM. Several formats may guide this process, but at its end, a nomination is made. Members of the congregation give to the Bishop the names of those persons they would deem suitable for positions on the team. The Bishop will talk with each person so commended. Those who choose to do so will become part of the Ministry Development Team.

Preparation:

Those who accept the nomination will covenant to meet together for a period of study and formation using the Iowa Course of Studies. The course consists of 40 sessions that the team will pursue over a period of up to four years. At least one coach will be assigned to meet with the group and assist with their progress.

Postulancy:

At some point after the first unit has been completed, the coach for the group and the COM will arrange for a postulancy interview. A representative group from the COM will conduct this interview at the local church. If there is evidence that the team is functioning well and that it has been diligently pursuing the Iowa Course of Studies, the COM may recommend that the Bishop grant postulancy to the team.

Candidacy:

When the team has completed unit three of the Iowa Course of Studies, the coach may recommend that it be considered for candidacy. By this point, there should be clarity regarding the various roles of the individuals within the team, including the identification of those to be ordained priest and deacon. The team and the representatives of the congregation should be able to articulate a mission for both the team and the congregation. Representatives of the COM and of the Standing Committee will conduct a second interview at the local church. In addition to the team itself, local participants should include a warden and another member of the Vestry or Bishop's Advisory Committee. Those identified for ordained roles will fulfill the canonical requirements regarding physical and psychological evaluations and background checks.

Evaluation:

At the completion of the Iowa Course of Study, the team will be assessed as a whole regarding proficiency in the required canonical areas. An examination process will be designed for this purpose by the COM and the Bishop.

Ordination and Commissioning:

When the canonical requirements have been met and 18 months have passed, those to with a priestly vocation may be ordained as transitional deacons. When a further six months have elapsed, they may be ordained to the priesthood. Deacons may be ordained and other members of the team commissioned at this time.

Continuing Education:

After the completion of the Iowa Course of Studies, members of the team will engage in continuing education through the e-seminary and other appropriate venues. National canons require such training for those ordained, and diocesan policy requires it of all team members. Congregations are expected to assume the cost of this continuing education.

Roles of Participants in the Discernment and Ordination Process

Typically, the identification of a call to ordained ministry emerges in a congregational setting, with the support and encouragement of a congregation. Members of congregations are therefore key to the discernment process. Clergy and Vestry members are especially charged to be alert to those persons who may be called into a more intentional ministry, whether lay or ordained. But it may be that gifts and graces for ministry are more apparent to those who work regularly together on a project or who share a small group experience than to those in the formal leadership structures of the parish. The national canons of the Episcopal Church encourage an atmosphere of ongoing discernment within each local congregation. Congregations need to develop a heightened awareness of God's call to all the baptized and then be ready to affirm and support their members in the ministries to which they are called. That being said, the clergy and Vestry in a local congregation have specific canonical responsibilities regarding those called to ordained ministry.

I. Clergy:

When a cleric sees in a member of the congregation a complex of gifts and attitudes that would be particularly suited to an ordained ministry, he or she should raise with the possibility of such ministry with the individual and offer information and guidance. The possibility of a call to ordained ministry should also be raised from time to time among the young people of the parish.

An individual may discern a call to ordained ministry and then seek the input from people in the congregation in order to clarify this call. He or she should also contact the rector or priest-in-charge of the parish for guidance. Through careful listening, honest feedback, careful prayer and discernment, the priest will assist the individual in assessing his or her call. It is important for the cleric to share any reservations honestly with the potential aspirant. If the cleric agrees there is evidence of a vocation, a discernment committee should be formed. The COM discernment handbook describes the role and function of the discernment committee.

II. Discernment Committee: (See COM discernment handbook for more detailed information.)

When the discernment committee has completed its work, it shall prepare a written report of its recommendations, along with a summary of its discussions. This report shall be made available to the Vestry, the Bishop and the COM.

III. Vestry:

When a report from a discernment committee is received, the Vestry of the congregation is expected to exercise due discretion with regard to endorsing a nomination. Since the

support of the congregation for the nominee will need to be ongoing and thoroughgoing, the Vestry needs to consider carefully the support that will be available as the nominee goes through the process. Vestry support of a potential nominee requires a 2/3 majority vote of the total Vestry. Thus, if in a duly called meeting of a Vestry with 12 members, only 9 are present, 8 members of the Vestry would need to vote to endorse the nominee. If the potential nominee is a member of the Vestry, he or she may not be counted in the vote or sign the required certificate.

Nomination: When a Vestry is ready to nominate a person to Holy Orders, the nomination must include the nominee's full name, date of birth, length of time resident in the diocese, evidence of baptism and confirmation, an indication whether or not the person has previously been nominated as a postulant in this or any other diocese, a description of the process of discernment and its conclusions, a list of educational attainments, and a letter of support from the congregation. The discernment committee should express its intention to continue in the ongoing discernment and preparation of the nominee.

IV. Role of the Bishop

Nominations for Holy Orders shall be made to the Bishop, who makes the final determination whether or not a person may be made a postulant. At any time, the Bishop may end the process at his or her sole discretion. The Bishop will notify all interested parties should such a decision be made.

Deacons: After a period of conversation with the nominee, the Bishop may admit him/her to postulancy. Either during this period or prior to admission to candidacy, the Bishop shall arrange for appropriate background checks and for medical and psychological/psychiatric evaluations. These checks must be done prior to postulancy.

Priests: If, after initial conversations, the Bishop determines that a nominee may proceed, arrangements will be made for background checks and for medical and psychological/psychiatric evaluations. The results of these exams will be shared with the nominee, and if he or she and the Bishop agree, an initial interview will be scheduled with the COM. Upon recommendation of the COM, the Bishop may admit the nominee as a postulant. The COM and the Bishop will determine the nature and duration of preparation.

Ember Day Letters: Postulants and candidates will correspond with the Bishop, in writing, at least four times each year, during Ember Days. These letters are intended to keep the Bishop abreast of each person's progress, both academically and spiritually. The Bishop may require that certain topics be covered in each letter.

V. Role of Commission on Ministry in Discernment Process:

The role of the COM is to advise the Bishop (canon III.2). It assists the Bishop in the administration of the title III canons, with respect to the ministry of all the baptized. The Commission continually evaluates the nature and demands of ministry within the context of the diocese of Iowa. The COM establishes the criteria for competency, sets standards for training and evaluation, and monitors educational programs of preparation for various ministries.

Deacons: The COM will interview nominees for the diaconate and may recommend them to the Bishop for postulancy. The COM will provide a contact person for each postulant. This contact person shall monitor the postulant's progress and provide needed help. The COM shall interview each postulant at the time of candidacy and may make recommendations concerning further training and preparation. The COM then approves candidates for ordination when it is satisfied that the necessary preparation has been completed.

Priests: When the Bishop and nominee are satisfied that the process should continue, an interview will be scheduled with the COM for the purpose of approving the aspirant for postulancy. This initial interview is a part of the nominee's ongoing process of discernment. Further questions from and discussions with people who may not know the nominee will give an opportunity for further reflection. The interview will also focus on practical issues of preparation and future plans for ministry. The COM will make a recommendation to the Bishop regarding approval for postulancy; it may also make recommendations regarding the aspirant's preparation, both academic and experiential.

Postulancy: During the period of postulancy, the postulant's designated contact person, through regular contact, will assist the COM in monitoring the postulant's progress and facilitate communication between the postulant and the COM. Ideally, the contact person will become a genuine companion for the person in the process.

Candidacy: The candidacy interview will usually be scheduled in the spring of the middler year in seminary. By this time, the canonical time requirements will have been met. Academic preparation will be well underway, and the seminary will provide middler evaluations from the faculty. In addition, any clinical pastoral education will usually have been completed. The interviews, while covering many of the same topics as the initial interview, will explore the candidate's growth in understanding of his or her call and the nature of his or her future ministry. At the conclusion of the interview, the COM may make a recommendation to the Bishop regarding candidacy.

Ordination to the Diaconate: After six months, the COM will consider the candidate for ordination to the diaconate. Increasingly, the Diocese of Iowa is ordaining seminarians to the diaconate during their final year in seminary, usually prior to the General Ordination Examinations. If there are no unanswered concerns about the candidate's progress, the COM may recommend for ordination without a further interview. The COM will also review the results of GOEs or equivalent for each candidate. If the results are less than satisfactory, the COM may prescribe additional study, possibly with a mentor from the COM itself, in order to ensure that the individual is adequately prepared.

Ministry Development Teams:

The commendations of persons for ordained ministries within a local Ministry Development Team will be done only after a lengthy period of discernment and preparation for ministry by the entire team. Once the specific ministry of each person is determined, the canonically required evaluations and checks will occur. The COM will meet on site with the team to evaluate its progress in preparation. These meetings will occur at set points in the curriculum.

VI. Role of the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee advises the Bishop at crucial points in the ordination process. The committee's consent is necessary for a postulant to proceed to candidacy. It must also consent to all ordinations. Although the Bishop may refuse to ordain a person even if the Standing Committee consents, he or she may not ordain anyone without the express consent of a majority of the Standing Committee. The committee may ask to meet with any candidate at any point in the ordination process.

VII. Role of Those in Process:

Be open to surprise answers: The process leading to ordination is an ongoing period of discernment, and the person in process must remain open to the unexpected. Every stage along the way is intended to provide new information for the person, the COM, the Bishop, and the Standing Committee. All parties need to be open to the possibility that a call to ministry has been misunderstood or misdirected. At any point along the way, the process toward ordination may be halted or suspended.

Respond to his/her COM contact in a timely manner: Each meeting of the COM includes a review of all of those persons and ministry teams currently in process toward ordination. Members maintain contact with the person or persons for whom they are responsible. This contact must be frequent enough to enable the member to provide a report at the scheduled meetings of the COM. Those in process should respond in a timely manner to emails or phone calls from their contact person so that up-to-date information may be shared.

Complete Ember Day letters: Ember Days occur four times in each year. The Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays following the First Sunday in Lent, the Day of Pentecost, Holy Cross Day (September 14th and December 13th are so designated). As described in Section 5, all postulants and candidates for ordination are expected to correspond with the Bishop in order to keep him abreast of their academic and spiritual formation. A set of questions to guide these reports is available from the diocesan office.

Let the Bishop and COM know of any issues that may affect your progress so that they may be addressed. It is important for the Bishop and the COM to know about any health issues, financial problems or family emergencies that might be affecting a person's progress or performance. Those in process are expected to report such exigencies as soon as possible.

Take seriously any recommendations made: The person in process is expected to undertake in good faith any recommendation made concerning training or formation. Some recommendations will involve definite expectation; others may be suggestions; but they are nonetheless made with the intention of enhancing the preparation of those in the process.

Maintain contact with the supporting congregation or agency. The person in process is expected to communicate with his or her home congregation on a regular basis. This helps to ensure ongoing prayer and support from those who have helped in the discernment of the vocation.

Appendices:

- A. Glossary (from discernment handbook)
- B. Process checklists
 - 1. Priest

- 2. Vocational deacon
- 3. Ministry Development Team

- C. Nomination Form
- D. Spiritual autobiography
- E. List of Episcopal seminaries
- F. Information regarding E-Seminary
- G. COM interview process

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Rector of the Parish

VESTRY

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(The above must be signed by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry, at a meeting duly convened)

ATTESTATION

I hereby certify that is a member of(parish) in, Iowa; and a confirmed adult communicant in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry

(8) ACCEPTANCE OF NOMINATION IN WRITING BY THE NOMINATED PERSON.

I hereby accept Nomination for Ordination to the Diaconate under Canon III.6

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Applicant

EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

This is to certify that in our judgment is qualified to pursue a course of preparation for ordination to the Diaconate, our further evaluation and recommendations attached.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Chairperson

CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION AS A POSTULANT FOR ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

This certifies that _____, having complied with all of the necessary requirements in accordance with Title III, Canon 6, is hereby admitted as a Postulant for Ordination to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Bishop of Iowa

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA

APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION AS A **CANDIDATE** FOR ORDINATION TO THE (VOCATIONAL) DIACONATE
IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE III, CANON 6: OF THE ORDINATION OF DEACONS

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

I,
(first) (middle) (last)

hereby make application for admission as a Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Iowa. I was admitted as a Postulant on.....
(date)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Postulant



Letter of Support by Congregation (or other community of faith)

We do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for admission as a Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate. (Additional letter of support may be attached.)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Member of Clergy (or other leader exercising oversight)

VESTRY (or comparable body)

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(The above must be signed by at least two-thirds of the Vestry, or comparable body).



Attestation

I hereby certify that is a member of(parish) in, Iowa; and a confirmed adult communicant in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry



Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment..... is engaged in continuing formation and in the prescribed course of preparation for Ordination; and hereby receives our recommendation for admission as a Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)

(Signed).....

Chairperson



Standing Committee

Having interviewed and reviewed the documentation relating to his/her application for candidacy, we approve the admission of as a Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate.

THE STANDING COMMITTEE

(Date)

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CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION AS A CANDIDATE FOR ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

This certifies that, having complied with all of the necessary requirements in accordance with Title III, Canon 6, is hereby admitted as a Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date).....

(Signed).....

Bishop of Iowa



- cc: Candidate
- Member of Clergy / leader with oversight
- Commission on Ministry
- Standing Committee
- Dean of seminary / director of program of preparation

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA
CERTIFICATES FOR ORDINATION TO THE VOCATIONAL DIACONATE
IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE III, CANON 6: OF THE ORDINATION OF DEACONS

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

I hereby make application for ordination to the Vocational Diaconate. I was born , A.D.....; and was admitted to Postulancy and Candidacy, effectiveand.....respectively.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Candidate



Certificate from Rector and Vestry

We do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for Ordination to the Vocational Diaconate. (Additional letter of support may be attached.)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Rector

VESTRY

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(The above must be signed by the Vestry, or in case of no organized parish, by six laypersons, communicants of this Church in good standing).



Attestation

I hereby certify that is a member of(parish) in, Iowa; and a confirmed adult communicant in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry



Certificate of Seminary/Program of Preparation

This is to certify that has been duly enrolled in and that a transcript of

his/her academic work, along with our evaluation of his/her personal qualifications for the ministry of this church, and our recommendation for Ordination have been furnished to the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Dean/Director
◇ ◇ ◇

Bishop's Certificate

I hereby certify that the Candidate applying above has completed the terms of Postulancy and Candidacy, which beganand.....respectively.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Bishop of Iowa
◇ ◇ ◇

Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment has successfully completed the necessary requirements; and hereby receives our recommendation for ordination to the Vocational Diaconate.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)..... (Signed)
Chairperson
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Testimonial of the Standing Committee

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Iowa, having been duly convened at, do testify that, desiring to be ordained to the Diaconate under Canon III.6, has presented to us the certificates as required by the Canons indicating’s preparedness for ordination to the Diaconate under Canon III.6; and we certify that all canonical requirements for ordination to the Diaconate under Canon III.6 have been met; and we find no sufficient objection to ordination. Therefore, we recommend for ordination.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this day of, in the year of our Lord

STANDING COMMITTEE

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(Or a majority of all members thereof. This testimonial shall be signed by all consenting to its adoption.)

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(Date)..... (Signed).....
Rector of the Parish

VESTRY

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(The above must be signed by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry, at a meeting duly convened)

ATTESTATION

I hereby certify that is a member of(parish) in, Iowa; and a confirmed adult communicant in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry

ACCEPTANCE OF NOMINATION AND APPLICATION FOR POSTULANCY

I hereby accept Nomination and request admission to Postulancy for Ordination to the Priesthood under Canon III.8.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Applicant

EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION OF COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

This is to certify that in our judgment is qualified to pursue a course of preparation for ordination to the Priesthood, our further evaluation and recommendations attached.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Chairperson

CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION AS A POSTULANT FOR ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

This certifies that, having complied with all of the necessary requirements in accordance with Title III, Canon 8, is hereby admitted as a Postulant for Ordination to the Priesthood in the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Bishop of Iowa

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA

APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION AS A **CANDIDATE** FOR ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD
IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE III, CANON 8: OF THE ORDINATION OF PRIESTS

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

I,
(first) (middle) (last)

hereby make application for admission as a Candidate for Ordination to the Priesthood in the Diocese of Iowa. I was admitted as a Postulant on.....
(date)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Postulant



Letter of Support by Congregation (or other community of faith)

We do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for admission as a Candidate for Ordination to the Priesthood. (Additional letter of support may be attached.)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Member of Clergy (or other leader exercising oversight)

VESTRY (or comparable body)

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(The above must be signed by at least two-thirds of the Vestry, or comparable body).



Attestation

I hereby certify that is a member of(parish) in, Iowa; and a confirmed adult communicant in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry



Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment..... is engaged in continuing formation and in the prescribed course of preparation for Ordination; and hereby receives our recommendation for admission as a Candidate for Ordination to the Priesthood.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)

(Signed).....

Chairperson



Standing Committee

Having interviewed and reviewed the documentation relating to his/her application for candidacy, we approve the admission of as a Candidate for Ordination to the Priesthood.

THE STANDING COMMITTEE

(Date)

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CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION AS A CANDIDATE FOR ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

This certifies that, having complied with all of the necessary requirements in accordance with Title III, Canon 8, is hereby admitted as a Candidate for Ordination to the Priesthood in the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date).....

(Signed).....

Bishop of Iowa



- cc: Candidate
- Member of Clergy / leader with oversight
- Commission on Ministry
- Standing Committee
- Dean of seminary / director of program of preparation

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA
CERTIFICATES FOR ORDINATION TO THE TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE
IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE III, CANON 8: OF THE ORDINATION OF PRIESTS

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

I hereby make application for ordination to the Transitional Diaconate. I was born , A.D.....; and was admitted to Postulancy and Candidacy, effectiveand.....respectively.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Candidate



Certificate from Rector and Vestry

We do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate. (Additional letter of support may be attached.)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Rector

VESTRY

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(The above must be signed by the Vestry, or in case of no organized parish, by six laypersons, communicants of this Church in good standing).



Attestation

I hereby certify that is a member of(parish) in, Iowa; and a confirmed adult communicant in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry



Certificate of Seminary/Program of Preparation

This is to certify that has been duly enrolled in and that a transcript of

his/her academic work, along with our evaluation of his/her personal qualifications for the ministry of this church, and our recommendation for Ordination have been furnished to the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Dean/Director

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Bishop's Certificate

I hereby certify that the Candidate applying above has completed the terms of Postulancy and Candidacy, which beganand.....respectively.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Bishop of Iowa

◇ ◇ ◇

Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment has successfully completed the necessary requirements; and hereby receives our recommendation for ordination to the Transitional Diaconate.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)..... (Signed)
Chairperson

◇ ◇ ◇

Testimonial of the Standing Committee

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Iowa, having been duly convened at, do testify that, desiring to be ordained to the Transitional Diaconate under Canon III.8, has presented to us the certificates as required by the Canons indicating’s preparedness for ordination to the Transitional Diaconate under Canon III.8; and we certify that all canonical requirements for ordination to the Transitional Diaconate under Canon III.8 have been met; and we find no sufficient objection to ordination. Therefore, we recommend for ordination.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this day of, in the year of our Lord

STANDING COMMITTEE

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(Or a majority of all members thereof. This testimonial shall be signed by all consenting to its adoption.)

◇ ◇ ◇

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA
CERTIFICATES FOR ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD
IN ACCORDANCE WITH TITLE III, CANON 8: OF THE ORDINATION OF PRIESTS

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

I hereby make application for ordination to the Priesthood. I was born A.D.....; and was ordained to the Diaconate on A.D.....; having been granted Postulancy and Candidacy, which beganand.....respectively.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Candidate



Certificate from Rector and Vestry

We do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for Ordination to the Priesthood. (Additional letter of support may be attached.)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Rector

VESTRY

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(The above must be signed by the Vestry, or in case of no organized parish, by six laypersons, communicants of this Church in good standing).



Attestation

I hereby certify that is a member of(parish) in, Iowa; and a confirmed adult communicant in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry



Certificate of Seminary/Program of Preparation

This is to certify that has been duly enrolled in and that a transcript of

his/her academic work, along with our evaluation of his/her personal qualifications for the ministry of this church, have been furnished to the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Dean/Director

◇ ◇ ◇

Bishop's Certificate

I hereby certify that the above-named applicant was ordained to the Diaconate on, A.D.....; having completed the terms of Postulancy and Candidacy, which beganand.....respectively.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Bishop of Iowa

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Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment has successfully completed the program of formation designed during Candidacy under Canon III.8.5; and hereby receives our recommendation for ordination to the Priesthood.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)..... (Signed)
Chairperson

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Testimonial of the Standing Committee

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Iowa, having been duly convened at, do testify that, desiring to be ordained to the Priesthood, has presented to us the certificates as required by the Canons indicating’s preparedness for ordination to the Priesthood; and we certify that all canonical requirements for ordination to the Priesthood have been met; and we find no sufficient objection to ordination. Therefore, we recommend for ordination.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this day of, in the year of our Lord

STANDING COMMITTEE

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(Or a majority of all members thereof. This testimonial shall be signed by all consenting to its adoption.)

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EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA
APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO POSTULANCY

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We, as a ministry team, hereby make application for admission to Postulancy in the Diocese of Iowa.

..... <i>(first)</i> <i>(middle)</i> <i>(last)</i>
..... <i>(first)</i> <i>(middle)</i> <i>(last)</i>
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..... <i>(first)</i> <i>(middle)</i> <i>(last)</i>

(Date).....

Ministry Team of
..... Church
..... , Iowa



Certificate from Rector and Vestry

We do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that the aforementioned Ministry Team possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for admission to Postulancy.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Rector/Senior Warden

VESTRY

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(The above must be signed by the Vestry, or in case of no organized parish, by six laypersons, communicants of this Church in good standing).



Attestation

I hereby certify that are members of(parish) in, Iowa; and confirmed adult communicants in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry

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Certificate of Program of Preparation

This is to certify that has been duly enrolled in and that our evaluation of his/her/their personal qualifications for the ministry of this church, have been furnished to the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Dean/Director/Coach

◇ ◇ ◇

Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment is engaged in continuing formation; and hereby receives our recommendation for admission to Postulancy.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)..... (Signed)
Chairperson

◇ ◇ ◇

CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION TO POSTULANCY

This certifies that, having complied with all of the necessary requirements in accordance with the Title III Canons, is hereby admitted to Postulancy in the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Bishop of Iowa

◇ ◇ ◇

- cc: Postulants
Member of Clergy
Commission on Ministry
Standing Committee
Dean of seminary/Director of program of preparation

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA
 APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We hereby make application for admission to Candidacy in the Diocese of Iowa. We, as a ministry team, were admitted to Postulancy on.....
 (date)

..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)

Ministry Team of
 (Date)..... Church
, Iowa



Identification of Roles - The following persons are seeking to be Ordered

I,
 (first) (middle) (last)
 hereby make application for admission as a Candidate for Ordering as in the Diocese of Iowa.
 (Deacon/Priest)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
 Postulant



I,
 (first) (middle) (last)
 hereby make application for admission as a Candidate for Ordering as in the Diocese of Iowa.
 (Deacon/Priest)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
 Postulant



Attestation

I hereby certify that are members of(parish) in, Iowa; and confirmed adult communicants in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year....., and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry



Certificate of Program of Preparation

This is to certify that has been duly enrolled in and that our evaluation of his/her/their personal qualifications for the ministry of this church, have been furnished to the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Dean/DirectorCoach



Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment is engaged in continuing formation; and hereby receives our recommendation for admission to Candidacy.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)..... (Signed)
Chairperson



Testimonial of the Standing Committee

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Iowa, having been duly convened at, having interviewed the postulants, do approve for admission to Candidacy.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this day of, in the year of our Lord

STANDING COMMITTEE

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.....

(Or a majority of all members thereof. This testimonial shall be signed by all consenting to its adoption.)



CERTIFICATE OF ADMISSION TO CANDIDACY

This certifies that the Ministry Development Team ofChurch,, Iowa, having complied with all of the necessary requirements in accordance with the Title III Canons, is hereby admitted to Candidacy in the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date).....

(Signed).....

Bishop of Iowa



- cc: Candidates
- Member of Clergy
- Commission on Ministry
- Standing Committee
- Dean of seminary/Director of program of preparation/Coach

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA

APPLICATION FOR COMMISSIONING and ORDERING of a MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We hereby make application for Commissioning and Ordering as a Ministry Development Team in the Diocese of Iowa. We, as a ministry team, were admitted to Postulancy on.....
and Candidacy on (date) (date)

..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)
..... (first)	..... (middle)	..... (last)

(Date)..... Ministry Team of Church
....., Iowa



Identification of Roles - The following persons are seeking to be Ordered

I,
(first) (middle) (last)
hereby make application for Ordering as in the Diocese of Iowa.
(Transitional Deacon)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Candidate



I,
(first) (middle) (last)
hereby make application for Ordering as in the Diocese of Iowa.
(Transitional Deacon)

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Candidate



I hereby certify that are members of(parish) in, Iowa; and confirmed adult communicants in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year, and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry

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Certificate of Program of Preparation

This is to certify that has been duly enrolled in a course of study involving **The Iowa Curriculum** and that our evaluation of his/her/their personal qualifications for the ministry of this church, have been furnished to the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Coach to Ministry Team

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Willa Goodfellow, Coach to Coaches

◇ ◇ ◇

Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment is engaged in continuing formation and that the team's plans for continuing education meet with our approval; and hereby receives our recommendation for Commissioning and, where appropriate, Ordering as Transitional Deacons.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)..... (Signed)
Chairperson

◇ ◇ ◇

Testimonial of the Standing Committee

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Iowa, having been duly convened at, having interviewed the candidates, do approve for Commissioning and, where appropriate, Ordering as Transitional Deacons.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this day of, in the year of our Lord

STANDING COMMITTEE

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.....
.....

(Or a majority of all members thereof. This testimonial shall be signed by all consenting to its adoption.)

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF IOWA

APPLICATION FOR COMMISSIONING and ORDERING of a MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Application

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We hereby make application for reaffirmation of Commissioning and further Ordering as a Ministry Development Team in the Diocese of Iowa. We, as a ministry team, were admitted to Postulancy on.....; Candidacy on; and presbyteral candidates Ordered as transitional deacons on

Form with six rows of dotted lines for names, labeled (first), (middle), and (last).

(Date)..... Ministry Team of Church , Iowa



Reaffirmation of Roles - The following persons are seeking Ordination

I, hereby make application for Ordering as a in the Diocese of Iowa. (Vocational Deacon/Priest)

(Date)..... (Signed)..... Candidate



I, hereby make application for Ordering as a in the Diocese of Iowa. (Deacon/Priest)

(Date)..... (Signed)..... Candidate



Attestation

I hereby certify that are members of(parish) in, Iowa; and confirmed adult communicants in good standing; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry duly convened at on the day of, in the year, and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

(Signed).....
Clerk of Vestry



Certificate of Program of Preparation

This is to certify that has been duly enrolled in a course of study involving **The Iowa Curriculum** and that our evaluation of his/her/their personal qualifications for the ministry of this church, have been furnished to the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa.

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Coach to Ministry Team

(Date)..... (Signed).....
Willa Goodfellow, Coach to Coaches



Commission on Ministry

This is to certify that in our judgment is engaged in continuing formation and that the team's plans for continuing education meet with our approval; and hereby receives our reaffirmation of Commissioning and, where appropriate, recommendation for Ordering as Deacon and Priest as identified above.

THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

(Date)..... (Signed)
Chairperson



Testimonial of the Standing Committee

To the Bishop of the Diocese of Iowa:

We, the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Iowa, having been duly convened at, having interviewed the candidates, do affirm the afforenamed ministry team of Church for Commissioning and, where appropriate, for Ordering as Deacons and Priests as identified above.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this day of, in the year of our Lord

STANDING COMMITTEE

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(Or a majority of all members thereof. This testimonial shall be signed by all consenting to its adoption.)

Appendices

- A. Descriptions of Discernment
- B. Discernment Listening Guidelines
- C. Reflection Questions
- D. Preparing to Tell Your Faith Story
- E. Terms
- F. Scripture Passages for Bible Study
- G. Discernment Processes

Appendix A

Descriptions of Discernment

The following descriptions are taken from a variety of sources. It will prove helpful if the team take some time during their orientation to dialogue about these statements. The team should be able to articulate their definition of discernment.

Discernment is the process of making choices through the eyes of faith so that we are brought closer to the person of the Christ.

Discernment is a process that looks to the objective facts of the situation and to the inner yearnings of the individual for clues as to where one is called.

During discernment our sense of call is tested with others and against Scripture and tradition.

Discernment is always provisional and must be tested by its fruits.

Discernment is not a once-in-a-lifetime process. There is a need to continually assess whether our choices are in alignment with our faith.

Freedom is a prerequisite to discernment. When we close our hearts and minds and think we have all the answers, we are not ready for discerning the Spirit's urging.

In classical spirituality discernment focuses on distinguishing God's spirit from other spirits that are present in a given time and place.

Discernment is a journey rather than a destination.

Discernment is a prayerful, informed and intentional attempt to sort through all the voices to get in touch with God's spirit at work.

Appendix B

Discernment Listening Guidelines

Take time to become settled in God's presence.

Listen to others with your entire self (senses, feelings, intuition, imagination, and rational faculties).

Do not interrupt.

Pause between speakers to absorb what has been said.

Do not formulate what you want to say while someone else is speaking

Speak for yourself only, expressing your own thoughts and feelings, referring to your own experiences. Avoid being hypothetical. Steer away from broad generalizations.

Do not challenge what others say.

Listen to the group as a whole – to those who have not spoken aloud as well as to those who have.

Generally, leave space for anyone who may want to speak a first time before speaking a second time yourself.

Hold your desires and opinions – even your convictions – lightly.

From: Listening Hearts

Appendix C

Reflection Questions

How much does the group know about the discerner's way of relating to God?

How might the discerner's way of relating to God affect the topics of dialogue in each session?

What are the discerner's experiences of and assumptions about the way God is present in life situations?

What are the expectations of the people in the group regarding the discerner?

What are the expectations or hopes the discerner has for himself/herself regarding this process?

How does the discerner see God active in the session?

Is there any threat or challenge to the discerner's values, beliefs or psychological adjustment? Does this affect the discerner's perceptions or actions?

Are there any issues of dependency, attachment, sexuality, anger, power, or manipulation that might need to be addressed? Are these seen as obstacles or invitations to growth?

With what sort of attitude does the discerner enter the session? What kind of preparation?

How does the discerner address the role of the church, of the community, of the body of Christ and of social justice in the focus of the sessions?

Is the discerner having difficulty or excessive self-consciousness because of trying to give the "right" answer?

How does this discerner see his/her discernment happening through these sessions?

Are there any directions or ideas the discerner continues to shut out of the dialogue?

How relaxed or tense does the discerner seem to be in the sessions? How does the discerner's degree of trust in God compare to reliance on his/her own personal competence and willful effort?

Appendix D
Preparing to Tell Your Faith Story
Charles Fulton and Susie Miller

1. Draw a time line from left to right on a sheet of paper, the left being your birth the right being the present.

Time line:

Birth _____ Present

2. On the time line mark and identify (by year) significant events that were turning points in your life.
3. Above the line describe the context within which the event occurred. What else was going on in your life at that time?
4. Below the line describe your awareness of God at that point. Was God present or absent?
5. What was God doing with you in that event – comforting, challenging, provoking, teaching, giving, providing, loving, affirming, etc.?
6. Look at the whole time line. Are there patterns in the turning point events of your life? What initiates turning points? What is required of you? How were you different after these events?
7. What are the patterns in your experience of God and your relationship with God? Is there a consistency in God's actions and responses in your turning points?
8. Imagine telling someone about your insights into God's presence and working in your life. Tell your story of how God has come into your life and what has been the result when you have recognized God's presence. Tell the story to yourself, then tell your story to a friend and listen for the response your story will trigger in your friend.
9. Tell you story to someone outside a faith community
10. Commit to inviting God into your life as your life line lengthens into your future, regularly engaging the Gospel with others.

Appendix E

Terms

Baptism

The rite of initiation into the Christian faith. Baptism is the foundational event for calling Christian people into ministry.

Baptismal Covenant

The document that translates faith into action. The first two promises of the Covenant relate to our faithfulness within the Christian tradition. The third calls us to be evangelists, and the fourth and fifth direct our action to “all people” (BCP, pp. 304-5)

Bishop

The bishop’s responsibility is oversight of the diocese. He or she is charged with guarding the faith, providing for the sacraments, and ordaining priests and deacons.

Candidate

A person in the ordination process, who has completed a time as a postulant, testing a vocation. This person is currently working on his/her preparation for the diaconate or the transitional diaconate.

Canons

The laws of the Episcopal Church.

Clinical pastoral education (CPE)

CPE offers participants the opportunity to explore personal and professional growth issues in ministry formation in a clinical setting. Students study the meaning of pastoral care and work under the supervision of a treatment team.

Commission on Ministry (COM)

The diocesan body charged with developing and affirming the ministries of all baptized persons. The COM plays a significant role in mentoring people through the ordination process.

Deacon

An ordered (ordained) person who represents to the people of God the servant ministry of the church in the world. The office of deacon is called the diaconate.

Discernment

A prayerful community process of coming to understand call (vocation) as it is represented in members of the faith community.

Ember Days

The Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following the first Sunday in Lent, the Day of Pentecost, September 14, and December 14. These days are set aside for fasting and prayer. During each Ember Day cycle (four times a year), each postulant and candidate is required by canon to communicate with the bishop.

Initial Discernment Process

The process an individual undertakes with the help of a clergy person or trusted friend in his/her home congregation. A person usually takes some time personally to reflect on the feelings of a call, and then asks the community to help listen to this call.

Laity

A term used to refer to those people of God who are not ordained to one of the three orders of deacon, priest, or bishop.

Laos

A Greek word which means “all the people of God”.

Liturgy

Literally, “the work of the people,” liturgy is the way the faith community acts out the rites of Christian worship.

Mentor

A person who guides a person through the ordination process.

Ministry

That which we spend our lives on, in the name of Christ. Ministry is often equated with “church work,” but most ministry is done “in the world”.

Ministry developer

A professionally educated person who supports multiple congregations in a region of the diocese.

Nominee

A person who is testing a call to ordained office, but has not yet been admitted to the process leading to ordination.

Postulant

A person who has been formally accepted into the ordination process by the bishop.

Priest

An ordered (ordained) person who is called to be a pastor, sacramental leader, and teacher.

Spiritual Director

A spiritual companion who helps a person discern how she/he can grow in faith.

Standing Committee

The diocesan body which, by canon, must approve persons for ordination to the diaconate and to the priesthood based on fulfillment of canonical requirements.

Vestry/Bishop's Committee

The governing body of a congregation. It must approve, at several steps along the way, their postulant's and/or candidate's continuation in the ordination process.

Appendix F Scripture References for Bible Study

Deuteronomy	4:29	30:11-14		
1 Samuel	3:1 – 4:26			
Proverbs	8:1-12	8:32-35		
Wisdom	6:12-16			
Isaiah	6:5	43:1-4	50:4-5	55:8
Matthew	18:20			
Mark	1:35	6:46	14:32-39	
Acts	6:1-7			
Romans	5:5	6:1-11	8:9	8:14-16
Ephesians	4:13	4:7-16		
1 Corinthians	1:21-25	2:3-16	7:17	12:4-11
2 Corinthians	1:21-22			
Colossians	1:27-29			
1 John	2:20	2:27	4:2-3	4:13

Appendix G

Sample Discernment Processes

The Commission on Ministry has included several different discernment processes. Each of the ones included has benefits and can be adapted to individual situations. It is the desire of the COM that each person seeking to use a discernment team review each process and determine what type of process fits the situation.

Pay particular attention to the first process described, “Discerning God’s Will Together”. This is taken from the book of the same name, Discerning God’s Will Together by Danny Morris and Charles Olsen. The process outlined may look long and complicated, but it does promote an attitude of discernment and an intentionality of establishing a spiritual discipline of “holy listening”. There are some good suggestions about letting go of outside thoughts and about growing the seeds of what God has sown. It is well worth the time to review and then work this process as a group. Using the “individual discernment questions from Part 1, or questions from other discernment processes with “Discerning God’s Will Together” may be helpful.

It is our hope that as congregations become more proficient with discernment teams, they will contribute their processes and adaptations to the COM in order to be added to this notebook.

Discernment Processes Included in this Notebook

Discerning God’s Will Together A Spiritual Practice for the Church by Danny Morris and Charles Olsen.

This is published by Alban Publications. The format can be used to guide an individual discernment process as well as a congregational discernment process.

Minnesota Discernment Process.

A process of individual discernment developed by the Diocese of Minnesota. Each session focuses on a specific aspect of call.

Diocese of Colorado – Holy Orders Handbook

A process of individual discernment developed by the Diocese of Colorado. The focus is more on the development of a person’s ministry. There are scripture passages and prayers designated for each of the sessions.

The Quaker Clearness Committee Model

A much more informal process that can be used in addition to another process or in smaller congregations where most people know each other.

Listening Hearts by Suzanne Farnham, Joseph Gill, R. Taylor McLean, Susan Wand

A more informal process. The book has many helpful ideas about discernment groups and the way they might function.

Discerning God's Will Together

A Guide to Doing Prayerful Discernment

The first page is an overview of this process. More detail about each stage follows.

Selecting the Seed

Framing

Select a subject or an arena for discernment.

May we consider this as a matter of discernment, asking, "God is this your will?"

Preparing the Soil

Grounding

What is the guiding principle?

Shedding

Test for indifference

How many are indifferent to all but God's will?

Rooting

What are the biblical images or texts that come to mind?

Cultivating the Plants

Listening

What voices do we need to hear?

Let us pray in silence, seeking to discern God's will.

Exploring

What are the possible options or paths within the guiding principle?

Improving

Now "better up" each option. Make each the best it can be.

Harvesting the Yield

Weighing (the options)

List the fruits.

Consolation or desolation

Does the Spirit lure you?

Using biblical imagination

Are we ready to close? Does this matter need more prayer and reflection?

Closing

May we proceed in the way just stated?

Check for consensus.

Resting

Test of the heart.

Consolation? Desolation?

Discernment Process

Selecting the Seed

Framing - Identify and clarify the question

In order to determine if a subject is a realistic discernment issue, framing is essential

Helps clarify what we should pick up and what we should lay down.

Often in a meeting, a question or problem is no sooner stated than a barrage of remedies begins.

Resting in uncertainty goes against the grain.

Feel pressure of time

Quick solutions demonstrate efficiency

Moving too quickly may cover the difficult question

The question itself does not necessarily tell us what level of response is appropriate.

If we raise and consider questions carefully we may detect an unstated need that may be important to address.

When considered seriously, a question often changes with time and reflection.

It is important to provide opportunity for people first to ask questions that establish the needed information and then allow time to raise questions that get beneath the surface.

Members of a community intent on discernment must be deeply united to Christ – not only to find an answer, but to ask the right question in the first place.

Probing questions engage us in ways that help us to discover things for ourselves.

Good questions can open us up to the creative flow of the Spirit.

Well framed questions can draw entire group into a search for truth that enables its members to develop fuller insights together.

Identifies the focus for discernment of God's will

Clearly stated – agreed upon by group “God, what are you guiding me/us to do?”

Test the sense of the group – “May we consider this as a matter for discernment?”

Need to be able to sense the response of the group (leader).

Preparing the Soil

Grounding - Gather information and ideas

“What is the guiding principle?”

This sets the boundaries for discernment

This principle becomes definitive

The guiding principle should be specific to the issue and should define the boundaries of what will be discussed and the aim of the discernment effort.

The guiding principle may be confirmed by scripture or from a previously determined mission or vision statement.

The group may struggle to identify the guiding principle.

The leader may want to prepare a tentative guiding principle in order to save time for the larger group.

If there is controversy about which principle should guide discernment, the leader may suggest a more generic guiding principle – such as “God’s will, nothing more, nothing less; nothing else”

Shedding – means to name and then lay aside anything that will deter the person or group from focusing on God’s will as the ultimate value

“What needs to die in me/us in order for God’s gifts and direction to find room in our lives?”

Shedding means to suspend assumptions – doesn’t mean getting rid of them, but naming them for everyone to see.

In discernment, “indifference” is a positive word – means, “I don’t value anything as much as I value knowing and doing God’s will”

“What am I willing to let die to give God room to start something new?”

“What will I lay aside or leave behind so that I will be open to new gifts of grace or new expressions of ministry?”

Indifference is not easy to attain. People may be at different places in this ability.

The process of indifference is not optional for people who want to be serious about discerning God’s will.

The group process of coming to indifference may include openly talking about the issue of giving up personal agendas and coming to indifference for the greater good of knowing the Divine will.

The process may form the group as community.

Test for indifference.

“How many are indifferent to all but God’s will?”

the question is not voted on, but each person should consider this in his or her own mind and heart

It is best if everyone affirms his or her indifference, but if that cannot be done, it is better for the group to know the heart of each person – knowing where each person stands will help the group work through the process

Shedding involves a level of trust – each person will share at what ever level they feel comfortable.

The leader invites shedding in proportion to the issue.

The leader may invite the group to move from understanding themselves as individuals to sensing that they are united on indifference as a community.

“Are we willing to let something die to give God room to start something new?”

“What will we lay aside or leave behind so that we will be open to new gifts of grace or new expressions of ministry?”

Rooting

“What Biblical images or texts come to mind?”

Suggest scripture that relates to the issue for discernment

Images, themes, stories or people in Scripture that make connections with the issue they are considering (don’t have to defend the choice)

Go beyond Biblical to Christian tradition and the history of the local congregation – arts and hymns of the Church

Recalling stories from other sources help the group form a corporate memory.

May move into silent prayer.

Cultivating the Plants

Listening

Participants should see themselves as colleagues.

Christ speaks to his church in a variety of ways and through a variety of people.

All members respect the views of each member – and even invite views of each member.

“Whose voices do we need to hear?”

Listening is essential in discernment.

To one another

To cries of people in need

To Spirit of God

It may include

Gathering information

Conducting interviews with people outside the group

Listen to voices on the edge as well as those in the center

The leader may include time of silent prayer so the group can listen to inner prompting of God’s spirit.

Should be focused on discernment issue

Time devoted to silence should be announced (watch the clock)

Participants may scatter and return at specified time

Sitting in silence after prayer may allow more openness to the Holy Spirit

Be aware of deep, inner feelings

Feelings of consolation and desolation

Be aware of deep feelings, while praying

Joy, peace, sense of right, movement toward God
(consolation)

Distress, ill-at-ease, troubled, concerned, confused
(desolation)

May experience both, but one will dominate

Be sensitive to the feelings throughout silence – continue to pray and to listen until sense of discernment has come.

Invite members to talk about their experience if desired.

Stay in prayer and silence as long as it takes to discern God’s will.

Exploring

“What are possible options or paths within the guiding principles?”

list options on paper

In discernment, nothing is to be hidden or ignored. All suggestions may shed light on the subject.

Identify as many options or alternative paths as possible.

Goal is to identify all possible directions or alternatives each option may be finally put before the group – determine if it needs to be restated for more clarity.

Improving

“Now improve each option. Make each option the best it can be.”

May work together on this or spend time in silence before reporting to the group.

Through discernment, God’s will is more likely to be found in the most rather than in the least.

The leader tries to pull together what has been improved, prior to the weighing of options and closing.

At this time – the leader...

- Is interested in where the group is at this point in the process

- Listens for direction which the process takes, for points of clarity, or conclusions and leadings and offers them to the group for response

- Refines a statement that discussion may reshape

- “Is anyone uncomfortable with the directions just stated?”

Harvesting the Yield

Weighing

This allows the discerning person or group to move toward a preference for the paths or options which have been identified and improved.

“How can we come to a preference for a particular path?”

More human judgment is involved in this step.

While using various means of coming to wisdom – realize that this is Holy Ground – we are trusting the indwelling Spirit to be actively engaged in the process.

Methods that can be used

1. draw a line down the middle of the page and list pros and cons
2. list the fruits that each path would produce
3. “Are any from God’s Spirit?” “Are any rooted in the devil’s work of making sin attractive?” “Do any arise from the drive of human ego?”
4. 5 way test
 - a. is it filled with what is good for all
 - b. is it heavy with the fear of God
 - c. is it genuine in the feelings that underlie it
 - d. is it lightweight because of human show or because of some inward trust toward novelty
 - e. has the burden of vain glory lessened its merit
5. place each path near the heart
 - a. is there consolation – a sense of peace and movement toward God
 - b. is there desolation – a sense of dis-ease and movement away from God
6. practice of silence and solitude, allow Spirit to “lure” you to a particular path
7. guided meditation
 - a. Read John 14:1-3, Jesus offers to go ahead and prepare a “place” for us in God’s “house”. Imagine entering a large mansion-type house, Jesus meets and greets you at the door, How does he greet you? What does he say? He escorts you step by step up a long spiral stairway. At the top, you sit together on a bench in a large, round open hallway that is flooded with natural light from a skylight. Around the hallway are several doors – in fact, the same number of doors as options you are considering in your discernment. When you are ready, Jesus offers to accompany you to each door, then gently opens them one at a time, allowing you to peer into each room. What do you see in each?

8. guided imagery
 - a. Select a symbol – something you could draw or fashion for each option.
 - b. In your imagination, take a trip to a chapel or a beautiful secluded meadow with a reflection pond. Upon arrival, allow colorful appointments to embellish your holy place. Invite a holy and wise person to enter the space and greet this Sage. Receive the Sage’s greeting in return.
 - c. Then, as you sit together, imagine each symbol which you have selected entering the space, interacting with the environment and with each other until they come to rest. Note where and how they rest and in what relationships. Then say good-bye to each symbol. Receive the Sage’s parting words and gestures, and return to the location of your discernment.

Leader needs to be open to the possibility that more time may be needed.

Test for clarity and direct group accordingly.

Decision is not subject to a vote.

Try to sense the response of the group.

Offer a choice – “I sense we are ready to respond,” or, “I sense you may wish to pray and consider this matter further.”

If the leader senses the group is not ready to proceed, may suggest more time is needed.

Be definite in offering an alternative time for further consideration.

Later in the meeting

Another day

End of the meeting

This should be negotiated by the group and strictly honored.

Closing

This step is no longer in dialogue mode where ideas are explored – opening for wisdom and new sight.

This is closing down on a decision or new direction.

We can’t keep matters up in the air forever.

Steps to follow in bringing closure

1. test for consensus
 - a. "I like the proposition as stated"
 - b. "I am concerned, but will support the proposition"
 - i. this is basic affirmation – means its been discussed thoroughly, person might state it differently, this may not be exactly the statement the person would like, but it is close enough
 - ii. give the group a healthy warning to be careful and thoughtful
 - iii. this is a request to not rush to judgment without due consideration
 - c. "I am uneasy for these reasons, but will stand aside"
 - d. non-consensus "I cannot support the proposition"
 - i. the body has not reached full consensus on the matter
 - ii. at this point, the group may choose to stop the process or give the subject more consideration
 - iii. if efforts to reach consensus fail and the person cannot in good conscious change his or her response, leader may ask the person if he or she feels able to step aside so as not to block the rest of the group. The person's reasons for non support would be recorded
 - e. Seriously divided means
 - i. No consensus
 - ii. There are contrary feelings
 - iii. Group has argumentative attitude about the outcome
 - f. Not ready to conclude means
 - i. More time is needed
 1. for prayer
 2. for information gathering
 3. discussion
 - g. impasse means
 - i. members too far apart to anticipate consensus
2. proceed in the following way
 - a. reconsider guiding principles, test again for indifference, repeat rest of the discernment process
 - b. take time for further prayer and reflection
 - c. cast lots
 - i. when situation offers several good choices and the group doesn't want to vote down a good option and make it a loser
 - ii. the option drawn by lot will be chosen
 - iii. agree to this procedure ahead of the action
 - d. appoint one person to decide for the group
 - i. all must agree to follow the decision of this one person
 - e. vote by majority rule – sting of voting is lessened if everyone feels he or she has been heard

- f. count only “yes” votes
- g. drop it – celebrate the discernment, drop it, and move on

Resting

“Is this a comfortable place to be?”

This becomes the final movement in the process.

“Is our decision God’s will, nothing more, nothing less, nothing else?”

Resist the temptation to rush forward even when the matter seems properly concluded.

If time permits, invite the group to rest in the decision – how does it sound in the parking lot, after a night’s sleep, when explaining it to a friend?

Put the matter to the test of the heart

Does it bring consolation or desolation? Draw us closer to God and each other or result in distress and move the group away from God?

When finished with a discernment

Review the experience

Make notes on how it went, what you learned about dynamics and principles of discernment and consensus and what you discovered about God’s will.

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 discernor) 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 discernor 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 discernor
 - How what that means shows in his or her life.
 - How the discernor copes with failure to live up to his/her standard of behavior.
2. Discerner's work experiences – how these experiences relate to the discernor's sense of call?
3. What vision does the discernor bring to the future ministry? (To what extent is it open-ended?)
4. Does the discernor 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 discernor'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?

- 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.

Taken from: Holy Orders Handbook Diocese of Colorado

A PRAYER, BIBLE AND THEOLOGY STUDY GUIDE FOR THE CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

I. The Church

1. Thanksgiving to God for Parish Life in Christ

Collect	“For the Unity of the Church”	BCP pg. 255
Scripture	Deuteronomy 7:6-8 Colossians 3:12-17 I Corinthians 11:23-26 Luke 24:13-35	
Reading	An Outline of the Faith (The Catechism) The Church The Sacraments	BCP pg. 854-855 BCP pg. 857-858
Prayer	“A Litany of Thanksgiving”	BCP pg. 836-837

2. The Ministry of the Laity

Collect	The Prayer – Confirmation Service	BCP pg. 418
Scripture	Deuteronomy 10:12-15 I Corinthians 12:12-28 Ephesians 4:1-16 Matthew 28:16-20	
Reading	The Catechism –The Christian Hope	BCP pg. 861-862
Prayer	A Song of Creation	BCP pg. 88

II. The Ordained Ministry

1. The Ordination of a Priest

Collect	For the Ministry II	BCP pg. 256
Scripture	Isaiah 6:1-8 Ephesians 4:7, 11-16 or I Peter 5:1-4 or Philippians 4:4-9 Matthew 9:35-38 or John 6:35-38; 10:11-18	
Reading	The Ordination of a Priest The Examination	BCP pg. 531-532
Prayer	The Litany for Ordinations	BCP pg. 548-550

2. The Ordination of a Deacon

Collect	For the Ministry II	BCP pg. 256
Scripture	Jeremiah 1:4-9 or Ecclesiasticus. 39: 1-8 Psalm 84 or 119:33-40 II Cor. 4:1-6 or I Tim. 3:8-13 or Acts 6:2-7	
Reading	The Ordination of a Deacon The Examination	BCP pg. 543-544
Prayer	The Litany for Ordinations	BCP pg. 548-550

3. The Pastoral Ministry		
Collect	A Prayer of Self-Dedication	BCP pg. 832
Scripture	Isaiah 55 I Corinthians. 4 I Peter 5:1-11 Matthew 7:7-12	
Reading	The Celebration of a New Ministry: The Induction and Prayer	BCP pg. 561-563
Prayer	A Prayer attributed to St. Francis	BCP pg. 833
4. The Priesthood		
Collect	For the Ministry I	BCP pg. 256
Scripture	I Samuel 2:35 Hebrews 4:14-5:10 John 15:1-17	
Reading	The Ordination of a Priest The Consecration	BCP pg. 533-534
Prayer	Christ Our Passover	BCP pg. 83
5. The Diaconate		
Collect	For Social Service Vocation in Daily Work	BCP pg. 260 or BCP pg. 261
Scripture	Isaiah 42:1-4 or Isaiah 52:13-53; 12 I John 4:7-12 Matthew 25:31-46	
Reading	The Ordination of a Deacon: The Consecration	BCP pg. 545
Prayer	The Song of Simeon	BCP pg. 93
6. The Cost of Ministry		
Collect	Holy Cross Day	BCP pg. 244
Scripture	Revelation 5:6-14 II Corinthians. 5:17-6:16 Matthew 9:35-10:39	
Reading	The Catechism Sin and Redemption	BCP pg. 848-849
Prayer	A Song of Penitence	BCP pg. 90
7. The Discipline of Ministry		
Collect	Second Sunday of Easter	BCP pg. 224
Scripture	Exodus 20:1-20 I Corinthians. 9:16-27 John 21:15-19	
Reading	The Catechism The Ministry	BCP pg. 855-856
Prayer	The Song of Zechariah	BCP pg. 92

III. Prayer and Ministry

1. The Prayer of Union

Collect	Of a Saint III	BCP pg. 250
Scripture	II Chronicles 6:12-21 John 17	
Reading	The Catechism God the Son	BCP pg. 849-850
Prayer	The Second Song of Isaiah	BCP pg. 86

2. Prayer for One Another

Collect	Proper 22	BCP pg. 234
Scripture	Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-19 Philippians 1:3-11 Colossians 1:9-23 II Thessalonians 1:11-12	
Reading	The Catechism The Holy Spirit Prayer and Worship	BCP pg. 852-853 BCP pg. 856-857
Prayer	The Solemn Collects: Good Friday	BCP pg. 277-280

3. The Faithfulness of God

Collect	For Quiet Confidence	BCP pg. 832
Scripture	Lamentations 3:21-33 Romans 8:31-39 Matthew 5:1-12; 6:19-34	
Reading	The Catechism Human Nature God the Father	BCP pg. 845-846 BCP pg. 846
Prayer	You are God	BCP pg. 95

A SUGGESTED OUTLINE FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION SESSIONS
IN THE CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT PROCESS
Diocese of Colorado

The following questions may be helpful for each of the sections. They are intended to assist in opening possible areas of consideration. Most do not have any “right” answers, but are only meant to stimulate thought and discussion.

I. The Church

1. Thanksgiving to God for Parish Life in Christ
 - What does it mean to be God’s chosen people? Chosen for what?
 - How does a group of people become “bound together in love by the one Spirit?” What does this mean?
 - What is the relationship of individual and communal discernment of God’s will for our lives?
 - Why did the disciples on the road to Emmaus not recognize Jesus? What may have gotten in the way? What gets in the way for us?
2. The Ministry of the Laity
 - How have we discerned God’s will for us in our own present vocations?
 - What are our responsibilities as Christians in our present vocations?
 - What gifts do we have that could add to the unity and wholeness of the Body of Christ?
 - How can we be more open to Christ’s presence with us?

II The Ordained Ministry

1. The ordination of a Deacon and a Priest
 - In what way do the ministries of all the baptized, the diaconate and the priesthood differ from one another?
 - What are some indications of being “called” to any particular vocation? To the ordained ministry?
 - What kind of leader is a shepherd? What qualities are needed to be a dictator? To be an example?
2. The Pastoral Ministry
 - What are “pastoral “responsibilities?
 - How can one’s image of God and relationship with God affect pastoral ministry?
 - Is there a difference in the call to pastoral ministry for the laity and the ordained ministry? If so, what is it?

3. The Priesthood
 - What makes a priest? What can we learn from Jesus as High Priest about the role of priest?
 - Is there a role for priest in areas other than specific “parish work” and if so, in what ways?
 - What does it mean, and what difference does it make that it is Christ who chooses us first and not we who first choose Christ?
4. The Diaconate
 - What makes a deacon? What can we learn from Jesus as Servant Lord about the ministry of a deacon?
 - If we are all called to be engaged in serving others (diakonia), why should deacons be ordained?
 - How do deacons carry on Christ’s Servant Ministry?
5. The Cost of Ministry
 - How can we differentiate “taking up your cross” and being a self styled martyr (developing a martyr syndrome)? What are the differences in attitude?
 - How are Christ’s instructions to the apostles related to taking up one’s cross, surrendering one’s willfulness?
 - In what way does the news that we are reconciled make us a new creation? How in our own lives does this good news relate to taking up our own crosses?
 - What is the relationship of “taking up your cross” to self-examination and increased self-awareness?
6. The Discipline of Ministry
 - In what way do our lives reflect the new covenant of reconciliation?
 - How do we reflect God’s place in our lives? How do we feed Christ’s sheep?
 - In what way can we prepare ourselves and nourish ourselves for being ministers of the new covenant?

III Prayer and Ministry

1. The Prayer of Union
 - With whom (or what) do we desire to become united in prayer of union?
 - What are some ways we can open ourselves to, or increase our awareness of, the presence of God, Christ, within us?
 - In what way can the prayer of silence, non-verbal or listening prayer be a prayer of union – with God – with others?

2. Prayer for One Another

- What are some ways we recognize the Holy Spirit within others, within creation, within ourselves?
- How can we increase our awareness of the needs of others, rather than our own projections of what we think they need?
- What are various types of intercessions used in your own verbal or non-verbal prayer for others, and for yourself? What has been most helpful?

3. The Faithfulness of God

- In what way can “sitting in solitude and silence” increase awareness of God’s faithfulness, God’s love?
- What are some of the ways we learn how to trust in God?
- What are some of the experiences you have had which have increased your faith and trust in God?

The Quaker Clearness Committee Model

(referenced in The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life.
Parker Palmer. Jossey-Bass, 1998)

This informal model may be used in conjunction with another discernment process or as a “stand alone” process in small congregations where most of the members know one another.

The purpose of a clearness committee is to “[invite] people to help each other with personal problems while practicing a discipline that protects the sanctity of the soul.” (Although Parker uses the term “problems,” this process can be effectively used in discerning vocation. Much of the Listening Hearts material is based on the clearness committee model.) It works like this.

The discerner brings an issue to a group of 4-5 people she/he has invited to be on the committee. In preparation for their meeting, she/he writes 1-2 pages about the issue, giving a clear statement of the issue, relevant background, and relevant foreground.

The group meets for 2-3 uninterrupted hours, and the discerner is the center of attention. Committee members are forbidden to speak to her/him except to ask open, honest questions. Some attention should be paid to what “open” and “honest” means. Asking the question, “Have you ever considered therapy?” is a leading question – not open and honest. Asking “Have you often felt this way?” is acceptable. The discerner usually answers each question, but has the right to pass. There is lots of silence, and nothing is hurried. Advice and oversimplification from committee members are not allowed.

About 15 minutes before the session ends, the discerner is asked if she/he would like to do some “mirroring”. If not, the group continues with questions. If so, committee members reflect, or mirror, what the discerner said or did, but might not be aware of. “When you talked about X, your voice dropped and you seemed tired, but when you spoke of Y, your energy rose and your eyes got bright.”

There are two levels of confidentiality in effect in a clearness committee. First, what’s said in the meeting stays there. Second, members may not approach the discerner with comments or suggestions, either during or after the meeting.

Of course the clearness committee can (and should) be infused with prayer – both corporate and individual. The group may want to select a convener to keep track of time and to facilitate times for prayer.

From “The Commission on Ministry Handbook”
Diocese of Wyoming 2005

Discernment Process Suggested in Listening Hearts

1. In preparation for the first meeting, the discerner writes a brief biographical sketch tracing the significant threads of experience and background that relate to the question, stating the issue or decision the person is facing and mentioning any information that may be relevant.
2. Convener of the team distributes copies of the biographical sketch to the other team members at least a few days before the meeting. Members will keep the discerner and the rest of the team in prayers before the team meets.
3. When the group assembles, if all do not know one another, they take some time to introduce themselves.
4. The convener opens the meeting with a specified period of silence to permit all to become receptive to God's presence.
5. The convener ends the silence by having the discerner say, in his/her own words, the issue or question of call.
6. The task of the members of the team is to listen prayerfully and raise questions that will help the discerner consider the issue.
7. If the issue being considered is unclear, the first questions need to deal with that. Next, questions to establish relevant background may be in order. Thereafter, the questions should become slower-paced and more reflective.
8. Questions should be concise and presented one at a time. Avoid giving background as to why you are asking a question or explaining the reason for the question. If you are unsure exactly how to phrase the question, it is better to wait silently to let the question develop and become more focused.
9. The background information supplied by the discerner is often fertile soil for questions.
10. Avoid questions such as; "What does God want you to do?" If the person knew the answer, the group would not be gathered for discernment.
11. Members must refrain from giving advice. Do not ask questions that suggest the answer or cloak advice in the guise of questions.
12. It is advisable for the discerner to keep the answers brief because more questions and more silence may provide further clarity.
13. While articulating answers to the questions is usually helpful, the discerner is never obligated to answer any question.

14. The work of God often takes place in the depth of quiet. Preferably, each person will be conscious of permitting a period of prayerful, silence between speakers.
15. Each member of the group needs to help maintain a pace that allows reflection. Any member may ask for a time of silence.
16. Each member of the group needs to help maintain a gentle atmosphere, guarding against any tendency to become confrontational.
17. An atmosphere of open listening needs to be maintained.
18. Each member of the group needs to help ensure that members do not press their own agendas or feelings on the discerner.
19. Each member of the group should ensure that others in the group have the opportunity to speak.
20. About thirty minutes before the meeting is scheduled to end, the convener offers the discerner the opportunity to ask questions of the group.
21. About ten minutes before the end of the meeting, the convener asks the group to determine whether or not another meeting is desirable. If anyone in the group is not comfortable with the direction the discerner seems to be moving, it is important for that person to suggest that the group convenes again.
22. The final five minutes are for free and open prayers which the convener introduces and concludes.
23. At any time during the meeting, a sense that the group has crossed a threshold may emerge. A member may suggest that a common understanding seems to exist. Should this occur, the convener may check this perception with the group, and if verified, begin to conclude the meeting.
24. A meeting or series of meetings can take place without resolution of the issue raised by the discerner. The consensus may be that the group has gone as far as it can for the time being. Should this occur, the desire to “wrap things up” neatly or to come to closure on a particular question should be resisted.
25. It is essential that what goes on in the meeting is absolutely confidential unless the discerner expressly chooses otherwise.
28. Everyone should come to meetings prepared to schedule a time for another meeting.
27. At the conclusion of the final session all discerners should return their copies of the biographical sketch to the discerner.