



**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE
OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST**

**MANUAL FOR DISCERNMENT PROCESS
FOR VOCATIONAL MINISTRY**

Phone: (850) 434-7337

Fax: (850) 434-8577

diocgc.org

AN INTRODUCTION

Every Christian is called by God. The reality of this statement is reflected in the ministry of Jesus Christ and the Baptismal Covenant. The examination at Baptism (BCP 304-305) asks the family and candidate for Baptism, “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?” This same truth is reflected in the Catechism (BCP 855), “Who are the ministers of the Church? The Ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons.”

Discernment is the process by which an individual, in the context of Christian community, seeks to hear, understand, and respond to God’s unique calling. Anyone who begins the discernment process should **1.]** understand the reality that the most important order in the church is the laity, and **2.]** recognize that God has given every individual gifts for the building up of his Kingdom. Serving as a lay person, a deacon or a priest is an individual’s response to this call from God. The Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast supports an individual’s response to the call of Christ by providing a process of listening, testing, serving, and encouraging. This process helps the nominee to discern a particular call to a more developed lay ministry, a call to create a bridge between the church and the community as an ordained deacon, or to serve Christ as an ordained priest. All who begin discernment accept the reality that the process will result in a direction that serves God with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and not necessarily the individual. Those who submit themselves to the process will understand the possibility that their discernment may lead them to a whole new understanding of their call and their responsibility within the Kingdom of God.

Discerning a call to a developed lay ministry, the sacred order of deacons or the holy order of priests is one that will most likely bring about significant life changes. The process is meant to be nurturing, encouraging, challenging and reflective of the grace and mercy we have received through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Commission on Ministry (COM) engages in this work with a nominee under the pastoral direction of the Diocesan Bishop. There are three major steps in the process of discernment: **1.]** From the sponsoring congregation to the Bishop; **2.]** From the Bishop into the Diocese and COM; **3.]** From the COM with a recommendation to the Bishop.

FROM THE SPONSORING CONGREGATION TO THE BISHOP

GENERAL PARAMETERS AND EXPECTATIONS:

The estimated time commitment for discernment is approximately six months at the parish level and another six to twelve months at the Diocesan level. There may be opportunity for the process to be individualized, as some nominees move through the discernment process quickly and others require more time. Everyone who begins the discernment process will not be ordained or attend seminary. Many who enter the process will continue to serve God as lay leaders, with a more developed ministry and the support of the Diocese. However, the result of one's discernment will not change the call to serve Christ that is stated at Baptism.

The discernment process requires commitment, leadership, discipline, humility, and a willingness to serve. It is a journey of both the head and the heart. Some nominees will enter seminary; some may enroll in the local Diocesan School for Ministry program of formal education/formation, to serve Christ as priest or deacon within our diocese; others may continue to serve Christ as a lay leader. Enrolling in seminary is never understood as a goal. The nominee and his or her family (spouse / partner and children) are a part of this process. The nominee's response to a call will impact the life of the family. Questions concerning the potential of relocation, financial issues, conflict, and possibly disappointment as the Holy Spirit leads one into and through the "wilderness" are discussed and reflected upon throughout the discernment process.

The nominee, the sponsoring congregation, the supporting clergy, the COM, and the Diocesan Bishop, all work as a team in this process to achieve the best vocational response to the call of Christ. The hope of all those involved is to build the Kingdom of God.

Note: If seminary is a requirement in the individual's vocation, most seminaries require completed applications for the fall semester by mid Spring of the year enrollment will begin. This date may be important but will not drive the process, discussions, or influence the timeline of a decision.

INITIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NOMINEE:

- A nominee should be an active, confirmed, Episcopal member of a parish or mission church in the Diocese for at least two years, and be viewed as a leader by the congregation and not just a small group within the congregation.
- The nominee must practice proportional giving and respect the authority of the Bishop, the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast, and The Episcopal Church.

The nominee should prepare to incur costs of approximately \$1,500.00 as the process is undertaken. These funds are used for costs associated with the process and are non-refundable (even if the nominee withdraws from the process). Psychological testing, a criminal background report, credit check, and a medical exam are to be completed at the direction of the Diocesan Bishop. It is expected that your sponsoring congregation will assist you with costs where needed/appropriate. You are in this process with the support of your congregation; spiritually, in preparation, and financially. As dictated by the Canons of the Episcopal Church, your congregation should be committed to *“pledge to contribute financially to that preparation”*.

- For more information on initial fees, refer to [APPENDIX H].
- A bachelor’s degree from an accredited university or college is required for ordination to the priesthood.
- The nominee should know they will not be assigned to their sponsoring church.
- A nominee should not resign current employment without consulting the Diocesan Bishop.

STARTING THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS:

- The discernment process begins when someone schedules a meeting to discuss their intent with their local clergy. In the absence of a local priest, the individual will contact the Diocesan Bishop who may choose to appoint a clergy person to assist the individual with beginning the discernment process.
- The priest in charge has the discretion to choose the focus and length of a parish-level discernment process. Discernment may be done one-on-one or may include the use of a congregational discernment committee. The parish-level discernment process will extend as necessary. The book *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* by Susan G. Farnham (Morehouse Publishing 1991) is a useful resource for these meetings. In addition to this resource, several appendices in this manual offer resources for use in the parish. These are suggestions only. The discernment process at the parish-level rests in the discretion of the local priest-in-charge.

APPENDIX C A list of suggested readings for those in vocational discernment

APPENDIX D A list of suggested questions to be addressed in discernment conversations

APPENDIX E A four-part church level discernment process

- Anyone entering into formal vocational discernment shall engage a Spiritual Director who functions beyond the sponsoring church.
- If discernment leads to the mutual agreement between nominee and clergy for introduction into the diocesan discernment process, the supporting clergy of the sponsoring congregation will contact and request an initial meeting with the Diocesan Bishop. Before the introductory meeting with the Bishop is held, the nominee shall submit to the Bishop:
 - The formal application into discernment [**APPENDIX A**].
 - The Spiritual Autobiography and Vision Statement [**APPENDIX A**].
 - A letter of support from the clergy.

THE INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH THE BISHOP:

At the introductory meeting with the Bishop, the work of the nominee, the conversations between the nominee, clergy, and/or church level discernment committee will be discussed. A spouse/partner will be expected to participate in the meeting with the Bishop and be involved in the conversation regarding discernment.

This meeting with the Bishop should not be interpreted as automatic admittance into the diocesan discernment process.

After the meeting, the nominee will receive notification of the Bishop's decision regarding admittance into the diocesan discernment process. If the nominee is encouraged to move forward, the nominee will receive information and forms to complete the required psychological testing, medical exam, and a criminal background report and credit check. Psychological assessments are conducted by a licensed professional appointed by the Bishop. The results of such testing are shared with the COM. Further information and anticipated fees are found in [APPENDIX H].

FROM THE BISHOP INTO DISCERNMENT WITH THE COM

ORIENTATION MEETING:

If invited into the diocesan discernment process, the nominee will attend a series of meetings that begin with an Orientation Meeting with the Diocesan Bishop and the Commission on Ministry [COM]. The orientation meeting is held in early fall and lasts approximately two hours. This is an opportunity for both the nominee and spouse/partner to ask questions and explore expectations. At this meeting, the remaining process and future meetings will be explained. This part of the process is a time of study, assessment, experience, and reflection that culminates with the COM making a recommendation to the Bishop in early January.

At the Orientation Meeting you will:

- Meet other nominees.
- There will be time for group discussions, and you will be appointed to a Shepherd from the COM. This will be your primary point of contact during the next phase of discernment.
- Soon after the meeting, the Diocesan Bishop will assign you to a congregation in which you will be required to perform a twelve-week church internship.

CHURCH INTERNSHIP:

The nominee will complete a twelve-week internship in a church setting different from the sponsoring church. Spouse / partner and family are encouraged to join the nominee during the internship. This experience exposes the nominee and spouse / partner to the church at large. It requires leaving and letting go. Also, such an experience is meant to broaden and deepen the understanding of the church and models for ministry. Finally, it offers an opportunity to deepen and expand the nominee's personal discernment. Details of the internship will be established between the nominee and the priest-in-charge of the congregation where the internship will be served, using guidelines established by the Diocesan Bishop and COM. In general, the COM expects that the nominee's work will include the following:

- Four hours per week in the church or ministry of the church. This includes but is not limited to time spent in worship and meetings with the priest.
- Attendance at Sunday morning services and weekday services [if offered] as agreed.
- Attend at least two vestry meetings.
- Involvement in the ministry of the church as set by the priest in charge and the COM. This might include pastoral visits, teaching a class, attending meetings, or becoming involved in an outreach ministry of the parish. The specific work should be something that will expand and enrich the nominee's understanding of ministry. Thus, it is preferable that the work done be something that the nominee has not previously done in his/her sponsoring church. The Bishop may allow some limited roles and duties normally reserved for ordained clergy to be taken on and performed by the nominee for the duration of the internship.
- Regular meetings with the church's clergy (or designee) for reflection and conversation about the experiences of the internship. It is the nominee's responsibility to set and lead the agenda of these meetings.
- Preparing and presenting to a group within the parish a sermon, meditation, or teaching.

UPON COMPLETION OF THE INTERNSHIP:

The priest in charge will fill out a checklist [APPENDIX G] and write a report to the Diocesan Bishop and COM as to his/her perceptions of the nominee's ministry. The following should be addressed:

- How do you perceive this person's sense of vocational call to ministry in the church?

The nominee will submit a report to the Diocesan Bishop and COM responding to the following:

- Describe and discuss the scope of your internship.
- What surprised you about this experience?
- How did this experience inform your understanding of the church?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- What made you uncomfortable and why?
- How did this experience inform your own call to ministry?
- How do you envision church changing within the next ten years, and how do you see your vocation intersecting with that vision?
- What do you want us to know about your own discernment that you have not had the chance to say?

MEETINGS WITH THE COM:

During the discernment process, the nominee will meet three to four times with the COM. Discussion topics and agenda for these meetings will focus on your experiences in the internship/discernment process, the focus of the three orders of ministry, a gifts assessment, and leadership and ministry.

FROM THE COM WITH A RECOMMENDATION TO THE BISHOP

Following the discernment process, COM will submit a recommendation to the Diocesan Bishop, on their perception of the vocational call of the nominee. Their recommendation will focus on one of the three orders: Laity, deacon, or priest. There are occasions that COM will ask a nominee to return in the future or may be unclear as to their recommendation.

The Diocesan Bishop will take that recommendation into account in a formal decision that will be communicated in-person with the nominee.

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APPENDIX A

Application for Admittance into Vocational Discernment

Part I



Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

Phone: (850) 434-7337 Fax: (850) 434-8577

www.diocgc.org

Bishop's Confidential Questionnaire

Full Name _____ SSN _____

Telephone: C _____ H _____ W _____

Sponsoring Congregation _____

Home Address _____

Email _____ On Social Media: (Y/N) _____

Facebook _____ Twitter @ _____

Instagram _____ Other (specify) _____

Date of Birth _____ Age _____ Place of Birth _____

Baptism Date _____ Church and City _____

Confirmation Date _____ Church and City _____

by The Right Reverend _____, Bishop of _____

Length of time as a resident in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast _____

Have you been a member of another Diocese? (Y/N) _____

Diocese Name/City/State: _____

Length of time as a member of the Episcopal Church: _____

What percent of income have you given to the work of the Church through their parish during the past five years? _____%

FAMILY:

Marital Status: Single _____ Married _____ Divorced _____ Separated _____ Widowed _____

If married / separated /divorced / widowed, provide date(s) _____

Spouse / Partner Full Name _____ Goes by _____

Date of Birth _____ Occupation: _____

Baptized / Confirmed (circle applicable) Religious Affiliation _____

On Social Media: (Y/N) _____ Facebook (Y/N) _____ Twitter (Y/N) _____

Instagram (Y/N) _____ Other _____ Community Involvement (Y/N) _____

What is your spouse / partner’s attitude toward your plan to enter the ministry?

Previous Marriages: (Yes/No) _____ If yes, list date[s] of marriage[s]

Children:

_____	_____	_____
Name	Name	Name
DOB _____	DOB _____	DOB _____

_____	_____	_____
Name	Name	Name
DOB _____	DOB _____	DOB _____

What is their attitude toward your plan to enter the ministry?

Father's Full Name _____

Living? _____ Occupation(s) _____

Mother's Maiden Name _____

Living? _____ Occupation(s) _____

Religious affiliation of parents _____

What is their attitude toward your plan to enter the ministry?

Brothers and Sisters: How many and ages: _____

EDUCATION: Please include a copy of degree(s) and transcript(s)

High School _____ Year of graduation _____

School's Address _____

Highest Post-Secondary Education Completed _____

Major: _____ Month/Year of graduation _____

School's Address _____

List any graduate work:

If current student: Major Field(s) of Study _____

Minor(s) _____ Certificates _____

Expected date of graduation/completion _____ GPA _____

Other Post-Secondary Education (and dates)

EMPLOYMENT RECORD: Give a brief account of last three employments. Include the following: name of employer; dates; position title; and primary responsibilities.

Current/Most Recent

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

MILITARY SERVICE: (Branch, dates, rate/rank attained, areas of service, reason for leaving)

Have you ever applied for admission to vocational discernment in the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast or any other diocese? (Yes/No) _____ List if another diocese _____

If yes, briefly describe the resulting action:

In which of the following ministries have you served in a congregational setting within the past five years?

Lector	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vestry Member	<input type="checkbox"/>	LEM	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outreach Ministry	<input type="checkbox"/>
Choir	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cursillo	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mission Work	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kairos	<input type="checkbox"/>	EFM	<input type="checkbox"/>	Youth Leader	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (Specify):

How have you been involved in servant ministry within the church and community in which you live or work?

Are you interested in some particular **type** of ministry? (Yes/No) _____

Provide details:

FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Do you have funds for 3 years of seminary? (Yes/No) _____

Comments

Do you have any debts? (Yes/No) _____ Give general overview of debts:

PERSONAL DATA:

Have you ever been arrested? (Yes/No) _____ If yes, give details:

What has been your experience or usage of alcohol or other drugs?

Have you ever received psychiatric treatment or psychological counseling? (Yes/No) _____

Have you ever been prescribed psychotropic medication? (Yes/No) _____

If yes, please give details and dates?

Would you be willing to sign a release for those records? (Yes/No) _____

PERSONAL THOUGHTS:

What event has affected your life most?

What is your feeling about current social issues and are any of particular concern or interest to you?

Have you ever been involved in controversy with school officials, employers, or others in authority over you? (Yes/No) _____

If yes, give details

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/DETAILS ON ANY PART OF THE APPLICATION:

APPLICATION COMPLETED BY:

Nominee's signature date

Sponsoring Clergy Signature date

Sponsoring Clergy Name [please print]

Church: _____

City: _____



Spiritual Autobiography

Vision Statement

Clergy Discernment Letter of Recommendation

Certificates of Degrees

Transcripts _____

List Additional Material

Application for Admittance into Vocational Discernment

Part II

[To be written by the NOMINEE and submitted with application]

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY: In a typed essay of no more than five pages, double-spaced, discuss the major influences and events of your life, especially what has led you to your participation in this discernment process. Be sure to include information such as family, personal circumstances, and your age at the time of a major event.

VISION STATEMENT: In a brief typed essay of no more than three pages, double-spaced, articulate your vision of your future ministry as you discern it to be at this moment. Please address the following questions within this essay: **1.** To what vocational ministry do you feel God is calling you? **2.** Describe your understanding of the role and identity of that ministry. **3.** What type of ministry do you contemplate (*parochial, specialized, full-time, part-time*)? **4.** What is the purpose of the church? **5.** If applicable, how does your spouse / partner view your vocational aspirations? **6.** If applicable, what plans do you have for your family during your education, training, and ministry?

[written by the SPONSORING CLERGY and submitted with application]

Briefly describe the grounds upon which the nominee has moved to seek discernment. In your opinion, do you believe that the nominee fully understands the sacrifices of submitting one's self to the church for vocational discernment? Does the nominee understand that by entering the Diocesan discernment there are several possible outcomes (lay ministry, deacon, and priest) of this process? What were the highlights of the conversations from the list of topics in [APPENDIX D]? What is your perception of this person's call to ministry in the church?

Please include with this form [a recent headshot photograph](#) of the applicant only, and send to:

*The Rt. Rev. J. Russell Kendrick, Bishop – russell@diocgc.org
cc: Mary R. Poss, Ordination Officer – mary@diocgc.org*

If mailed: send original to the Bishop, in an envelope marked "Confidential" to:

**The Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast
201 North Baylen Street
Pensacola, FL 32502**

APPENDIX B

A few facts about The Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

Number of churches = 61 (plus one Mission Station in Fountain Prison in Atmore, AL.)

Typical costs to a parish for one full-time clergy person is about \$ 90,000.00 annually.

- Minimum salary (full-time) = \$55,911 (January 2020)
- Pension (18% of salary and housing)
- Annual costs of family medical ranges from \$20,000 to 30,000 (January 2020 rates), dependent on what offered plan is selected.

**** There are only 16 churches that have more than 1 clergy person on staff.

National statistics state that average Sunday worship is 65 people and most congregations have about 155 members. These figures reflect the reality that we are denomination of small congregations.

65% of the current openings will most likely be for part-time clergy leadership.

Duties that are performed by many clergy that give the nominee an idea of the work involved:

- Prepare and print weekly bulletin
- Prepare and print parish newsletter
- Update parish webpage
- Visit sick and shut in
- Work to incorporate visitors
- Teach or facilitate a Bible study
- Prepare a sermon on a weekly basis
- Serve on a Diocesan-level committee or department
- Clean and prepare worship space (includes cleaning bathrooms)
- Respond to phone calls
- Typically, clergy officiate two weddings and five funerals per year

APPENDIX C

Resources for Reading

The following list of books is a suggestion for reading and reflection for someone considering vocational discernment. It is not meant as a prerequisite for entering the diocesan discernment process, nor is it exhaustive.

- R. Thomas Ashbrook, *Mansions of the heart: exploring the seven stages of spiritual growth*
- Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion*
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship; Life Together*
- Rosalind Brown, *Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World*
- Michael Curry, *Crazy Christians*
- Debra Farrington, *Hearing with the Heart: A Gentle Guide for Discerning God's Will for Your Life*
- Nora Gallagher, *Practicing Resurrection*
- Denise George, *What Pastors Wish Church Members Knew*
- Margaret Guenther, *Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction*
- Stanley Hauerwas, *Resident Aliens*
- Alan Jones, *Sacrifice and Delight*
- C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*
- Nancy Ann McLaughlin, *Do You Believe? Living the Baptismal Covenant*
- Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Like Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*
- Ormonde Plater, *Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons*
- Eugene Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir*
- Bennett Sims, *Servanthood*
- Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World*
- Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence*
- A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of Christ*
- Robert Wicks, *Availability: The Spiritual Joy of Helping Others*
- N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian*
- Dwight Zscheile, *People of the Way*

APPENDIX D

Church-Level Vocational Discernment - Suggested Questions

These topics, sessions, and worksheets on leadership and ministry are to be used at the church level in the discernment process:

- Nominee's belief in the person of Jesus Christ as Messiah and Son of God.
- Nominee's belief in the creedal statements contained in the Book of Common Prayer.
- Nominee should be prepared to discuss the testing of his or her personal call and how he or she is prepared to serve the church. How will the nominee address serving a parish that is different from the congregation of origin? How will the nominee prepare for the intellectual, emotional and financial rigors of responding to a call?
- How does the nominee state "the Gospel" and how has his or her understanding of the Gospel changed over their life? When and how has the theology of the nominee changed?
- What skills does the nominee have that are associated with service to God?
- Nominee should be encouraged in the areas of service, teaching and pastoral visits. *These commitments should be documented for the Bishop and COM.*
- What event has led to the person beginning this process?
- Does the nominee have events in his or her life experience that will challenge others? Could this life experience be viewed as negative or self-destructive by a congregation?
- How has the faith of the nominee affected political views held by the individual?
- The nominee, the rector, or a parish level discernment committee should discuss the differences between a vocation and a job.
- How will the nominee serve a congregation, what gifts of leadership are currently offered into the life of a parish?
- What weaknesses of the nominee have been described and how will these weaknesses present challenges to the individual and to those whom he or she serves?
- How does the nominee live among problems that can't be fixed? When did you live with uncertainty and ambiguity?
- How does the nominee distinguish between the call to serve as a lay leader, a deacon or a priest?
- Does the discernment involve some dissatisfaction with current employment, a relationship, a parenting issue or a recent spiritual event?
- What financial plan does the nominee have to support his or her vocation as a lay leader, a deacon or a priest? Providing medical insurance for family, a retirement plan, access to education for a spouse / partner or children and the reality of relocation to serve are aspects that an individual must anticipate and discuss at all levels of discernment – refer back to [APPENDIX B] for Diocesan Minimum Salary estimates. If an individual is unwilling to relocate, his or her leadership should be developed at the parish level as a lay leader.

APPENDIX E

CHURCH-LEVEL VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT - SUGGESTED FOUR-PART PROCESS

This appendix, which includes pages 22-30 is a suggested discernment process for use with someone in the church setting. It is not intended as the only way to conduct vocational discernment in the parish. It may be used by a group or in one-on-one conversations between clergy and the discerner. During the first session, members of the group will introduce themselves. The structure of the meetings, including its educational and reflective styles, are explained below.

SESSION I LISTENING TO GOD

Prayer: A Prayer for Quiet Confidence, BCP pg. 832

Focus: "What is Ministry" - The Discernment Process

Preparation: Read the book "Listening Hearts" by Suzanne G. Farnham

Discussion:

- What is Ministry?
- What is the ministry of each member of the Discernment Group?
- What is the current ministry of the nominee[s]?
- What is listening?
- How do you listen for God?
- How do you know what God wants of you?
- What are the impediments to listening for God?
- What conditions help us discern God's call?

Closing Prayer: Prayer of Thomas Merton, Listening Hearts, pg. 145.

SESSION II MINISTRY

Prayer: Prayer of Vocation in Daily Work, BCP pg. 261

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

Activity: Group exercises. The goal of these exercises is to clarify our understanding of what priests, deacon and lay ministers are really ordained / authorized to do.

Exercise A: List what you think priestly, diaconate and laity leadership skills & responsibilities are. Compare the list with the “Examination of Priest”, BCP pg. 531 and “Examination of Deacon”, BCP pg. 543.

Exercise B: Read aloud the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, BCP pages 304-305.

- Which of these vows are easy for each member of the group to fulfill?
- Which are harder, if not impossible?
- When do you succeed in “seeking and serving Christ in all persons?”
- Where do you (and the Church) fail? Share personal stories.
- How do you proclaim by word and example the Good News?
- Which is easier for you, word or example?

Closing Prayer: Prayer for Social Service, BCP pg. 260.

SESSION III LEADERSHIP

Prayer: Prayer for Self-Dedication #61, BCP pg. 832

Focus: Self-awareness and leadership style.

Discussion: There are many leadership styles and there are many settings for ministry. What leadership style matches the leadership needs of a particular ministry setting (e.g. Rector of a corporate-size congregation; a hospital chaplain, deacon, lay minister etc.)?

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

- What is the Holy Life?
- What does it look like?
- Who is perfect?
- What does it mean to “pattern your life (and that of your family) in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?”
- How is life in the Church a “school for holiness?”
- Describe someone in your life who is an example of holiness.
- How well do you know yourself? Share a time when you were brought up short and an unattractive part of yourself was disclosed to you.
- How have you experienced failure in life? Disappointment? Tragedy? How have you been changed from these experiences?

Personal Reflection:

- Are you aware of your effect on the people around you?
- How do you perceive the others in your group?
- In what ways do they exhibit godliness?
- To what extent do you buy into the myth that ordination is the ticket to holiness?
- How tolerant are you of ambiguity and uncertainty?
- What is your taste for mystery? In other words, how big is your box for God?
- How big is your box for your neighbors who differ from you due to race, economic class, health, sexual orientation or gender?

Closing Prayer: Prayer for Guidance #57, BCP pg. 832

SESSION IV LISTENING

Prayer: Opening Silence closing with Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Easter, BCP pg.225

Focus: Obedience

Discussion / Group Activity:

The word obedience derives from the Latin word to “hear or listen deeply.” In the Bible, there are examples of people who paid heavy prices for obedience that preceded whatever reward came to them. Obedience may take the form of responsibilities and obligations (to marriage, commitments, children, family, self) that must be honored prior to making the sacrifices of the ordained ministry. Ordination never rescues a person from these more fundamental places of faithfulness.

- Name/explore some persons in the Bible who are examples of deep obedience (Abraham, Sarah, Ruth, Samuel, Jesus, Peter, Paul).
- Discuss ways obedience has been a part of your life.
- What challenges and blessings have resulted in such exercises of obedience?
- What are the limitations, restrictions, and other realities in the person’s life that must be reckoned with and obeyed?
- How has the nominee displayed commitment in the face of hardship?

Closing Prayer: Silence closing with Prayer of St. Chrysostom, BCP pg. 126.

**WORKSHEETS FOR DISCERNMENT SESSIONS FOR
USE IN THE CHURCH DISCERNMENT PROCESS**

DISCERNMENT SESSIONS ON LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY

SESSION I LISTENING TO GOD	FOCUS: What is Ministry – Part I
DISCUSSION	COMMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Ministry? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the ministry of each member of the Discernment Group? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current ministry of the nominee[s]? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is listening? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you listen for God? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know what God wants of you? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the impediments to listening for God? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What conditions help us discern God's call? 	

DISCERNMENT SESSIONS ON LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY

SESSION II MINISTRY	FOCUS: What is Ministry – Part II
DISCUSSION	COMMENTS
<p>Exercise A:</p> <p>Lay, Deacon, and Priest leadership skills and responsibilities.</p> <p>Comparison with: The “Baptismal Covenant” – BCP pg 416 The “Examination of a Deacon”– BCP pg 543 The “Examination of a Priest” – BCP pg 531</p>	
<p>Exercise B:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of these vows are easy for each member of the group to fulfill? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which are harder, if not impossible? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do you succeed in “seeking and serving Christ in all persons”? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where do you (and the Church) fail? Share personal stories. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you proclaim by word and example the Good News? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which is easier for you: word or example? 	

DISCERNMENT SESSIONS ON LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY

SESSION III LEADERSHIP	FOCUS: Self-awareness and Leadership Style
DISCUSSION	COMMENTS
Exercise A: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the Holy Life? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it look like? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is perfect? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to “pattern your life (and that of your family) in accordance with the precepts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?”? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is life in the Church a “school for holiness?”? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well do you know yourself? Share a time when you were brought up short and an unattractive part of yourself was disclosed to you. 	
PERSONAL REFLECTION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you aware of your effect on the people around you? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you perceive the others in your group? 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In what ways do they exhibit godliness?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To what extent do you buy into the myth that ordination is the ticket to holiness?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How tolerant are you of ambiguity and uncertainty?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is your taste for mystery? In other words, how big is your box for God?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How big is your box for your neighbors who differ from you due to race, economic class, health, sexual orientation, or gender?	

DISCERNMENT SESSIONS ON LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY

SESSION IV LISTENING	FOCUS: Obedience
DISCUSSION	COMMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name/explore some persons in the Bible who are examples of deep obedience: [Abraham, Jesus, Paul, Peter, Ruth, Samuel, Sarah] 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss way obedience has been a part of your life. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What challenges and blessings have resulted in such exercises of obedience?? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the limitations, restrictions, and other realities in the person's life that must be reckoned with and obeyed? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the nominee displayed commitment in the face of hardship? 	

Notes | Thoughts | Ideas | Questions

APPENDIX F

CHURCH INTERNSHIP CHECKLIST

(To be completed by the internship clergy)

Name of Nominee: _____

Name of Internship Church: _____

Location of Internship Church: _____

Name of Rector or Designee: _____

The nominee completed the 12 week internship: (Yes) _____ (No) _____

Comments:

Spouse / partner and other family joined the nominee: (Yes) _____ (No) _____

Comments:

The nominee completed at least four (4) hours per week in the church's ministry. This includes, but is not limited to time spent in worship and meetings with the clergy:

(Yes) _____ (No) _____

Comments:

The nominee attended worship services as agreed: (Yes) _____ (No) _____

Comments:

The nominee attended at least two vestry meetings: (Yes) _____ (No) _____

Comments:

The nominee participated in or was included in the following [mark all that apply]:

- pastoral visits
- teaching a class
- attending meetings
- proclaiming the Gospel [This is dependent on the Bishop giving permission for this.]
- setting the table [This is dependent on the Bishop giving permission for this.]
- officiating at weekday services /Daily Office services
- an outreach ministry of the parish. If so, please be specific about the ministry/ies:
- other; If so, please be specific about the ministry/ies:

Comments:

The nominee met regularly with the internship church clergy (or designee) for reflection and conversation about the experiences of the internship: (Yes) _____ (No) _____

Comments:

The nominee prepared and presented to a group within the church a sermon, meditation, reflection or teaching: (Yes) _____ (No) _____

Comments:

APPENDIX G

Initial Fees for Nominees to the Priesthood/Diaconate

As part of the Diocesan Vocational Discernment program, each nominee will fulfill the following requirements:

I. BACKGROUND CHECK:

- The fee will be divided equally into thirds, with one third paid by the Diocesan office; your sponsoring congregation; and you respectively (amounts owed by your congregation and you, will be billed directly to your priest).
- Currently, the total fee ranges from \$300 to \$600, depending on the nominee's work history and residency location.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION:

Complete the required mental health evaluation forms from the Church Pension Fund. This evaluation will be required before admittance into the diocesan discernment process. These currently include:

- **Life History Questionnaire (LHQ):** This extensive document prepares both nominee and clinician for a structured interview. To increase evaluative rigor while assuring nominee confidentiality, the completed LHQ **never** resides with the Diocese. It is for the clinician's eyes **only** and is retained in the clinician's file. However, the clinician may include LHQ disclosures as part of a final evaluative report.
- **Behavioral Screen Questionnaire (BSQ):** This document asks behaviorally oriented questions and requires disclosure regarding sexual misconduct, domestic problems, criminal activity and professional malfeasance. The completed BSQ goes **both** to the clinician and to the Diocese. As such, it serves dually as a clinical and risk management tool.
- **Authorization and Release Form:** This form clarifies confidentiality boundaries while documenting informed consent by the nominee to undergo sensitive evaluation. The form advises the nominee that the clinical report will go directly to the Bishop. While some may find the forms cumbersome, they attempt to model clarity regarding access to information, the Bishop's discretion in sharing it, and its future use and storage.

- The Evaluation Appointment:
 - The evaluation will be scheduled with a PhD Clinical Psychologist through the Diocesan office. If the nominee uses psychotropic medications or reveals a history of psychiatric hospitalization, the nominee will also be required an evaluation by a Psychiatrist. The estimated cost of this interview is \$300.
 - The evaluation will include, at least, the following: The Psychologist will review the LHQ and BSQ and review these questionnaires with the nominee as part of the clinical interview. Additionally, the following tests will be administered to the nominee, evaluated, and then reported on by the Psychologist:
 - MMPI-2
 - The Incomplete Sentence Test
 - The 16 PF Test
- The estimated cost for this testing is \$350 and will be divided equally into thirds, with one third paid by the Diocesan office; your sponsoring congregation; and you, respectively (Amounts owed by your congregation and you, will be billed directly to your priest).

Currently the total fee for the Psychological exam/interview is \$650. A psychiatric exam/interview may also be required, as stated in paragraph 1 at the top of the page, for an additional fee.

III. MEDICAL EVALUATION:

- Using the Required Medical Exam form provided by the Church Pension Group, the nominee will complete a medical examination.
- Cost for this exam and evaluation will be the responsibility of the Nominee. Each nominee is responsible for making an appointment with their practitioner; using their personal insurance plan, if covered by an insurance plan, or self-pay.

[Note: an update of all the above items will be required during the Senior Year (at the same cost as the original checks and evaluations), in order to satisfy Canonical Requirements.]

It is expected that your sponsoring congregation will assist you with costs where needed/appropriate. You are in this process with the support of your congregation; spiritually, in preparation, and financially. As dictated by the Canons of the Episcopal Church, your congregation should be committed to *“pledge to contribute financially to that preparation”*¹.

¹ Constitution & Canons: 2018 General Convention; Title III, Canons 6 and 8, Section 2 (a)

APPENDIX H

DIOCESAN SUPPORT FOR SEMINARIANS

(Group medical and life insurance)

DIOCESAN SUPPORT FOR SEMINARIANS

Three Year Tract

The Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast will endeavor to assist Seminarians with limited financial assistance, while enrolled full-time in an accredited seminary. The support amount will be determined annually, based on the number of seminarians enrolled and congregational support of the Diocesan annual budget.

At this time, the base support provided is estimated at the equivalent cost of 1/3 of the single-coverage premium of the lesser of the Diocesan group medical insurance plan [CDHP 20] or the equivalent Seminary single group medical insurance plan costs*. In the event a Seminarian opts for the plan with a higher premium or coverage level, the Seminarian will be responsible for paying that difference, in addition to the 1/3 that would be their portion of the premiums. If your seminary provides medical insurance at no cost to the seminarian, a semester stipend may be made available.

The Diocese will also provide (at no cost) participation in the Diocesan group life insurance plan (\$40,000 on the life of the Seminarian).

Although there is not any other regularly budgeted financial support for Seminarians, special appeals for extraordinary financial needs may be made directly to the Bishop. It is highly recommended that Seminarians are to apply for outside grants that may be made available through a variety of other sources [e.g. SIM grants].

It is expected that your congregation will assist you with costs where needed/appropriate. You are in this process with the support of your congregation; spiritually, in preparation, and financially. As dictated by the Canons of the Episcopal Church, your congregation should be committed to “pledge to contribute financially to that preparation”¹.

** Seminarians are not eligible for the Diocesan group medical insurance plan; health insurance is offered at each seminary. Seminarian health plan premiums may differ at each seminary and may be age banded. When planning your budget, you will need to contact Dwight Babcock, Diocesan Administrator, at the Diocesan office - (850) 434-7337 - to review available benefits.*

¹ Constitution & Canons: 2018 General Convention; Title III, Canons 6 and 8, Section 2 (a)

APPENDIX I

Terms used in the process

Candidate: Is an individual who has completed a specified amount of study and is pursuing ordination. This is a title that is associated with the Canons of The Episcopal Church [TEC]; Title III, Canon 6, Section 4 and Canon 8, Section 4.

Canon to the Ordinary: An individual on the diocesan staff who is involved in deployment and discernment.

Commission on Ministry [COM]: The diocesan commission directed by the Canons of both TEC and the Diocese, to advise the Diocesan Bishop on matters of vocational discernment: TEC Title III, Canon 2; Canon 3; Canon 6, Sections 1, 3 (b), 4 (a) (b), 5 (a), and 5 (i); Canon 7, Section 5; Canon 8 Sections 3 (b); 4 introduction; 5 (a); 7 (b) (5); and Diocesan Canon 22.

Deacon: All candidates seeking ordination as a Priest, serve a minimum of six months as a Deacon. Some Deacons are not seeking ordination to the priesthood. These deacons are vital in the life of a congregation and the community and do not receive any form of compensation for their work as a Deacon.

Diocesan Bishop: Is the canonically elected Bishop of a diocese, who is serving as the leader and spiritual head of the diocese. This title does not reference an Assisting Bishop or retired Bishop.

Ember Day: These are days within a calendar year that Postulants and Seminarians are expected to write letters to the Bishop. There are typically four sets of these days in a calendar year.

Lay Leader: This is the first order of the church and most important ministry in all congregations.

Master of Divinity: A degree awarded to a student who has *completed* an undergraduate degree as well as completed studies at an accredited seminary.

Nominee: Is a person who is involved in the vocational discernment process.

Ordination Office: The Bishop's assistant for the processing and record keeping of all steps of the discernment process who provides all necessary documentation, forms, and certifications needed as required by Canons of the Diocese and The Episcopal Church.

Postulant: This title is associated with a nominee who has been put forth for formation into ordained ministry. [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/Priesthood.]

Vocational Discernment Process Manual: This document describes the expectations that are asked of those seeking a more defined role among the laity, diaconate, or priesthood.

THE CANONS OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH, TITLE III
regarding ordination: [2018 General Convention Constitution and Canons of TEC](#)

THE CANONS OF THE DIOCESE OF THE CENTRAL GULF COAST
[2020 JNL of Convention - Canons of the Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast](#)

*These documents are readily available on various webpages
and can be located through searches of the web.*