



Discernment Process for Ministry Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon

Discernment for ministry begins in the congregation. This is where the person and his or her gifts for ministry are best known and best considered. Persons should have been active in a congregation for at least a year before ministry discernment is undertaken.

The purpose of discernment is to discover particular gifts and potential call to ministry. Parish discernment is a deep conversation and discovery process for all involved. When an individual's potential call is to ordination, a formal process will be undertaken. This process may look and be experienced differently depending on the context.

In Baptism, God calls all Christians to ministry and to Christ-like service. Some persons are called to ordination or to particular lay ministries for the building up of the body of Christ.

When an individual feels a pull towards ordained or other specialized ministry, the individual is encouraged to have conversation with their parish clergy if applicable and/or bishop about where this pull might lead prior to beginning a formal process.

Steps of the Formal Process:

- 1) When the parish priest, if applicable, or other appropriate parish leadership (i.e. Wardens and or Vestry) become aware of an individual's desire for ministry discernment, the person in charge of the congregation will contact the bishop.
- 2) The Vestry will write a letter to the Commission on Ministry (COM) to initiate the discernment process.
- 3) A member of the COM will be in contact with the individual, vestry and parish clergy, and other members of the congregation as appropriate, to develop an intentional discernment process appropriate to that congregation.
- 4) Discernment: The process will continue until consensus is reached as to the nature of the individual's call.

If that call is to Lay Ministry, the process will help the individual make a plan for going forward.

If a call to ordination is discerned, those involved in the discernment will provide a confidential written report to the Vestry. This report will include a summary of the discernment process and the recommendation for the individual.

- 5) The Vestry then interviews the individual and decides whether or not to nominate the individual for ordination.

Should the Vestry decide to nominate, the written report from the discernment process is included with the nomination papers submitted to the bishop and the COM. (See Canons III.6.2 for Diaconate and Canon III.8.2 for Priesthood)

The Nomination shall be in writing and shall include a letter of support by the Nominee's congregation or other community of faith committing the community to:

- (1) pledge to contribute financially to that preparation, and
- (2) involve itself in the Nominee's preparation for ordination

If it be a congregation, the letter shall be signed by 2/3 of the Vestry or comparable body and by the member of the clergy or leader exercising oversight. *

Should the Vestry decide not to nominate, the discernment process shifts focus to support the individual in exploring other potential ministries.

- 6) Following Vestry nomination, the individual meets formally with the bishop, and, if invited by the bishop, meets with the COM.

If the bishop and the COM discern a call to ordained ministry, the discernment process continues.

If either the bishop or the COM does not discern a call to ordained ministry, the parish discernment process shifts focus to support the individual in exploring other potential ministries.

As part of discernment, deep conversations about the Baptismal Liturgy, and both the Diaconal and Priestly ordination liturgies are important.

*Canon III.6.2(a) - diaconate and Canon III.8.2(a) - priesthood