



## **Discernment Committee Guidelines Episcopal Diocese of Eastern Oregon**

### **Guidelines for Discernment Committee Report to the Vestry or Parish Discernment Report to Commission on Ministry**

In most cases, a Discernment Committee will be appointed within a congregation to assist an aspirant with the aspirant's discernment and discernment of the community. A Discernment Committee must provide a report to the Vestry, which, in turn, provides the community's recommendation to the Commission on Ministry and the Bishop for the aspirant to proceed towards ordination. It is important for the Discernment Committee to understand that the report to the Vestry outlining the committee's recommendation will be seen by both the Vestry and, should the Vestry approve and recommend the aspirant to be considered for postulancy, by the Bishop and members of the Commission on Ministry. With this in mind, the following items could be helpful to all interested parties:

- When did the Discernment Committee (the Committee) begin its work?
- How did the Committee organize itself? For example did it elect a chair?
- How many members does the Committee have?
- Provide very brief info on each member, such as: name, how long a member of the congregation, ministries within the congregation, how long and in what regard the member has known the aspirant.
- What materials did the Committee utilize? For example, did the Committee use the book, *Listening Hearts*? If so, did each member of the Committee have a chance to read it? Did the Committee receive and utilize the materials included in the aspirant's discernment packet?
- Did you require and utilize the aspirant's spiritual autobiography?
- How many times did you meet with the aspirant? Did the Committee feel the time allocated to meeting with the aspirant was adequate?
- Briefly describe how the Committee and the aspirant determined which order of ministry was appropriate: the diaconate or the priesthood and how and why was this decision made?
- What qualities does the committee see in the aspirant that recommend the aspirant for ordained ministry?
- Briefly describe the Committee's process for reaching a decision regarding the aspirant's potential call to ordained life.
- The Committee's report to the Vestry must be signed by the Chair at a minimum, or preferably by each member of the Committee.

In some congregations or communities of faith, the entire congregation/community may function in the discernment process and recommendation of an aspirant. When this is the case, a letter detailing the discernment process must still accompany the Vestry's letter of nomination when it is sent to the Bishop and Commission on Ministry. In such a situation, please include the following information in the letter:

- How long has the aspirant been a member of the parish? In what ways has the aspirant been an active member of the parish?
- Did the parish/community utilize any discernment materials? For example, was the book, *Listening Hearts*, used? Were the materials included in the aspirant's discernment packet received and utilized?
- Briefly describe how the parish/community and the aspirant determined which order of ministry was appropriate: the diaconate or the priesthood and how and why was this decision made?
- What qualities do you see in the aspirant that recommend the aspirant for ordained ministry?
- Briefly describe the community's/parish's process for reaching a decision regarding the aspirant's potential call to ordained life.