



Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

Commission on Ministry

Diocesan Discernment Manual

December 2025

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Introduction: A Note About the December 2025 Manual

This version of the Diocesan Discernment Manual has been finalized in December of 2025. Please note:

- The “Exploring Vocations” phase that is periodically referenced in this manual does not apply to the 2025-2026 timeframe of Diocesan Discernment.
- The timeframes listed throughout this manual should be superseded by the timeframe chart notated here:

Dates and Milestones for Diocesan Discernment 2025-2026
(Applies to the 2025-2026 Diocesan Discernment Committees Only)

Step		Description	Responsible	Timing
		Diocesan Discernment Committee (DDC) Orientations	DDC	By Nov 30, 2025
1	Discerner	Module 1 meeting: Spiritual reflections	DDC	Week of Dec 13, 2025
2	Discerner	Module 2 meeting: Spiritual Grounding and Christ Centeredness	DDC	Week of Jan 10, 2026
3	Discerner	Module 3 meeting: Gifts of Gathering and Developing Community	DDC	Week of Feb 7, 2026
4	Discerner	Module 4 meeting: Ordained Life and Spouse, Partners, Families, and Community	DDC	Week of Mar 7, 2026
5	Discerner	Module 5 meeting: Emotional Maturity	DDC	Week of Apr 11, 2026
5a	Discerner	Diocesan Discernment Group check-in #1	DDC	Between modules 5 and 6
6	Discerner	Module 6 meeting: Alcohol, Substance Abuse, and Addiction	DDC	Week of May 9, 2026
7	Discerner	Module 7 meeting: Anti-racism	DDC	Week of

				Jun 13, 2026
7a	Discerner	Diocesan Discernment Group check in #2	DDC	Between modules 7 and 8
8	Discerner	Module 8 meeting: Understanding Authority and Obedience	DDC	Week of July 11, 2026
9	Discerner	Module 9 meeting: Christian Stewardship	DDC	Week of Aug 8, 2026
10	Discerner	Diocesan Discernment Committee meeting completion deadline	DDC	No later than Aug 9, 2026
11	Discerner	Deadline for DDC recommendation letter (DD-5) to Clergy Leader and COM Chair	DDC	By Aug 20, 2026
12	Discerner	Deadline for Clergy recommendation letter (DD-6) to vestry/bishop's committee (sent along with DDC letter)	Clergy Leader	By Aug 24, 2026
13	Discerner	Deadline for Vestry/Bishop's Committee Meeting (nomination to postulancy)	Vestry	By Sept 10, 2026
14	Nominee	Clergy Leader uploads to COM File Upload : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vestry/BC nomination (DD-7) • Clergy recommendation letter (DD-6) • DDC recommendation letter (DD-5) 	Clergy Leader	By Sept 10, 2026
15	Nominee	Sec of Vocations sends to Nominee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postulancy Application • Deadlines and expectations 	Sec of Vocations	By Sep 14, 2026
16	Nominee	Deadline for nominee to submit Postulancy Application	Nominee	By Oct 2, 2026
17	Nominee	Invitations to Postulancy Retreat sent to Nominees	Bishop's Office	By Oct 16, 2026
19	Nominee	Postulancy Retreat with Nominees, COM, Bishop	COM	Late Nov/early Dec 2026
20	Postulant	Bishop decides postulancy, continued discernment, or lay ministry, and sends to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nominee • Clergy Leader • COM Chair • Sec of Vocations 	Bishop	By Jan 2027

Part I: Discerning Ordained Ministry

The process of discerning a call to ordained ministry begins when a person perceives a call to it. Whether the person perceives this call within themselves, or the clergy leader or community perceives the call, the process is the same. A discernor must be an active confirmed/received member in good standing of the parish for at least one year before applying for Diocesan Discernment. Prior to applying, the discernor should exhibit stable connections in the congregation and a deep and abiding relationship with God. Characteristics of such connections include, but are not limited to, regular attendance and participation in Sunday liturgy and other congregational activities, a regular and active prayer life, modeling Christian stewardship, demonstrating a pattern of life that expresses a connection with God, and healthy interpersonal relationships.

In addition, all those discerning a call to ordained ministry should exhibit qualities outlined in the Expectations for Ordained Leaders in the Diocese of Olympia. These expectations specify that individuals we seek to ordain as deacons and priests:

Are spiritually grounded and Christ-centered.

We seek leaders who live by a rule of life, grounded in the practice of prayer. They have experience in receiving spiritual direction and will be willing to continue this path throughout their life. They embody and share their faith in ways that draw others into “The Story,” and find strength in Christian community and in their own personal spiritual journey. They can culturally locate themselves, their spiritual practices, and their faith community, and have a deep appreciation for diversity and experience in speaking and working across differences.

Have a gift of gathering and developing a community.

We seek leaders who have a deep love for the Church and a heart for congregational life or chaplaincy. They have the capacity to develop a community through connection and invitation toward greater health and faithfulness over time. They can quickly identify and name where they and their congregation are in their faith journey and can foster a mutually forming environment for spiritual growth and development, empowering their congregations to embrace and live out the Church’s mission of reconciliation.

Demonstrate emotional maturity.

We seek leaders who understand the impact they have in their personal relationships, in their role as leaders in congregations, and in any role they play in the work of the diocese or broader church. They can identify and name their behavioral and emotional responses and can self-regulate and choose which feelings to add to an exchange or conversation.

Are committed to and engaged in anti-racism work.

We seek leaders who understand, and are appropriately and constructively critical of, the polity of the Episcopal Church. They can identify systems, policies, and practices that perpetuate racism. They actively work to dismantle racism in

their own attitudes and behaviors, in the systems and structures of their parish, and in the broader life of the church. They are willing to lead their communities toward racial healing.

Understand authority.

We seek leaders who are in touch with their own authority and power over others in the various contexts of their life and vocation. They pay attention to the way their congregations understand power and can name the dynamic of power structures in their communities. They understand the authority structure unique to our Anglican/Episcopal identity, and humbly honor all of the people that are invested with this authority.

Practice Christian stewardship.

We seek leaders who can articulate the way that Christian values, practices, and theology impact their understanding of money, resources, and people. They are aware of how values about money impact communal life and the spiritual practice of giving and have a regular discipline of tithing.

Though not required until a discerner is ready to apply for Diocesan Discernment, the Commission on Ministry commends the Expectations of Ordained Leaders Assessment Tool to clergy leaders and discerners during the Exploring Vocations phase, as it can help guide and direct learning goals, ministry exploration, and formation.

All individuals discerning a call to ordained ministry in the Diocese of Olympia are required to complete the Exploring Vocations pathway outlined in the *Exploring Vocations* manual. If, at the conclusion of Exploring Vocations, the clergy leader and discerner both have a clear sense of the discerner's call to ordained ministry, the clergy leader will submit a letter of recommendation to the Secretary of Vocations that the discerner should be admitted to Diocesan Discernment (please CC the discerner on that email).

Clergy Letter of Recommendation

The clergy letter of recommendation should report specifically on:

- The clergy's sense of the discerner's call
- The discerner's role in your congregation, what ministries they've been a part of and/or explored during the Exploring Vocations process
- The clergy leader's observations of the discerner's strengths and growing edges
- The discerner's readiness to begin Diocesan Discernment
- Letters of recommendation should be submitted by July 1st each year.

Once the letter of recommendation is received, the Secretary of Vocations will provide a link to the online application for Diocesan Discernment to the discerner. The discerner should complete the application *and* upload their completed Exploring Vocations Reflection Report.

The clergy leader should then begin to discern members of the parish they can recruit to participate in the Diocesan Discernment Committee work. For each discerner recommended to Diocesan Discernment, 1-2 parish members need to be recruited. These names should be submitted to the Secretary of Vocations no later than July 31st each year.

Introduction to the Commission on Ministry and Liaisons

Applications for Diocesan Discernment will be reviewed by the Commission on Ministry. Applicants will be invited to an informal meeting with representatives of the Commission on Ministry (these will happen throughout the month of August). These meetings will provide an opportunity for both discerners and Commission on Ministry members to begin to get to know one another, will be an opportunity to introduce the curriculum, process, and timeline of Diocesan Discernment, and give discerners an opportunity to ask questions about the Commission on Ministry's role and responsibilities.

By early September, discerners will be assigned to a liaison on the Commission on Ministry. Commission on Ministry members are assigned as liaisons to individuals who are in the discernment process, and are specifically charged with supporting discerners, postulants, and/or candidates in both their discernment and their formation. Liaisons are prayerful partners in discernment alongside those in the process. They are also tasked with providing regular reports to the rest of the Commission on Ministry on the progress of discerners, postulants, and candidates. This requires regular contact between the person in process and their liaison. People in process are therefore required to meet quarterly, at minimum, with their liaisons. When these meetings happen and how they happen (zoom, phone, or in person) will be agreed upon between the individual and their liaison.

Diocesan Discernment Committees

The Chair of the Commission on Ministry will form Diocesan Discernment groups. Generally, these groups will consist of 2-4 discerners along with the 1-2 parish members of their respective congregations recruited by their clergy leaders. If more than one discerner is recommended from a single parish, these discerners will be placed in separate groups. Each group will have a paid, designated facilitator who will assist the discerners and committee members as they work through the modules of the Diocesan Discernment curriculum.

Parish representatives that serve in the Diocesan Discernment groups form the committee for all discerners in their group. They will be responsible for making a recommendation for each of the discerners in writing to each discerner's clergy leader and to the Secretary of Vocations.

Orientations for Diocesan Discernment will happen in late August or early September, after Diocesan Discernment groups have been formed. All committee members and

discerners will be required to attend the orientation. At orientation, a member of the Commission on Ministry will provide details about the timeline and the curriculum, the possible recommendations that the committee can make, and what to expect when the committee completes its work.

Committees function as discernment partners and will ultimately make one of three recommendations that will be sent to the clergy leader of the discerner and to the Secretary of Vocations:

- Affirmation of a call to lay ministry
- Affirmation of a call to ordained ministry
- Recommendation for further discernment and/or formation

From those serving as Committee Members, three roles should be decided on prior to the first meeting. These include: Convener, Chaplain, and Clerk. **Discerners should not fill any of these roles.**

Convener: The role of the convener is to convene. They are responsible for sending reminder emails/communication to discerners, other committee members, and the facilitator about the next scheduled meeting, including links for virtual meetings and reminders of prework to be completed in preparation for the next module. Conveners are not group leaders, they are members of the group tasked with assisting the group as a whole to keep track of where the group is at in the process and the committed meeting days and times. Should there be a scheduling conflict that arises, the conveners take point on helping to reschedule the meeting and communicating this to the group as a whole. If at all possible, the person chosen for this role should be the same person who fulfills the role throughout the process.

Chaplain: The role of the chaplain is to assist the group in engaging the work of discernment in a prayerful posture. This is a role that can be shared throughout the process. Chaplains help keep a “pulse” on the emotional, spiritual, and pastoral needs of the group, calling for moments of calm, prayer, or quiet as needed, particularly when engaging in difficult conversations.

Clerk: The role of the clerk is to keep notes during each of the sessions and share them with the rest of the committee. The Committee’s notes will be used to track questions, concerns, and curiosities about each of the discerners and will form the fodder for the final recommendation made by the committee for each of the discerners. Committee members can share this task across modules. After each session, the clerk (or acting clerk of the session) should share the notes with all other committee members but not discerners.

Continued Ministry Exploration and Learning

Discerners entering Diocesan Discernment will continue their ministry exploration and learning within the context of their parish (and, in some cases, in community

organizations). This ministry exploration and learning should be guided by the Expectations for Ordained Leaders Assessment Tool (see [Appendix V](#)) completed by both the discerner and their clergy leader and used to identify strengths and growing edges. Discerners, in consultation with their clergy leaders, should continue to explore new ministries and find areas of leadership in the context of their parish ministries that they can exercise. A documented set of learning goals should guide this ministry exploration and learning and should be regularly reflected on in meeting with clergy leaders and other parish leadership.

Clergy Expectations during Diocesan Discernment

While discerners complete Diocesan Discernment, clergy leaders are expected to continue meeting with and supporting the discerner's growth and ministry exploration. In addition, clergy leaders and discerners should complete the Expectations for Ordained Leaders Assessment Tool (found in Appendix V) and use this to create learning goals to help discerners continue to develop in their strengths and in their growing edges. During this time, the clergy leader should be doing their own discernment regarding the discerner's call – the clergy leader's full support is required for any individual who is recommended for postulancy to be put before the vestry or bishop's committee for nomination. If the committee makes the recommendation to postulancy for the discerner, but the clergy leader has reservations or disagrees, the clergy leader is required to provide feedback and pastoral care to the discerner, and support their continued work of discernment and formation. Should the clergy leader decide not to put a recommended individual before the vestry or bishop's committee for nomination, they must inform the Secretary of Vocations and Chair of the Commission on Ministry as soon as possible with documented reasons for the decision.

Diocesan Discernment Facilitators

Each Diocesan Discernment group will be facilitated by a trained facilitator. These individuals do not participate in the actual discernment process. They are there to provide support, guidance, and facilitation through each of the modules and to assist the committee members in making their final recommendations for each of the discerners in their group. They do not participate in the letter writing process.

Facilitators will facilitate the conversations of each meeting, using the curriculum provided by the Commission on Ministry. They will provide support to discerners and committee members to ensure clear communication leads to understanding. And they will assist discerners and committee members to navigate difficult conversations as they arise. Having a trained, designated facilitator will ensure that the discerners and committee members can focus on the tasks at hand and more effectively engage in the work of deep listening.

Part II: Diocesan Discernment Curriculum

As part of the mandatory orientation for Diocesan Discernment, each group will be given time to set at least the first three meetings and agree to group norms. The Commission on Ministry recommends meeting once every three weeks. Less than this often does not allow for the time necessary to reflect and listen well. More than that often leads to neglect of the work of deep listening. We recognize that schedules can sometimes be difficult to coordinate and things like holidays and other significant liturgical seasons might create some situations in which more time between meetings is necessary. We insist that these be exceptions rather than the rule, with the norm being a meeting once every three weeks with the possibility that December and Holy Week/Easter may disrupt that norm.

The curriculum for Diocesan Discernment is provided by the Commission on Ministry. We anticipate that the discussion questions provided, and the answers to them, may lead to other non-scripted questions and that these often are questions important to ask for the committee and the discerners to be faithful in their discernment. The facilitators will help discerners and committee members to keep on topic but will also help create an environment for deeper exploration as warranted.

Throughout each of the modules, the discerners and committee members should check in regularly about the discerners sense and understanding of their call, how it is being clarified or evolving, and about their progress in the learning goals established between clergy leaders and discerners.

Each session of the discernment group's work should be about two hours. Most require prework from the discerners and many ask that all members of the group – including committee members – engage in reflective activities prior to particular modules. Committee members should include check-ins as part of the midway point and after the seventh module, without the discerners, to discuss if there are outstanding questions and/or if anything needs to be revisited. Time for outstanding questions or revisiting previous discussions should be included, as able, in regularly scheduled meetings with the discerners. If it is determined by the committee that more time is needed, they can decide to hold an additional meeting either before or just after the concluding module.

The curriculum consists of nine modules:

1. **Spiritual Reflections**
2. **Spiritual Grounding and Christ-Centeredness**
3. **Gifts of Gathering and Developing Community**
4. **Ordained Life and Spouses/Partners/Families/Communities**
5. **Emotional Maturity**
6. **Alcohol, Substance Abuse and Addiction**
7. **Anti-Racism**
8. **Understanding Authority**
9. **Christian Stewardship**

Norms for Discernment Groups

While each group will develop norms specific to their work, the Commission on Ministry expects the following as baseline:

- Each discerner and committee member will develop a personal prayer practice that includes every member of the group in your daily or weekly prayers.
- Remember that every call is particular and unique. Discernment is not competition in any way.
- The group is encouraged to honor each person's journey with a stance of curiosity, suspended judgment, and openness.
- All members of the committee should contribute to the conversation, with ample time given to the discerner(s).
- Arrive for and end meetings on time.
- Listen; don't interrupt.
- Take only your own story home: protect the privacy of information owned by others.
- Use "I" statements when expressing an opinion or personal perspective.
- Resist letting tech/devices remove you from the meetings except for urgent matters.
- All questions are acceptable.
- Try to avoid side discussions, and when they happen, feed back to the whole group any information that belongs to the whole group.

Diocesan Discernment Curriculum

Module 1: Spiritual Reflections

Before you gather: Every member reads sections of the BCP on:

- Laity (BCP Catechism p. 855)
- Deacon (BCP Examination pp. 543-544)
- Priest (BCP Examination p. 531-532)

Each person reflects on their sense of God's call in their lives. The discerners write a 2-4 page (500-1,000 words) spiritual reflection considering these prompts (not all questions need to be answered):

- What are some pivotal experiences that deepened your spiritual life? These may be crises or "mountaintop" experiences, or ordinary events that had significant impact on your life.
- How did you come to the Episcopal Church and why have you stayed?
- Who are the people who have most influenced your spiritual journey, and in what ways?
- What are stories in scripture that resonate with your spiritual journey?
- When did you first become aware of your calling and how has it evolved over time?
- What are the spiritual questions on your mind now? What are you hoping to develop through this process?

Discerner(s) circulate their spiritual reflections at least four days in advance of the meeting. Discernment Committee members read all materials before the meeting.

Prayer: Read the Baptismal Covenant (BCP, pp. 304-305) as a group. Follow the reading with some silence.

Discussion: Each discerners spends 8-10 minutes sharing their reflections about their spiritual lives. Other members of the group offer some of the details of their own reflections as well. Pay particular attention to:

- The ways spiritual journeys weave in and around and through our personal, vocational or family lives.
- Any similarities in group members' reflections.
- Particular differences in group members' reflections..
- Are there connections in group members' reflections?
- The final step in this module is for the group to begin reflecting with the discerners on the discerners' spiritual autobiography.

Module 2: Spiritual Grounding and Christ-centeredness

Before you gather: The discerners prepare a spiritual diary for one week prior to the meeting. Record prayer times, spiritual insights, and other relevant details that will help others understand how you experience Christian spirituality. Circulate to the discernment committee at least four days prior to the meeting so they can read it in advance. Discerner(s) should come prepared to discuss the questions below.

Discernment Committee to read materials before the meeting.

Prayer: Read any of the collects found on BCP pp. 256-257. Read one or more of the following: Colossians 4:2-6, Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 Peter 2:9-10, Romans 8:26-28, 2 Peter 1:3-11.

Discussion: Using the spiritual diary as a reference point, the discerner(s) answers the following questions:

- How do you experience God in your daily life?
 - What provides you with peace in the midst of turmoil or struggle?
 - What role does Creation (the created world, people, creatures) play in your spirituality?
 - What role does God (the Father) play in your spirituality?
 - What role does Jesus Christ play in your spirituality?
 - What role does the Holy Spirit play in your spirituality?
 - How do you know when you're being faithful? How do you recognize or define success and disappointment in the context of faithful ministry?
-

Module 3: Gifts of Gathering and Developing Community

Before you gather: Discerner(s) write a paragraph about a time when they felt a sense of belonging in community – what person or people made that sense of community possible? And what relationship did that gatherer have with the community? Write another paragraph on when the discerner gathered a group within the congregational community or another community organization – in what ways was the discerner and the community mutually formed? And how did the discerner function as a community leader? Circulate to the discernment committee prior to the meeting so they can read it in advance.

Discernment Committee to read materials before the meeting.

Prayer: Read Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-35.

Discussion: Each discerner reviews their example of community gathering. They reflect on the following questions and discuss with the committee:

- What was it that made the relationship between gatherer and community special?
 - In what ways did the gatherer demonstrate community leadership?
 - Was there mutual formation?
 - In both examples, what stood out about the gatherer?
 - Was there anything the discerner could have done differently?
-

Module 4: Ordained Life and Spouse, Partners, Families, and Community

Before you gather: The discerner chooses one or more person(s) in their life with whom they have a committed relationship to join this conversation, such as a spouse, partner, family member or friend. If the discerner is married or partnered, the spouse or partner should be the one invited. This module is meant for the discerner to consider how their discernment for holy orders impacts their previously vowed relationships. Their discernment is not just an individual process.

Before the session, read some or all of these scripture passages:

- Matthew 12:46-50 (“Who are my mother and my brothers?”)
- 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (There are varieties of gifts)
- Genesis 12:1-9 (The call of Abram)
- 1 Samuel 3:1-18 (The call of Samuel)

Then read the following Ordination rites:

- Bishop (BCP, Presentation, Examination, Consecration pp. 513-515, 517-521)
- Priest (BCP Presentation p526-528 and the Examination/Consecration pp. 531-535),
- Deacon (BCP Presentation 538-541, Examination/Consecration pp. 544-547).
- The Litany for Ordinations and Additional Directions (BCP, pp. 548-555).

Prayer: General Thanksgiving pg. 836 BCP

Discussion: Each discerner responds to some or all of these questions:

- What are the vows and commitments you have made to other people and communities?
- How does your discernment connect and conflict with other vows you have made?
- How has the discernment process already changed life at home or in your relationships?
- If you engage in ministries together, how might that change?
- How has your partner or significant person(s) helped to clarify or complicate your sense of calling?

- What might be some hidden or cultural expectations to the varying roles of bishop, priest, and deacon?
- Given that all baptized Christians take their share in all of the work of the church, how might that work shift or change when a baptized Christian is ordained to a particular order?
- What aspects of the roles or duties of ordained life frighten or concern the discerners? What aspects frighten or concern the partner or significant person(s)?

Closing Prayer: A Prayer of Dedication

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. (p 832-833 BCP)

Module 5: Emotional Maturity

Before you gather: Read Galatians 5:22-23 (The fruit of the Spirit). Discerners consider the discussion questions below and write some thoughts in advance.

Prayer: Read any of the following: Prayers for Guidance (BCP, p. 832 #57 or #58), Prayer attributed to St. Francis (BCP, p. 833).

Discussion:

- Share an example from your life when you had difficulty regulating your own emotions. What did you learn?
- What have you learned from your family of origin, past experiences, or culture(s) regarding how you should handle emotions?
- What have you learned about emotions and interpersonal relations from our faith tradition, scripture, and/or your own formation in faith?
- Why is it important for Christian leaders to be aware of their emotional and behavioral responses based on their context?
- Share an example of conflict in which 1) the stakes were significant; 2) the difference of opinion was significant; and 3) both you and the other person(s) experienced strong emotions.* What did you learn in that conflict? What might be a growth area for you, in handling upsetting events like this? What are you able to teach or share with others about conflicts, from your personal experience?

* These three categories (high stakes, high disagreement, high emotions) are identified as the three key elements in a conflict in the book, "Crucial Conversations:

Module 6: Alcohol, Substance Abuse, and Addiction

The discerner may choose to invite the same significant person(s) from Module 4 to this session as well.

Before you gather:

- The discerner takes (**and all members of the group** are encouraged to take) the Michigan Alcohol Screening Test, a nationally-recognized assessment of a person’s risk for meeting criteria for substance dependence (separate PDF attachment). **Note** that taking this assessment does not automatically imply that a person has a problem, and the results do not conclusively diagnose anyone with a substance dependence disorder.
- The discerner writes a paragraph about their experiences with, and thoughts about, alcohol or other substances that lead to addiction.

Prayers:

- God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. (Serenity Prayer, originally attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr, used in the 12-Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous)
- O blessed Lord, you ministered to all who came to you: Look with compassion upon all who through addiction have lost their health and freedom. Restore to them the assurance of your unfailing mercy; remove from them the fears that beset them; strengthen them in the work of their recovery; and to those who care for them, give patient understanding and persevering love. Amen. (BCP Prayer for the Victims of Addiction, p. 831)

Discussion (for all group members):

- What part of the Serenity Prayer has energy and power for you? What part might challenge or concern you?
- What has been the impact of addiction (your own or that of others) in your life?
- Addiction is a physical and social illness, not a moral failing. Why do you think we tend to avoid conversations about substance addiction and abuse?
- What is your relationship with alcohol and other substances? Did the MAST questions, or the results, surprise you in any way, or lead to new insights or reflections?

- Have you heard stories about substance abuse and dependence in the history and culture of the Episcopal Church? What are your thoughts and feelings about the Episcopal Church regarding substance abuse and dependence? What has been your experience in your congregation, or in your past congregations?
 - Alcohol is similar to but also distinct from other mood-altering and/or habit-forming substances, or gambling and sex addictions. What has been your personal experience with addictions, if any, and what nuances of this topic do you believe are important to discuss?
 - How might a congregation respond to a community struggling with the opioid epidemic, or other social problems caused by harmful substances?
-

Module 7: Anti-Racism

Note: *Racism wounds not only those who are oppressed, but also members of the dominant culture. The Episcopal Church has pledged its commitment to combating racism and [Becoming Beloved Community](#), encouraging all members to seek healing through the dismantling of the systemic racism that exists in our society today.*

Before you gather: Read “So You Want to Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo or watch her [Google talk here](#).

Also listen to this podcast, “[What it Takes to Heal](#),” with Prentis Hemphill and Ijeoma Oluo.

After watching/reading, each member should write and reflect on their experience of race and racism (members *will not* share their reflections with others). Consider these questions to prompt your reflection:

- How do you understand your own racial identity?
- How have you experienced racism and discrimination in your own life? What role do you see racism playing in the systems to which you belong?
- How has racism wounded you? And, what healing work do you need to do?
- What does it mean to you to be “anti-racist?”
- What does it mean to contribute to the healing of others?
- Think about one or two significant “ah-ha” moments in your journey of anti-racism. What did you learn about yourself and how you engage difference?

Prayer: Thanksgiving for Diversity of Races and Cultures: BCP, 840.

Discussion: The primary focus of this discussion is for the discerners to articulate their own experience of developing anti-racist behavior and engaging in racial healing.

- Where have you seen racism in the church or in your community?

- What tools or resources do you need to expand your understanding of the history of racism in U.S. America and in your own communities?
 - How have you engaged in practices of racial healing? What work have you done to dismantle internal biases?
 - How do you see anti-racism work as part of your vocation and in congregational life?
 - What insights did you learn about yourself and your ability to work across difference during your prework?
-

Module 8: Understanding Authority and Obedience

Before you gather: Read Chapter 5, “On Obedience” from [The Rule of St. Benedict](#) and read Joan Chittister’s article on [“Obedience as the Third Step of Humility.”](#)

Consider obedience as multi-directional listening with a willingness to change: listening to God, elder, novice, abbot, community, children, tradition, scripture, newcomer. Everyone listens to everyone.

Reflect on experiences where you have 1) been obedient, 2) exercised authority over others, and 3) experienced the authority of others. Consider:

- How did you experience obedience? What was necessary for you to be obedient?
- How did you experience authority over you – trusting, oppressive, creative, collaborative . . . ?
- What does it mean to you to have and exercise authority?
- What is your leadership style? How does it change in different contexts or circumstances?

Prayer: Read Ecclesiasticus 39:1-8 and 1 Peter 5:1-4

Discussion:

- What does it mean to be obedient? How do you experience obedience in the church today? How do you imagine experiencing it in ordained life?
- What does obedience and respecting authority look like to you?
- What about being obedient to God and to people in authority is challenging for you?
- What is the difference between having responsibility and having authority? Where does authority for ministry come from?
- How do you know when you have authority? What establishes authority in the church and our broader culture?
- How do you exercise authority?
- What challenges do you experience in exercising authority?
- What is your vision for leadership and authority in your ministry?

Module 9: Christian Stewardship

Before you gather: Read Henri Nouwen's [A Spirituality of Fundraising](#).

Stewardship means recognizing that all we have is a gift from God, and we are caretakers, not owners. It involves caring for creation, financial and material gifts, and relationships. As an ordained person, you will model responsible stewardship in your own life and teach and lead others in their own practice of stewardship.

Nouwen writes:

"We will never be able to ask for money if we do not know how we ourselves relate to money. What is the place of money in our lives?"

"When we approach fundraising in a spirit of gratitude, our confidence in our mission does not depend on how the person we are with responds to our request! We are free to remain secure in God's love with our hearts set joyfully on the kingdom."

"Are we willing to be converted from our fear of asking, our anxiety about being rejected or feeling humiliated, our depression when someone says, 'No I'm not going to get involved in your project'?"

- Reflect on these comments about stewardship and fundraising.
- Give examples of Christian stewardship in your personal and communal lives.
- How does practicing Christian stewardship change your relationship with God and the world?

Prayer: Read the collect for stewardship of creation (BCP, p. 259). Read one or more of the following: Leviticus 27:30, Matthew 25:14-30, Luke 16: 10-13, 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Discussion:

- Reflect as a group on Carl Knirk's Steps for Financial Discipleship:
 - Everything you have is a gift from God.
 - No one has everything, no one has nothing.
 - All you have you will lose.
 - While you are in possession of it, you, and only you decide how to use it.
 - How you use everything that passes through your hands will determine the kind of person you are and will become – Gratitude begets Gratitude.
- How do you and (if applicable) your family practice financial discipleship? How do you share what you have?
- What are your hopes and concerns about leading a community in matters of stewardship and fundraising? What gifts and challenges do you anticipate? What is your level of comfort in talking about money and financial matters with others and where might you see growing edges for yourself?

Part III: Concluding Diocesan Discernment:

Committee Report, Clergy Recommendation and Vestry/Bishop Committee's Role

Concluding the Committee's Work

After the seventh module has been completed, the Committee members should check in with each other about any outstanding questions, concerns, or curiosities. If possible, time during the final two modules should be made to address these with the discerners. If the committee members feel another meeting is warranted, they should reach out to the facilitator and discerners to schedule such a meeting.

Once all modules (and any follow-up work) have been completed, the committee members will meet with the facilitator to review their notes and to discuss a recommendation for each of the discerners. It is important to note that consensus is not the goal of the recommendation. All voices should be represented in the recommendation, even (and especially) those of dissent from a majority voice. The committee is charged with making one of three recommendations:

- Affirmation of call to lay ministry
- Affirmation of call to ordained ministry
- Recommendation for further discernment and/or formation

The committee's recommendation should be completed and submitted to the clergy leaders for each of their respective discerners and to the Secretary of Vocations, no later than early June. Any deviation from this timeline needs to be discussed with the clergy leader(s) and the chair of the Commission on Ministry. For those who are being recommended to postulancy, this timeline assures that the discerner's clergy leader can make the necessary arrangements for a vote from the vestry or bishop's committee, and for the discerner to accept the nomination (if offered) and complete their postulancy application by the annual deadline.

Discerning a Committee Recommendation

The committee members of the Diocesan Discernment group are tasked with discerning whether the discerners are called to ordained ministry. It is not the responsibility of the committee to decide on the timing or pathway of formation needed prior to recommending to postulancy. The Commission on Ministry is interested in the committee's thoughts on formation, but these need to be separated from the decision about the individual's call.

If the committee members are relatively evenly divided on the final recommendation, the convener should contact the Chair of the Commission on Ministry for further guidance. This does happen and it is not a serious problem. No committee member should be (or feel) pressured to come to a consensus about the discerner's call. The facilitator is tasked with helping the committee engage in fruitful, honest, and prayerful discussion to

ensure all voices are heard and all perspectives are represented in the decision process.

Once a decision has been made, the committee members will decide on how to approach the letter writing process (who will write the draft, how the draft will be commented on by all members, and who's responsible for final edits). The letter should address the committee's observations of the discerner's strengths and growing edges, with special attention given to the Expectations of Ordained Leaders in the Diocese of Olympia (see [Appendix IV](#)).

The discernment committee does not need to come to a unified consensus about each quality or characteristic that comprises the discerner's call and the Expectations for Ordained Leaders. Committee members may not find themselves in agreement over all aspects of the recommendation, and this is both good and to be expected. We each bring our own perspectives, experiences, and even biases, into this work with us. It is very helpful to the Commission on Ministry to hear different thoughts and opinions being expressed in the letter as this will assist the Commission, the clergy leader, and the Bishop to consider additional needs for formation or support. While individual committee members whose opinions differ from the collective need not be named specifically, it is helpful to indicate which parts of the letter are held unanimously and which are perspectives held only by a few people or a single person. A variety of insights into the discerner and their call are essential to the discernment process. It is rare that a discernment committee speaks with just one voice in all areas about someone's call.

Writing the Committee's Letter

The letter of recommendation from the Discernment Committee should 1) describe the committee's work with the discerner and 2) make a formal recommendation to the discerner's vestry or bishop's committee to consider in their nomination process. The letters should identify what the committee finds compelling about the discerner and their call, why they are making the recommendation they are making, and any background about the discerner which the vestry/bishop's committee, the Commission on Ministry, and/or the Bishop would find helpful in their deliberations.

In addition, the following questions provide assistance for the committee's work in making and writing their recommendation:

- How is the discerner growing in their Christian faith?
- What are the discerner's current and past ministries?
- How does the discerner demonstrate a desire to learn and practice integrating their leaning into their life and ministry?
- What is the discerner's leadership style and approach?
- How does the discerner practice their ministry in the parish, community, world?
- What have you discerned to be this person's call to deeper discipleship?
- What additional training, skills, and resources does this person need to respond to the call you sense in them?

Letters should be two to three pages in length and include enough detail to help the clergy leader, vestry/bishop's committee, the Commission on Ministry, and the Bishop understand why the group came to its conclusion.

Letter of Recommendation: Review with Discerner

Once the letter is complete, and before sending it to the clergy leader and the Secretary of Vocations, the committee (or representatives of the committee) should meet with the discerner to review the letter. The committee should send a digital version of the letter in advance of this meeting to give the discerner an opportunity to read it and recommend edits to factual data (dates, times, places, names, etc.) or to offer clarification on something that may have been misunderstood or misrepresented. The purpose of this meeting and the letter review is not to debate the committee's recommendation. After this meeting and review, the committee will make any final revisions necessary and will submit to the clergy leader and the Secretary of Vocations.

The Chair of the Commission on Ministry is available to offer any support needed as the discernment committee completes this report. This can be a time where bias is revealed and the Chair of the Commission on Ministry can provide support either through meeting with the committee or providing a cultural interpreter if needed.

Clergy Leader Expectations

It is the clergy leader's responsibility to present discerners to the vestry or bishop's committee for nomination to postulancy. This decision should take into consideration the recommendation of the Discernment Committee and the clergy leader's own discernment about the discerner. **If the clergy leader's recommendation differs from the discernment committee's recommendation, the clergy leader must submit, in writing, a report to the Secretary of Vocations and the Chair of the Commission on ministry as to their difference of opinion.** At minimum, this report should consist of the following:

- The official recommendation of the discernment committee
- The clergy leader's recommendation and the reasons for it
- If the discernment committee recommended nomination to postulancy and the clergy leader is not in agreement, they shall also include,
 - How the clergy leader plans to pastorally support the discerner
 - Plan for further discernment work, if applicable
 - Pathways of formation to assist the discerner in living into their call to deeper discipleship as a lay minister

If both the discernment committee and the clergy leader agree that the individual should be presented to the vestry or bishop's committee for nomination to postulancy, the clergy leader shall include at the next regularly scheduled vestry/bishop's committee meeting an agenda item for discussion and vote. Both the committee's and the clergy's letter of recommendation shall be distributed to the vestry/bishop's committee in advance. To assist the vestry/bishop's committee with their responsibility of nominations, the clergy leader shall invite, at minimum, the parish representatives from

the discernment committee along with the discerner to the meeting so that the vestry/bishop's committee can address any questions they have.

Should the vestry/bishop's committee vote to nominate, the clergy leader is responsible for submitting the Vestry/Bishop's Committee Letter of Support for the Nomination to Postulancy (see [Appendix VII](#)) and their own letter of recommendation to the Secretary of Vocations.

Vestry Role

A quorum is necessary for an official vote to nominate. The Commission on Ministry recommends that the committee members and the discerner meet separately from each other in the same meeting. Both should be excused prior to the vote. If the vestry/bishop's committee votes to nominate the discerner to postulancy, no less than two-thirds of the vestry/bishop's committee should sign the Vestry/Bishop's Committee Letter of Support for the Nomination to Postulancy (see [Appendix VII](#)).

Part IV: Applying for Postulancy

Nominees

Should the vestry/bishop's committee nominate a discerner for postulancy, the discerner becomes a "nominee." Upon receipt of the vestry/bishop's committee letter of support and the clergy leader's recommendation, the nominee will be sent a link to the online application for postulancy. The application is extensive and the Commission on Ministry strongly encourages those nominated to begin working on the application no later than August 1st. Applications and all supporting documents and material are due by Holy Cross Day, September 14th, each year.

Application and Other Materials

Nominees are asked to submit *only* the online application and supporting materials asked for. Any other documents or materials submitted will not be included in the nominee's file or viewed by any receiving party. The application link will be sent to nominees by the Secretary of Vocations after receiving the vestry/bishop's committee Nomination and the clergy's letter of recommendation.

In addition to the online application, nominees should submit the following using the online submission platform:

- Financial Assessment – completed by you and, if applicable, your spouse/partner
- Letter of Acceptance – this letter is the nominee's official acceptance of the vestry/bishop's committee's nomination, and should be no more than one page in length. It should be addressed to the Bishop and include a brief statement of what leads the nominee to accept the nomination. It must conclude with the sentence: *"I, (your name), in accordance with Canon III.6.3 or III.8.3b (choose the relevant one according to the order of ministry), accept my nomination to the (diaconate/priesthood) as put forth by (congregation/community of faith name) and humbly request to be admitted to postulancy."*
- Official transcripts from post-secondary education – this includes all undergraduate and graduate work, even if degrees have not been completed or conferred. Official transcripts are available from your college's or university's registrar's office.
- A statement of financial support from your sponsoring congregation.

The discernment committee's official recommendation, the clergy leader's recommendation (both of which should have already been submitted), along with the application and supporting documents will comprise the material reviewed by the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry for postulancy interviews.

Postulancy interviews take place once per year, usually in November, in the context of a rhythm of prayer and fellowship. The Nominees can expect to participate in daily common prayer, Holy Eucharist, fellowship with other discerners and Commission members, group activities, individual interviews with the Commission on Ministry, and group time with the Bishop. The Commission on Ministry will make a recommendation

to the bishop at the conclusion of the retreat, and the Bishop discerns whether to admit nominees into postulancy.

Admittance to Postulancy

Admittance to Postulancy is the sole prerogative of the Bishop, who is canonically charged to take into consideration the recommendation of the Commission on Ministry. Very often, the recommendation of the Commission on Ministry and the Bishop are in alignment. Occasionally, they are not. The Bishop has final say and responsibility for admitting nominees.

Postulancy often entails seminary education or some other ministry preparation program, and it is a time of significant commitment and change in the postulant's life. The Bishop is committed to supporting our people in process by assuring them that, once admitted to postulancy, they will be ordained barring the individual taking themselves out of the process or some major moral failure. This is a shift from the Diocese of Olympia's historical custom, and with this shift comes a change in how we approach and navigate postulancy.

One of the implications of this is a shift in seeing postulancy as a time of formation rather than an extension of formal discernment. While we believe and affirm that discernment is ongoing in our life of discipleship, admittance to postulancy means an affirmation of a nominee's call to ordained ministry has been clearly perceived by the individual, the Commission on Ministry, and the Bishop. This means that it is possible that some nominees who apply for postulancy will not be admitted. As with Diocesan Discernment Committees, the Commission on Ministry's recommendation will be one of three options:

- Affirmation of lay ministry
- Admittance to postulancy for the diaconate or the priesthood
- Recommendation for further discernment and formation

Appendix I: Canons for Commission on Ministry, Ministry, and Ordination

Title III: Ministry – The Episcopal Church Canons and Constitution, 2024

Canon 1: Of the Ministry of All Baptized Persons

Sec. 1.

Each Diocese shall make provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including:

- a. Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's mission at all times and in all places.

- b. Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation.

Canon 2: Of Commissions on Ministry

Sec. 1.

In each Diocese there shall be a Commission on Ministry ("Commission") consisting of Priests, Deacons, if any, and Lay Persons. The Canons of each Diocese shall provide for the number of members, terms of office, and manner of selection to the Commission. Any Diocese may agree in writing with one or more other Dioceses to share a Commission on Ministry.

Sec. 2.

The Commission shall advise and assist the Bishop:

- a. In the implementation of Title III of these Canons.
- b. In the determination of present and future opportunities and needs for the ministry of all baptized persons.
- c. In the design and oversight of the ongoing process for recruitment, discernment, formation for ministry, and assessment of readiness therefor.

Sec. 3.

The Commission may adopt rules for its work, subject to the approval of the Bishop; *provided* that they are not inconsistent with the Constitution and Canons of this Church and of the Diocese.

Sec. 4.

The Commission may establish committees consisting of members and other persons to report to the Commission or to act on its behalf.

Sec. 5.

The Bishop and Commission shall ensure that the members of the Commission and its committees receive ongoing education and training for their work.

Canon 3: Of Discernment

Sec. 1.

The Bishop and Commission shall provide encouragement, training, and necessary resources to assist each congregation in developing an ongoing process of community discernment appropriate to the cultural background, age, and life experiences of all persons seeking direction in their call to ministry.

Sec. 4.

The Bishop, Commission, and the discernment community shall assist persons engaged in a process of ministry discernment to determine appropriate avenues for the expression and support of their ministries, either lay or ordained.

Canon 22: Diocese of Olympia Canons and Constitutions, 2024**Section 1 Membership**

There shall be a Commission on Ministry consisting of at least ten members.

a. One member of the Commission shall be chosen by the Standing Committee from among its members. Such members shall serve a one-year term and may be re-appointed by Standing Committee.

b. Of the remaining members of the Commission, one half shall be clergy canonically resident in the Diocese and one half shall be lay adult Communicants in Good Standing in the Diocese. One half of the Commission's members shall be appointed by the Bishop at

the Annual Convention for three-year terms. One half of the Commission's members shall

be elected by the Annual Convention for three-year terms. One third of the Commission will be appointed and elected each year. No member may serve more than two successive three-year terms. Those appointing and electing members of the Commission, as well as the Commission itself, shall strive for the diversity described in Diocesan Canon 17.

c. If a vacancy of a member appointed by the Bishop occurs on the Commission, the Bishop shall fill the vacancy for the unexpired term. If a vacancy of a member elected by Annual Convention occurs on the Commission, the Diocesan Council shall fill the vacancy until the next Annual Convention, which will elect a replacement person to fill out the remainder of the unexpired term.

d. Beginning in 2021, the commission will begin the three-year process required to move to

the above structure, with the bishop appointing one-sixth and convention electing one-sixth of the commission's membership each year, maintaining the lay/ordained 50%/50% balance.

Section 2 Duties and Responsibilities

a. The Commission on Ministry shall have the duties and responsibilities prescribed by Canons of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. It shall assist the Bishop in matters pertaining to the enlistment and selection of persons for ministry, in the guidance and pastoral care of candidates for Holy Orders, of Deacons, lay professionals, and other baptized persons, and in matters pertaining to lifelong learning.

b. It shall interview Candidates for Holy Orders and shall, upon assignment by the Bishop,

conduct, evaluate, and report upon canonical examinations. The Commission shall report promptly in writing to the Bishop the results of all interviews and examinations conducted by it or for it, whether satisfactory or unsatisfactory, making separate reports upon each person examined. The Bishop shall transmit these reports to the Standing Committee, which shall in no case recommend a candidate for Holy Orders, or for ordination to the Diaconate or Priesthood, without first considering the report of the Commission on Ministry.

c. The Commission on Ministry shall have such other responsibilities as are placed upon it by the Canons of the General Convention, by the Canons of the Diocese, and as may be assigned to it by the Bishop.

Appendix II: Resources for Spiritual Practices of Discernment

What is Discernment?

- ECWW Resources: <https://ecww.org/discernment-resources/>
- Listening Hearts Primer: <https://listeninghearts.org/resources/a-primer-on-spiritual-discernment/signs-of-the-spirit/>

Pray the Daily Office

- Venite app: <https://www.venite.app/home>
- Church of England's "Everyday Faith": <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/exploring-faith/everyday-faith>
- Forward Movement Daily Prayer: <https://prayer.forwardmovement.org/home>
- Mission of St. Clare: <https://www.missionstclare.com/english/>
- Northumbria Community: <https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/>

Online Spiritual Gift Inventories

- Inventory from Episcopal Diocese of Long Island: <https://spiritualgiftquiz.org/>
- Inventory from St. John's Anglican Cathedral, Winnipeg: <https://stjohnscathedral.ca/support-us/spiritual-gifts-inventory-test/>

Bible Reading Plans

- Bible Study of Sunday Lectionary: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/bible-study/>
- Daily Office Lectionary: <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/lectionary/>
- Bible in a Year from Diocese of Upper South Carolina: <https://www.edusc.org/bible-in-a-year/>

Spiritual Directors

- ECWW Spiritual Direction Resources: https://adultfaithformation.ecww.org/spiritual-direction-resources/?doing_wp_cron=1764617248.6202371120452880859375
- Ignatian Spirituality Center: <https://www.ignatiancenter.org/spiritual-direction-see-find-service>
- Spiritual Directors International: <https://www.sdicompanions.org/find-a-spiritual-director-companion/>

Self-Awareness

- [Enneagram Personality Test](#) – The objective of knowing your enneagram type is to help you know yourself better and to enrich your personal development.
- [Myers-Briggs Personality Test](#) – The Myers-Briggs personality inventory is a tool which uses Carl Jung’s psychological types to make them understandable and accessible for people. This inventory for self-knowledge has been helpful in various professional settings, such as spiritual direction.

Appendix III: Required and Recommended Reading

Required Reading

- *Practicing Resurrection: A Memoir of Work, Doubt, Discernment, and Moments of Grace* by Norah Gallagher
- *Welcome to the Book of Common Prayer* by Vicki K. Black
- *The Liberation of the Laity* by Anne Rowthorn
- *The Church Cracked Open: Disruption, Decline, and New Hope for Beloved Community* by Stephanie Spellers
- *Proclaim! Sharing Words, Living Examples, Changing Lives* by Marcus George Halley
- *Unexpected Consequences: The Diaconate Renewed* by Susanne Watson Epting

Recommended Online and Published Resources

- David G. Benna, *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*. Downers Grove, IL: Varsity Press. 2015. Congress of Anglican Religions Orders of the Americas (CAROA). *A Handbook of Guidelines*. www.caroa.net.
- L. William Countryman, *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing. 1999.
- Suzanne G. Farnham, Joseph P. Gill, R. Taylor McLean, & Susan Ward., *Listening Hearts: Discerning Your Call in Community, 20th Anniversary Edition*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing. 2004.
- Albert Haase, *Saying Yes: Discovering and Responding to God's Will in Your Life*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press. 2016.
- Sue Annis Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry (3rd ed.)*. Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Co. 2013.
- Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. 2008.
- Nancy Ann McLaughlin, *Do You Believe? Living the Baptismal Covenant*. NY: Morehouse Publishing. 2006.
- Wayne Muller, *How, Then, Shall We Live? Four Simple Questions that Reveal the Beauty and Meaning of Our Lives*. NY: Bantam Books. 1997.
- National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC). www.naecc.us.
- John Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. 2006.
- Henry Nouwen, *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*. NY: Harper One. 2013.
- Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*. NY: Wiley. 1999.

- Jane Riess, *Flunking Sainthood: A Year of Breaking the Sabbath, Forgetting to Pray, and Still Loving My Neighbor*. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press. 2011.
- Richard Rohr, *Falling Upwards: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. SF: JosseyBass. 2011.
- Mark E. Thibodeaux, *God's Voice Within: The Ignatian Way to Discover God's Will*. Chicago: Loyola Press. 2010.

Appendix IV: Expectations for Ordained Leaders

The following Six Expectations for Ordained Leaders in the Diocese of Olympia are central to discernment for ordained ministry. These criteria describe qualities of people we seek to ordain as priests and deacons, and guide everything included in the process of discerning a call to ordained ministry. We seek persons who:

Are spiritually grounded and Christ-centered.

We seek leaders who live by a rule of life, grounded in the practice of prayer. They have experience in receiving spiritual direction and will be willing to continue this path throughout their life. They embody and share their faith in ways that draw others into “The Story,” and find strength in Christian community and in their own personal spiritual journey. They can culturally locate themselves, their spiritual practices, and their faith community, and have a deep appreciation for diversity and experience in speaking and working across difference.

Have a gift of gathering and developing a community.

We seek leaders who have a deep love for the Church and a heart for congregational life or chaplaincy. They have the capacity for developing a community through connection and invitation toward greater health and faithfulness over time. They can quickly identify and name where they and their congregation are in their faith journey and can foster a mutually forming environment for spiritual growth and development, empowering their congregations to embrace and live out the Church’s mission of reconciliation.

Demonstrate emotional maturity.

We seek leaders who understand the impact they have in their personal relationships, in their role as leaders in congregations, and in any role they play in the work of the diocese or broader church. They can identify and name their behavioral and emotional responses and can self-regulate and choose which feelings to add to an exchange or conversation.

Are committed to and engaged in anti-racism work.

We seek leaders who understand, and are appropriately and constructively critical of, the polity of the Episcopal Church. They can identify systems, policies, and practices that perpetuate racism. They actively work to dismantle racism in their own attitudes and behaviors, in the systems and structures of their parish, and in the broader life of the church. They are willing to lead their communities toward racial healing.

Understand authority.

We seek leaders who are in touch with their own authority and power over others in the various contexts of their life and vocation. They pay attention to the way their congregations understand power and can name the dynamic of power structures in their communities. They understand the authority structure unique to our Anglican/Episcopal identity, and humbly honor all of the people that are invested with this authority.

Practice Christian stewardship.

We seek leaders who can articulate the way that Christian values, practices, and theology impact their understanding of money, resources, and people. They are aware of how values about money impact communal life and the spiritual practice of giving and have a regular discipline of tithing.

Appendix V: Expectations of Ordained Leaders – Assessment Tool

It's important that the formation of those discerning for ordained ministry is guided by the Six Expectations of Ordained Leaders. This assessment tool can be used during Exploring Vocations to assist in the individual's discernment and ministry exploration, and it is required to be completed once granted admittance to Diocesan Discernment.

We encourage both the clergy leader and discerner (along with anyone else who might be supporting or helping with discernment other than the discernment groups), to complete this assessment then compare responses as the foundation of the learning plan to guide ministry exploration and learning goals during discernment.

Spiritually grounded and Christ-centered

We seek leaders who live by a rule of life, grounded in the practice of prayer. They have experience in receiving spiritual direction and will be willing to continue this path throughout their life. They embody and share their faith in ways that draw others into "The Story," and find strength in Christian community and in their own personal spiritual journey. They can culturally locate themselves, their spiritual practices, and their faith community, and have a deep appreciation for diversity and experience in speaking and working across difference.

Observed Strengths:

Areas Needing Development:

Other Questions, Comments, & Notes

Have a gift of gathering and developing a community

We seek leaders who have a deep love for the Church and a heart for congregational life or chaplaincy. They have the capacity for developing a community through connection and invitation toward greater health and faithfulness over time. They can quickly identify and name where they and their congregation are in their faith journey and can foster a mutually forming environment for spiritual growth and development, empowering their congregations to embrace and live out the Church's mission of reconciliation.

Observed Strengths:

Areas Needing Development:

Other Questions, Comments, & Notes:

Demonstrate emotional maturity

We seek leaders who understand the impact they have in their personal relationships, in their role as leaders in congregations, and in any role they play in the work of the diocese or broader church. They can identify and name their behavioral and emotional

responses and can self-regulate and choose which feelings to add to an exchange or conversation.

Observed Strengths:

Areas Needing Development:

Other Questions, Comments, & Notes:

Are committed to and engaged in anti-racism work

We seek leaders who understand, and are appropriately and constructively critical of, the polity of the Episcopal Church. They can identify systems, policies, and practices that perpetuate racism. They actively work to dismantle racism in their own attitudes and behaviors, in the systems and structures of their parish, and in the broader life of the church. They are willing to lead their communities toward racial healing.

Observed Strengths:

Areas Needing Development:

Other Questions, Comments, & Notes:

Understand authority

We seek leaders who are in touch with their own authority and power over others in the various contexts of their life and vocation. They pay attention to the way their congregations understand power and can name the dynamic of power structures in their communities. They understand the authority structure unique to our Anglican/Episcopal identity, and humbly honor all of the people that are invested with this authority.

Observed Strengths:

Areas Needing Development:

Other Questions, Comments, & Notes:

Practice Christian stewardship

We seek leaders who can articulate the way that Christian values, practices, and theology impact their understanding of money, resources, and people. They are aware of how values about money impact communal life and the spiritual practice of giving and have a regular discipline of tithing.

Observed Strengths:

Areas Needing Development:

Other Questions, Comments, & Notes:

Based on your assessment

My/the discerner's most significant strengths are (these are areas to build and expand):

My/the discerner's areas of concern are (areas that if not addressed are likely to get in the way of the discerner's movement towards ordained ministry):

Learning Plan for Exploring Vocations or Diocesan Discernment

Given this assessment, the Discerner will engage in the following learning plan during this phase:

Appendix VI: Diocesan Discernment Committee – Letter Guidelines and Format

Before composing the letter, please review the pages following the Diocesan Discernment Curriculum in Part III, entitled “Concluding Diocesan Discernment.” As a reminder, any concerns or questions the committee has about the discerner’s call to ordination raised in the letter should have already been discussed with the discerner in detail.

The following questions might help you in coalescing the insights learned. They can be answered in the letter if they are helpful in explaining why the group is recommending a specific pathway moving forward.

- How is this person growing in their Christian faith?
- What are this person’s current and past ministries?
- How does this person demonstrate a desire to learn and practice integrating learning into their life and ministry?
- What is this person’s leadership style and approach?
- How does this person demonstrate their ministry in the Church? In the World?
- What do you believe is this person’s call to ministry?
- What additional training, skills and resources does this person need to respond to this call?

Letters should be two to three pages in length with enough detail to help the clergy leader, vestry or Bishop’s committee, Commission on Ministry, and the Bishop understand why the group has come to this conclusion.

If there are major disagreements about the letter among the Diocesan Discernment Committee, please contact the clergy leader and Commission on Ministry chair before finalizing the letter. The letter should include the following information:

- Name of Discerner
- Name of Congregation
- Date of Letter
- Convener Name and Email Address

Sample Format of Body of Letter

Dear [clergy leader], Vestry/Bishop’s Committee and Commission on Ministry,

We, the undersigned, affirm *N.’s [call to lay ministry / call to ordained ministry / need for further discernment or formation]*.

The letter should now describe

- The committee’s work with the Discerner.
- What the group finds compelling about the discerner and their call
- Why you are making the recommendation you are making

- Any background about the discerner which the vestry/bishop's committee, the COM or the Bishop would find helpful in their deliberations.
- Using *Six Expectations of Ordained Leaders in the Diocese of Olympia* give examples or descriptions to help us understand your recommendation.

Signed:

[Names of all discernment Committee members]

Appendix VII: Vestry/Bishop's Committee Letter of Support for Nomination for Postulancy

**Vestry/Bishop's Committee Letter of Support – Nomination to Postulancy
Title III, Canon 6, Section 2(a) for Diaconate
Title III, Canon 8, Section 2(a) for Priesthood**

To The Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia

WE, whose names are hereunder written, testify to our belief based on 1) personal knowledge and/or 2) on evidence satisfactory to us that _____ is a confirmed communicant of this Church in good standing. We do furthermore declare that, in our opinion, they possess such qualifications as fit them to be admitted a POSTULANT FOR HOLY ORDERS in this diocese. We do set forth the grounds upon which we make our judgment of the applicant's qualifications in the appended statement and as an outcome of our conversation with the Nominee in a duly-called meeting of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee. In addition, we pledge to be involved in and financially supportive of _____'s preparation for ordination.

Print Name of Clergy Exercising Oversight

Signature of Clergy Exercising Oversight

[To be signed above by a majority of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee] Date _____

ATTESTATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee of _____, duly convened on the _____ day of _____, 20____, and that the signatures above are those of at least two-thirds of the members of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee, the number of members being _____.

Signature of Clerk or Secretary

Print Name of Clerk or Secretary