



Episcopal Diocese of Olympia
Commission on Ministry

Exploring Vocations Manual

February 2026

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Statement of Purpose

This manual is intended to support the spiritual practice and work of discernment as the People of the Diocese of Olympia seek to be faithful to their calls to deeper discipleship. It functions as a guide for both clergy leaders supporting discerners in their parishes and discerners doing their own work of discovering the gifts God has given them and how those gifts prepare them for the work God has called them to do.

In the Episcopal Church, we believe that baptism is full initiation into the household of God, which sets us on a lifelong journey of discipleship and specific paths of vocation that allow us to exercise the gifts we have been given. For this reason, we affirm that the ministry of the Church belongs to the whole People of God. Each of us, in our various orders of ministry, are called to share in the work of ministering in Christ's name to one another and to the world. This manual is intended to support any individual in this Diocese—regardless of whether that call is to new lay ministry or to ordained ministry—in the work of discernment.

The work of discernment is, in many ways, the work of discovery. It is a lifelong process of discovering how our gifts equip us to meet the needs of this present moment, to recognize the ways God is working within us and in the world around us, and to discern how we can cooperate with God's mission of reconciliation in this time and place. From this perspective, discernment is better understood as a journey than a destination—a lifelong practice that all members of God's household are called to cultivate as we seek to live as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. We hope this manual provides one element of support in your journey of discovery as you follow the call of the Holy Spirit into deeper discipleship.

Letter from the Commission on Ministry

Dear People of the Diocese of Olympia,

The Commission on Ministry is excited to offer you this guide as a way to support you in your journey of discernment into deeper discipleship. This manual is a product of the Commission's own discernment about how best to live faithfully into our canonical responsibility to encourage, train, and resource our parishes and missions for the ongoing work of community discernment, and to assist discerners in determining appropriate avenues of expression and support for their ministries, whether lay or ordained (Title III: Canon 3).

We recognize that every parish and mission are unique expressions of the Body of Christ in their particular places, and that there is no one-size-fits-all model of community discernment. We have tried to offer enough guidance in this manual to assist that process in a variety of parishes and missions without being overly directive or stifling the vibrant practices of community discernment already in place in some communities. If you belong to, or lead, a community that has an established ministry of discernment already in place, this guide should supplement your work and enrich the experience. If you belong to, or lead, a community for whom gaining traction for the ongoing work of discernment has been difficult, we hope this will help you lay a solid foundation.

Exploring Vocations provides a structure for discerners and clergy leaders—within the context of their communities—to work together to identify the gifts of the discerner, to listen closely alongside one another to the leading of the Holy Spirit and the needs of the community, and to suggest pathways for formation as discerners discover their call to deeper discipleship. The Commission on Ministry is available as a resource to provide support and encouragement during this process, regardless of whether the call being discerned is to ordained ministry or lay ministry. We commend the use of this manual to all seeking to discern their call to deeper discipleship.

No matter where you are on your journey of discernment, we pray that this guide opens new paths of discovery and that, as you travel those paths, you are drawn ever deeper into relationship with Jesus and with your community.

In faith and love,

The Commission on Ministry

Part I: Vocation and Discernment

What is Vocation?

Vocation, from the Latin *vocare*, means “to call.” In our tradition we understand vocation or calling to be rooted in our baptismal identity. Through baptism we are initiated into the household of God and charged to share with one another in Christ’s eternal priesthood. How each of us lives into that calling, and the ways in which it manifests over the course of our lives, is unique and shaped by the gifts with which God has equipped us.

There are, however, certain things common to all people that connect each of our individual vocations: the gifts we are given are for the common good and for the building up of God’s people (1 Corinthians 12:1–11), and they equip us to faithfully represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever we may be; to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take our place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church (Book of Common Prayer, 855).

The particularities of each of our vocations shape the way we learn to live into the vows of our baptismal covenant: to continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the prayers and the breaking of bread; to persevere in resisting evil; to proclaim the Good News of God in Christ through word and deed; to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to love our neighbors as ourselves; to strive for justice and peace among all people; and to cherish and protect the beauty and integrity of all creation (Book of Common Prayer, 304–305).

Part of our shared path of discipleship includes the discovery of these gifts through the spiritual practice and work of discernment, and the development of these gifts through the ongoing work of formation. And while this work is certainly personal, it is not private: we are meant to do it in community, learning how to listen to God through and with others, how to recognize the ways in which God is working within and around us, and how to discern the direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading us.

What is Discernment?

In his book *Discernment*, Henri Nouwen defines discernment as “a spiritual understanding and an experiential knowledge of how God is active in daily life that is acquired through disciplined spiritual practice. Discernment is faithful living and listening to God’s love and direction so that we can fulfill our individual calling and shared mission.”

While we often speak of discernment in terms of making decisions (such as: Which college should I attend? What should I do after I retire? Should I take this new job?), discernment is

about more than decision-making. It enables us to live into deeper discipleship, aiding us in living more faithfully as disciples of Christ in the world according to the gifts we have been given, and allowing us to contribute to the shared mission of the Church.

The spiritual work of discernment involves deep listening, prayer, scripture reading, study, conversation with trusted companions, and openness to where the Spirit may lead. Often this work requires us to explore new experiences, to try new things on for a time, and then to reflect on those experiences with others who know us well. For us in the Diocese of Olympia, this work begins in the context of parish life and community with the clergy leaders who provide spiritual care. If you are sensing a call to deeper discipleship, we encourage you to speak with your clergy leader and other leaders in your community as you listen more intently for God's voice.

What are the Spiritual Practices of Discernment?

Regular Practice of Prayer

In our tradition, the Book of Common Prayer provides a structure for both corporate and personal prayer. We invite you to discover the grounding rhythm of the Daily Office. In addition, this is a good time to explore new practices of prayer, such as contemplative prayer or meditation, the Daily Examen, Lectio or Visio Divina, or culturally appropriate forms of prayer from your own heritage.

Scripture Reading

The Episcopal Church uses lectionaries to aid us in our corporate and personal prayer. The readings assigned for the Holy Eucharist follow a three-year cycle, and the readings assigned for the Daily Office follow a two-year cycle. These are excellent ways to engage Scripture daily and weekly. Because the lectionaries do not include the entirety of Scripture, we also encourage you to read Scripture more broadly. Online tools such as reading plans can help you read through the whole Bible over the course of six months, a year, or two years.

Study

Our capacity to listen and think deeply is sharpened through study. Many parishes offer regular opportunities for Christian formation, and we encourage you to participate in these programs. You may also read books, listen to podcasts, or participate in diocesan formation opportunities as they arise. Your clergy leader or spiritual director can assist you in developing a study plan to support your growth.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual directors help us learn to pay attention to how God is acting and speaking in our lives in the present moment. They provide support, encouragement, and suggested practices that help tune our hearts to what God is doing and calling us toward. We encourage all discerners—and require those discerning ordained ministry—to seek out a spiritual director.

Rule of Life

A Rule of Life provides a rhythm of life and practice that helps us remain connected to God and community. Elements of a Rule of Life vary from person to person, but often include practices of prayer, Scripture reading, study, sabbath and recreation, and community engagement. We encourage all who are discerning a call to deeper discipleship to develop a Rule of Life and to enlist trusted companions to help maintain accountability to it.

Spiritual Gift Discovery

During the spiritual work of discernment, it is helpful to discover—or rediscover—the gifts God has given you for ministry. There are free online tools to assist with this, or your spiritual director or clergy leader may have recommendations. Once you complete an assessment, discuss the results with your clergy leader and/or spiritual director.

Ministry Exploration

As you discern where God is calling you, we expect that you will deepen your involvement in parish and community ministries, including leadership roles in worship. This is a time to try new things and to reflect on those experiences with your clergy leader (and spiritual director, if applicable). The Commission on Ministry commends the action–reflection cycle: engage in a ministry experience and then reflect on it in community. In consultation with your clergy leader, explore areas of involvement and leadership you might try, including designing or implementing a congregational or community project.

Parish/Ministry Visitations and Ministry Leader Interviews

Experiencing different ministry contexts can clarify your own sense of call. In consultation with your clergy leader, plan to visit three parishes or ministries different from your own and interview ministry leaders from across the diocese. If you are discerning ordained ministry, you are required to do both visitations and interviews and to interview an additional person in the order you are discerning. More guidance may be found in Part II of this manual.

Mutual Discernment

Anyone in discernment can benefit from participating in a mutual discernment group. Often these groups form within the local parish, with several participants each discerning a question in their lives or ministries. Since discernment is never purely internal or private, listening deeply in community assists us in recognizing God’s activity and discerning vocational direction.

Meet Regularly with Your Clergy Leader

If you are discerning a call to deeper discipleship, remain in contact with your clergy leader. They can help you develop the practices and disciplines needed for discernment and assist you in discovering ministry opportunities to explore. The Commission on Ministry recommends meeting once every month or two.

For a non-exhaustive list of resources to support these practices, see **Appendix II**.

How Much Time Should I Spend Discerning?

Discernment is not something that can be rushed. The work of discernment takes time because it often involves learning new practices, testing gifts, engaging new ministries, and reflecting on these experiences in community. For most people, discernment unfolds over the course of months and years, not days and weeks.

In the Diocese of Olympia, we encourage discerners to give themselves enough time to explore vocational questions, listen for the Holy Spirit’s direction, and reflect with their clergy leaders, spiritual directors, and trusted companions. In most cases, discerners should expect to spend at least a year engaging in intentional discernment before determining appropriate next steps. If you feel a sense of clarity around your call, we encourage you to write an Exploring Vocations Reflection Report (see page 16) to help you debrief the experience with your clergy leader and to plan your pathway of formation.

The pace of discernment varies from person to person and will be shaped by factors such as schedules, access to ministry opportunities, and engagement in parish life. What is important is not the speed, but the faithfulness with which we attend to the work, allowing discernment to unfold with honesty, patience, and openness to the Spirit.

Expectations for Clergy Leaders

Clergy leaders play an essential role in supporting discerners as they explore vocational questions. Because discernment is personal but not private, clergy help the community

participate in this work and ensure that discerners have access to practices, mentoring, and ministry experiences that foster growth.

If you are accompanying someone in discernment, meet with them regularly to reflect on their experiences, recommend opportunities for ministry and leadership, and support their use of practices such as prayer, study, spiritual direction, and mutual discernment. You may also help the congregation understand its role in the discerner's ongoing formation and support.

Clergy leaders are encouraged to help discerners navigate baptismal ministry, lay ministry, licensed lay ministry, and, when appropriate, ordained ministry. While not every discerner will pursue ordination, all are called to deeper discipleship and leadership in the Church. Clergy leaders play a key role in helping this unfold faithfully and well.

If you sense that a discerner may be called to ordained ministry, you may introduce them to the Commission on Ministry or to other clergy for further conversation. The Commission on Ministry is available for consultation in the early stages of discernment to help navigate questions, contexts, and possible next steps.

For the purposes of this document, "Clergy Leaders" refers to clergy who have oversight of a parish or mission (Vicar, Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or Interim). As leaders in your communities, we assume you are supporting parishioners in their discipleship and discernment. For those actively discerning a call to deeper discipleship, we expect you will:

- Support practices of prayer, study, and ministry exploration.
- Meet regularly with discerners to offer pastoral support and guidance (the Commission on Ministry recommends monthly meetings).
- Assist discerners in selecting parishes, diocesan ministries, or community ministries to visit, and ministers to interview (see Part II).
- When appropriate, convene a mutual discernment group. While no longer required, these groups can be highly beneficial. If you lack people resources, consider partnering with nearby parishes or contacting the Chair of the Commission on Ministry for support. Guidance on discerning in community is in Part II.
- For those discerning ordained ministry, use the assessment tool based on the Expectations of Ordained Leaders in the Diocese of Olympia to develop learning goals and ministry experiences.
 - Do your own work of discernment in:
 - sensing the individual's call to ordained ministry, and
 - understanding how your own expectations of ordained leadership shape your assessment of the discerner.
- Debrief with discerners on their Exploring Vocations Reflection and help them consider pathways of formation for their call to discipleship (see Part II).

- If, after approximately 6–9 months (more or less, depending on prior work), you believe the individual may be called to ordained ministry, write a recommendation for participation in the Diocesan Discernment Process. Send the recommendation to the Chair of the Commission on Ministry and the Secretary of Vocations.

Part II: Exploring Vocations A Pathway of Discernment

What is Exploring Vocations?

Exploring Vocations is the process by which discerners, clergy leaders, and communities listen together for how God may be calling a discerner to deeper discipleship and specific forms of ministry in the Church and in the world. Grounded in baptismal identity, the process uses discernment practices to uncover gifts, clarify interests, test vocational questions, and deepen participation in parish and community life.

Exploring Vocations is not solely about determining whether someone is called to ordained ministry. It begins with the belief that all the baptized share in Christ's work and that the Holy Spirit equips each of us for ministry. For some, the call may lead to new lay ministries, licensed lay ministry, or deeper service in the parish or community. For others, the call may involve ordained ministry as a deacon or priest.

The purpose of Exploring Vocations is not to produce quick decisions, but to help discerners and communities listen deeply to the Holy Spirit and make faithful judgments about ministry, leadership, and formation. The process emphasizes action and reflection: engaging in ministry, reflecting on those experiences with clergy leaders and companions, and discerning next steps in light of the Church's mission.

Exploring Vocations provides a pathway for those sensing a call to deeper discipleship. You may be feeling drawn to parish or community ministries, aware of needs in the world that resonate with your gifts, curious about leadership within the parish or diocese, discerning vows for religious life, or sensing a call to ordained ministry. Whatever the shape of that call, Exploring Vocations helps you discern it with the Church.

If you're reading this manual, we assume you have already taken initial steps. If you have not yet done so, your first step is to speak with your clergy leader about what you are sensing. They can provide pastoral support and help you develop or strengthen spiritual practices that aid discernment. This conversation marks the beginning of Exploring Vocations.

Questions to guide your initial conversation:

- What events or transitions are prompting me to explore a call to deeper discipleship?
- What needs in the community or in the world do I identify with my sense of call?
- Who has reflected back to me something about my gifts or vocation?
- What practices or disciplines have supported my discernment so far?
- What parish, diocesan, or community ministries am I interested in exploring?

Beginning in 2026, the Diocese of Olympia will offer an annual Discernment Retreat to help participants learn and deepen discernment practices. Stay connected with your clergy leader and watch the diocesan calendar for registration information.

Work with a trusted spiritual leader—your clergy leader, spiritual director, or mentor—to develop a Rule of Life if you do not already have one. Establish a practice of self-reflection such as journaling or another creative medium that helps you attend to your relationship with Christ, your emerging sense of vocation, your Rule of Life, and your ministry experiences.

Get to know the ministry leaders in your parish. If you are unfamiliar with their work, ask to learn more, observe, or participate. With your clergy leader, make a plan to explore parish ministries: what they do, who they serve, and how they contribute to the life of the congregation. Depending on your sense of call, you may also explore diocesan ministries such as Mission to Seafarers, the Bishop’s Task Force on Homelessness, and Campus Ministry.

Discerning in Community

The work of discernment, while deeply personal, is not private in the context of Christian formation. Practices such as deep listening, attending to the movement of the Spirit, and noticing the gifts God has entrusted to us lead to clarity and empowerment when they are shared and tested within community. For this reason, Exploring Vocations invites discerners to be in regular conversation with clergy leaders, spiritual directors, and trusted mentors.

Our network of discernment extends beyond these roles as well. Family members and friends who know us well, fellow parishioners who see us exercising ministry, and spiritual companions with gifts of wisdom and encouragement all contribute to our discernment. We encourage discerners to intentionally cultivate this network and engage them in regular conversation about how they see God at work in and through their lives.

One structured way of doing this work is through a **Mutual Discernment Group**. Either the clergy leader or the discerner may propose such a group, and the Commission on Ministry

commends it to those exploring deeper discipleship or a vocational question. There is no single format. A common pattern is for the clergy leader to identify several parishioners who are discerning significant questions—ranging from deeper ministry engagement to life transitions, education, retirement, or vocational shifts. With clergy or lay facilitation, the group gathers for a defined period to listen, pray, and reflect together.

Some groups invite all members to share brief updates at each gathering; others designate a “focus person” for each meeting who presents their discernment question and current sense of call. In both models, the group listens attentively and asks questions that help the discerners gain clarity rather than offering solutions or advice. Many parishes have used the *Guidelines for a Discernment Group* found in the Appendices of *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* by Suzanne G. Farnham. as a helpful framework. This book may be available in the Diocesan Resource Center.

Reading List

We encourage all those who are Exploring Vocations to read the following books (these are required for all discerning ordained ministry):

- *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

Your clergy leader may have other recommendations as well. The Commission on Ministry has also provided a list of other recommended reading in Appendix II

Parish, Ministry, and Community Organization Site Visitations

In consultation with your clergy leader, make a plan to visit ministries beyond your home parish. Depending on your sense of call, this may include non-parish Episcopal ministries as well as community-based ministries that serve the public (for example: Chaplains on the Harbor, Luther’s Table, Paths to Understanding, Kids 4 Peace, and others).

In addition to site visits, work with your clergy leader to identify ministry professionals to interview. These individuals may or may not be directly connected to the ministries you visit, but they should be engaged in work related to the area of ministry you are discerning. The Commission on Ministry recommends interviewing at least three people: a lay professional (paid or volunteer), a deacon, and a priest.

If you are discerning ordained ministry, you are required to interview an additional person in the order you are discerning. If you are unsure whether you are called to the diaconate or the priesthood, you should interview one person in each order.

Parish/Ministry Site Visitation Guidelines

The purpose of parish and ministry visitations is to remember that our individual parishes and ministries are part of a wider diocesan and civic ecosystem, and to learn from the diverse ways discipleship and mission are expressed in different contexts.

Planning Parish Visitations

Consult with your clergy leader as you identify parishes to visit. As you plan:

- Seek diversity in the types of parishes or ministries you visit (size, demographics, liturgical style, and geographic location).
- Do some pre-work: explore websites, drive or walk the surrounding neighborhood.
- Schedule interviews ahead of time. While your interviews do not need to involve leaders from the places you visit, if you wish to interview them, do not simply show up and request time—plan in advance.

During Parish Visitations — Observe and Reflect

Congregation

- How does the congregation differ from your own in size, demographics, location, architecture, or culture?

Liturgy & Worship

- What resonated with you? What felt unfamiliar or challenging?
- What sparked curiosity?
- What roles did lay ministers, deacons, and priests play?
- How did the priest preside at Eucharist?
- What was the music like?
- What else did you notice about the liturgical space and rhythm?

Leadership & Organization

- How did the congregation participate?
- How many clergy are on staff? What other staff roles exist?
- How many lay leaders serve in ministries?

Mission & Ministry

- What ministries were highlighted in bulletins or announcements?
- What values and mission were expressed? How do they compare with your home parish?
- How would you describe the neighborhood and the parish's relationship to it?

Reflection

- What was your biggest takeaway?
- Where could you imagine yourself serving? If nowhere, why?

Ministry Visitations (Non-Parish Settings)

Mission & Context

- What are the mission and values of the ministry? How do they compare with similar ministries in your parish or community?
- How would you describe the community served?

Organization & Leadership

- Who participates and how is leadership structured?
- How did staff/volunteers interact with participants?
- What is the ratio of paid staff to volunteers?

Reflection

- What resonated? What challenged you?
- What sparked curiosity?
- What was your biggest takeaway?
- Where could you imagine yourself serving? If nowhere, why?

Interview Guidelines

- Plan for roughly 30 minutes.
- With permission, take notes.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Meet in person whenever possible.

Possible Interview Questions

- What does being a *[priest/deacon/lay minister]* mean to you?

- What brings you joy in your ministry?
- What is most difficult?
- How has your ministry differed from what you expected when you began?
- How has ministry impacted your personal and family life?
- How do you see the role of [*priest/deacon/lay professional*] changing in the future?
- What guidance would you offer someone discerning a call to this ministry?

Post-Visitation Reflection & Journaling

After completing visitations and interviews, reflect on:

- What resonated with you?
- What made you curious?
- What was uncomfortable or challenging?
- Where did you recognize aspects of yourself?
- How did the leadership style you observed compare to leadership you have experienced? To your own?
- How did the contexts of other parishes or ministries compare to those you know?
- What surprised you?
- What new questions emerged?

Exploring Vocations Reflection Report

As you near the end of your 6–9 months of Exploring Vocations, complete a Reflection Report and schedule a time to debrief with your clergy leader. Please share your report ahead of your meeting so your clergy leader has time to read and reflect.

Your Reflection Report should be approximately 3–4 pages and respond narratively to these questions:

Prayer & Practices

- How has your prayer life changed during this period of discernment?

Reading

- What did you read from the reading list?
- What was most meaningful?
- What did you struggle with or question?
- Were there other readings you found helpful?

Mutual Discernment Groups

- If you participated in a Mutual Discernment Group, how was your sense of call clarified or affirmed?
- What further questions emerged from that work?

Conversations with Church Leaders

- Reflect on your conversations with church leaders and/or committees.
- What stood out about the gifts of each order of ministry (lay, deacon, priest)?
- Highlight several insights that resonated with you (with brief detail).
- What questions emerged?

Site Visitations

- List the parishes, ministries, or community organizations you visited.
- What stood out to you during these visitations?
- What questions or wonderings did each visit raise?

Sense of Call

- How was your sense of call changed, clarified, or strengthened through this process?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Debriefing the Reflection Report

You and your clergy leader should spend time discussing your discernment process and the sense of call articulated in your report. This conversation is an opportunity to clarify whether additional time in intentional discernment is needed or whether there is a clear sense of call—and to what.

The Commission on Ministry has identified several pathways of formation that may support further growth in gifts and skills. These may be useful for those continuing in active discernment as well as those pursuing next steps.

Next Steps for Those Discerning Ordained Ministry

If both the discerner and the clergy leader have clarity about a call to ordained ministry, the clergy leader should write a letter recommending that the discerner be admitted into Diocesan Discernment. This letter should be sent to the Secretary of Vocations. The discerner will then receive an application for Diocesan Discernment, which must include the Exploring Vocations Reflection Report.

Eligibility Requirement: Discerners applying for Diocesan Discernment must be confirmed or received, and must be communicants in good standing for at least one year in their sponsoring parish.

To learn more about Diocesan Discernment, please see the Diocesan Discernment Manual, available from the Secretary for Vocations.

Additional Pathways for Formation

Possible formation pathways include:

- Anti-Racism Training
- Safe Church Training
- College for Congregational Development
- Education for Ministry
- CALL Courses (Church Divinity School of the Pacific)
- Iona Collaborative (under development)
- Lifelong Learning (Virginia Theological Seminary)
- Foundations for Baptismal Living & On-Demand Courses (Bexley Seabury)
- Organizing for Mission
- Sound Alliance
- Breaking Open the Word & other courses (Ignatian Spirituality Center)
- Creation Care / Justice (Diocesan resources forthcoming)

Licensure Options

- Eucharistic Minister
- Eucharistic Visitor
- Preaching License
- Worship Leader

Religious Life

For those in Vowed Religious Life, their first ministry is to love and adore the Beloved who called them. They also describe their call to become the living prayers of the church. The Episcopal Church and the Worldwide Anglican Communion have men and women living in monastic and dedicated Christian communities. The Episcopal Church has over 32 distinct Traditional Orders and Christian Communities in the United States. Each community has their own formation process. Search online under the Episcopal Church website under Religious Life for a detailed listing.

Suggested reading:

The Vows Book: Anglican Teaching in the Vows of Obedience, Poverty and Chastity by Br. Clark Berger, SSF, Vest Pocket Publication 2014

Sharing the Vision: Spiritual Lessons of the Religious Life by Lavinia Byrne, Cowley Publications, 1989 Lessons of the Religious

Other Pathways

- Parish-based initiatives such as Sacred Ground or *Love God, Love God's World*, either locally or in partnership with neighboring parishes

Appendix I: Canons for Commission on 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

Online Spiritual Gift Inventories

- <https://spiritualgiftquiz.org>
- <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>
- <https://gifts.churchgrowth.org>
- <https://www.elca.org/our-work/congregations-and-synods/faith-practices/spiritual-renewal/spiritual-gifts-assessment-tool>

Bible Reading Plans

- <https://bibleproject.com/reading-plans/>
- <https://www.edusc.org/bible-in-a-year/>

Spiritual Directors

- <https://www.sdicompanions.org/>
- <https://www.ignatiancenter.org/spiritual-direction-seek-find-service>
- A list is being compiled of individual spiritual directors in the diocese of Olympia

Self-Awareness

- Myres Briggs Testing
- Enneagram
 - *The Essential Enneagram* by David Daniels & Virginia Price
 - *The Sacred Enneagram* by Christopher L. Heuertz (with additional workbook)
 - *The Enneagram* by Richard Rohr & Andreas Ebert
 - <https://www.enneagraminstitute.com>

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: