



Called to Ministry

Section 3: Holy Orders

Doc 3H: Guidelines for Sponsoring Clergy, Vestries/Bishop's Committees

**Guidelines for Ministry of all the Baptized,
Lay Licensed Ministries, and Holy Orders**

for the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe

Commission on the Ministry of the Baptized

The Commission on the Ministry of the Baptized serves to guide and empower all baptized people in discerning their ministries.

European Institute for Christian studies

October 2016

**Guidelines for Sponsoring Clergy and Vestries/Bishop’s
Committees Considering Recommending a Parishioner for Holy
Orders**

Contents

I. Introduction..... 3

II. Discernment Committee..... 3

III. Responsibilities of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee 3

IV. Interviewing the discerning person 5

V. Representing the Whole Church..... 6

Guidelines for Sponsoring Clergy and Vestries/Bishop's Committees

Considering Recommending a Parishioner for Holy Orders

I. Introduction

The separate assessments and recommendations of the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge (in the following: the Priest) and Vestry or Bishop's Committee of a parishioner who is testing a possible call to Holy Orders are critical and demanding responsibilities. These assessments and recommendations occur at the beginning of a person's inquiry about the possibility of becoming a Postulant for Holy Orders, and are forwarded to the Bishop and the Commission on the Ministry of the Baptized (COMB) in written form, when completed.

II. Discernment Committee

The Priest makes known to the Vestry/Bishop's Committee that a parishioner is exploring and discerning a call to ministry.

The Priest appoints a Discernment Committee to meet with the inquiring parishioner and to explore with them the content of call to ministry. The Priest hands all members of the Discernment Committee a copy of *Document 3G: Guidelines for Discernment Committees*.

In most situations, the conversation about a call occurs with the Priest and the Discernment Committee over a year or more. Please note that a parishioner should be active in a parish of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe for at least two years before discernment about ordained ministry is formally pursued.

It is the responsibility of the Priest and Wardens to inform new Vestry/Bishop's Committee members about ongoing discernments within the congregation.

At the end of the process with the Discernment Committee, the Priest will be provided with a written document with unidentified comments of the members of the Discernment Committee regarding the call of the discerning person (for details see the Convocation's *Guidelines for Discernment Committees*) to be shared with the Vestry/Bishop's Committee.

III. Responsibilities of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee

When a person has been exploring and discerning a call to ministry with his/her Priest, has met regularly with a Discernment Committee and has been attending one of the annual Discernment Conferences of the Convocation, he or she may be invited by the Bishop to be interviewed by COMB.

1. Written documents

The Bishop must receive written recommendations that the person is ready to enter into discernment at the Convocation level. The following documents must be in the Bishop's Office one month before a COMB meeting is scheduled:

- a. a written recommendation from the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge.
- b. the canonical certificate from the Vestry/Bishop's Committee [Canon III.6.2(a); or III.8.4(a)2]
- c. a copy of the Certificate of Attendance of a Discernment Conference of the Convocation.

Please note that these letters are recommendations for ordination and need to be taken seriously. It is therefore requested that in addition to the canonical certificate, the Vestry/Bishop's Committee give a descriptive statement why they recommend the discerning person to the Bishop to be considered for ordained ministry.

In case of a recommendation for Postulancy for the Order of Deacons, the Vestry/Bishop's Committee is also required to provide the Bishop and COMB with a specific description of the ministry of a deacon in that congregation.

Whether or not one formally applies to become a Postulant for Holy Orders is at the discretion of the discerning person, who is also in charge of providing any additional papers necessary according to the Canons.

2. Personal knowledge of the person presented

While the Priest will present to the Vestry/Bishop's Committee the results of the careful inquiry, including the report of the Discernment Committee at the discretion of the Priest, it is essential that the basis of the canonical certificate be out of personal experience of each member of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee with the discerning person. This involves the personal engagement and interaction of every member of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee with the discerning person.

It is therefore appropriate for the Vestry/Bishop's Committee, if necessary, to take several more months after the decision of the Discernment Committee to have personal (one-on-one) meetings with the discerning person so that all members are able to make a decision of their own representing not only the congregation, but also as part of the whole Church.

3. Ongoing spiritual and financial responsibility

With the decision to provide the discerning person with a canonical certificate recommending him/her for ordained ministry, the Vestry/Bishop's Committee should recognize that the congregation will, as it nominates the applicant for ordained ministry, have an ongoing spiritual and financial responsibility (taking into account

the discerning person's needs and the congregation's resources) to the individual during the discernment and training process.

IV. Interviewing the discerning person

To help the Vestries/Bishop's Committees in their decision-making, the following expectations of COMB have been compiled to provide guidance for interviews.

These are some of the things that the Bishop and COMB would like to see clearly present in the persons presented:

- **FAITH** That the person demonstrates Christian faith in a genuine, natural way, and that faith is evident and not hidden.
- **LEADERSHIP** That the person can lead and has had enough experience in various leadership roles so that a style of leadership has emerged that has been effective.
- **RELATIONSHIP** That the person relates well with others, is relatively comfortable one-on-one, with groups, and with a crowd. He or she is someone whom people would feel comfortable being with and talking to.
- **HEALTH** That the person is healthy in mind, body, relationships and spirit so that the measure of health will support effective ministry.
- **COMPASSION** That the prayer life, character and lifestyle of this person express that the needs and well-being of others are clearly at the forefront of their agenda.

In addition, these are the things that the Bishop and COMB would also like to see as clearly present:

- the capacity to learn and grow, and the possibility of being formed and transformed by theological education
- a missionary spirit
- a willingness to engage with the whole Church in all of its theological diversity
- flexibility that will make for sound pastoral ministry
- grounding in the communal culture, ministry and mission of The Episcopal Church
- the ability to function and be accountable to a bishop and various councils that have authority.

V. Representing the Whole Church

It is essential for everyone involved – the Priest, the Discernment Committee and the Vestry/Bishop's Committee – to be forthright, honest and thorough at this early point, remembering that they are carrying out a vital responsibility in this matter for the whole Church and not just their parish or faith community.