

Parish Discernment Checklist for Sponsoring Clergy and Inquirers

We hope this checklist will help you form a strong Discernment Committee for any member of your congregation who wants to discern a call to ordained ministry. A member of the Commission on Ministry will review the composition of your Discernment Committee before scheduling its first meeting with you to make sure that your discernment process is off to a good start. Please be in touch with Edie Dolnikowski (edie@diomass.org) if you have questions or concerns about any of the recommendations on this checklist.

Any exceptions to these recommendations must be approved by the Commission on Ministry *before* you submit the Commitment Form that initiates the formal discernment process.

The inquirer should be

- a baptized communicant in good standing¹ in the sponsoring congregation for at least one year prior to requesting formal discernment
- confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church
- a legal resident in the United States²

The inquirer should NOT be

- a staff member of the sponsoring congregation³
- a close friend or family member of the sponsoring priest

Members of the Discernment Committee should be

- committed Christians who are active members of the sponsoring congregation
- familiar with the orders of ministry (lay and ordained) in the Episcopal Church
- able to schedule at least eight regular meetings (ninety minutes each) between early March and early June

A well-formed Discernment Committee will

- comprise four to six members appointed by the priest in charge of the sponsoring congregation
- have ***no more than*** one vestry member, who serves as a liaison between the discernment committee and the vestry
- be as diverse as possible in terms of how well and how long its members know the inquirer

- be as demographically diverse as possible: if the inquirer is a person of color, it is *especially* important to invite persons of color to serve on the Discernment Committee
- be able to converse in the inquirer’s first language

People who should NOT be invited to serve on a Discernment Committee are

- family members of the inquirer
- close personal friends of the inquirer
- postulants or candidates for Holy Orders
- clergy

The Sponsoring Priest should be

- the rector or priest in charge of the sponsoring congregation⁴

¹ “All communicants of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered communicants in good standing.” Canon I.17.3

² Although the Canons of the Episcopal Church do not require legal residence of applicants to the ordination process, ordinands cannot be employed in the church without documentation attesting that they can legally reside and work in the United States. The Commission on Ministry strongly encourages inquirers with questions about their immigration status to consult with our Canon for Immigrant and Multicultural Ministry, the Rev. Dr. Jean Baptiste Ntagengwa (jbntagengwa@diomass.org), before submitting an application for Holy Orders.

³ A lay staff member wishing to enter discernment for ordained ministry and the priest of that congregation must contact the Office of Ordained Vocations before submitting a Commitment form to allow time to identify an appropriate sponsoring priest. An inquirer *may not* be sponsored by a priest who is the inquirer’s direct supervisor.

⁴ If the congregation is being served by an interim priest, the Commission on Ministry will appoint another priest to serve as the inquirer’s sponsoring priest until the inquirer is nominated for and admitted to postulancy