



Called to Lead

Discerning Lay and Ordained Ministry

Commission on Ministry

The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina



THE DIOCESE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Dear beloved,

In The Episcopal Church, the ministers of the church are not only bishops, priests, and deacons, but also lay persons, and all are called to represent Christ and the Church in ministry. Listening to the calling of the Holy Spirit is often a journey, as one discerns the path ahead.

The purpose of the Commission on Ministry is to help me as your bishop in determining the needs for ministry in the diocese and to help those on a path of discernment who may be considering Holy Orders. Together, in the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, we are committed to help guide people throughout the discernment process, to find their vocation and explore ministry that may lead them toward laity, diaconate, or priesthood. There is no one definite path that leads to any of these vocations. It is important to listen to the calling of the Holy Spirit as you find your way, guided by spiritual leaders from your church and your community.

Discernment in ministry is truly a life-long journey. As we move through the seasons of life, it is very common for Christians to feel a calling and begin to explore vocational opportunities that could lead them to ordained or lay ministries. Our "Called to Lead" Manual is a starting point for people to discern ministry through community and spiritual direction.

In addition to this manual, my office and the chair of the Commission on Ministry can provide discerners with a list of spiritual directors, and other materials that could help you explore your vocation.

Please know that as your bishop I am praying for you as you travel this road of discernment. I am thankful you are a part of this diocese and that you are interested in exploring ways you can serve Christ and our neighbors in the ministry of The Episcopal Church.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, stylized initial 'R' followed by the name 'Ruth' in a cursive script.

The Rt. Rev. Ruth Woodliff-Stanley
Bishop, The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina



The ability to identify, listen, and assist those who perceive a call to leadership in the church is a vital role of the Christian community. The Commission on Ministry in The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina developed this resource to facilitate discernment for lay and ordained ministries. It is our hope that through prayerful conversation with one's priest, a spiritual director, and a small group of church members, exploring topics such as baptismal covenant, spiritual gifts and ministry roles, over time the Spirit will provide clarity as to God's holy invitation.

The Commission on Ministry in The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina appreciates the participation of all individuals who seek to discern their gifts for ministry and those who assist them in the ministry discernment process. Please notify the Commission on Ministry at the address listed below if you find any errors, omissions, or suggestions that might be used to improve this guide. Thank you for your prayerful, faithful participation and your dedication to the ministry discernment process in the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina.

The Rev. Canon Philip Linder
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** This manual has been adapted for the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina with permission from the Diocese of Colorado.*

I. THE BIG PICTURE: ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

Imagine visiting a popular restaurant on a busy Friday night. Consider all the different groups of people participating in the experience:

- Hosts and hostesses greeting customers, taking their names, seating them at tables
- Servers taking orders, delivering drinks and food
- Line cooks in the kitchen preparing the meals
- Bussers clearing tables to prepare for the next seating
- Dishwashers cleaning, drying and stacking dishware to be reused throughout the night
- The chef who created the menu
- The general manager keeping an eye on all things
- The owner and investors who made this dream a reality
- The customers—the hungry public.

Considering all the roles, which would you say is the most important? Which is essential to the dining experience? Now, imagine removing any one of those roles and envision the resulting chaos:

- Without hosts, the customers would battle for tables.
- Without servers, food and drinks would not be ordered or delivered.
- Without line cooks, no meals would be prepared.
- Without bussers, tables could not be turned.
- Without dishwashers there would be no clean dishes.
- Without the chef, there would be no menu.
- Without the manager, employees would not be hired or trained.
- Without the owner and investors, no restaurant would have opened.
- Without the customers, the restaurant could not stay in business.

You get the idea. Every role is vital to a positive dining experience. Every single person has a function that is integral to the success of the whole.

The Episcopal Church is no different in this respect. The Book of Common Prayer identifies four distinct ministers in the church: laity, priests, deacons, and bishops. Each has a different role in the church. While it is common to identify hierarchy with importance, The Episcopal Church recognizes and values each of the four orders as essential to a thriving faith community.

Each order has a ministry whose exercise is integral to the success of the whole. The Church thrives as the Body of Christ when every member offers their God-given gifts in service to the whole. Discerning what those gifts are and how God is calling them into service is the responsibility of every Christian.

All baptized Christians are called to the work of God's kingdom in this world, to be the hands, feet, and heart of Jesus Christ. Each of us is called to discover how we are to live out our Baptismal Covenant. The Book of Common Prayer (p. 855) tells us that ministry of the baptized is "to represent Christ and His Church, to bear witness to Him wherever we may be, and to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world." Ministry takes as many forms as there are people and needs in the world. Ministry is not limited to the ordained. Each of us has multiple ministries, as we carry Christ with us into our homes, offices, schools, playing fields, neighborhood meetings and everywhere we go. The locations of ministry are limitless as we allow God's Spirit to direct our hearts and minds in spiritual discernment.

What Is Discernment?

Discernment consists of recognizing differences. The word from the Latin root means "*seeing in a discriminating way.*" From the Greek root *diakrisis* it means to test and distinguish between good and evil, the path toward God and the path away from God.

Discernment is a way in which Christians seek God in the context of prayer, scripture, tradition, experience and community. Discernment also means to sort or screen gifts, talents, solutions, people, and resources for situations, vocations, or placement.

Within the church we engage in spiritual discernment, which is "to see to the heart of the matter with spiritual eyes; from God's vantage point, to see beneath the surface events through illusions within human systems, and beyond the immediate and transient." (Danny E. Morris and Charles M. Olsen, *Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church*, p.21)

Discernment of our Christian vocation begins with the conviction that God calls each of us as a baptized Christian to actively participate in the Body of Christ. The goal of discernment is to know God's desire for a person or situation within the context of the wider vision of the Kingdom of God. The discernment process is one of prayerful discovery that recognizes God is already at work in the world around us, inviting us to participate and co-create.

The Commission on Ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina desires that every Christian, lay and ordained, grow in their capacity for discernment, for the seeking of God's will in every moment and circumstance. At some point, everyone finds themselves at a crossroads in life and can benefit from a form of group spiritual direction.

This guide is designed to assist those engaged in a specific kind of discernment, i.e., individuals who are sensing a call to some form of ministry leadership, whether lay or ordained, in The Episcopal Church.

Wanted: Leaders for the 21st Century Church

A Google search demonstrates a rapidly changing landscape for church in the 21st Century.

Secularization, globalization, and technology make for a rapidly changing world. The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina and indeed The Episcopal Church more broadly, seeks a new generation of lay and ordained leaders committed to meeting these new opportunities.

The vision for each congregation is that it becomes a “mission-shaped” community dedicated to proclamation, discipleship, and servanthood in its surrounding neighborhood and in the larger world. We pray for God to raise leaders that will nurture congregations as faithful to invite, form, send, and serve. They will be called to equip and support the baptized in ministries of compassion, justice, and witness in the world.

Whatever their style of leadership, they must be centered in Christ and able to bring a community to life in Christ. In a culture where many people do not understand what it means to be Christian, they must live as witnesses to the Gospel.

Leaders have many and varied gifts for service; we look for certain qualities of character, such as:

- Leaders have a sense of inner authority that finds its center in God and comes from a prayerful, vital relationship with God.
- Leaders can articulate the gospel of God revealed in Jesus Christ clearly and passionately to all kinds of people, inside and outside of the Church.
- Leaders are gifted at building up the Body of Christ, able to identify and recognize spiritual gifts and invite them into full expression.
- Leaders are flexible and willing to go where the Church needs them.
- Leaders are willing to take risks for the sake of the Gospel; they are adventurous self-starters who can seed new communities, support healthy and active ministries, or revitalize dying congregations.
- Leaders have a spirit of warmth and hospitality that invites people into community. They are able to act as God’s instruments in bringing in a realm of justice and mercy.
- Leaders are emotionally mature and self-aware, able to tolerate stress, live with ambiguity, be aware of their limitations, and willing, when necessary, to seek appropriate help and support.
- Leaders are reconcilers, able to engage conflict, and work toward understanding and healing.
- Leaders demonstrate an ability to work with integrity, authenticity, and can be creative in situations of uncertainty.

- Leaders understand and accept the costs of becoming a public figure in a network of visible accountability for their ministry.
- Leaders reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural, and theological diversity of The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina.
- Leaders demonstrate the ability to live comfortably in a multicultural and global society.
- Leaders are fluent in English and could be capable in another language or be willing to learn. They must have some cross-cultural and cross-class experience before ordination.
- Leaders realize the importance of positive collegial relations across the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina, The Episcopal Church, and the Anglican Communion.
- Leaders are loyal to The Episcopal Church while being able to engage in honest, critical reflection.
- Leaders are willing to respect, relate to, and act under the authority of the Church as represented by their Bishop.
- Leaders are persons of hope and able to communicate Christian hope to the world around them. They know how to revive hope when it wanes and can hold onto the hope of new life and to awaken that hope in others.

II. STEPS IN THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

1 STEP ONE: CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR PRIEST AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR (TYPICALLY 6-12 MONTHS)

Discernment is personal, but not private. Discernment happens in community because God created us to be in relationship with one another. Through one another, we gain a more complete picture of what God is up to in our lives and communities. We need each other's gifts, experiences, and wisdom to further our own spiritual journeys.

Anyone sensing God's call in their life to some form of leadership in the church will begin by having a series of conversations with the priest in charge of their congregation. These conversations may last for several months and cover a wide range of topics from a spiritual autobiography, to a sense of call, to the concrete circumstances of one's life that shape ministry possibilities. Confirmation or reception in The Episcopal Church and an active presence in the congregation is assumed.

One should seek out and regularly meet with a trained spiritual director. This person can be a prayerful, discerning presence on the journey. The selection of a spiritual director is an exercise of discernment: gender, faith tradition, and personality are just a few of the variables to consider. You can also call the bishop's office and speak to the Canon to the Ordinary for known spiritual director references.

2 STEP TWO: ATTEND THE ROAD TO MINISTRY LEADERSHIP EVENT

The Commission on Ministry annually hosts Road to Ministry Leadership events. Leaders from the around the diocese will provide a variety of resources to enrich the information at this event about the discernment process.

Congregations that make up The Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina are so diverse that this gathering establishes a shared foundation and a common vocabulary. Seekers have a chance to converse with other seekers as well as members of the Commission on Ministry. **The bishop does require clergy to attend this event with any seeker from their congregation.**

STEP THREE: FORMING AND TRAINING A CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE (1-2 MONTHS)

Over time and mutual discernment, the priest determines the need for a Congregational Discernment Committee (CDC). The seeker and priest will invite a group of people from the congregation, between six to nine people, to form this CDC. These individuals should primarily be from the congregation, though the rector/vicar may invite a parishioner or priest from another Episcopal Church to participate.

These thoughtful and prayerful parishioners commit to be members of the CDC to support the seeker on their discernment journey for lay or ordained ministry. The composition of the CDC should include those who know the seeker well and others who do not. CDC members cannot be members of the vestry or mission council as this would present a conflict of interest.

The parish clergy and the seeker's spouse or partner are not to be members of the CDC. Both are encouraged to attend the initial training to gather a sense of the discernment process. All clergy are asked to excuse themselves from participation in the CDC as the importance of lay discernment in this process is highly valued. The rector/ vicar will provide ongoing prayerful support and conversation during the seeker's discernment.

A seeker who is actively involved in a ministry outside the congregation, such as a hospital, prison or shelter, may wish to include someone who knows them in that context. Strive for a demographic representation of the congregation for the best chance of different perspectives and breadth of experiences.

CDC members must understand the time commitment can be up to 18 months.

While the CDC is being formed, the priest will request a trainer for the CDC by submitting Form A to the Canon to the Ordinary in the bishop's office. **The submission of Form A signifies that the priest has met with the seeker for at least six months, believes that the seeker is in a stable place in their life at this moment, and now sees the formation and work of a CDC to further expand the seeker's discernment of a possible call to ministry leadership in the church.**

Upon completion of the CDC training, the seeker will submit Form B to the Canon to the Ordinary.

4 THE FOURTH STEP: THE WORK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

After the Congregational Discernment Committee (CDC) finishes their training, they work and meet with the seeker for approximately six to 12 months to explore his or her sense of call.

In addition, the seeker should identify and meet regularly with a trained spiritual director, which cannot be the parish clergy. If you need help finding a spiritual director, please call the Canon to the Ordinary in the bishop's office.

Some Essential Understandings

- The information that the congregational discernment committee provides is an essential and unique contribution to the larger process. It is not a suggestion or recommendation.
- The CDC's task is to know the person; their background, present ministry, understanding of a call, and how that call could be lived out.
- The CDC needs to look beyond the desires of the individual and to consider the needs of the broader church.
- The sponsoring clergy cannot be a member of the CDC. However, members of the CDC may share with the sponsoring clergy various aspects of the discernment process to help them with their work.
- Topic content between the CDC members and the seeker remain confidential. The final CDC report summary is shared with the sponsoring clergy.
- Typically, all members of the CDC experience growth in their own faith.

5 STEP FIVE: CONCLUDING THE WORK OF THE CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE (1-2 MONTHS)

After completing all the sessions, the group meets without the seeker to reflect on the discussions and to share insights. Each member can offer written reflections. The group will prepare and share a combined summary of the group's insights.

CDC Summary Report Guidelines

The summary is to include the reflections of the entire committee. Its purpose is to provide the seeker with honest insights into his or her gifts and skills for ministry as a lay leader, priest, or deacon. It is to be sensitive, honest, and thorough, including areas for further growth and personal development. After discussing the summary with the seeker, it is provided to the sponsoring priest who may or may not share the results with the bishop's committee or vestry.

In 1,000-1,500 words, please address the following questions in the CDC Summary:

- In what ways has the seeker demonstrated his or her:
 - Christian commitment and spiritual development, stability, and maturity
 - Life of prayer, personal and corporate
 - Understanding, experience, and exercise of baptismal ministry
 - Personal self-care and health
 - Healthy relationship to Christian community
 - Awareness of and commitment to areas of future baptismal ministry if ordination is determined not to be the person's vocational course
- What characteristics of leadership has the seeker demonstrated and how? Consider both the qualities of desired leadership listed in this manual, as well as concrete examples of leadership witnessed in the life of the congregation.
- In what ways has the seeker demonstrated his or her:
 - Understanding of lay and ordained ministry roles
 - Clarity and consistency of a specific call to a particular order
 - Observation of gifts for a particular order
 - Willingness to be obedient to the authority and leadership of the bishop
- Is there anything that might hinder or prevent the seeker from serving in leadership?

Closure for the CDC

The members of the CDC have spent time and energy, and shared prayer and intimacy during the discernment process. They should celebrate the conclusion of their work. Members may choose to celebrate closure with an informal Eucharist with the parish priest that could include a meal and, perhaps, the sharing of thoughts, personal learning, reflections, and challenges during their time together.

6 STEP SIX: PREPARING FOR WHAT COMES NEXT

The Congregational Discernment Committee (CDC) summary, the parish priest's assessment of the seeker's call to ministry, and the seeker's desire to continue the journey, commence a new phase of the discernment process.

We are now at a fork in the road:

- The CDC and the seeker may determine that the seeker pursue lay leadership. The seeker and the priest can continue this conversation and look at forms of lay leadership that fit for the seeker.

- The CDC, the seeker and the priest may determine that the seeker move forward in the discernment process. The CDC turns in their report summary to the priest. The priest meets with the vestry or Mission Council and shares the results from the CDC summary report and completes Form 1. The CDC summary report and the signed Form 1 are sent to the Canon to the Ordinary.
- The Canon to the Ordinary begins and maintains contact with the seeker through this part of the discernment process toward the BACOM Retreat (Bishop's Advisory Council on Ministry)

III. THE CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

GETTING STARTED

Congregational Discernment Committee (CDC) members meet one another and begin forming a community at the initial CDC training. We recommend a subsequent casual social gathering after the group training. The committee could ask clarifying questions and attend to the following logistical details before the official first meeting:

- The CDC chooses a facilitator or point person who is not the seeker. The facilitator's tasks are to schedule and remind members of meetings, any preparation required, or of unexpected changes. The facilitator is responsible for the opening and closing prayer or finding someone else to oversee the prayers and facilitate the conversation.
- Designate a group member to take notes. Members may keep their own notes. A record of what the group discussed is helpful when drafting the summary report.
- The CDC group process may be discussed with the Rector/ Vicar. Content is kept confidential.
- The group should develop group guidelines or group norms for their time together. For the CDC to function as intended, it is important that all members understand how they will work together.

The following norms are suggestions that may be included in a Group Covenant:

- Meetings begin and end with prayer. During the meeting anyone may request silence for prayer.
- Discuss in some detail what confidentiality means. Consider flagging issues that individuals particularly want to be kept confidential.
- The Holy Spirit can work through all members of the CDC. Alternative opinions need to be considered as valuable.
- During group discussions, anyone has the freedom to pass. Likewise, the group should give time to introverts and invite them to have a chance to speak.
- Meetings will begin and end on time. Members will come on time and be prepared for the meeting. This allows the group to develop and maintain group trust and morale.
- Committee business or group content will not be discussed outside of group meetings.
- If a person brings up content, others in the group should gently remind them of this part of the covenant.
- Any content brought up by any individual cannot be further shared unless that individual gives specific permission.
- Schedule the meetings so everyone can be present as much as possible. Emergencies do occur and are understood.
- At the end of each meeting, review the process. Make this part of the agenda.
- All notes should be kept secure and destroyed at the end of the process.

All members of the Congregational Discernment Committee, the seeker and the rector/vicar should familiarize themselves with this guide and the Canons of The Episcopal Church that pertain to ministry: Title III, Canons 1-9.

A TYPICAL MEETING AGENDA

- Each meeting should be scheduled for two hours.
- Begin with a few minutes to gather informally to transition from the day's obligations to the work at hand. This could include time to check in with each other on how things are going in their life.
- The next part of the meeting should be devoted to a time of prayerful reflection. The preferred prayer model follows in this guide.
- The prayer model is utilized to recognize and invite the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit as the leader of the discernment process.
- The next part of the meeting consists of guided conversation that covers a series of topics related to the church, the seeker's call, and discernment. These guided conversations are divided into seven phases. Each phase can vary in length from one meeting to several depending on what the seeker needs. These topics are included in this manual.

THE JANE VENNARD PRAYER MODEL

Group Centering Prayer, Adapted from the Model of Jane Vennard

In this model, we begin with the awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit as our primary source of strength and inspiration. This awareness moves us away from the desires of the ego, the desire to rush to solutions, to solve problems or to give advice. Rather, we trust in the process of being with another, with compassion for their journey, and through silence we allow the unfolding.

Webster defines "observe" as "to see or send, especially through careful attention." The words suggest movement, flow, and a non-static state of being. To observe can also mean "to celebrate" as in the observance of Easter. In this model, there is a role called the compassionate observer. In the compassionate observing of another we pray and celebrate one another.

One definition of compassion is mercy, used often in the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible. Mercy implies mutuality, the awareness of the woundedness of each of us, feeling the same feelings. In mercy, we see ourselves with the eyes of compassion, and then the other with the same eyes. The **Compassionate Observer**, sees or senses the other through careful attention, we celebrate them and we respond with mercy in the awareness of our mutual woundedness with prayer and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The word compassion is used in scripture as a dynamic flowing, alive action word. In Mark 6:34, "As he went ashore he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them because they were like sheep

without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.” In Matthew we are reminded, “Should you not have compassion on your fellow slave as I have compassion on you?” The Psalms are rich in description of our God as “full of compassion.”

The Compassionate Observer role sits in silence and invites us into a holy relationship with another, trusting in the presence of the Spirit as our guide and strength, and entering and moving into a time of seeing and sensing the other through careful attention, and celebration of them, in the awareness of our mutual woundedness. The awareness of woundedness includes the empowerment by the third Holy Presence.

THE ROLES IN THE JANE VENNARD PRAYER MODEL:

- The Seeker (always the seeker)
- The Responders
- The Compassionate Observer(s)
- The Time Keeper

THE SETTING IN THE JANE VENNARD PRAYER MODEL:

- The Seeker and Responders sit in a circle.
- The Compassionate Observers and the Time Keeper sit in a circle around or outside of the circle of the Seeker and Responders.
- You may wish to have a candle in the middle of the circle.
- The Time Keeper needs a chime and a clock with a second hand, if possible. The Time Keeper should have visual contact with the Seeker.
- The Compassionate Observers will be in silence, holding the space and others in prayer and holding the presence of the Holy Spirit in this holy session.

The Prayer Session:

1. Each session begins with a brief opening prayer offered by the Time Keeper. The prayer is followed by three minutes of silent contemplative prayer. The Time Keeper rings a chime to indicate the start and the end of the three minutes.
2. The Seeker then has a maximum of 10 minutes to share a story, concern or question. The Time Keeper rings the chime when the Seeker finishes (if the Seeker runs over the time limit, the Time Keeper may need to give a one or two-minute warning).
3. The sharing by the Seeker is followed by three minutes of silent contemplative prayer, marked again by the ringing of the chime by the Time Keeper.
4. Then the Responders each take a turn to comment on what the Seeker shared. The Responders may offer thoughts or images that came to them during the silence. The Responders do not give advice or say what they would do in that situation. The Responders trust in what the Holy Spirit

has to say through them during the silence. No one, not even the Responder, can judge a response. Each Responder takes a maximum of two minutes.

5. At the end of all the responses, the Time Keeper rings the chime to mark the beginning of silence. Three minutes of silence follows the response time, again, ended by the ringing of the chime by the Time Keeper.
6. The Seeker then has two or three minutes to respond to what the Responders have said. This is not a conversation but a time for the Seeker to provide a response on what they heard and how it might fit.
7. When the Seeker finishes, the Time Keeper rings the chime to mark the beginning of another three minutes of silence. The silence is ended by the Time Keeper with an “Amen.”
8. Once the prayer model is finished, it’s a good time to take a short break. After the break the group reconvenes to the discussion portion of the group work.

FOLLOWING THE PRAYER MODEL

After a short break, everyone will discuss the topics found in the following phases. The group should begin this time by reading the given scripture passage and should end the session with prayer. The scripture selections and study questions are intended to stimulate thought and discussion.

The seven phases do not coincide with meetings as any phase may take several meetings to complete. Each phase has a number of topics to be discussed. Each topic has several resources to be studied prior to each meeting. The committee will agree on which topics will be studied and then the members will study the resources and reflect on the questions before the next meeting.

As the committee works its way through the phases, you may find that a conversation about a previous topic has led to conversations about other topics and these conversations need not be repeated, or you may find that topics previously discussed need to be revisited.

PHASE ONE: GETTING ACQUAINTED

Scripture selection: Seeker's choice

For the first phase, the seeker will select a text that has been pivotal in their spiritual journey. For the first few meetings allow time to become familiar with the prayer model.

Conversation:

The seeker orally presents his or her spiritual autobiography to provide insight into their personality, strengths, and weaknesses and includes four or five significant life experiences that have helped shape their present identity and life direction.

The Congregational Discernment Committee should become sensitive to the following characteristics in the seeker:

- a) Communication skills
- b) Ability to relate to others
- c) Personal integrity and self-esteem
- d) Physical health and energy
- e) Intellectual gifts and strengths
- f) Sense of own strengths and weaknesses

Members of the group are invited to briefly share their own spiritual autobiographies and Biblical texts that have shaped their faith journey. The CDC members and the seeker could reflect on commonalities of the spiritual journey.

PHASE TWO: EXPLORATION OF GIFTS FOR MINISTRY

Before this phase: Complete the spiritual gifts assessment/inventory (at end of this manual) and come prepared to share the results.

Scripture selection: Romans 12:1-13

Conversation: Take some time to share results and responses of spiritual gifts assessment.

Are members using their gifts in their respective vocations? Remember, ministry is not limited to what happens in the church—it's our whole lives. What new possibilities for ministry might this inventory open up for you? What limits your exercise of these gifts?

1. What is the purpose of our gifts and talents? Whom do they serve?
2. What are your primary gifts and how have they been manifested?

3. How does the seeker view his or her strengths and weaknesses?
4. How does the seeker cope with failure to live up to their sense of call?
5. How does the seeker's work experience contribute to their sense of call?

PHASE THREE: THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH: WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE?

Scripture selection: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Conversation: The Book of Common Prayer (855) provides our mission statement: "*The mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.*"

1. If the church is to be about restoring right relationship, our very purpose for existence presumes a current state of broken relationships. Name some examples of brokenness you currently see. What are some factors that inhibit people living in right relationship with God? With their neighbor?
2. How do you see your present faith community working for reconciliation of people with God and with one another? What possibilities could you imagine in the future?
3. Frederick Buechner defines call as an intersection "where our deepest gladness meets the world's deepest need." Take some time to name some of the gifts/resources/passions of your current congregation; identify some needs in your community. Where do you already see engagement as well as future possibilities for intersection?
4. What particular vision or goals does the seeker have regarding his or her future ministry?

PHASE FOUR: HONORING OUR BAPTISMAL VOWS

Scripture selection: Mark 12:28-34

Conversation: Reflect on the promises all Christians make in the Baptismal Covenant (BCP 304-5) and respond to these questions:

1. How do we honor our baptismal vows in our own present vocations?
2. How can we be more open to Christ's presence with us?
3. Are there areas in your life where it is easier to be faithful? Are there areas where you struggle to be faithful?
4. How has your faith changed and grown during your spiritual journey?

MID-TERM CHECK-IN

By this point, the seeker should provide a six- to eight-page (no more) written spiritual autobiography to the group.

After several months of working together, CDCs may find that they come to a point of clarity, sometimes explicit, sometimes unspoken. Members sense that there is a moment when either a deeper invitation has emerged, requiring relationships to grow deeper and more self-revealing, or committee members begin to drop out mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and sometimes physically. The committee may decide to recommit and go deeper or it may decide to end its life of discernment together. To assist this process, a mid-term check-in may be wise.

At the mid-term check-in, group members will check in with each other, share any discoveries that need to be discussed with the seeker, and perhaps give a general impression of any group dynamics challenges or relational issues that the group has. The seeker can share how discernment is shaping his or her vocation.

Next steps, in addition to the rest of the phases, could include winding down the process and bringing closure to the group, taking some time to address group dynamics, or challenging the seeker with issues or impediments that may affect his or her future ministry.

This may be a good time to contact the initial diocesan trainer and seek some support, especially if the committee is being undermined by group dynamics challenges (such as if one person is monopolizing, people stop attending, confidentiality has been broken, or manipulation of some kind is happening).

If the group is ready to continue, it is time to open a discussion of anything the members have discovered that may be impediments for the future ministry of the seeker. Suppose, for instance, that the seeker is unaware that he or she has a mannerism that most people find offensive or annoying. Because committee members love the seeker and want the best for the seeker, their love requires that they gently and caringly speak this truth. After all, wouldn't all of us appreciate hearing this kind of difficult news from people who love us rather than from the rumor mill or a gossip? This way, the behavior is brought up in a prayerful and loving way and the seeker can hear how what he or she says and can affect other people. Speaking the truth in love is an important part of this formative discernment process.

PHASE FIVE: DISCERNING A CALL

Before meeting: Read the call stories of Moses (Ex. 4:1-17) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-9)

Scripture selection: I Corinthians 1:18-31

Conversation: What strikes you in the call stories of Moses and Jeremiah?

God never seems to call the smartest, most confident, articulate, gifted people; rather, God equips those God calls. What could be some reasons for this?

Consider Paul's testimony in I Corinthians 1 that his definition of "successful ministry" is paradoxically utter failure in the eyes of the world. How does our worshipping a crucified God shape our understanding of "successful" ministry? How have you seen God work through human weaknesses and failures?

1. What difference does it make that it is Christ who chooses us first and not we who first choose Christ?
2. What are some indications of being called to either lay or ordained ministry?
3. Discuss the meaning of the seeker's sense of call: from God, from the community, and in the context of one's family and friends. How is it lived out? Is it lived out in a cross-cultural or bilingual setting?

PHASE SIX: ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

Before this phase: Consult with your priest to invite a priest, deacon, and active lay leader, from outside your congregation if possible, to participate so that members can hear descriptions of these ministries.

Scripture selection: I Corinthians 12:4-28

Conversation: Consider the various orders of ministry as described in the Catechism (BCP 855-6). As you visit with the clergy, refer to the Examination and Consecration of their respective ordinations (Deacon, BCP 543-5; Priest; 531-4).

1. Describe the ministry of a layperson in the church. How can a person be a minister if not ordained?
2. What makes a deacon? What can we learn from Jesus as Servant Lord about the ministry of a deacon?
3. If we are all called to be engaged in serving others (Diakonia), why should deacons be ordained?
4. What makes a priest, what can we learn from Jesus as High Priest about the role of priest?
5. Is there a role for a priest in areas other than specific "parish work" and if so, in what ways?
6. In what way do the ministries of all the baptized, the diaconate and the priesthood differ from one another?
7. Why do clergy often get put on pedestals? What are the dangers of this and how might someone avoid the pitfalls?
8. How do you understand the relationship of responsibility, authority, and obedience among ordained ministers?
9. Invite the seeker to reflect on their personal responses to responsibility, authority and obedience? Of the three, which comes naturally? Which is a challenge?
10. Invite the priest and deacon to share their visions of healthy relationships between various orders of ministry. What would you add? Offer concrete examples of health that you've witnessed.
11. Invite the seeker to share their understanding of each ministry role and articulate which they feel drawn to and why.

PHASE SEVEN: COUNTING THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

The seeker's spouse/partner is invited to participate in this phase.

Scripture selection: Matthew 10:5-16

1. How are Christ's instructions to the twelve related to the cost of discipleship and taking up one's cross today?
2. How can we differentiate "taking up your cross" and being a self-styled martyr (developing a martyr syndrome)? What are the differences in attitude?
3. How does one sustain oneself for the marathon and not the sprint?
4. How do the seeker's significant relationships (spouse/significant other, children, others) fit into their sense of call?
5. If following that call would impact another career in the household, what conversations have taken place?
6. Has there been any reflection on the potential personal and financial stresses?
7. How have you begun to establish radical generosity as a core pattern of your life?

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

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Respond to each statement which follows using this numerical system:

- 5** = This is highly descriptive of me virtually all of the time.
- 4** = This is descriptive of me most of the time.
- 3** = This is descriptive of me some of the time.
- 2** = This is descriptive of me only rarely.
- 1** = This is not descriptive of me.

It is very important for you to respond to these statements in terms of how you actually are rather than in terms of how you feel you should be. Don't be shy about acknowledging strengths, and don't feel badly because some statements are not descriptive of you. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers—only honest responses. Don't spend too much time thinking about a particular item. Go with your first impression or leave the item blank and return to it later.

- ___ 1. I am able to convey ideas and insights in a way that motivates people to want to learn more.
- ___ 2. I speak the truth about what I feel is right even when that is unpopular and hard for other people to accept.
- ___ 3. I am willing to accept responsibility for organizations or groups that lack a clear sense of direction or leadership and seek to help them change.
- ___ 4. During other activities, I find myself focusing on the needs of another person and praying for that individual.
- ___ 5. I feel that an important purpose of my home is to be a place to care for others, including people who are not part of my family.
- ___ 6. I find satisfaction in working behind the scenes to help others make the most of their gifts and abilities.
- ___ 7. I find pleasure in sharing my material resources with persons in need.
- ___ 8. I cultivate relationships with people who do not know Christ so that I can lead them to Him.
- ___ 9. I can empathize with people who are going through difficult times and find meaning in involving myself in their healing processes.

- ___ 10. I enjoy developing my skills in communicating through music, drama, or other art forms.
- ___ 11. I am fulfilled when I can build or create something that helps the church or other people.
- ___ 12. I can recognize what people truly want to communicate both from what they say and from what they do not say.
- ___ 13. Find pleasure in learning about how organizations function.
- ___ 14. People say they learn a lot from my teaching, and they seem motivated to want to learn more on their own.
- ___ 15. I am willing to accept personal suffering and criticism if it will result in myself and others growing closer to God or doing the right thing by God's standards.
- ___ 16. I've given leadership to groups that have sensed God's presence or gained a sense of purpose even in the middle of difficult times.
- ___ 17. A day does not seem complete to me unless I have spent time praying for the needs of other individuals, of the church, and of the world.
- ___ 18. I enjoy doing all that I can to help new people feel that they belong.
- ___ 19. I like to encourage others by serving wherever and whenever there is a need.
- ___ 20. I find significant meaning in knowing my financial support makes a difference in the ministries of the church or of another service organization.
- ___ 21. After I lead people to a closer relationship with God, I guide them into deeper discipleship and service.
- ___ 22. I find meaning in motivating others to have more concern about the health of their souls.
- ___ 23. I can communicate my sense of God more through music or other artistic means than through conversation.
- ___ 24. I can fashion raw materials into finished objects.
- ___ 25. I can continue to maintain a positive relationship with people even when it's necessary to express substantial disagreement or to raise questions about what they're doing.
- ___ 26. I can grasp the overall purpose or goals of an organization or group and work out plans for accomplishing them.

- ___ 27. I can draw other people into considering how their relationships with God or a sense of meaning and purpose should affect their daily lives.
- ___ 28. Even in the face of criticism or pressure, I challenge people to examine their lives and change their direction when needed.
- ___ 29. I can decisively manage people and resources in positive ways to bring a vision or mission into reality.
- ___ 30. The names of people who are especially in need of God's help are never far from my mind.
- ___ 31. I enjoy providing food and lodging for people in need.
- ___ 32. I like to use my natural and my learned skills to enable the work of others.
- ___ 33. When I know that someone else needs resources that I have, I don't worry about replenishing what I give.
- ___ 34. When I tell others what God has done in my life, they respond with renewed faith of their own.
- ___ 35. I can motivate others to take their faith more seriously in their lives.
- ___ 36. People accuse me of being temperamental like an artist.
- ___ 37. I feel that I honor God with things I make by hand.
- ___ 38. I can empathize with and help people who are resentful, angry, or confused.
- ___ 39. I have skill in coordinating the gifts of people for greater effectiveness.
- ___ 40. I love to help others gain greater skill in understanding and expressing themselves.
- ___ 41. I can motivate others to use their faith in making decisions in both their private and their public lives.
- ___ 42. I usually have a clear sense of what needs to be done in an organization and can motivate others in that direction.
- ___ 43. People frequently express appreciation to me for my having continued to remember them in my prayers.
- ___ 44. I readily reach out to persons needing physical or emotional encouragement.

- ___ 45. When I see a wide range of needs, I want to help with as many as I can.
- ___ 46. I have been successful at earning or discovering significant amounts of money for the Lord's work.
- ___ 47. I want people around me to know I am a Christian and hope that may provide opportunities to help them draw closer to Christ.
- ___ 48. I am able to strengthen people who are wavering in their sense of purpose in life.
- ___ 49. Through my artistic expressions, people have gained deeper insights into themselves or into the spiritual life.
- ___ 50. I can design and build things to help the church or other organizations better serve people.
- ___ 51. I show my concern by helping people find practical solutions to spiritual, relational, or personal struggles.
- ___ 52. I like to improve the efficiency of organizations with which I work.
- ___ 53. I enjoy finding practical guidance in the Bible and sharing that help with others.
- ___ 54. I feel compelled to confront people when they display behaviors or attitudes which are destructive.
- ___ 55. I can enthusiastically organize people to achieve goals which I feel are important.
- ___ 56. I have had times when I was so absorbed in my prayers for the needs of others that I lost all track of time.
- ___ 57. I like to help new people get acquainted with others in the church and in other settings.
- ___ 58. I believe there is spiritual significance in the routine tasks I do for others.
- ___ 59. Because I want to see significant things happen in ministry, I give more than a tithe (over 10 percent).
- ___ 60. I continually seek to find different or better ways to share my faith with others.
- ___ 61. I enjoy reaching out to people in settings like hospitals, nursing homes, or prisons.
- ___ 62. I like the challenge of communicating with variety and creativity.

- ___ 63. I can visualize how something should be constructed before I build it.
- ___ 64. People tell me that my patient and understanding listening helps them clarify their thoughts.
- ___ 65. Once I know what the goal is, I have skill at developing the strategy to meet it.
- ___ 66. I always find myself learning as I have opportunity to teach others.
- ___ 67. I have had times when a concern was so heavy on my heart that I had to speak out no matter what the price.
- ___ 68. Others seek me out to give leadership to various causes or organizations.
- ___ 69. When I am deep into prayer for others, I often find myself communicating in images or feelings more than in words.
- ___ 70. I feel that entertaining others in my home, at the church, or in other settings is one of the best ways that I am personally able to nurture genuine community.
- ___ 71. I enjoy doing a variety of odd jobs around the church or other organizations to help meet the needs of people.
- ___ 72. I am able to motivate others to financially support worthy causes.
- ___ 73. I have the patience to work with another person over a long period of time to eventually bring that individual to faith in Christ.
- ___ 74. I find great meaning in reaching out to persons at their times of greatest need no matter what the problem.
- ___ 75. I enjoy developing my skills in the arts through music, crafts, drama, or other media.
- ___ 76. I am gifted at putting things together and making them work.
- ___ 77. I can generally help people see their problems from a new perspective and work toward a solution that is right for them.
- ___ 78. I am good at and find pleasure in organizing many kinds of projects.
- ___ 79. On the whole, I would rather teach a class or group than simply be a spectator.

- ___ 80. I can confront people with problems in their own lives, in the church, or in society in a way that causes them to rethink their positions rather than simply be angry.
- ___ 81. I can lead others through the development of a vision for their work together.
- ___ 82. Praying for others several times a day feels almost as natural to me as breathing.
- ___ 83. I feel a true calling to help new people become fully integrated into the life of the church or other organizations.
- ___ 84. While I am often not the one giving direct leadership, a great many things in the organizations to which I belong would not get done without my willingness to do what is needed.
- ___ 85. I give generously to God's work and genuinely do not seek or want any recognition or reward for what I do.
- ___ 86. I feel that God often brings me into contact with people who need to discover or to rediscover Christ.
- ___ 87. When people are going through difficult times, I can encourage them to maintain their faith and to do all they can to respond positively to the problems they face.
- ___ 88. I feel that I have been especially gifted in terms of music, drama, painting, or other art form.
- ___ 89. I have the ability to build or make things which will facilitate the work of the church or of other service organizations.
- ___ 90. I am able to help people face the truth about themselves and their relationships with others when necessary to help them work through their problems.
- ___ 91. I am generally an efficient person who keeps track of things and follows through well.

When you've completed all 91 assessment items, transfer your scores to the following chart.
Add each line across, producing a total.

Teaching:	1 _____	14 _____	27 _____	40 _____	53 _____	66 _____	79 _____	Total _____
Prophecy:	2 _____	15 _____	28 _____	41 _____	54 _____	67 _____	80 _____	Total _____
Leadership:	3 _____	16 _____	29 _____	42 _____	55 _____	68 _____	81 _____	Total _____
Intercession:	4 _____	17 _____	30 _____	43 _____	56 _____	69 _____	82 _____	Total _____
Hospitality:	5 _____	18 _____	31 _____	44 _____	57 _____	70 _____	83 _____	Total _____
Helps/Service:	6 _____	19 _____	32 _____	45 _____	58 _____	71 _____	84 _____	Total _____
Generosity:	7 _____	20 _____	33 _____	46 _____	59 _____	72 _____	85 _____	Total _____
Evangelism:	8 _____	21 _____	34 _____	47 _____	60 _____	73 _____	86 _____	Total _____
Encouragement:	9 _____	22 _____	35 _____	48 _____	61 _____	74 _____	87 _____	Total _____
Artistic								
Expression:	10 _____	23 _____	36 _____	49 _____	62 _____	75 _____	88 _____	Total _____
Craftsmanship:	11 _____	24 _____	37 _____	50 _____	63 _____	76 _____	89 _____	Total _____
Counseling:	12 _____	25 _____	38 _____	51 _____	64 _____	77 _____	90 _____	Total _____
Administration:	13 _____	26 _____	39 _____	52 _____	65 _____	78 _____	91 _____	Total _____

If you invited one or more others to complete the assessment for you, compare their scores with your own. If there are significant discrepancies, talk about those with the person or persons who completed the assessment for you. Be open to what they say, but ultimately have confidence in your own perceptions.

Now transfer your four highest scores to the following chart. Add your own comments about each spiritual gift that is listed. Consider these questions:

1. Are there any surprises? If so, what are they?
2. To what extent are the results what you expected? Are you pleased with the results? Disappointed with the results?
3. Do you have additional scores that are almost as high as the fourth one you listed on the chart? If so, it is possible that those might also represent spiritual gifts.

FOUR GIFTS WITH HIGHEST SCORE:

Gift: _____ **Score:** _____

Comment: _____

Gift: _____ **Score:** _____

Comment: _____

Gift: _____ **Score:** _____

Comment: _____

Gift: _____ **Score:** _____

Comment: _____

SOME COMMON OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

1. I only have one or two clear spiritual gifts by this system. My other scores are all much lower.

Don't be concerned. Some persons only have one or two spiritual gifts as measured by this kind of system. What's important is thinking about the gifts that you have and developing them as effectively as possible. (Occasionally a person will be uncomfortable responding to items in positive ways and will end up with scores that are artificially low. You may want to try completing the assessment again, this time thinking more positively about yourself!)

2. I really have seven or eight spiritual gifts that all have very high scores.

Then you are probably blessed with an above average number of spiritual gifts. This isn't a matter for pride since gifts come to us from God rather than from our own effort, but it does mean that you may have many opportunities to be of help to others.

3. I know that I have skills and abilities in an area in which I had a very low score on the assessment.

Remember that spiritual gifts are not the same as skills and abilities. You may be doing excellent work in an area that isn't really one of spiritual giftedness for you. On the other hand, it's also possible that the problem is with the assessment instrument itself. This is not a perfect system! Think about it, pray about it, and visit with others about it.

4. I am almost shocked by how high my score was on one or two of the items. I really didn't think of myself as being gifted in those areas.

It is always possible that the assessment process is at fault; but generally, you should take very seriously any new areas of giftedness which emerge from this process. You may find that you'll have wonderful opportunities to develop the gift or gifts and that new direction will open for you.

5. I feel as though I am very gifted in work with computers and the Internet, but that doesn't seem to surface on this spiritual gift assessment.