



PARISH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE GUIDE



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OF OTHERS



PARISH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

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PDC PROCESS OVERVIEW

Thank you for serving on a Parish Discernment Committee (PDC)! We appreciate your time and efforts, and hope that this will be a rewarding experience for you.

At C4SO, we believe Holy Orders is different from other forms of ministry, as it is both a “setting apart” of a leader within a community and a sacramental rite of the one holy, catholic and apostolic church. That’s why with C4SO, the Path of Discernment to Holy Orders is just that — a path. It’s a journey we take together as a community of faith, exploring what God has for an individual as an aspiring member of C4SO clergy, how He has uniquely equipped them for the sake of others, and where He is leading them to serve. As a member of a PDC, you play a very important role on this journey for an Aspirant.

Ordination Mission Statement

Because C4SO exists to spread the gospel through church planting, we ordain ministers, both women and men, who are serving in paid or stipend positions in growing C4SO churches that need more clergy; or having achieved a healthy core congregation, are ready to lead a church plant.

Alignment to C4SO’s Vision and Values

Ordination is a Divinely-initiated and sponsored process. Ordination is not a civil or personal right. Neither is it owned or controlled by various denominational judicatories or bishops. It is God who calls, gives character, gifts and ministry-fruit. The Church, in any form, recognizes such people, and in Anglican circles, discerns which of them are called to Holy Orders. Then we simply seal that discernment by publicly recognizing, in the form of an ordination service, what God has done from before time (Psalm 139, Jeremiah 1:4-10, Isaiah 6:1-8, Luke 9:10 sending passages, Ephesians 2:10, John 20:19-23, Revelation 22:5, etc.). The real differentiating power begins, stays with, and ends with God, not the candidate or church hierarchy. The diocese cannot give the gifts or fruit of the Spirit. We can coach, mentor, teach and offer

relationship, but we can’t create effectiveness. And demonstrated fruit-of-proven-ministry is the chief box to be checked in the ordination process.

Our Ideal Candidate

Because C4SO seeks to focus on church planting and multiplying apprentices to Jesus in kingdom living, we ordain people who are called to start churches or to work in a substantive, paid role in a growing local church.*

Such candidates will possess these attributes:

- Character and the lifelong pursuit of spiritual transformation through apprenticeship to Jesus, as the core of their life
- Competency: a proven track of fruitful ministry (based on the testimony of others)
- Calling: a clear purpose, people to serve and place to work
- Alignment to core C4SO values: Kingdom, Spirit, Formation, Mission, Sacrament
- A paid/stipend place to work/serve

*A vocational deacon might not get paid from a local church, but they should be able to demonstrate the ability to raise money for whatever ministry they are doing in the world and should have the financial backing of a church.

The Ordination Preparation Team (OPT) serves the ordination process by helping to determine whether an individual’s call can be affirmed and by identifying areas of character or competency that need to be addressed during the Path to Discernment.

Anglicanism is conciliar in its exercise of authority. Anglican Bishops, as part of their role, enjoy the absolute right of ordination and have full authority to ordain the Candidates they choose. That said, it is normative within Anglicanism for a Bishop to seek the counsel of ordained and lay people at the Local, Deanery and Diocesan levels as they consider a decision to ordain. Someone seeking ordination in C4SO would normally have a Rector’s Recommendation and Parish Discernment Committee Report in the Local Process, then a Dean’s Recommendation and an OPT Report in the Deanery Process as



vital community inputs in the discernment process. Each of these four recommendations provides a unique perspective on the question of calling, as well as questions of character and competence.

Prior to the first PDC meeting, it is essential that all members:

- 1 Become familiar with the duties, responsibilities, and requirements of those pursuing ordination in the Church**
- 2 Review the Rector's Discernment Report and the Aspirant's Spiritual Autobiography**

Private and confidential information will be discussed in this parish discernment process. While this information may be discussed with the Rector, Dean, Canon for Ordinations, and/or Bishop, the confidentiality of this information must be strictly honored and not

shared outside of the PDC without prior written approval.

Experience shows that a PDC process can be anywhere from three to five conversations, but the point here is to arrive at accurate discernment. Once a PDC has arrived at that discernment then the process is complete. In other words, the meetings cannot be grouped together for convenience or to expedite the process. The meetings must take place in person. Please review and use the questions provided in this guide. A committee leader should be selected by the committee. This person will write a report to the Rector, Bishop, and Canon for Ordinations according to the guidelines given to the PDC.

The committee will consist of three to five people and will be a combination of men and women. If an ordained, Anglican leader knows the Aspirant, a discernment letter written to the committee is

highly recommended. If married or engaged, the Aspirant's spouse or Fiancé is required to attend at least one meeting. If the committee determines that additional meetings are necessary, they can schedule up to three more meetings on their own. If more than three additional meetings are desired, the Rector should consult with the Canon for Ordinations.



PARISH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE (PDC)

PROCESS OVERVIEW

GOALS OF PARISH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

CONFIRM CALLING

- PDC members are to verify/confirm if the Aspirant is called to ordained ministry

DISCERN CHARACTER/COMPETENCY

- PDC members are to support the Aspirant in the discernment process through prayer, counsel and honest reflection on character (temperament, emotional/spiritual health, etc.) and competency (gifting and ability)

PDC PROCESS OVERVIEW

PDC BEGINS

- Three to five individuals, combination of lay men and women, who exemplify Christian character and wisdom

PDC PREPARATION

- Familiarize with ordained ministry/calling
- Read Rector's Discernment Report and Spiritual Autobiography, and review PDC questions
- PDC Training

POSTULANT INTERVIEW

- Three to five meetings, one which includes spouse or Fiancé
- Format of meeting is conversational, using the PDC questions as guide

REVIEW/REPORT

- PDC final meeting (without Aspirant) to discuss findings and create final report and recommendation to the Dean and Bishop.

RECTOR, ASPIRANT, AND PDC ALL COMMIT TO PRAYER THROUGHOUT THE PDC PROCESS



PDC PROCESS

If you are assigned to the Parish Discernment Committee, you have a twofold responsibility:

- 1 First, you are to discern if the person is called to ordained ministry, both personally and corporately.**
- 2 Second, you are to support the individual in the discernment process through prayer, counsel, and honest reflection on character (temperament, emotional/spiritual health, etc.), competency (gifting and ability), and maturity.**

Through prayer, a series of pointed conversations, and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the Church seeks to confirm a call of the Aspirant to ordained ministry. We see this type of confirmation throughout scripture. Samuel anointed David at the leading of the Holy Spirit in I Samuel 16; in Acts 6 we read of seven men being chosen for ministry and Paul giving instruction to appoint elders in Titus 1:5ff. The desired outcome is expressed best by the words of Acts 15:28, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us.”

As a PDC member, it’s important that you recognize that some Aspirants may not be confirmed in the process and commitment to that possible outcome is important. God’s words to Samuel in I Samuel 16 serve as a guide: “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical

stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” You and the other committee members should seek to know the mind of Christ in regard to the individual’s call to ordained ministry in C4SO.

You and the other committee members will ask sensitive and personal questions of the Aspirant. Your tendency might be to accept anything the Aspirant shares, which sounds spiritual and right. However, doing so without adding prayer, discernment, understanding, and clarity could bring about an unfair outcome for the Aspirant. The ability to struggle with and express the deep sense of personal relationship with God and others, and to articulate the call upon one’s life, is central to the practice of Christian ministry. Please

ask the Aspirant questions with grace and respect, but also with depth and clarity.

The format of the meetings should be conversational and provide the Aspirant with open-ended questions that will give you a good feel and understanding of his or her heart and mind on a particular topic.

After the allotted meetings, you should gather without the Aspirant to determine your recommendation. Give a report of your findings to the Rector, Dean, and Canon for Ordinations. In its recommendation, the PDC may confirm or refute the Aspirant’s call to ordained ministry. In either case, you should supply sufficient written response to validate your findings. Please use the guided questions in writing this report. They can be found in the section titled “Final Report By PDC.”



UNDERSTANDING ORDAINED MINISTRY

While many followers of Jesus in the Christian tradition are called to serve as lay leaders (the laity), others are called to ordained ministry. The word “ordain” has its origins in the Greek word “diatassō,” meaning to “appoint.” And the word “minister” comes from the Greek word “diakoneō,” which means to be a servant—and actually to “wait upon tables.”

As you enter into a season of discernment and reflection of the kind of service God may be calling the Aspirant to, we hope to offer resources and insights to guide you along the way.

The pursuit of Holy Orders in C4SO may lead an individual down one of two paths:

1 The ministry of the vocational diaconate (toward service as a Deacon)

2 The ministry of the Priesthood

We’ve expanded on each of these important orders below and invite you to read in more detail for deeper understanding the ACNA Constitutions and Canons on Holy Orders (specifically, Title III, Canons 1-4) and the ACNA Ordinal, both found on the [ACNA website](#) under the Governance tab.



Vocational Deacons

The Role of Deacon as “Servant Leader”

A Deacon is to represent Christ and His Church, particularly as a servant of those in need, and to assist Bishops and Priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. The main part of the Deacon’s work should remain rooted in the larger community.

The Deacon’s charge is:

- Helping others to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through the congregant’s everyday lives.
- Showing others how to seek and serve Christ in the world and how to proclaim and embody His love, particularly to the marginalized and underprivileged in society.
- Being responsible for ministries within the church, as every Deacon is part of a particular congregation.

Historically, the Priest and Deacon represent Christ in the liturgy, with the Priest representing Christ as shepherd and Priest and the Deacon as servant. Through reading the gospel, preaching, leading corporate prayer and confession, serving at the Communion table, distributing the Communion elements and dismissing the people with the call to serve Christ in the world, the Deacon reminds everyone in the congregation of his and her responsibilities as servants in the world.



Priests

The Role of Priest as "Shepherd"

The Priesthood is rooted in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ and is a unique and "set-apart" expression of the Priesthood of all who are baptized. As Bishop Todd often emphasizes, a Priest is first and foremost a Deacon, called by God to serve both the Church and the world. As such, prior to being ordained as a Priest, an individual first must be ordained and serve as a transitional Deacon for a period of time. In addition to assuming all of the diaconal responsibilities, a Priest is called to the following vocation:

A Priest is a person called by God to lead and shepherd a community of faith and charged to:

- Encourage, call out and orchestrate the gifts of the people of God, forming the community in the way of Jesus.
- Perform the various functions of the Priest, speaking and acting as Christ's representative, with the authority of the Church.
- Make Christ's presence a tangible reality through the preached word, through the sacraments and through being an example of Christian living.
- Work as a pastor, Priest and teacher and to share in the Councils of the Church.
- Minister to and intercede for the people committed to his or her care.
- Preach the Word of God.
- Baptize.
- Celebrate the Eucharist.
- Pronounce absolution and blessing in God's name.

While primarily serving in local church settings, Priests sometimes are called to train other ministers, especially in academia or seminaries, as well as serve as chaplains in hospitals, schools, corporate settings, or the military.



PDC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

At the beginning of the first PDC meeting, take a few minutes to introduce yourselves to the Aspirant and briefly share about your own faith journeys.

Introductory Questions

- 1 By way of introduction, tell us about:
 - Yourself
 - Your family situation
 - Your educational background
 - Your church experience
- 2 How would you describe your childhood and adolescence?
- 3 How would you describe your understanding of God in this period of your life?
- 4 What was the single most shaping event of your childhood or adolescence?
- 5 Is there another major shaping event?
- 6 What kind of relationship did you have with your father as a child and adolescent?
- 7 What kind of relationship did you have with your mother as a child and adolescent?
- 8 What kind of relationship do you have with your father now?
- 9 What kind of relationship do you have with your mother now?
- 10 At what point did you begin to develop a relationship with Jesus Christ?
- 11 How has this relationship grown and developed over the years?



Questions About Calling

- 1 At what point did you begin to realize that you might be “called” to ordained ministry?
- 2 Why are you seeking Holy Orders?
- 3 What does it mean to be called to Holy Orders in a worldwide Church?
- 4 Share with us your understanding of:
 - Sacraments
 - Creeds
 - Holy Scripture
 - Your church experience
 - The difference between the Bishop, Priest, Deacon and the Priesthood of all believers
- 5 Which order of ministry do you feel called to – Deacon or Priest (Presbyter)?
- 6 What has led you to seek ordination with the Anglican Church of North America?
- 7 If you were unable to be ordained within the Anglican Church of North America, what effect would that have on your involvement in ministry?
- 8 Mission and ministry are requirements for the Priesthood of all believers.

With that in mind, why do you feel called to ordained ministry when you can already be on mission and in ministry as a follower of Christ now?
- 9 Who are the people you feel called to serve?
- 10 If you are ordained, where do you see yourself in five years?
- 11 What evidence is there of your continuing commitment to learning and intellectual growth?
- 12 Do you feel in any way that you are pursuing Holy Orders as a way of solving your personal problems?



Questions About Character

- 1 Describe your relationship and walk with Jesus Christ now.
- 2 What areas of growth are needed in your walk with Christ?
- 3 What steps are you taking to meet the needs for growth in your walk with Christ?
- 4 How do you seek to keep your relationship with Jesus Christ vibrant and growing?
- 5 What have been the obstacles and struggles in your walk with Christ?
- 6 What has been the most significant spiritual growth or development you have experienced in the last year?
- 7 Describe how you came to that awareness. Was it through a single event, a series of events or a general growing awareness?
- 8 Share with us your experience with brokenness and sin.
- 9 Share with us your experience with forgiveness, redemption, reconciliation and healing.
- 10 Describe a time when your integrity was put to the test and you did not respond in a Christ-like manner.
 - What did you learn from that experience?
- 11 What do you do when you are tempted? What do you rely on or turn to? What spiritual disciplines are you practicing that will help you overcome temptation?
- 12 Do you have an accountability partner... someone with whom you can be totally honest?
 - If so, how often do you meet?
- 13 Have you ever had a time in which you believed that God was giving you direction?
 - Describe that experience and your response.
 - What brought you to conclude it was God?
- 14 Have you ever had the opportunity to faithfully serve under another person in ministry?
 - What about that was difficult?
 - What about that was easy?
 - What did you learn about yourself in the process?
- 15 Describe your physical health.
- 16 Describe your mental and emotional health.
- 17 How would you describe your devotional life?



Questions About Character (continued)

- 18** To what degree have you spent time reading and studying the Bible on your own?
- 19** What portions of Scripture have been particularly meaningful to your spiritual formation?
- 20** What role does worship play in your life? Describe what that means and how that looks to you.
- 21** What brings you joy in your life?
- 22** What do you do as a hobby in your life or for fun outside your work and family?
- 23** Do you practice a Sabbath regularly?
- 24** What does your Sabbath look like?
- 25** Have you ever experienced a time in which you felt God took pleasure in you? If so, describe that.
- 26** What are spiritual disciplines?
- 27** In what way do you practice spiritual disciplines?
- 28** What does your Daily Office or devotional time look like?
- 29** How are you still questioning, searching and probing the mysteries of the faith?
- 30** How self-aware are you?
- 31** How in touch are you with your feelings?
- 32** How do you express strong positive and negative feelings?
- 33** How comfortable are you in your sexuality?
- 34** Describe your understanding of stewardship.
- 35** Do you presently tithe to your local church? If so, how long have you done so?



Questions About Competency

- 1 What do you believe are your spiritual gifts?
 - How have you had an opportunity to use them?
- 2 Tell us how others have confirmed those areas of giftedness.
- 3 What are your three top strengths?
- 4 What are your three major weaknesses?
 - How do you handle/address your weaknesses?
- 5 How do you think God is calling you to use your gifts to serve others?
- 6 Give an example of a time when you were given a ministry task and you successfully completed it.
- 7 Have you ever been given a ministry task that you did not complete? If so, for what reason?
- 8 How has your leadership been evidenced in prior or current ministries in school, work or church settings?
- 9 Share with us your communication skills and ability to relate with others.
- 10 Share with us a couple stories of people who have followed your leadership.
- 11 Have you ever been a leader of a small group? If so, tell us about it.
- 12 Have you ever started a small group from scratch? If so, tell us about it.
- 13 Have you ever led someone to faith? If so, tell us about it.



Questions About Spouse/Fiancé, Children:

- 1 Describe the meaning of your sense of call from:
 - God
 - Family
 - Friends
 - The local church
- 2 Tell us about your relationship with your Spouse or Fiancé.
- 3 Tell us about your relationship with your children.
- 4 Is your Spouse or Fiancé a follower of Jesus?
- 5 Are your children followers of Jesus, if applicable?
- 6 How do you handle personal stress and anxiety?
- 7 Do you have any burdensome financial or family responsibilities, which would be compromised if you were to pursue a call to Holy Orders?
- 8 Have you discussed with your Spouse or Fiancé the possible personal and financial strain involved in the pursuit of and in taking Holy Orders?
- 9 Are there any hindrances, like more schooling needed, small children at home, major life changes, etc., that might be a problem with pursuing Holy Orders at this time?

Questions to the Spouse/Fiancé of the Aspirant:

- 1 Tell us about your relationship with God.
- 2 Tell us about your relationship with your children.
- 3 Tell us about your relationship with your Spouse or Fiancé.
- 4 Tell us how you feel about your Spouse's or Fiancé's call to Holy Orders in the Anglican church.
- 5 Share with us your Spouse's or Fiancé's three top strengths?
- 6 Share with us your Spouse's or Fiancé's three top weaknesses?
- 7 Are you a follower of Christ?
- 8 Are there any hindrances, like more schooling needed, small children at home, major life changes, etc., that might be a hindrance with your Spouse or Fiancé pursuing Holy Orders at this time?
- 9 Do you have any burdensome financial or family responsibilities, which would be compromised if your Spouse or Fiancé were to pursue a call to Holy Orders?
- 10 How do you handle personal stress and anxiety?
- 11 Have you thought about the possible personal and financial strain involved in your Spouse's or Fiancé's pursuit of and in taking Holy Orders?
- 12 How do you see your role in your Spouse's or Fiancé's ministry?
- 13 What ministries are you called to within and without the local parish?
- 14 Is your Spouse or Fiancé supportive of your giftings and ministry?



Biblical Qualifications for Ordination

- 1 Read:
 - 1 Tim. 3:1-7
 - Titus 1:5-9
- 2 In what ways have you lived according to these guidelines given for church leadership?
- 3 Is there anything here that would disqualify you from Holy Orders permanently or temporarily?
- 4 To the Spouse or Fiancé, is there anything on this list that would disqualify your spouse or Fiancé from Holy Orders permanently or temporarily?
- 5 In the [Book of Common Prayer](#), read The Examination for Deacon (pp. 543-544) or Priest (pp. 531-532) as appropriate.
- 6 Is there anything in these promises that you cannot make with integrity before God and others?
- 7 Are you able to make these promises with integrity before God and others?



FINAL REPORT

by Parish Discernment Committee

As mentioned earlier in this document, after the allotted meetings, you should gather without the Aspirant to determine your recommendation. A report of your findings should be given to the Rector, Dean, and Canon for Ordinations. In your recommendation, the committee may confirm or refute the Aspirant's call to ordained ministry. In either case, you should supply sufficient written response to validate your findings, though not more than a couple of pages. Depending on the outcome, the Rector, Dean, or Canon for Ordinations may wish to meet with the PDC leader in order to discuss the findings.

In preparation for writing the PDC report, discussing the following may help in answering the questions.

- 1** How did you ascertain that the call of the individual was to ordination rather than a deepening call to lay ministry?
- 2** How did you ascertain that this person is called to the diaconate rather than the Priesthood, or vice versa?
- 3** What is the evidence that this person will be competent at enabling the ministry of the laity in a congregation?
- 4** What is the evidence that this person will be competent in conflict management and in the general ministry of reconciliation?
- 5** Has the Aspirant understood that no position is guaranteed upon completion of the process?



As you write the report, consider the following questions:

- 1** Do you believe the Aspirant is called by God to seek Holy Orders as a Priest or vocational Deacon? Please be specific as to the order called. Why or why not?
- 2** Describe the discernment process that led to your conclusions.
- 3** Within the Aspirant's congregation, what special gifts does the Aspirant exhibit in his or her present ministries? How will these gifts enhance their ordained ministry?
- 4** In what ways has the Aspirant been active in his/her congregation and community?
- 5** Describe those factors which might inhibit this person's ordained ministry. Will remedial work or further training overcome those limitations?
- 6** If the Aspirant is married or engaged, provide your assessment of the marriage relationship and the spouse's or fiancé's ability to relate to the ordination process.
- 7** In what ways has the Aspirant shown him/herself to be a "wholesome example," in the local congregation, in the workplace, and in the community at large?
- 8** Describe the Aspirant's attitude towards servant leadership, pastoral leadership, evangelism, stewardship, and the facilitation of lay leadership in the congregational setting.
- 9** How does the Aspirant react to and interact with those in authority?
- 10** Given the sizable investment in time and money, will ordination be mutually beneficial to the Aspirant and the Diocese of C4SO. In what ways?
- 11** What additional information regarding the Aspirant will be helpful to the Dean, Canon for Ordinations, and Bishop?

Once again, thank you for your service!

If you have any questions, please let the Canon for Ordinations know: ordination@c4so.org.

