

DIOCESE OF EAU CLAIRE

PROCEDURES FOR THE LAY DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

September 3, 2014

The following outline is designed to assist members of parish lay discernment committees in their part of the discernment process. The process described consists of six to eight meetings.

General Recommendations

1. Each committee should have a **convener**, who is chosen by the rector or priest-in-charge of the congregation or designee of the rector or priest-in-charge, in consultation with the person in discernment (the aspirant). The convener schedules and facilitates the meetings, helps the group to follow the agenda, makes sure meeting times are known by all the members, and starts and finishes meetings on time. If the convener is unable to attend a meeting, he or she should appoint someone else to convene for that meeting.
2. The committee should choose a **recorder** to keep a record of each session and provide the meeting summaries to the committee for further reflection when writing the discernment narrative. This job can be rotated among several members of the committee. It is best to have people who feel comfortable with note-taking in the role of recorder.
3. This is an exploration and journey in which all the members are to be actively engaged.
4. It is important to open and close each meeting with prayer. This responsibility may be shared by members of the committee.
5. Reading the following Bible passages during group meetings may be helpful to guide the committee in the discernment of gifts: Matthew 5: 1-11; 1 Corinthians 12: 1, 4-14; Ephesians 4: 7, 11-16; Romans 12: 1-8; Acts 4: 1-13. These could be read aloud as the group begins to meet and discussed as a way to come to a clearer understanding of spiritual gifts.
6. The group's interaction is a very important part of this process. Committees are encouraged to use some method at the end of each meeting to assess and document the group's progress. One way of doing this is simply to ask each person to state what was good and what was not so good about how the group worked together during the meeting. Ask what helped and what hindered, what to continue doing, what to stop doing, and what to add.
7. Although your work is primarily focused on the person entering discernment for holy orders, this is also a valuable opportunity for mutual discernment. Each member of the committee is asked to participate by offering their own journey of faith. It is not unusual for a member of a discernment committee to discern a new call or to gain affirmation of the offering of their gifts through this experience.
8. This process is confidential. Committee members should limit all discussions concerning the process to the meetings themselves. Problems and concerns should be discussed as a group.
9. Questions asked of other committee members or of the aspirant should be open-ended and not leading. Avoiding leading questions is more difficult than it may sound. Open-ended questions do not give advice

(for example, “Why don’t you ...?” or “Here’s what happened to ...”). It is important that if a committee member’s questions are not open-ended, that the convener and/or other members remind that person of the guidelines.

10. Ask questions that are brief and to the point, addressing only one topic per question.
11. Sometimes a person may not feel ready to answer a particular question. In that case, it is important to let the question rest until such time that it can be answered. Sometimes questions need to be contemplated over a longer period of time or outside the group setting.
12. The committee’s time together should be relaxed and comfortable. The committee process is not an inquisition nor is it a cross-examination.
13. The pace of the meetings should not be rushed. Leave time between questions for reflection and assimilation. Do not be afraid of silence in the group. Trust it and honor it. Resist the temptation to fill the silence. Silence in a group may mean that something important is happening. The committee may find that it needs two meetings to complete the content contained in one session of the outline.
14. Committee members should keep in mind that discernment is primarily about listening to the Holy Spirit. In discernment, we let go of the pretense that we know what is best for another person, and we learn to trust the inner stirrings and wisdom of the Spirit in our own lives. The Committee is not looking for the “right” answers. The group is seeking together to hear what the Spirit is saying through its questions, reflections, and discussions.
15. The suggested maximum length of time for each session is 90 minutes.

Discernment Listening Guidelines

“Discernment means distinguishing the voice of God from other voices that speak to us.”

“Discernment is a prayerful, informed, and intentional attempt to sort through these voices to get in touch with God’s Spirit at work in a situation and to develop a sense of direction in which the Spirit is leading.”

The following are guidelines, not hard and fast rules. Discernment requires the safest possible environment, where people can freely explore their deepest thoughts and feelings without fear of being challenged. These guidelines are designed to create a safe and thoughtful environment in the group.

Remember that discernment is not about persuasion. It is about listening with one’s heart for the guidance of the Spirit.

1. Take time to become settled in God’s presence.
2. Listen to others with your entire being; that is, using all of your senses, feelings, intuition, and rational faculties.
3. Speak for yourself only, expressing your own thoughts and feelings, referring to your own experience to the extent you are comfortable.

4. Whenever possible speak in concrete and practical terms. You may wish to use examples to illustrate or clarify your meaning. Avoid using terms that are abstract or theoretical.
5. Respect the opinions of others. Express disagreement without challenging others.
6. Listen intently to the entirety of what each person says. Do not interrupt, and do not think about what you will say next while someone else is speaking.
7. Introducing a pause for silence between speakers, so that everyone may absorb what has been said, is recommended.
8. Make sure the input of those who have not spoken is captured. Leave space for anyone who may want to speak a first time before you speak a second or third time.

(Adapted from Suzanne G. Farnham, Stephanie A. Hull, R. Taylor McLean (1996). *Grounded in God: Listening Hearts Discernment for Group Deliberations*. Morehouse Publishing, pp. 55-56)

Outline of Discernment Committee Sessions

SESSION ONE

- The convener begins the meeting with prayer. You may want to begin with some centering/silent time to enable everyone to make a mental and emotional transition from where they have been before gathering, and to become present to the task at hand. See prayers in *BCP* pages 832-833 and/or the following prayer:

A Prayer of Thomas Merton

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.

- Have each person in the group introduce himself or herself. Ask that each person share some things about their life, work, things that important to them, and their relationship with the church. Ask each person to state why he or she agreed to serve on this committee, and how it feels so far.
- Review the procedures so everyone understands the ground rules for your time together. You may also want to do a brief review at the beginning of each meeting as a reminder. Spend some time clarifying/discussing the procedures so they become a natural part of the group's interaction.
- Discuss other issues of importance to the group: meeting times, necessary absences, confidentiality, talking to others about the committee's work without feeling secretive. In general, what does each person need to know about the other group members and the task in order to work together effectively?
- Discuss each member's understanding of what discernment is.
- Ask each committee member (including the convener) to prepare a brief faith pilgrimage statement describing his/her life in relationship with God. The faith statements should include some of the stepping stones along the individual's faith journey. One or two people will share their faith statements at each meeting.

Questions for reflection before the next meeting:

Without consulting other sources, each member should write their own responses to the following questions:

1. What is ordination?
2. What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?
3. What is the ministry of a deacon?
4. What is the duty of all Christians?
5. What gifts and skills do you have to offer in ministry?

- Take a couple of minutes to review the time together. The convener should ask each person what was good and what was not so good about how the group worked; what helped and what hindered; what to continue doing, what to stop doing and what to add. The recorder should note the comments and the convener should use these in the next meeting.

- End with prayer.

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SESSION TWO

- The convener or appointed person opens the time with prayer.
- Check in for a few minutes about how group members are doing.
- Remind members of the listening guidelines.
- Ask the aspirant to share with the group his or her spiritual autobiography. The other group members listen carefully without interrupting. Ask questions of clarification only (e.g., “Could you tell me more about . . .?”) The purpose is for group members to learn about the aspirant, and to honor that person’s journey.

READING

The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4: 11-13)

- Spend some time as a group discussing the reflection questions given at Session One. How does the aspirant view the ministry of the whole Body of Christ? How does the aspirant differentiate between the ministries of the laity and the ordained?
- Read the portions of the Catechism concerning ministry and ordination (*BCP*, pp. 855-856, 860-861.)
- What gifts and skills are necessary for the kind of ministry that a deacon is called to live?

- What gifts and skills are necessary for the kind of ministry that a priest is called to live?
- How is the aspirant already (or not) preparing for the ministry of a deacon/priest?

Questions for reflection for the next meeting:

Prior to the group's next meeting, the aspirant should interview a deacon and a priest, using the questions listed below. Ideally neither of the interviewees should serve in the home congregation of the aspirant. Interviewees' answers will not be shared with the committee, but the aspirant will be asked to reflect on what was learned through the interviews and share his or her reflection with the committee. The aspirant should explain how the interviews are being used when making arrangements for the interviews. The time needed for each interview will range from one to two hours.

Interview Questions:

1. How did you experience your call to ordained ministry? How has your understanding and experience of that call changed, grown, or focused over time?
 2. Describe the ministry of a deacon, as you understand it.
 3. Describe the ministry of a priest, as you understand it.
 4. Describe the process of vocational discernment that led to your ordination. What part of that process helped clarify for you and the Church that your call to ordained ministry was that of the diaconate/priesthood?
 5. Tell me about a few of your experiences of greatest learning and growth while you were preparing for ordination.
 6. Tell me about a few of your experiences of greatest learning and growth since you were ordained.
 7. What is the most difficult aspect of ordained ministry for you? For members of your household?
 8. What have been some of the costs of ordination for you and members of your household? What have you and members of your household sacrificed in order to respond to this vocational call?
- The convener should ask for one or two volunteers to be ready to share some aspect of their faith journeys at the next meeting.
 - Take a couple of minutes to review the time together. The convener should ask each person what was good and what was not so good about how the group worked; what helped and what hindered; what to continue doing, what to stop doing, and what to add. The recorder should note the comments and the convener should use these in the next meeting.
 - End with prayer.

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SESSION THREE

- The convener or appointed person opens the time with prayer.
- Check in with all members about how things are going.
- Review listening guidelines.
- Ask those who volunteered at the last meeting to share an aspect of his/her faith journey.

READING

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. . . For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way. But not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Corinthians 4: 1, 5-12)

- Ask the aspirant to reflect on his/her interviews. What was stirred up as they listened and remembered the interview? Other committee members should listen without asking questions or making comments.
- A period of silence for reflection should follow the aspirant's reflection.
- After the period of silence, committee members respond by sharing their own reflections on what the person in discernment has said. (e.g., "What stood out for me in what you said was . . .")
- The group should then explore the potential economic, personal and emotional impact for the aspirant and their household, should he or she be ordained.
 - Consider effects of ordination on the household's income during training and preparation for ordination, during his/her working life, and after retirement.
 - Consider the public nature of the role and the stresses that ordained ministry might be expected to put on the person in discernment and their household.
 - Consider the present age of the person in discernment, and potential positive and negative implications for ordination.

The purpose of this discussion is for the discernment committee to seek evidence that the aspirant is responding to God concerning the ordained ministry. Could he or she be confusing a response to Christian service with a response to ordination? Are his or her primary interests congruent with the basic function of an ordained ministry? Are his or her gifts and abilities consistent with the demands of the ordained ministry?

- The convener should ask for one or two volunteers to be ready to share some aspect of his/her faith journey at the next meeting.
- In closing, group members should reflect on and share what stood out for them in the course of your time together.
- Take a couple of minutes to review the time together. The convener should ask each person what was good and what was not so good about how the group worked; what helped and what hindered; what to continue doing, what to stop doing, and what to add. The recorder should note the comments and the convener should use these in the next meeting.
- End with prayer.

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SESSION FOUR

- The convener or appointed person opens with prayer.
- Check in.
- Review listening guidelines.
- Ask those who volunteered to share an aspect of their faith journey.

READING

The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. (Mark 6: 30-31)

- Ask the aspirant to begin the conversation by sharing about the following four aspects of his/her relationship with God:
 1. Describe your prayer life.
 2. How has your relationship with God changed over time?
 3. Who is Christ in your life?
 4. Who has been an important role model for you in the faith?
- The convener calls for a period of silence and reflection.
- The committee members share their reflections on what the aspirant has said. (e.g., “What stood out for me in what you said was. . .”). Members may also share some of their own insights on the questions.

- The aspirant then continues to talk about the role of his/her faith in daily life, addressing the following questions:

1. Describe how you take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
2. Describe how you are still questioning, searching and probing the mysteries of the faith.
3. Describe how you understand stewardship; personal financial responsibility; tithing; and personal stewardship of time and leisure.

- The convener calls for a period of silence and reflection.

- The committee members share their reflections on what the aspirant has said. (e.g., “What stood out for me in what you said was. . .”)

The purpose of this discussion is for the Discernment Committee to identify how the aspirant is growing in the Christian faith. How well does he or she understand the basics of the Christian faith? Does he or she give evidence of having a personal relationship with God? Is he or she conversant with the persons of the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Questions for reflection for next meeting:

(Note: All committee members and the aspirant should prepare for the next meeting by reflecting on these questions.)

1. Make a list of your strengths

2. Make a list of your weaknesses.

3. Make a list of the areas in your life where you see room for improvement and that you are actively working on (sometimes called your “growing edges”).

4. What do you find difficult in your relationships with others?

5. How do you react to people in positions of power and authority?

6. How do you react to being in a position of power and authority?

7. How do you react to being in a powerless situation?

- Ask for one or two volunteers to be ready to share some aspect of their faith journey at the next meeting.

- In closing, spend some time reflecting to the aspirant what stood out for you in the course of your time together. Take a couple of minutes to review the time together. The convener should ask each person what was good and what was not so good about how the group worked; what helped and what hindered; what to continue doing, what to stop doing, and what to add. The recorder should note the comments and the convener should use these in the next meeting.

- End with prayer.

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SESSION FIVE

- The convener or appointed person opens the time with prayer.
- Check-in.
- Review listening guidelines.
- Ask those who volunteered to share an aspect of their faith journey.

READINGS:

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. . . . So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. (Romans 7: 15, 21)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8: 38-39)

- The convener invites committee members to share some of their insights into the questions for reflection. (e.g., Describe your thoughts about the reflection question that was the most challenging for you.)
- The aspirant shares with the group what has emerged as he or she reflected on his or her strengths and weaknesses.
- The convener calls for a period of silence for reflection.
- Committee members share their reflections with the aspirant. (e.g., “What stood out for me in what you said was . . .”)
- The aspirant then responds to the following questions:
 1. What are the areas in your life where you see room for improvement and that you are actively working on (sometimes called your “growing edges”)?
 2. What are your goals for further spiritual growth?
 3. What skills do you already have and what skills would you like to develop?
 4. How do you learn best?

Committee members listen to the responses without asking questions, except for clarifying questions, or making comments.

- The convener calls for a period of silence for reflection.

- The committee members share their reflections with the aspirant. (e.g., “What stood out for me in what you said was . . .”)

- The aspirant then responds to the following questions:

1. What “pushes your buttons” (makes you really angry)?

2. What conflicts have you had in your life and how have you handled them?

3. What frustrates you? What delights you?

4. Talk about a time in life when you felt like a failure. Have you found grace in that experience?

- The convener calls for a period of silence for reflection.

- The committee members share their reflections with the aspirant. (e.g., “What stood out for me in what you said was . . .”)

The purpose of this discussion is for the Discernment Committee to determine how aware of his or her feelings the aspirant is. How well does he or she express strong positive and negative feelings? When dealing with his or her feelings, do physical gestures and movements (body language) match the words spoken? Are there any indications that he or she aspires to the ordained ministry as a way of solving his or her personal problems? Does he or she demonstrate maturity and ability to adapt in different situations?

- The convener asks for one or two volunteers to be ready to share some aspect of their faith journey at the next meeting.

- In closing, the convener asks the committee members to spend some time reflecting back to the aspirant what stood out for them in the course of your time together.

- Take a couple of minutes to review the time together. The convener should ask each person what was good and what was not so good about how the group worked; what helped and what hindered; what to continue doing, what to stop doing, and what to add. The recorder should note the comments and the convener should use these in the next meeting.

- End with prayer.

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SESSION SIX

- The convener or other appointed person opens with prayer.

- Check in.

- Review listening guidelines.

- Ask those who volunteered to share an aspect of their faith journeys.

READING:

A dispute also arose among them as to which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest. But he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.” (Luke 22: 24-27)

- Ask the aspirant to describe what kind of ministry he or she is presently doing in the parish and has done in former parishes.
- Ask the aspirant if he or she has served in any leadership roles in current or past parishes, dioceses or communities.
- Ask the aspirant to describe his or her relationship with people in his or her life who have authority over him or her. Describe a situation that has been tense and/or difficult. Describe a situation that has been respectful and/or mutual.
- The convener calls for a period of silence to reflect on the responses.
- The group shares their reflections with the aspirant. (e.g., “What stood out for me in what you said was . . .”)
- The convener then guides the aspirant through the following questions:
 - As you consider ordination, how do you understand the power and authority that come with that office?
 - Tell us about what it might be like to claim and use that authority appropriately.
 - Tell us how that authority could be claimed and used in an inappropriate way.
- The convener calls for a period of silence for reflection on the aspirant’s responses.
- The group shares their reflections with the aspirant. (e.g., “What stood out for me in what you said was . . .”)

The purpose of this discussion is for the Discernment Committee to assess the aspirant’s capacity for leadership. Does he or she show initiative, self-confidence, enthusiasm? Can he or she motivate others? Is he or she aware of and at ease with a variety of leadership styles and able to use them as the situation indicates? How does he or she function in interpersonal relationships? How comfortable is he or she with being a person in whom authority rests? To what extent is he or she ready to claim and use that authority appropriately? What is this person’s experience with and attitudes towards racial and ethnic minorities? Can you envision this person as your deacon or priest?

- In closing, spend some time reflecting back to the aspirant what stood out for you in the course of your time together. Then take a couple of minutes to review how your time together was. Ask each person

what was good and what was not so good about how the group worked. Ask what helped and what hindered, what to continue doing, what to stop doing, and what to add. The recorder should note the comments and the convener should use these in the next meeting.

- End with prayer.

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SESSION SEVEN

Preparing Your Evaluation

- This session happens individually. Rather than the regular group meeting, each member of the Discernment Committee and the aspirant are invited to use that time to prayerfully recollect and reflect on the potential vocation.
- Find a comfortable and quiet place where you won't be interrupted. Spend some time quietly being present to God. Ask God to guide your recollections and reflections.
- Read the notes recorded from every session and spend some time reflecting on that session and its revelations in light of the series of sessions taken as a whole. Jot down any insights, images, thoughts, concerns, etc. that arise as you remember and reflect on each session in turn. If a phrase or a passage of scripture comes to mind, find it in your Bible and spend some time asking how the passage might be related to the discernment work at hand. At all times, seek to do this work with an attitude of openness to God's possibilities for the aspirant.
- Once you have finished your work of recollection and reflection, stop for a moment and pay attention to your inner state. You may want to set the work aside for a time before continuing your preparation work. When you are ready, turn to the questions that will guide the group through the process of writing the Discernment Narrative.
- Take your time with each question. After you have written your response to each one, stop to notice your inner state. Is there a sense of peace and "rightness" about what you have written? Is it complete/whole or does something more need to be written?
- When you have completed your responses to the questions, set your work aside. Think of each person in the Discernment Committee, and give thanks for their gift to you and to the group.
- When you gather for the final meeting, bring along your responses and your notebook.

THE DISCERNMENT NARRATIVE

(Drafted by each member of the Discernment Committee individually and collated into a single document by the convener.)

We suggest that you begin this session with a time of silence and prayer. The following prayer for the Church is found in the ordination liturgies of the *BCP*:

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up and things which had grown old and being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen

The members of the Discernment Committee answer each of the following questions individually. The combined responses will provide the structure for the Discernment Narrative.

1. How do the ministries, gifts, skills, and requirements of a deacon/priest align with what the aspirant is already doing in his/her life? Be specific.
2. How would ordination affect the person's closest relationships? (include economic, professional, emotional, and other impacts) Be specific.
3. What issues of power, authority, obedience, and accountability may be present for the aspirant as he or she considers the possibility of ordination? How well does the person know herself or himself? Be specific.
4. What issues of health and self-care (physical, intellectual, spiritual, or emotional) may be present for the aspirant as he or she considers the possibility of ordination? Be specific.
5. Describe the aspirant's spiritual life and relationship with Christ; its maturity, depth, change over time, discipline (form, content, and character). Be specific.
6. Describe the aspirant's current and potential relationship with the requirements of the canons and the ordination vows. Be specific.
7. The Church's needs and expectations are for leaders who bear special qualities of Christian commitment, leadership, vision, and responsiveness to the needs, concerns and hopes of the world. Indicate whether such qualities are emerging in the committee's sense of the aspirant's vocation. Be specific.
8. What spiritual, intellectual, and moral qualities for ministry have emerged in the aspirant as the group has engaged this part of the discernment process? Be specific.
9. Are there other things you would like to report?

10. For those in discernment for the diaconate, the Bishop and Commission on Ministry ask that the discernment committee give a detailed description of the person's present ministry and what s/he is passionate about.

The Discernment Committee makes the following recommendation concerning the aspirant:

Recommend Recommend with reservation Do not Recommend

Signed (All members of the Discernment Committee) _____ Date _____

Convener _____ Date _____

Aspirant _____ Date _____

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IN THE EVENT THAT THE COMMITTEE DOES NOT RECOMMEND PROCEEDING

Recall that the essence of the discernment process is listening for what the Holy Spirit is saying about the aspirant's suitability for ordained ministry. Discernment is not a process leading to a "right" answer (to recommend) or a pro forma approval. The outcome of discernment should be greater clarity for the aspirant and the committee members about the aspirant's authentic ministry call. Sometimes the committee will conclude that the aspirant is called to lay rather than ordained ministry, or that the call is to the priesthood and not the diaconate, or vice versa.

A recommendation not to proceed can be the outcome of a successful process. While the aspirant and members of the committee may experience disappointment when the recommendation is not to proceed, the committee can be reassured that it has done its job to help the aspirant identify the ministry to which the Spirit is calling him or her. A decision not to proceed can save the aspirant a significant investment of time, energy, and financial resources that would otherwise be spent to follow a ministry path that later proves to be an unfortunate choice.

FINAL SESSION –WORKING THROUGH THE QUESTIONS TOGETHER

The aspirant is not present for this session; however, the committee may wish to invite him/her to come after the session to share together how the process has been, to thank one another for what each has offered to the times together, and to pray together.

- Begin the session with the prayer used in the first session, whether Thomas Merton's prayer (below) or another prayer from the *BCP*:

My Lord God, (we) have no idea where (we) are going. We do not see the road ahead of us. We cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do we really know ourselves, and the fact that we think we are following your will does not mean that we are actually doing so. But we believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And we hope we have that desire in all that we are doing. We hope that we will never do anything apart from that desire. And we know that if we do this you will lead us by the right road, though we may know nothing about it. Therefore, we will trust you always though we may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. We will not fear, for you are ever with us, and you will never leave us to face our perils alone. Amen.

- Begin to work through each question. The convener might find it helpful to use newsprint as a way of capturing the consensus or divergence of the group as you move through each of the questions in turn.
- Following this meeting, it is the convener's responsibility to draw all the responses together into one Discernment Narrative which should then be signed by all the members of the Discernment Committee and the aspirant.
- The Discernment Narrative should be sent to the Bishop's office, with copies to the aspirant and his or her Rector or Priest in Charge.
- Since the Discernment Committee will disband after the writing of the Discernment Narrative, it is important that the group is intentional about closure. You may want to have a meal together, or perhaps a Eucharist. There should be ample time allowed for each member of the group to say thank you to each other member of the group for the gift they were in this process.
- The convener should collect all copies of the notes/minutes from your sessions and shred them to protect the confidentiality of all involved.

Resources:

Bound With Cords Of Love, The Rev. Ann Kidder, 2002, the Diocese of Maine

Guidelines for the Parish Lay Committee - Diocese of Atlanta; Diocese of Western North Carolina

The Clearness Committee, Parker Palmer