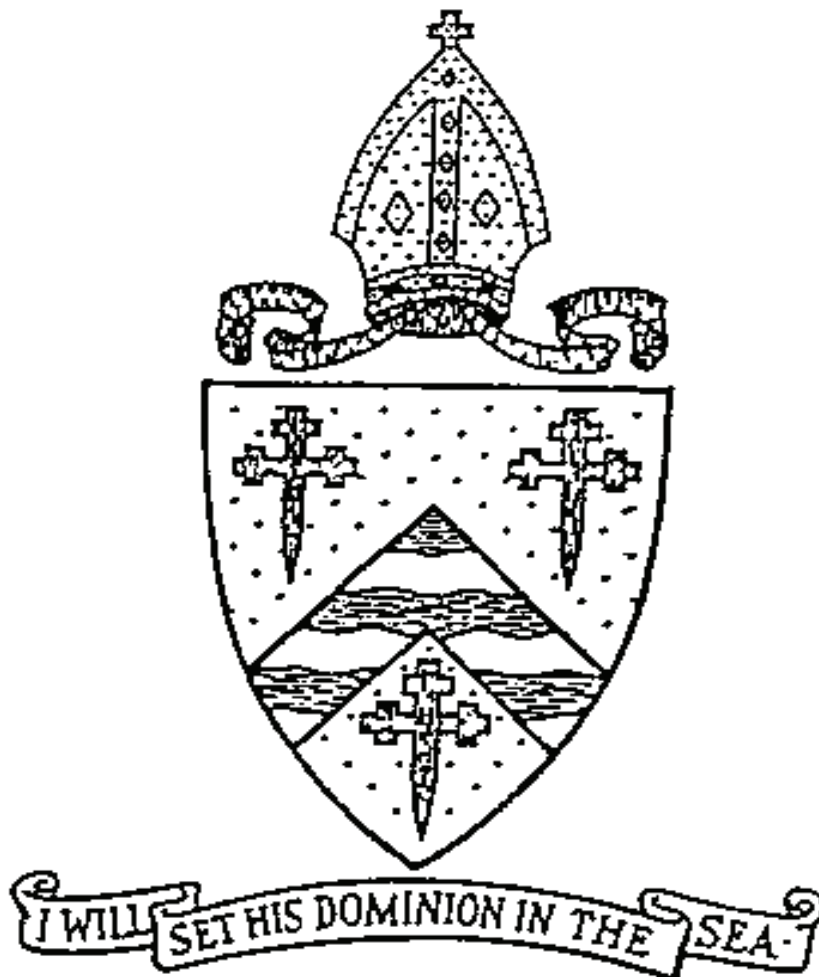


**SPEAK LORD,
YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING!**

**PARISH DISCERNMENT MANUAL I OF BAPTISMAL MINISTRIES
IN THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF LONG ISLAND**



**DIOCESAN COMMISSION ON MINISTRY
DISCERNMENT SUB-COMMITTEE**

SEPTEMBER 2006

BISHOP WALKER'S INTRODUCTION TO THE DISCERNMENT MANUALS

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

What do we mean when we speak of a “call to ministry”? In 2003 and now in 2006, our General Convention began and continues the putting into effect of a process to help each of us in our understanding of ministry and our own particular call to ministry.

Through baptism, every Christian becomes a member of the Church, the Body of Christ, and participates in the ministry of Jesus through the Church. When we say the words of the Baptismal Covenant, we affirm that by our baptism we are joined into the Church to “continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers,” to “persevere in resisting evil,” to “seek and serve Christ in all persons” and to “strive for justice and peace among all people.” This ministry is ours, whatever our age or gender, whatever our skills or training, whatever our role, large or small, and whether we are lay or ordained. We all share a common ministry.

This common ministry takes diverse forms. As St. Paul teaches, there are both many roles to be performed within the Church and the world and many gifts dispersed among us that may equip us to perform those roles. Each of us, then, if we make the effort to become aware of our gifts and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may discover that we have been given specific ways through which we can live out our part in this common ministry.

With the publication of this manual, our Commission on Ministry puts into place the foundational program of discernment for baptismal ministry. The *Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening* manual will be conducted on a diocesan level to help form each of us spiritually and communally to listen to God’s call we have all received and to see how in that call we can accomplish God’s mission.

Please remember that God is calling you, right now, into ministry. It could be one of the many outreach ministries in your parish; it might be visiting the sick, helping with youth programs, lay leadership on the parish or diocesan level; it might be as a Eucharistic Minister or Visitor, Greeter, Acolyte, Altar Guild, Preacher, Evangelist, Catechist, Receptionist, Hospitality, or Parish Administrator. The list is endless, because God’s gifts are without end.

God’s mission is a continuous unfolding, always changing and yet always the same. I thank God each day for the capacity we have as a Diocese to BE the Body of Christ here in the Lord’s Dominion on Long Island. Jesus’ mission, our mission, is too important to be compromised by present controversies. God will ask us on that great day— “Were you faithful in spreading the Good News?”

In response to the Canons of the Church this manual — *Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening* — there are two other manuals — (1) *The Gifts of God for the People of God* which helps someone to discern a call to licensed lay ministry and finally (2) *Called to Serve and Love* which helps an individual to discern a call to either the ordained ministry of Deacon or Priest. The Commission on Ministry—Discernment Process Committee (DCOM-DP) has developed these tools to enable parishes to play a role, formally, in helping individuals in the congregation discover their own “call to ministry.” In theory, a discernment committee works with any member of the parish to help that individual discern the nature of his/her particular calling, whether it might be to lay or ordained ministry.

What does *discernment* involve? How do we recognize or perceive the gifts of someone to be used for the building up of the Body of Christ? What we do in Parish Discernment Committees is attempt to recognize the will of God for the Church and for individuals within the Church. Attempting to discern the will of God is bold

and risky. It is the same as when we are “bold to pray” the Lord’s Prayer. So any discernment process is, and should always be, an exercise in prayer, careful listening and waiting to gain clarity about the nature of a particular person’s calling from God.

Since the early days of the Church, spiritual leaders have been identified and put forward by the community. When someone in a congregation begins to sense that she or he is called to ministry, we look not to the individual or to the priest or even to the bishop alone to discern; we look to the community — the congregation — to affirm or not any calling. For this reason anyone willing to put him/herself forward for any ministry in the church should be first and foremost an active member of a parish community.

When a faithful church member approaches his/her clergy person and the members of a Parish Discernment Committee, that person is offering to make him/herself vulnerable by inviting others to consider some of the very deepest hopes, thoughts, works, gifts and limitations of his/her life. Making such an offering takes great courage, and the person who does so must be treated with the utmost respect and care.

These Parish Discernment Committees give us the opportunity, through the telling of our own faith stories and spiritual journeys, important opportunities to witness to our faith first with those inside our congregations, thus building them up in Christ to be more effective witnesses to our mission: to proclaim to all the world the Good News of God’s reconciling love in Jesus Christ. In these discernment encounters, all members are asked to identify gifts of individuals and to consider how those gifts can be used to empower the church — not just for today, but for the future, for we believe God is calling all of us to participate in building up the Body.

We are the Church which the Holy Spirit has called to serve God’s mission. Let us use these tools of *Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening*, *The Gifts of God for the People of God*, and *Called to Serve and Love*, to discern our role in this Great Commission, so we can get on with what God has for us to do. In each of these manuals you will find the process on how each parish can develop their own Parish Discernment Committee and help each other seek out how the Lord calls us to our own baptismal ministries.

Members of the DCOM-DP will be available to help you in the establishment of these canonically mandated committees which I believe will help each parish grow in its life in the Holy Spirit and enrich the diocese and the greater Church as well.

Let us listen to the Lord; let us offer our spiritual gifts for God’s people; and let us serve in the Love of Christ,

With my prayers and care in Christ,

The Rt. Rev. Orris G. Walker, Jr.
The Bishop of Long Island

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INTRODUCTION & WELCOME

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

The structure and content of this discernment process grew out of our concern that a call to lay ministry be treated with as much respect and careful decision making as a call to ordained ministry. We began by considering the call to ministry that we all share as expressed in the baptismal covenant. Our baptismal vows, the sections of the catechism and canons that relate to ministry, and the ordination vows provided the template for nearly all of the areas of inquiry in this discernment process.

Historically in the Church, spiritual direction and discernment have been experienced primarily as occurring in the context of a relationship between a spiritual director and his/her directee. Yet the Church calls upon groups of people throughout the ordination process to participate in deciding whether or not an individual is being called into ordained ministry. Those with a call to lay ministry have received much less attention, honor, and scrutiny in the past. Such individuals would most likely work through a process of vocational discernment alone, with his/her parish priest, with a spiritual director, or with a few trusted friends. Therefore it was necessary to find a means of equally attending to, honoring, and diligently examining apparent calls to either lay or ordained vocations in a community setting. We turned for wisdom and historical experience to the established discernment practices of our Christian Tradition.

The principles of discernment that are the foundation of this process are as follows:

1. The discernment process must be entered as an act of free will by each member of the discernment group. You are offering the gift to God and to one another of your lives for a substantial period of time.
2. The habit of noticing, and reflecting upon what has been noticed, is a central dynamic in discernment. The exercises use scripture, experience, and imagination in order to explore God's call to each Seeker.
3. What has been noticed and reflected upon is shared in order to seek the benefit of others' perceptions, observations, and suggestions. This discernment process includes the use of reason in seeking a clearer understanding of God's call.
4. Discernment involves the search for clarity in identifying the source of each Seeker's sense of call, as well as the future direction of each Seeker's response.
5. Through using a structure, or pattern for discernment, and by sharing the discernment process with others, we may arrive at a decision which is less self-motivated than might otherwise be the case.
6. Accurate discernment should bring with it a profound sense of peace and "rightness" for each Seeker and for his/her Companions. There should be a general consensus, even if there are varying opinions about some minor aspects of the Seeker's call.

The principles of discernment outlined above serve as a structure, or vessel, for the actual content of this discernment process. The content of the process consists of prayer, scripture, discussions, activities, ministry experiences, shared reflections, and evaluation. The focus in all sessions should be the Seeker's experience of life, ministry, and spirituality, not abstract ideas about them.

Each session contains a list of suggested readings or activities and *Questions For Reflection*. These are to be engaged by each Seeker prior to meeting with his/her Companions as a group. When the group meets, they will engage the *Topics For Discussion*. All members of the group are expected to participate in, and contribute

to, the discussions. At the end of each session are *Questions Toward Discernment*. These are to be answered individually by the Seeker and the Companions as soon as possible after each session. The purpose of *Questions Toward Discernment* is to capture the observations, responses, and thoughts of each group member while still fresh in order that they might serve as memory joggers when the time comes to write the formal Discernment Reflections and Narratives.

The discernment process outlined in this workbook begins with the very broad vocational focus of ***Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening***, which is divided into three primary areas of inquiry: Vocation, Context, and Empowerment. This is, in essence, the what, where, and how of ministry. Each of these areas is divided into three sessions each of which examines a particular aspect of that area's concern. Vocation, Context, and Empowerment each end with a fourth session which focuses on writing a Discernment Reflection. The focus here is on each Seeker in turn, and his or her perceived call to ministry. The group as a whole may encourage an individual Seeker toward further discernment regarding either lay or ordained vocations.

The Diocesan Commission on Ministry:Discernment Process Sub-Committee (DCOM-DP) provides further guidance to the nominee with the use of the second manual ***The Gifts of God for the People of God***. This second manual follows the same process and helps the nominee through a more deeply focused exploration and discernment of licensed lay ministry. In the third manual the DCOM-DP will assist the nominee who wishes to discern further a call to the ordained ministries in ***Called to Love and Serve***.

During the group meetings of ***Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening***, each member of the group was a Seeker and a Companion to every other member of the group. In ***The Gifts of God for the People of God*** and in ***Called to Love and Serve***, the group may follow this pattern if there are several people seeking to discern a particular lay or ordained ministry. It is our suggestion that the discernment consist of one Seeker and her/his Companions. If the group contains only one Seeker, ideally, the group of Companions will consist of: a Facilitator who is trained and approved for this process by the DCOM-DP, two members of the Seeker's congregation who are chosen in consultation with his/her clergyperson (at least one of these two should be a member of the Vestry), one Companion from the ***Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening***, group and one person (not a close friend or family member) who knows the Seeker from a context other than Church.

Both the ***Gifts of God for the People of God*** and the ***Called to Love and Serve*** discernment groups will meet a total of at least five times, probably in two hour sessions, to discuss together the experiences and observations made during the individual *Questions For Reflection*. Using the notes made in responding to the *Questions Toward Discernment* at the end of each session, the final meeting will focus on the writing of the *Discernment Narrative*.

HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual is presented to you in a three-ring binder format. We hope that you will enjoy the flexibility and freedom that this format offers. Write or draw in this notebook. Add pages if you need more space. When you run across photographs, poetry, art or anything that speaks to your heart, add it to these pages. This, like the discernment process in which you are about to engage, is a work of creation in progress. God will speak to your soul at unexpected times in the coming months, and this notebook will provide you with a place to notice and reflect upon those moments.

This manual is a private space for you. What you write here belongs to you and to God. From this notebook and your experiences you may share what you wish with your Companions. This notebook will not be "turned in" like homework. It is a workroom, a studio, for your soul. Use it in whatever way enhances the discernment process for you. Feel free to read ahead. This will allow you to anticipate activities that will provide greater depth to the discernment process. Develop the habit of setting aside time regularly to spend with the *Questions*

For Reflection. This part of the process requires substantial time in order to adequately experience the exercise and reflect upon it prior to meetings of the group. When you meet together, *Topics For Discussion* will provide the focus for your time. We suggest regularly scheduled meetings; every two to three weeks is ideal but you should gather at least once per month. Set a beginning and an ending time and honor it.

Remember to pray for one another throughout this time of discernment. You are all Seekers, and you are all Companions on what is perhaps the most important journey we take in our lives — the journey into God.

The format for each section and session is as follows:

SPEAK LORD, YOUR SERVANT IS LISTENING!

VOCATION

1. Some things you may want to experience
2. Vocation: Sessions I-III
3. What we have seen & heard: Discernment Reflection I

CONTEXT

1. Some things you may want to experience
2. Context: Sessions I-III
3. What we have seen & heard: Discernment Reflection II

EMPOWERMENT

1. Some things you may want to experience
2. Empowerment: Sessions I-III
3. What we have seen & heard: Discernment Reflection III

GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: THE SEEKERS AND COMPANIONS

You have been invited to be part of a discernment group. Your role in the group is dual. You, along with each other member of the group, will be a Seeker. You will inquire and listen with your Companions for God's whispered desires for you and for your ministry. You will also be a Companion to every other member of the group as they, too, seek a clearer understanding of God's call in their lives. You need each other's prayers, wisdom, observations, honesty, and compassion. It is important that you enter this relationship out of your own free will. Your time is a gift to both God and to each other. You will be committing yourself to engage the discernment process individually and with the group over the course of approximately six to eight months. Trust that God's Holy Spirit will be at work throughout this process. Try to maintain an attitude of openness toward God and what God might be saying to you through the observations and insights of your Companions. They are giving you the gift of their lives.

If you genuinely engage the process and give of your time in reflection and discussion, the most important contribution you can then make to the discernment process is your compassion and honesty. Pray for one another when together and between gatherings of the group. Be faithful with your presence and participation. And finally, honor the sacredness of one another's life stories. Nothing that is shared with the group should be revealed or discussed with anyone who is not a member of the group, not even a spouse or partner. Remember, you may share your own story freely, but you may not share the stories of others. This is a sacred journey. Honor it.

GUIDELINES AND RESPONSIBILITIES: THE CLERGY

A member of your congregation has embarked upon a process of vocational discernment. During the discernment process provided in *Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening*, your role is primarily pastoral. The members of the discernment group have accepted the responsibility for doing the work of discernment together. A Resource Team, consisting of a lay person and a cleric from DCOM-DP, who are skilled in this process, will meet regularly with the group to help facilitate and guide the group with its discernment process. This frees you from the necessity of managing or administering the discernment process.

Your role will be to pray for the members of the discernment group regularly; and to provide pastoral care and counsel if that should be necessary. You should meet at least three times with each participant from your congregation during the course of *Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening*. At the conclusion of *Speak Lord, Your Servant is Listening*, the discernment group may encourage further, more focused, vocational discernment.

The Gifts of God for the People of God offers a guide for the deeper exploration and discernment of licensed ministry in the lay order. Should your parishioner continue in the discernment process through *The Gifts of God for the People of God* process, s/he should meet with you at least three times during the course of those group meetings. This will allow you to have a sense of how the process is going and to see that, where appropriate, the Vestry is able to adequately understand and prepare for the possible responsibility of endorsing or contributing to the financial support of your parishioner's "next step in faithfulness" - seeking appropriate education to enter this licensed lay ministry. There are formation program at the Mercer School to help the individual achieve that education.

Called to Love and Serve offers a guide for the deeper exploration and discernment of the diaconal and priestly orders of ministry. Should your parishioner continue in the discernment process through *Called to Love and Serve* s/he should meet with you at least three times during the course of those group meetings. This will allow you to have a sense of how the process is going and to see that, where appropriate, the Vestry is able to adequately understand and prepare for the possible responsibility of signing the *Endorsement of Application for Postulancy*, as required by the Canons.

DISCERNMENT

From the time these things were first revealed

I had often wanted to know what was our Lord's meaning.

It was more than fifteen years after that I was answered in my spirit's understanding.

'You would know our Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well.

Love was his meaning. Who showed it you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show you it?

For love. Hold on to this and you will know and understand love more and more.

But you will not know or learn anything else -- ever!'

Julian of Norwich: *Revelations Of Divine Love*

You have engaged to enter a process of inquiry and discernment about baptismal ministry vocation. The process concerns both the question of your own vocation and the discernment of the vocation of your sister or brother in Christ. The process of discerning God's desire for our lives is holy work. In taking up this work, we give the gift of our very selves to God. As the Rite One Eucharistic Prayer puts it, "...we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice unto thee." To seek out God's leading in our lives is an act of generosity and love toward God. To be a Companion on such a journey is also a gift to God. Whether in your role as a Seeker or as a Companion, come to the journey with an

open heart and an open mind.

We are **all** *imago Dei*. Created in the image of God, we participate in God's presence in the world through all the aspects of our lives. The process of "discernment" or "spiritual direction" draws our participation in God up into consciousness. It is more than "feeling" that God is calling us to a certain task or state of life. Discernment relies on bringing our lives, concerns, and questions into the presence of scripture, reason, and prayer. It continues by noticing and reflecting upon the thoughts and feelings that arise in these times of study and prayer. Then, in personal and group reflection upon what has been noticed, the path forward comes more clearly into focus.

We have identified several fundamental principles which must be part of a process of discernment:

1. Discernment is set within the established, disciplined life of prayer and meditation (especially upon Scripture) of each discerner (and of each discerning community).
2. The predisposing reality of Discernment is freedom (Ignatius' Indifference; 12 steps' detachment)
3. The purpose of Discernment is a progressive discovery of God's will in all the subtlety and graciousness of that will.
4. Discernment seeks for faithfulness, rather than a particular result or outcome.
5. Discernment acknowledges fully the context in which it takes place.
6. Discernment acknowledges fully the human particulars of the discerner's own circumstances (family, physical limitations, gifts and liabilities, temperament, age, etc.) at this moment.
7. Discernment encompasses the whole of the personal journey of the discerner.
8. Discernment embraces, but is not driven by, the emotions, desires, "baggage" of the discerner.
9. Discernment assumes (or commends) the gift of rigorous insight (self-awareness) as essential for sifting, sorting and distinguishing between temptations and invitations.
10. Discernment is dynamic; it attends to the movements, growth and evolution of the discerners, and it encompasses the redemption of those persons or communities.
11. Discernment takes place within the faith community; presupposes trust, complementarity, synergy and candor.
12. The indicators of appropriate Discernment are peace, consensus, felt rightness and courage.

Building discerning communities is work that takes time and patience. We have learned over the last several decades that there are several critical steps that aid in the process of becoming a discerning community.

1. Discerning communities need to have a clear sense of the nature and importance of the baptismal covenant to their life as a Christian people.
2. Discerning communities function through mutually supportive team leadership.

3. Discerning communities encourage members to explore both individually and corporately the nature of their own spiritual gifts and the ways in which these gifts are complementary to one another.
4. Discerning communities need individuals who have developed their gifts for pastoral care and active listening. These skills are vital building blocks upon which discernment skills are developed.
5. Discerning communities benefit greatly from structured group activities that enable members to explore their personal faith while receiving support, affirmation, and feedback from others.
6. Discerning communities are positive, affirming environments in which learning, experimentation, and risk taking are encouraged, and failure is allowed.
7. Discerning communities are communities that are process oriented, even when they are seeking to accomplish a task.
8. Discerning communities are communities that value the gift of intercessory prayer, where prayer becomes an active part of the decision making process.
9. Discerning communities are communities that value the gifts, talents and offerings of every single member.
10. Discerning communities are communities that care for and care about new members as well as old members.

The LORD shall watch over your going out and your coming in from this time forth for evermore.

Psalm 121:8

VOCATION

*...it is exactly in common searches and shared risks that new ideas are born,
that new visions reveal themselves and that new roads become visible.*

Henri Nouwen: *The Wounded Healer*, p.104

SOME THINGS YOU MAY WANT TO EXPERIENCE

VISION (watch these films):

Brother Sun, Sister Moon

Mother Teresa

Amazing Grace

Babette's Feast

ACTION: Interview one ordained person (not from your own congregation) and one committed lay person about their call to ministry, the tasks they do, the gifts they bring to ministry, and their needs.

Ask three people at random (and casually) to describe how they made an important decision in their life.

VOCATION: SESSION I

To notice, share, and give thanks for God's call in each Seeker's spiritual journey so far, and to consider what Paul means by "work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope."

We always give thanks to God for all of you and mention you in our prayers, constantly remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers and sisters beloved by God, that he has chosen you, because our message of the gospel came to you not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction; ... I Thessalonians 1:2-5b

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah 6:8

For all that has been -- Thanks!

To all that shall be -- Yes!

Dag Hammarskjöld: *Markings*, p.74

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is the story of your baptism? If necessary, talk with your parents or older relatives, or look for photographs and other records.

2. Write a spiritual autobiography (you might add a page or two as this can be long) OR draw a map of your spiritual journey thus far.

3. Describe **your** *work of faith*.

4. Describe **your** *labor of love*.

5. Describe **your** *steadfastness of hope*. (What scripture passages, music, art, books, relationships, etc. have carried you through life?)

TOPICS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Share the stories of your baptisms and spiritual journeys.
2. Discuss what you noticed about faith, love, and hope in the sharing of your stories.
3. For whose work of faith, labor of love, and steadfastness of hope are you thankful?

QUESTIONS TOWARD DISCERNMENT

1. What was the process like? (How did it go?)
2. What emerged for each Seeker in exploring this topic?
3. How did you experience each Seeker in exploring this topic?

3. What are the activities in which you “lose” yourself? When did you last spend time doing any of these activities?

4. Ultimately the gifts for ministry are God’s gifts. How do, or how have, you experienced those gifts in Baptism, Eucharist, Confession and Reconciliation, and Preaching?

5. Read and reflect upon the following prayer:

Almighty God, we thank you that by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ you have overcome sin and brought us to yourself, and that by the sealing of your Holy Spirit you have bound us to your service. Renew in these your servants the covenant you made with them at their Baptism. Send them forth in the power of that Spirit to perform the service you set before them; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. Bishop’s prayer for those being Confirmed, Received, or Reaffirming their Baptismal Vows. *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 309.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

According to the Catechism, the ministry of lay persons is “*to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.*” BCP p.855

1. Talk together about times when you have experienced being reconciled and being a reconciler.

VOCATION: DISCERNMENT REFLECTION I

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: We strongly suggest that you review all of the *Questions Toward Discernment* for all three sessions of VOCATION. Take time to read all of these *Discernment Reflection* questions before you begin. You may find it helpful to use newsprint as a means of capturing the group's brainstorming in response to questions 1, 3, and 4 below. One approach would be to do one word brainstorming on the newsprint for each of these questions. The results of the brainstorming can then be edited to form a few sentences that sum up the group's thoughts, feelings, and experiences in response to the questions.

It is important that each member of the group prepare for this meeting by reviewing the VOCATION sessions and seeking God's guidance in prayer **before** gathering for this session.

We suggest that you begin this session with a time of silence and prayer. The following prayer for guidance is from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 832.

*Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor,
and further us with your continual help;
that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you,
we may glorify your holy Name,
and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

1. What were the key responses and concerns of each Seeker:
In Session I?

In Session II?

In Session III?

CONTEXT

...We are primarily created and called, not for ourselves, not for the good of our neighbors or the needs of society, but solely "with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, to laud and magnify His Holy name." We are called to increase that clear, delightful knowing of His being, of that splendor of holiness, that mysterious beauty and wonder which fills the temple of life. That is what we are for.

Evelyn Underhill: *The Ways of the Spirit*, p. 202-203

SOME THINGS YOU MAY WANT TO EXPERIENCE

VISION:

Videos of the Holy Land (check Mercer Library, or Resource Center)

Art works done by artist Fritz Eichenberg

Icons on "Prayer Cards" produced by Bridgebuilder Icons

Jonathan Daniel's biography from *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*

David Oakerhater's biography from *Lesser Feasts and Fasts*

ACTION:

Go with at least one Companion to worship at another Episcopal Church whose size and style of worship are different from your own.

Go with at least one Companion to a place where you feel drawn to ministry and a place where you resist ministry from the following list: Prison, Street Ministry, Hospital, School, Diocesan/National Church Office, Nursing Home, Monastery/Convent, or another kind/location of ministry agreeable to your Companion.

Invite your Companions to visit your home. This may be for a session, a potluck meal, dessert, coffee, or whatever best fits your household's life.

Invite at least one Companion to visit your place of work, if this is possible.

CONTEXT: SESSION I

To explore the commitments and callings in each Seeker's life now; asking how they support or conflict with doing something new. To ask what exhausts and what renews each Seeker, including the implications for future ministry.

BIBLICAL SOURCES:

The Feeding of the Five Thousand (Mark 6:30-46)

Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

Psalm 84

OTHER SOURCE:

Women Priests in the Episcopal Church by Mary S. Donovan

(See especially the story of Carmen Bruni Guerrero; pp. 84-91).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are your present commitments and responsibilities? How do these present commitments and vocations support or conflict with doing something new?
2. What are the facts of your life at this particular time and season? How does this compare/contrast with other times or seasons of your life?
3. What exhausts and what refreshes you about your place of work? What do you value about your current work?
4. What makes home home? What makes a space sacred? Where, when, how, and with whom do you play? Where do you vacation (re-create)?

5. What do you want to accomplish before you die? What legacy do you want to leave?

TOPICS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Brainstorm a list of places mentioned in the Bible (for example: Bethlehem, Sea of Galilee, Egypt, Garden of Eden, Jordan River, etc.) Choose a place that resembles your life now and describe why.

2. Choose from this list a place you would like to go to at the present time of your life. Describe why.

3. What freedoms and limitations do you experience at this time in your life?

QUESTIONS TOWARD DISCERNMENT

1. What was the process like? (How did it go?)

2. What emerged for each Seeker in exploring this topic?

3 How did you experience each Seeker in exploring this topic?

CONTEXT: SESSION III

To ask where each Seeker envisions and resists ministering including restrictions created by family commitments.

BIBLICAL SOURCE:

Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai saying, “Go at once to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before me.” But Jonah set out to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. Jonah 1:1-3a

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Where have you always dreamed about going? In terms of this session’s objectives, where do you envision yourself ministering?
2. What commitments (family, financial, denominational, educational, etc.) influence your place of ministry?
3. If you have not already done so, visit another Episcopal Church as suggested in “Some Things You May Want To Experience.” Record through writing or art your response to this experience.
4. If you have not already done so, visit a place where you feel drawn to ministry, as suggested in “Some

CONTEXT: DISCERNMENT REFLECTION II

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: We strongly suggest that you review all of the *Questions Toward Discernment* for all three sessions of CONTEXT. Take time to read all of these *Discernment Reflection* questions before you begin. You may find it helpful to use newsprint as a means of capturing the group's brainstorming in response to questions 1, 3, and 4 below. One approach would be to do one word brainstorming on the newsprint for each of these questions. The results of the brainstorming can then be edited to form a few sentences that sum up the group's thoughts, feelings, and experiences in response to the questions.

It is important that each member of the group prepare for this meeting by reviewing the CONTEXT sessions and seeking God's guidance in prayer **before** gathering for this session.

We suggest that you begin this session with a time of silence and prayer. The following prayer: *For all Christians in their vocation* is found in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.256.

*Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified:
Receive our supplications and prayers,
which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church,
that in their vocation and ministry they may truly and devoutly serve you;
through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.*

1. What were the key responses and concerns of each Seeker:
In Session I?

In Session II?

5. Are there other things you would like to report?

EMPOWERMENT

“When I first came to Santa Fe Mission, the whole place was locked up. There were burglar bars everywhere; everything had locks on it. The day was cold, in the middle of winter, and it was a real dead-looking place. But the people saw my car outside, and at least ten families came by, either to inquire what I was doing there or to look for help. Almost everybody that came had a need of some sort. And all I had to give them was grapefruit.”

Mary S. Donovan: *Women Priests in the Episcopal Church*, pp. 84-85

SOME THINGS YOU MAY WANT TO EXPERIENCE

BOOKS:

Can You Drink This Cup? by Henri Nouwen

My Name is Asher Lev by Chaim Potok

Is Nothing Sacred? by Marie Fortune

Making the Connections by Beverly Harrison

MUSIC:

The St. Matthew Passion composed by J. S. Bach

The St. John Passion composed by J. S. Bach

The Messiah composed by G. F. Handel

ACTION:

Do the Stations of the Cross using the service found in the *Book of Occasional Services* at your own or another church. (You should arrange for this with the priest in charge of the church.)

EMPOWERMENT: SESSION I

To ask how and when God has empowered each Seeker, exploring how ministry relates to her/his sense of personal fulfillment, and examining each Seeker’s relationship with power. To consider what this implies for ministry and what further healing or renewal is needed for wholeness.

BIBLICAL SOURCES:

...those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles...

Isaiah 40:28-31

...my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus... Philippians 2:1-18

SOURCES:

All the books listed above

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. With whom do you connect in the Passion stories or Stations of the Cross? Why?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Read the Passion Narrative as a group. Share your responses to it (emotional as well as intellectual). Share what you think it means to be faithful to the cross of Christ.
2. Could Paul really mean, “Rejoice in the LORD always” in Philippians 4:4? Is it really “meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, give thanks” as *The Book of Common Prayer* states in The Great Thanksgiving from Rite I (pp. 333, 341)? Share your responses. Reflect together on your experiences of crucifixion and resurrection.
3. Share what you have learned about your relationship with the power and authority that you hold. Share what you have learned about your relationship with the power and authority that others hold over you.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCERNMENT

1. What was the process like? (How did it go?)
2. What emerged for each Seeker in exploring this topic?
3. How did you experience each Seeker in exploring this topic?

EMPOWERMENT: SESSION II

To ask whether life/the Holy Spirit have shaped and continue to support any Seeker in a way that calls for exploring lay ministry through further discernment.

To ask whether life/the Holy Spirit have shaped and continue to support any Seeker in a way that calls for exploring ordained ministry through further discernment.

BIBLICAL SOURCES:

If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. James 1:5

Instructions on prayer found in Luke 11:1-13.

OTHER SOURCE:

*...God is power, God is truth, God is purity. Therefore, the first thought we ought to have when we do not tangibly perceive the divine presence, is a thought of gratitude. God is merciful; he does not come in an untimely way. Anthony Bloom, *Beginning To Pray*, p.27*

IN PREPARATION:

Read the Baptismal Covenant, beginning on page 304 in *The Book of Common Prayer*, regarding the ministry to which all baptized persons are called.

Remember, and spend time reflecting on, each Seeker's Spiritual Autobiography, or Map that was shared in the first session of VOCATION.

Read the Canons that pertain to what the Church seeks in a clergy person. A copy of the Canons should be available from your local Episcopal Church office. They are also available online from the ECUSA website: www.episcopalchurch.org.

Reread the quotation from Tournier. (VOCATION, Session III).

SPEND A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TIME THIS WEEK IN PRAYER.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. In what areas and through what events of life has the Holy Spirit shaped each Seeker's character in a way that seems compatible with lay ministry?
2. In what areas and through what events of life has the Holy Spirit shaped each Seeker's character in a way that seems compatible with ordained ministry?
3. What is God asking of each Seeker? When you envision God doing with each Seeker what God wants, what do you see?
4. Where is each Seeker? What is he/she doing?

5. Who else is there?

WRITE OR DRAW WHAT EMERGES FROM YOUR TIMES OF PRAYER.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

NOTE: This is not yet the time to seek consensus about each Seeker's specific call to ministry, lay or ordained. Simply be faithful about sharing what emerged from your time in prayer. Listen to one another. Do not comment, or critique.

1. Share and discuss the images that emerged from your prayers for each Seeker and for yourself.

2. Using newsprint:
 - Brainstorm words (not phrases) that come to your mind regarding each Seeker.

 - Are there words that the group believes should be underlined?

 - Are there words that the group may decide to cross out?

EMPOWERMENT: DISCERNMENT REFLECTION III

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: We strongly suggest that you review all of the *Questions Toward Discernment* for all three sessions of EMPOWERMENT. Take time to read all of these *Discernment Reflection* questions before you begin. You may find it helpful to use newsprint as a means of capturing the group's brainstorming in response to questions 1, 3, and 4 below. One approach would be to do one word brainstorming on the newsprint for each of these questions. The results of the brainstorming can then be edited to form a few sentences that sum up the group's thoughts, feelings, and experiences in response to the questions.

It is important that each member of the group prepare for this meeting by reviewing the EMPOWERMENT sessions and seeking God's guidance in prayer **before** gathering for this session.

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 Book of Common Prayer*.

*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 are 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.*

1. What were the key responses and concerns of each Seeker:

In Session I?

In Session II?

5. What does the group believe are next steps in faithfulness to each Seeker's vocation?

6. Are there other things you would like to report?

WHAT NEXT?

At the conclusion of this first series of discernment sessions you should share with the priest of your congregation the results of this process. If there is a call and need for further discernment to either a lay or ordained ministry based on the results of this particular process then your priest should contact the Diocesan Commission on Ministry Chairperson so you are able to continue in the appropriate next discernment process.

If you and the community have discerned a call to explore further a baptismal ministry through one of the many licensed lay ministries then you would continue with *The Gifts of God for the People of God*. That manual has the instructions, similar to those found in this manual, and you would continue on for five more sessions to ascertain which lay ministry and the necessary formation to achieve that certification and or license.

If you and the community have discerned a call to explore further a baptismal ministry through one of the ordained ministries, diaconate or priesthood, then you would continue with *Called to Serve and Love*. That manual has the instructions, similar to those founding this manual, and you would continue on for five more sessions to ascertain which of the ordained ministries and what necessary steps would then be needed to follow to achieve that vocational call.

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