



DISCERNMENT PROCESS

Commission on Ministry

Episcopal Diocese of Alaska

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In accordance with the Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Alaska, each person desiring ordination or Holy Orders shall consult with a member of the Commission on Ministry. “The Bishop and the Commission on Ministry (COM) shall provide encouragement, training and necessary resources to assist each congregation in developing an ongoing process of community discernment appropriate to the cultural background, age and life experiences of all persons seeking direction in their call to ministry.”

The following process will be used:

1. The applicant must be a communicant in good standing* and an active member of the host congregation for at least one year before beginning the Discernment Process.
2. At this point in the call process, it is appropriate for the applicant to discuss a sense of call only with the Rector or Clergy-in-Charge of the host congregation and the members of the Discernment Committee, so as not to influence the process in later steps. A period of discernment between the Rector/Clergy in Charge, if available, or COM mentor and the applicant shall precede the calling forth of a Discernment Committee.
3. Each new applicant shall have a Discernment Committee.
4. The applicant shall meet with a Discernment Committee at regular intervals for 6 to 12 months.
5. The Discernment Committee should be comprised of no less than 4 lay persons from various walks of life representing a cross-section of the congregation. It is suggested that at least one member come from another congregation.
6. During the discernment process, the applicant shall engage in spiritual direction with a spiritual advisor who is not a member of the Discernment Committee. The Rector/Clergy in Charge or COM mentor must be consulted in selecting the appropriate advisor. The name of the advisor shall be made known to the Bishop.

7. The applicant may plan and execute a “ministry/service project” as called by engaging the Gospel with the Discernment Committee.
8. The Discernment Committee would meet at least once per month with the applicant. The primary focus should be:
 - a. To engage the Gospel in a circle of love and prayer.
 - b. Explore the applicant’s spiritual journey and life story.
 - c. An intensive and sustained reflection on the nature of ministry and the services of ordination in the Book of Common Prayer is suggested. Other study sources are available from the COM.
 - d. The applicant’s spirituality, relationship to authority, ego needs, leadership style, personality type, gifts and skills should be considered.
 - e. It is further recommended that the applicant experience the breadth of the Episcopal Church. Therefore, Sunday visits to other congregations, Deanery meetings or the Diocesan Convention are suggested.
 - f. The applicant’s knowledge of the faith and practice of the Episcopal Church.
 - g. The applicant’s description of their call to ministry.
 - h. Practical matters – the applicant’s support network including income, family, and other resources.
9. When discernment has been completed, the chair of the Discernment Committee will complete the *Discernment Committee Report to the Rector/Priest-in-Charge or Bishop* obtained from the COM, or on the diocesan website. This is a confidential document that is submitted to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, if there is one. If not, it is submitted to the Bishop. The rector, priest-in-charge, or bishop will then make a report with recommendation to the Church Committee/Vestry.
10. If the Vestry or Church Committee chooses to nominate the person for continuing discernment for ordination, they complete the *Nomination for Postulancy from Church Committee/Vestry* and submit it to the Bishop and the Chair of Commission on Ministry. The Chair of the COM and Bishop will then determine if an interview with the applicant is needed and arrange for that to occur. This interview may be conducted by the whole COM or by a designated interview committee.
11. The Bishop may then accept or not accept the applicant for Postulancy with or without the consent of the COM.