Discerning Paths of Ministry

Prepared by the Commission on Ministry of The Diocese of El Camino Real

March 11, 2006

(Revised June 2016)
# Table of Contents

Letter from the Bishop................................................................. 3
Qualities to Consider in the Discernment of God’s Call................. 4
Chapter 1 Our Baptismal Ministry.................................................. 6
Chapter 2 The Varieties of Ministries.......................................... 8
Chapter 3 First Steps in Discernment........................................ 14
Chapter 4 Role of the Rector and Sponsoring Parish.................... 18
Chapter 5 The Deanery Discernment Process............................... 22
Appendix 1 Contacts in the Diocese.............................................. 24
Appendix 2 A Reading List for the Discernment of a Calling......... 25
Appendix 3 Glossary........................................................................ 27
Appendix 4 Checklists for the Rector and Vestry........................... 30
Appendix 5 Meeting Schedule....................................................... 31
Appendix 6 Selecting a Spiritual Director..................................... 32
Appendix 7 Overview of the Discernment Process for Holy Orders.. 35
Appendix 8 Guidelines for Rector’s Letters to the Bishop.............. 36
Appendix 9 Lay Orders and Programs in the Episcopal Church...... 37
Form 1 Application for Nomination for Holy Orders.................... 38
A Letter from Bishop Mary

June 30, 2016

Dear friends,

Peace and grace to you from our Lord Jesus Christ. If you are reading this letter, it may mean you sense God calling you to a process of discernment for new ministry. While for the Christian, learning to listen to the Holy Spirit is a lifelong spiritual practice, there are usually seasons in our lives where we feel drawn to pray, study and discern beyond the day-to-day life of the baptized.

Such discernment of the movement of the Spirit is a process and one which happens in community. In the church, a calling is never that of an individual but ours with God and the wider church. In other words, my call to be your bishop, is not ‘mine’, but ours, discerned between God, the diocese, the wider church and me. Your call will be realized amidst that same communal process. It is our honor to walk with you during such a season and I pray for the faithfulness of all who will be part of this journey.

As you read this document, be mindful of all the steps and people involved, as well as the array of ministry options that may be open to you. Ordination to the diaconate or priesthood may be the order in which you are to live out your baptized life, but also, please review the licenses for special lay ministries that involve preparation, mentoring and exercise in relation to the bishop and the wider diocese. Our process of discernment may lead you somewhere you never considered!

May God bless us with prayerful communion, wisdom and grace as we begin this adventure together.

With the Commission on Ministry,

Mary Gray-Reeves
Bishop, El Camino Real
Qualities to Consider in the Discernment of God’s Call

Through our Baptismal Covenant, we are all committed to a common ministry, serving Christ and the Church. For many of us, this ministry is in the laity; for some, it is as a deacon, a priest, or a bishop. If we make the effort to become aware of our abilities and gifts and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, with the encouragement of those around us, we may discern a specific way God would like us to live out our ministry. It can be a particular lay ministry, or it could be a call to the diaconate or the priesthood. The Commission on Ministry has identified what we believe are five important qualities that should be considered when trying to discern God’s call. These five qualities are listed below together with some specific elements of each, not listed in any particular order.

Christ Centered and Spiritually Grounded
- has a practiced life of Christian prayer and scripture study within the Episcopal tradition
- has a desire to seek and do God’s will
- has a deep commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord
- has a deep familiarity with the content of the Bible
- demonstrates a durable Christian faith and witness
- offers evidence of a life commitment to the development of moral character patterned after the life of Christ
- receives spiritual direction and is willing to continue this path throughout their life
- articulates their faith and personal spiritual journey in a way that draws others into the gospel story
- finds strength within the Christian community
- displays qualities of humility and Christ like servant leadership

Gifted at Gathering and Developing Community
- has a creative and entrepreneurial spirit
- demonstrates a gift of gathering and developing a community
- has a history of connecting, inviting, inspiring and unleashing the gathered body
- has a deep and enduring love for the Church
- has a desire to help others grow in faith, knowledge, and service
- is committed to care for and serve others and to be with them in times of crisis
- has the ability to teach and give a reasoned account of the Gospel
- has a missionary heart and appreciation of ministry to and with the community beyond the church gathered
- has a deep appreciation of and experience with diversity
- has an awareness of and involvement in the issues and needs of society
Practices Good Stewardship

- has a demonstrated ability to lead, manage, and delegate
- has a personal history of serving as a leader in a congregation
- is able to discern and exercise gifts for ministry in self and others
- is mindful of the church’s mission and has the ability to engage in the ministry of reconciliation
- is able to balance personal time and family relationships
- is able to care for self
- is able to clearly articulate their personal stewardship journey as it relates to money, resources and relationships
- is able and willing to talk about their current practice of giving and the tithe

Demonstrates Emotional Maturity

- is intelligent and imaginative
- has a relevant educational background
- has a desire to continue to learn
- has a healthy sense of personal and institutional boundaries
- exhibits a healthy sense of humor, with the ability to laugh at oneself
- has a self-awareness, including a firm grasp of one’s personal strengths and weaknesses and their impact on others
- has the capacity for perseverance in difficulty, a resilience in adversity, and an ability to use life experiences as vehicles for personal growth
- has the ability and is committed to listen with sensitivity and understanding
- is able to hear and accept constructive criticism
- is able to relate to people of different personalities, ages, and varying religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds

Understands Authority

- has an appreciation and respect for the practice of authority in The Episcopal Church
- has a healthy respect for the balance of the orders of ministry
- is fully aware of personal and institutional authority and responsible for their respectful use with others
- has a firm understanding of the polity of The Episcopal Church
- has a personal understanding of their own ability to maintain the ordination vows
- has an understanding of their authority and is energized and empowered by the Holy Spirit
Chapter 1, Our Baptismal Ministry

The process of discerning a call to ministry begins with reflection on our baptismal vows. There are times in our life when God seems to grasp our shoulders and turn us in new directions – toward God and toward every ministry that builds up the Kingdom of God’s love on earth as it is in heaven.

All members of the Episcopal Church are to carry out the vows of the baptismal covenant:

- To affirm the beliefs in the Apostle’s Creed;
- To continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers;
- To persevere in resisting evil, and when falling into sin, to repent and return to the Lord;
- To proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ;
- To seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves;
- To strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being.

Episcopalians believe that in baptism God gives each individual a unique and equally valid ministry to serve as a living example of God’s love for all of creation. We believe that our shared life and worship empower each of us to explore and follow that call to manifest God’s love in the world.

We also believe that call may be lived out in both lay and ordained ministries, both within and beyond the Church. The process outlined in these chapters is designed to help ascertain into which of those arenas an individual may be called. But it is most important to understand that baptismal ministry in our daily lives is the primary call for each of us. Our daily witness of Christ carries the Church into the world.

Pursuing Baptismal Ministry

For those wishing to explore more fully their baptismal ministry, the Commission on Ministry (the COM) recommends considering:

- Spiritual and pastoral discussions with their Rector;
- Spiritual and pastoral discussions with lay leaders who are intentionally involved in living out their baptismal ministries;
- Reaffirmation of baptismal vows if already confirmed, preparation for confirmation, if not confirmed, or for reception;
- Educational offerings and spiritual formation opportunities offered by local congregations;
• Pursuit of opportunities for education and spiritual Formation:
  
  ■ Education for Ministry (EFM), a four-year program of study of scripture, liturgy and Church history, theological reflection, and spiritual growth developed by the School of Theology at the University of the South at Sewanee and offered by several parishes in the Diocese;
  
  ■ Cursillo and other spiritual renewal groups;
  
  ■ Membership in organizations such as the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer or Daughters of the King;
  
  ■ Books, videos and other resources. Contact the Diocesan Resource Center, at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 231 S. Sunset Avenue, Sunnyvale CA, 94086-5938; Telephone 408-736-4155; http://www.stthomas-svale.org/

For those who have participated in these activities and desire further discernment of their call to ministry, we recommend:

  • Spiritual formation with a Spiritual Director.¹ See Appendix 6, Selecting a Spiritual Director
  
  • Discovery Day: My Call--Lay, Priest or Deacon?² workshop and the 12-week Inquirers Group³ follow-up program offered yearly by the Diocese.
  
  • On line courses offered by the Center for Anglican Learning and Leadership (CALL). Its website is http://cdsp.edu/academics/continuing-education/CALL.
  
  • Summer session and short courses offered by the Graduate Theological Union (GTU). Its website is www.gtu.edu.

¹ For those discerning a call to ordained ministry or a call to one of the licensed ministries which requires working with a Spiritual Director, the Bishop requires that the director be an Episcopalian for the duration of the ordination process or the duration of the license.

² Discovery Day: My Call—Lay, Priest or Deacon? was formally called Day of Discovery

³ Inquirers Group was formally called Context for Ministry.
Chapter 2, The Varieties of Ministries

An individual in a Christian community discerns, through a mutual process, a call to a particular role and order in the Church. Discernment includes these elements:

- The individual’s contribution, in which a combination of beliefs, experiences, gifts, desires, and abilities give a sense that God is calling the individual to some particular role or service in the Church;
- The Church’s participation, in which the community’s experience confirms that the individual has demonstrated beliefs, experiences, gifts, desires and abilities consistent with the possibility that God is calling the individual through the Church to a particular kind of service;
- Opportunity and appropriateness, in which the Church affirms the need for the particular role or position to be filled as part of its larger call to ministry and mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

These elements apply for all the servant-ministries of the Church, such as the election of a local Vestry member and to the hiring of a sexton and to the selection of a Church School teacher. They apply equally in the discernment that is necessary for the Church to ordain some of its ministers as Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.

Paul’s letters envision God as working for the whole ministry of the Church through the gifts, graces, and abilities of individuals who serve the larger body.

> Each one of us, however, has been given a share of grace, given as Christ allotted it...And to some his gift was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; so that the saints, together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ.\(^4\)

God calls people in the Church to numerous roles and servant ministries, of which only three are ordained. The Church conducts its fundamental ministry in countless roles and offices that do not require ordination. However, those who believe God calls them to ordination seek an honorable and highly public service in the name of Christ and the Church. Consequently, the Church invests more scrutiny and expects more accountability for those who are ordained than for any of the other offices and roles that serve the Church. Discernment may lead to:

- Clarifying, deepening, or strengthening a person’s ministry as part of the Laity, the people of God
- Seeking a lay professional vocation such as music, administration, advocacy, or education
- Becoming licensed for a lay ministry by the Diocese

---

\(^{4}\) Ephesians 4:7, 11-12
• Becoming a lay or vowed member of a religious community
• Being ordained to the Diaconate
• Being ordained to the Priesthood
• Being ordained as a Bishop

Discernment in community requires a level of vulnerability and openness, which can be rewarding but is often difficult and sometimes painful. The encouragement that can be offered is this: Trust that it is God who is working to deepen a call, trust the Church to stand with a person who is exploring a call, and have faith that God is present even in the awkward and sometimes difficult discoveries that may emerge. Trust the Holy Spirit.

Most Church members, who sense a call to serve Christ more fully, find their call to ministry is as laypersons both in the Church and in the world where they live and work. For others, exploration of a call to serve Christ more deeply leads to one of the other ministries.

**Training Outside the Church**

As people pursue their calling, they will find various kinds of training useful in building their gifts, using their strengths and weaknesses to choose courses which will complement and aid them in this endeavor. The opportunities to learn are wide and varied and will be useful to the Church. We need all types of skills in order to serve Christ and his Church. Such education could include:

• Training offered by community groups;
• Seminars;
• Leadership skills;
• Listening skills;
• Working with volunteers;
• Community development;
• Organizational skills;
• Financial and clerical skills;
• Community colleges, university extension courses;
• Teacher training;
• History and religious teachings in the Church;
• Psychological, social work, and medical skills;
• Web-based education extension courses such as the Center for Learning and Leadership (CALL) at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CDSP), [http://cdsp.edu/continuing-education/center-for-anglican-learning-and-leadership/](http://cdsp.edu/continuing-education/center-for-anglican-learning-and-leadership/)
Lay Professional Vocation in the Church

A lay professional is a paid employee in the Church with professional training but not requiring ordination. The title has significantly raised the consciousness of the Church about the presence, needs and contribution of laypersons employed in the Church and has served both to confirm many in the role and to point to the significance of their sense of call and their commitment to ministry in and for the Church.

Lay professionals view their work in the Church as a vocation, a response specific to God’s call in their lives. Lay professional workers are parish administrators, Christian educators, lay ministry coordinators, youth workers, secretaries, seminary professors, organists, music directors, pastoral care workers, and chaplains. Lay professionals are part of congregational and diocesan staff teams and special outreach ministries. Most lay professionals are paid, and the salary range varies with the scope of the work. The Church is increasingly supporting lay professionals as a vital and valid call to service.

Licensed Lay Ministries

The canons of the Episcopal Church provide for the licensing by a Diocese for specific lay ministries: Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Evangelist, and Catechist. (Title III, Canon 4). In addition to the Title III licensed ministries, the Bishop has added licenses for a Healing Minister and a Small Group Leader. Additional local licensed ministries may be developed in the future. A layperson must be a confirmed communicant in good standing and be recommended by a member of the clergy, usually their Rector, for one of these licenses. Specific qualifications and training requirements have been developed for each ministry. The descriptions are available on the Commission On Ministry section of the web site of the Diocese of El Camino Real: realepiscopal.org

Lay Orders and Programs in the Episcopal Church

For those interested in a closer relationship with God but not interested in living in a vowed community or in ordination, there are a number of opportunities in the Anglican/Episcopal tradition. Many of the vowed orders have lay associates, called a third order or tertiaries, who live independently while following a Rule of Life and participating in the good works of the order. (See Appendix 9, Lay Orders and Programs in the Episcopal Church)

Religious Orders in the Episcopal Church

One may wish to consider exercising one’s gifts in the Church as a member of a Religious Order, a faith community. http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/religious-orders-and-faith-communities
Members of a community live a vowed life. The particular vows vary from community to community and often include poverty, chastity and obedience, and dedication to God and God’s people. (Title III, Canon 14: Of Religious Orders and Other Christian Communities)

Ordained Ministries of the Diaconate and Priesthood

The pursuit of a call to ordination to the Diaconate or Priesthood is the beginning of an intensive period of testing and discernment. Selecting effective ordained leadership is vital to the future welfare of the Church; the process toward ordination is therefore comprehensive and careful. To assist in the discernment process, a brief description of the offices of Deacon, Priest and Bishop follows. (Title III, Canon 6, 8, and 11).

The Life and Work of a Deacon

The office of the Deacon is a sacramental office that reminds the Church and the world of the servant ministry of Christ. The servant ministry of the Deacon in the liturgy reminds us of our call to proclaim the Good News by word and example; and to serve others in Christ’s name.

A Deacon serves under the direction and guidance of the Bishop, who appoints the Deacon to a particular congregation or institution. The Deacon may exercise a ministry of pastoral care in the congregation and assist in the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry. A Deacon may also exercise a servant ministry in the larger community, which further embodies the Church’s ministry in the world. Most Deacons serving in the Diocese of El Camino Real are not financially compensated by the Church for their diaconal ministry.

The Book of Common Prayer outlines the ministry of the Deacon in ‘The Examination’ in the Ordination of a Deacon.

As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your work and example to those among whom you live, and work, and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God’s Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time. At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ’s people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.
The Life and Work of a Priest

The office of the Priest is a sacramental office, in which the Priest is an icon for the Church and the world of what it means to live our lives as an offering to God. A Priest must have the character and substance to be a role model and a conduit of God’s grace.

The office of the Priest is an extension of the Bishop’s ministry as chief pastor and guardian of the Faith. While the institutional Church usually compensates a Priest, this person may work in a secular job. The work of a Priest, as expressed in ‘The Examination’ from the ordination service in the Book of Common Prayer is:

...to work as a pastor, priest, and teacher, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.

As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God’s forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God’s blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ’s Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.

In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ’s people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.

The Life and Work of a Bishop

The office of the Bishop is a sacramental office in which the Bishop is chosen by the people of a diocese to serve the entire church, often providing oversight of a given diocese as well as being an active participant in the church on a provincial, national and international level. From the Examination in the ordination service in the Book of Common Prayer:

With your fellow bishops you will share in the leadership of the Church throughout the world. Your heritage is the faith of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and those of every generation who have looked to God in hope.

The Bishop is called to be the guardian of the faith, unity and discipline of the Church; to celebrate and to provide for the administration of the sacraments of the New Covenant; to
ordain priests and deacons and to join in ordaining bishops. As chief priest and pastor, the Bishop is to be a faithful and wholesome example for “the entire flock of Christ,” and a channel of God’s grace.

Again, from the Examination in the Book of Common Prayer:

Your joy will be to follow him who came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.
Chapter 3, First Steps in Discernment

The Church, in its community of dioceses, congregations, and individuals, is the authority to which all baptized persons look in discerning a specific vocation as members of Christ’s body. A personal sense of calling may be a first indicator that God is calling the person to a particular ministry as lay person or as an ordained person. This personal call will be tested both by the individual and by the wider Church community.

You may be in the process of discerning the nature of your own call to ministry. While discernment usually begins in your private conversation with God, eventually you must test it elsewhere. As your discernment progresses, you will be discussing the possibility of a call to a particular lay ministry or to an ordained ministry with a variety of people: your family, friends, members of your parish, and most especially with your rector. The conversation with your rector needs to be in depth and very intentional, and will likely be an on-going conversation between the two of you. The COM suggests that you give your rector a copy of Qualities to Consider in Discernment of God’s Call, (see pages 4-5) to help focus this process. If your mutual discernment moves in the direction of possible ordained ministry, your rector will assist you in widening your discernment process. You must have been a communicant in good standing and have been a leader in your parish for at least one year prior to seeking ordination. Due to the length of time and the cost of the discernment/ordination process, it is generally recommended that you enter the formal discernment process before you have reached the age of 53 if seeking the priesthood or before age 55 if seeking the deaconate. Age is never the only factor in the Bishop’s decision and your rector may still advise you to continue your discernment toward ordination even if you have passed those ages.

During this preliminary period, persons considering Holy Orders should also talk to priests and deacons in other parishes, missions, and institutions of the Diocese about their work and read some of the various resources on lay and ordained ministry found in Appendix 2 of this document. If you do not currently have an in depth knowledge of the Bible, it is highly recommended by the Bishop and the COM that you begin to increase your knowledge at this time. Reading the Bible in its entirety using a study plan such as The Bible Challenge is one method of doing that. (http://thecenterforbiblicalstudies.org/) Consider encouraging others within your parish or community to read and reflect on the passages with you. An alternative method of increasing biblical knowledge is to read the Bible while reading and studying the Education for Ministry (EFM) texts: A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible by John J. Collins and Introducing the New Testament by Mark Allan Powell. EFM recommends the use of the most recent Oxford Annotated edition of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, but any translation may be used as long as it includes the Apocrypha. Paraphrased Bibles are not recommended for study.
The formal discernment process in the Diocese of El Camino Real is the same for the Laity, Diaconate and the Priesthood. It begins with the *Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon?* offered annually by the COM. The twelve-week *Inquirers Group* program follows the *Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon?*. The purpose of these programs is to create an environment for interested persons who want to discover more about how the four orders of ministry in the Episcopal Church (laity, deaconate, priesthood, and bishop) complement and support each other. The programs are open to all interested laypersons, but are required for individuals considering Holy Orders. Development and implementation of a ministry project is an important component of the *Inquirers Group* program and is seen by the COM as an essential step in the discernment process. Participants in these programs are called Inquirers. The COM appoints members from each deanery to act as facilitators for inquirers who are participating in the *Inquirers Group* program. The facilitators are available to answer the inquirer’s questions as they progress through the program. During the *Inquirer’s Group*, facilitators will introduce the Scripture Knowledge Assessment tool designed to assist those who are considering Holy Orders to prepare for future studies and hand out the cover letter for the tool. Inquirers may choose to participate in the *Inquirers Group* program immediately following the *Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon?*, wait until a later date or, if not seeking Holy Orders, may choose to participate only in the *Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon?*.

During the *Inquirers Group* program, the inquirer will begin regular meetings with a spiritual director who is an ordained Episcopalian. An approved list of directors is available on the web site: realepiscopal.org. A member of the sponsoring parish, the COM, or the Standing Committee may not be the inquirer’s spiritual director. This exclusion will enable participants to share their spiritual journeys in confidence. The spiritual director does not report to the COM, the Standing Committee, or the Bishop. (See Appendix 6, Selecting a Spiritual Director)

Inquirers who have a growing sense of a call to Holy Orders should continue to explore the idea of such a call with their rector and with members of their parish. Meeting with the Bishop to discuss further discernment requires the support of the rector. Entering the formal ordination process requires the endorsement of the rector and the vestry. Inquirers should read and share this document, *Discerning Paths of Ministry*, with their rector particularly encouraging the reading of Chapter 3, *First Steps in Discernment* and Chapter 4, *Role of the Rector and Sponsoring Parish*. Inquirers are advised to pay attention to the responsibilities of the rector, vestry and the parish as described in Chapter 4 and to remind their rectors when an action is needed.

---

5 Discovery Day: My Call – Lay, Priest or Deacon? was formally called Day of Discovery.
6 Inquirers Group was formally called Context for Ministry.
7 Under exceptional circumstance the Bishop and the COM may provide an alternative method of meeting these requirements or eliminate them.
Toward the end of the *Inquirers Group* program, the inquirer seeking Holy Orders should confer with the rector to be sure that there is support for continued pursuit of this goal and that all of the prerequisites for a discernment committee have been met. (See Chapter 4) The rector will then write a letter of introduction to the Bishop indicating support for further discernment. The inquirer may then request a meeting with the Bishop to discuss the next steps in the process. During this meeting the inquirer should discuss with the Bishop any plans to enter a formal program of study at a theological institution prior to acceptance as a postulant. Although it is no longer canonically required, the Bishop, in most cases, will require those persons seeking the priesthood to hold a bachelor’s degree or its equivalent to assure academic readiness for seminary. If the inquirer is living in an intimate sexual relationship outside of marriage, he/she should be prepared to discuss the topic of marriage when meeting with the Bishop. The Bishop’s policy is to not ordain persons living in a committed relationship outside of marriage.

With the Bishop’s approval, the inquirer should contact the chair of the COM to discuss the appointment of a Deanery Discernment Committee. The Chair will also appoint a liaison for the inquirer at that time. See Guideline 1 in the COM’s document *Steps Toward Ordination* for a description of the role of the liaison. Proof of baptism and confirmation or reception into the Episcopal Church is required by canon at the time an inquirer is nominated for Holy Orders. **The COM wishes to be assured that this proof is available before a discernment committee is appointed.**

The Deanery Discernment Committee will meet regularly with the inquirer to help in discerning the specific nature of God’s call to ministry. This call may be discerned to be to the Laity, Diaconate, or Priesthood. Chapter 5 of this document describes the Deanery Discernment Process. It is expected that it will take the inquirer at least six to eight months from the Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon? to the completion of the Deanery Discernment Committee’s report.

Upon the Deanery Discernment Committee’s recommendation to continue the process of discerning Holy Orders, the inquirer should contact his/her liaison and report that nomination is being sought from the sponsoring parish. The liaison from COM needs to meet with the vestry and rector of the inquirer’s parish to train them in the nomination process and to discuss the congregation’s ongoing responsibilities. **Since the COM requires this training prior to the vestry’s and rector’s completion of Form 6, Endorsement of Nomination for Holy Orders, the inquirer will work with the rector and liaison to ensure that this training is scheduled.** All of the COM’s forms are located in the document *Steps Toward Ordination*. The inquirer should notify his/her liaison when the sponsoring parish has signed the endorsement form and has submitted it to the vocations secretary.

**After nomination, the inquirer will send the completed Nomination Package to the vocations secretary.** This package includes Application for Holy Orders (Form 1), a recent photograph, and a letter of recommendation from the rector.
Upon receipt of the Nomination package, the inquirer becomes a nominee. The nominee should complete the open book Scriptural Knowledge Assessment tool that was distributed during the Inquirers Group. The Bishop and the COM believe that students benefit more from advanced Biblical course work and preaching preparation if they enter a formal program of theological preparation with solid Biblical knowledge. The completed tool should be given to the liaison who will arrange for it to be reviewed. The results will be shared with the nominee and the COM and may indicate the need for additional scriptural study but will not delay the next step in the process.

The remaining steps in the process are described in detail in the COM’s document *Steps Toward Ordination*. The nominee is advised to study the beginning sections of this document as some of the early requirements are time sensitive. The discernment process culminates with an invitation from the COM with the Bishop’s approval to the Ministry Discernment Conference, a comprehensive set of interviews with the COM. At the conclusion of the conference the COM will make its recommendation to the Bishop. The Bishop will decide whether the individual will become a postulant in the ordination process or continue to serve in the lay order. The COM will be available to support those who continue ministry in the lay order as well as those who continue in the ordination process.

For an outline of the early steps in the discernment process for Holy Orders, see Appendix 7. Chapters 4 and 5 of this document are written for inquirers who are seeking Holy Orders and for their rectors and congregations. Appendix 4 and Appendix 5 apply only when the inquirer is seeking Holy Orders.
Chapter 4, Role of the Rector and Sponsoring Parish

A call to ordained ministry consists of the perceived call of an individual from God and the ratification of that call by the Church community. The local community plays a vital role in the ordination process. Discernment of a call to ordained ministry at the congregational level primarily involves the rector. Later in the process the Deanery Discernment Committee, made up of parishioners from several churches in the deanery, is involved in the discernment of a call. The vestry particularly plays a vital role in the entire process as it is required to endorse an applicant at each major step. The COM will provide training for vestries. The sponsoring congregation needs to support its member throughout the entire process, from before nomination through its conclusion.

The Role of the Rector

The rector is often the first person a parishioner speaks to about a call to ordained ministry. Several years of dialogue may pass before an individual is ready for the first formal step toward Holy Orders. During this period, the rector may recommend prayer, spiritual direction, Bible study, special readings, and lay ministry projects appropriate to the order to which an individual feels called. For additional clarity in the discernment process, the COM recommends that the rector introduce the parishioner to deacons and priests outside of the parish. Participation in formal study, such as Education For Ministry (EFM), online or summer courses offered by seminaries, or similar education, may be beneficial. Such attendance will not be considered to be either detrimental or beneficial to entering the ordination process. Inquirers should discuss with the bishop any plan to enter a formal program of study at a theological institution prior to acceptance as a postulant.

If the mutual discernment of the rector and the parishioner moves in the direction of ordained ministry and either has concerns about the parishioner’s knowledge of biblical content, the rector should recommend that the parishioner read the Bible in its entirety using a study plan such as The Bible Challenge (http://thecenterforbiblicalstudies.org/) and recommend the formation of a group within the parish or community to read and reflect on the readings. An alternative recommendation for increasing biblical knowledge would be for the parishioner to read the Bible while reading and studying the Education for Ministry (EFM) texts: A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible by John J. Collins and Introducing the New Testament by Mark Allan Powell. Along with these texts, EFM recommends the use of the most recent Oxford Annotated edition of the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, but any translation may be used as long as it includes the Apocrypha. Paraphrased Bibles are not recommended for study.
The Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon? and Inquirers Group programs offered by the Diocese are required for those entering the ordination process and are the first formal steps in the discernment process. Under exceptional circumstance the Bishop and the COM may provide an alternative method of meeting these requirements or eliminate them.

The rector may assist the parishioner in selecting an appropriate ordained or lay Episcopalian to serve as the spiritual director. The spiritual director may not be a lay or ordained member of the parish, the COM, or Standing Committee. (See Appendix 6, Selecting a Spiritual Director.) Regular meetings with an approved spiritual director are a required component of the discernment and ordination processes, beginning with the Inquirers Group Program.

The introduction to this document specifies the qualities the COM looks for in persons seeking ordination. (See pages 4-5) An inquirer should be respected by the parish, have already demonstrated leadership in ministry, and possess a strong personal faith that is publicly acknowledged. The inquirer should be emotionally mature and be open and willing to explore that call with the leadership of the parish and the wider diocesan community. A person seeking Holy Orders should be someone parishioners can envision functioning as a deacon or priest. Due to the length of time and the cost of the discernment/ordination process, it is generally recommended that an inquirer enter the formal discernment process before reaching the age of 53 if seeking the priesthood or before age 55 if seeking the deaconate. Age is never the only factor in the Bishop’s decision and the rector may still advise an inquirer to continue his or her discernment toward ordination even if the parishioner has passed those ages.

The rector shall make a careful inquiry, in consultation with other leaders of the congregation, into the physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual qualifications of the person. If the rector discerns that a person considering Holy Orders is better suited to lay ministry or clearly unsuited for ordained ministry, compassionate, honest, and courageous guidance early in the process will avoid a lot of pain and expense for the individual, the congregation, and the diocese.

Before the inquirer meets with the Bishop for the first time, the rector shall send a short letter of introduction to the Bishop indicating support for the inquirer who is seeking further discernment. A more detailed letter of recommendation will need to be sent later if the inquirer is nominated for Holy Orders. (See appendix 8, Guideline for Rector’s Letters to the Bishop.)

Before the inquirer asks the COM to select a Deanery Discernment Committee, the rector should verify that the prerequisites for a discernment committee have been met.

The inquirer has:
- been a communicant in good standing and a leader in the congregation for at least one year.
- been baptized and has been confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church. (Proof required)
- a bachelor’s degree or the equivalent if seeking the priesthood. (While a bachelor’s degree is no longer a canonical requirement it is a requirement of the Bishop in order to assure academic readiness for seminary.)
- been in discussion about the call with the rector for a significant time.
- completed the Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon? and Inquirers Group programs offered by the Diocese of El Camino Real. One of the requirements of the Inquirers Group Program is that each participant must design and carry out a ministry project in the parish or its community.
- been meeting regularly with a spiritual director
- support of the rector for continued discernment.

The rector should inform the vestry when a parishioner begins to work with a Deanery Discernment Committee. A parishioner who is not well known to the vestry should be invited to a vestry meeting to discuss the early exploration of call. When the Deanery Discernment Committee has completed its work, the rector will receive a copy of the Committee’s report. If the report recommends that the parishioner continue the process of discerning Holy Orders, the rector asks the COM liaison to train the vestry on their responsibilities in the nomination and the ordination processes. **The COM requires this training prior to the vestry’s and rector’s nomination for Holy Orders and recommends that the vestry have an opportunity to review “Qualities to Consider in the Discernment of God’s Call” (see pages 4-5 of this document).**

If the inquirer is nominated, the rector shall write a letter of recommendation stating that the individual meets canonical requirements and why the parishioner should enter the formal ordination process. The letter should be sent to the Bishop by the rector and will also be submitted by the inquirer as part of the nomination packet. (See Appendix 8, Guideline for Rector’s Letters to the Bishop) Prior to the Discernment conference, the nominee’s liaison will contact the rector to discuss the strengths and areas of needed grow for the parishioner. If the parishioner is admitted to postulancy and continues in the ordination process, the rector will be asked to sign endorsements for candidacy and ordination at the appropriate times. (See Appendix 4, Check List for the Rector.) Before the parishioner meets with the COM for advancement to the next canonical step in the ordination process, the liaison will contact the rector for any additional input.

**The Role of the Vestry**

The vestry plays a vital role in the entire discernment process. The Canons of the Episcopal Church require vestry members to sign certificates of recommendation several times during the process toward ordination. The vestry is responsible to the whole Church to know each parish member considering Holy Orders and to consult with the rector before signing the certificates.
Part of the discernment process for applicants involves attending a Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon?. This training day would also be beneficial for vestry members so they could understand part of the discernment process. The COM will provide training specifically for vestries on the discernment process and the vestries’ responsibilities in the nomination and ordination processes. Before the vestry nominates a member for Holy Orders, it should consult with the rector and interview the parishioner. When the vestry agrees to nominate a parishioner, the rector and the members of the vestry will be asked to sign Form 6, *Endorsement of Nomination for Holy Orders* found in the COM’s document *Steps Toward Ordination*. As the parishioner successfully moves through the steps of the ordination process, the vestry will be asked to sign additional endorsements at candidacy and ordination. (See Appendix 4, Check List for Vestry.)

When a vestry nominates a member, it is agreeing to support that parishioner spiritually and financially throughout the ordination process. The degree of financial support will vary depending on the resources of the congregation. It can range from the amount raised at a bake sale to a substantial grant. The vestry should lead the congregation’s participation in the support of the member seeking ordination. In addition to tuition, the person in the ordination process will be asked to pay for a psychological examination, a Clinical Pastoral Education/Local Chaplaincy Program and an Industrial Areas Foundation training course. In most cases the parishioner will benefit more from direct payment toward these additional expenses rather than personally receiving the funds.

**The Role of the Sponsoring Parish**

If the Deanery Discernment Committee and the vestry of the sponsoring parish agree that the parishioner is called to ordained ministry, the congregation should be prepared to support and encourage the individual actively throughout that journey to ordination. Parish support should include remembering the individual in the Prayers of the People, providing financial assistance, inviting that person to preach, and maintaining communication during the time of preparation. The sponsoring congregation needs to support its member throughout the entire process, from before nomination through its conclusion.

If the conclusion is that the individual is called to lay ministry, the rector, vestry, members of the Deanery Discernment Committee, and the COM should be prepared to support and encourage the person to discover, claim, and train for that ministry.
Chapter 5, The Deanery Discernment Process

The call to ministry is an evolving process that may lead into uncharted territory and into varieties of service over time. God calls us all to ministry. Our task is to hear the call and to respond. The discernment process is for the whole church, and a significant portion occurs at the deanery level in the Diocese of El Camino Real. The process can take from one to two years or more. Every parish is strongly encouraged to participate in the deanery discernment process and to provide members for the Deanery Discernment Committee (the Committee).

The Committee is one of many groups that will be discerning on behalf of the Church how God calls a person to serve as a member of the laity, diaconate, or priesthood. The Committee will work with the inquirer to help discern God’s call through discussions, prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, following the meeting schedule shown in Appendix 5. A final written report will be submitted to the COM that summarizes the results of the meetings and, when applicable, affirms that the inquirer should continue with the process of discerning Holy Orders.

The Deanery Discernment Committee

The members of the Committee should be active in a parish and be familiar with the roles of the four orders of ministry in the Church. All members must keep confidences, listen with open minds and hearts, and prayerfully seek and speak the truth with love.

Everyone selected to serve on a Committee must be a parishioner of a church in the diocese. Each rector is asked to recommend one or two members from the congregation to become potential members of a Committee. All members will be trained in the discernment process by a member of the COM. A Committee ideally consists of a minimum of four members, and there will be no more than two members from any one parish. The inquirer’s liaison will provide pastoral support to the committee when needed.

When ready to start the deanery discernment process, the inquirer will contact the chair of the COM, and an assignment will be made to a Committee. The Committee will meet at least once before meeting with the inquirer. The inquirer will meet in person with the Committee a minimum of eight times over a period of no less than three months. Additional Committee meetings may be necessary to complete the process and write the report.
The Deanery Discernment Committee Report

When the Committee completes its discernment, it will prepare a final report in a format suggested by the COM that summarizes the results of their meetings and recommends that the inquirer either continue with the process of discerning Holy Orders or continue to serve God in the lay order of ministry. The Committee shall meet with the inquirer to review the report and discuss its conclusions and recommendations. This should be a candid, open, honest, and caring conversation with the inquirer. Following this discussion, the Committee shall send the written report to the Bishop, the Chair of the COM, the Vocations Secretary, the inquirer’s rector, and the inquirer. If consensus of the Committee is lacking, the report should so state, and the Committee members may submit alternative conclusions and recommendations. The report is confidential and the rector must exercise discretion in sharing it with the vestry.
Appendix 1: Contacts in the Diocese

The web site of the Diocese of El Camino Real is realepiscopal.org

For a current list of the members of the Commission on Ministry, visit the website (look under “Resources”).
Appendix 2, A Reading List for the Discernment of a Calling
Revised August 2012

- *Weeds Among the Wheat*, Green, Thomas, Ave Maria Press, 1990
- *Still: Notes on a Mid-Faith Crisis*, Lauren Winner, Harper One, 2012

Additions to the Reading List

Diana Butler Bass
  - *Christianity for the Rest of Us*, 2006
  - *A People’s History of Christianity*, 2010
  - *Christianity After Religion*, 2012

Dorothy Bass
  - *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, 2010

Peter Block
  - *Community*, 2008

Marcus Borg
  - *Speaking Christian: Why Christian Words have Lost Their Meaning and Power—And How They Can Be Restored*, 2011

Brene Brown
  - *The Gifts of Imperfection*, 2010
Juanita Brown and David Issacs  
*The World Café, Shaping our Futures through conversations that matter*, 2005

Mark Chaves  
*American Religion: Contemporary Trends*, 2011

Kenda Creasy Dean  
*Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*, 2010

Jean-Pierre De Caussade, Kitty Muggeridge, and Richard J. Foster  
*The Sacrament of the Present Moment*, 1989

Verna Dozier  
*The Dream of God*, 2006

Elizabeth Drescher  
*Tweet If You ♥ Jesus: Practicing Church in the Digital Reformation*, 2011  
*Click 2 Save: The Digital Ministry Bible*, 2012 (with Keith Anderson)

Patrick Keifert  
*We Are Here Now*, 2006

Patrick Lencioni  
*The Advantage*, 2012

Patrick McCaslin and Michael G. Lawyer  
*Sacrament of Service*, 1986

Carol Howard Merritt  
*Tribal Church: Ministering to the Missing Generation*, 2007

Ormonde Plater  
*Deacons in the Church*, 2003  
*Deacons in the Liturgy*, 2009

Sam Portaro  
*Crossing the Jordan*, 1999

Mary Gray-Reeves  
*The Hospitality of God: Emerging Worship for a Missional Church*, 2011

Richard Rohr  
*Everything Belongs*, 2003  
*Falling Upward: Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*, 2011

A. Wayne Schwab  
*When the Members are the Missionaries*, 2002

Christian Schwartz and Robert E. Logan  
*Natural Church Development*, 1996

Stephanie Spellers  
*Radical Welcome*, 2006

Barbara Brown Taylor  
*An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith*, 2009

Caroline Westerhoff  
*Calling: A Song for the Baptized*, 1994
Appendix 3, Glossary

Most words and phrases apply to both Canons 6 and 8.

**Bishop:** An ordained minister who carries on the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and uniting the Church. The Bishop serves as the chief pastor of the Diocese and has the central role in the ordination process.

**Candidacy:** A canonical step in the ordination process. Candidacy is the time between postulancy and ordination.

**Canons:** The laws of the church.

**Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE):** An accredited program of education, which focuses on discovering and forming the student’s pastoral style, abilities, and psychological and spiritual well-being in circumstances when the student is practicing pastoral care for others.

**Commission on Ministry** (the COM): A canonically established body which assists the Bishop in determining needs, recruitment, selection, and training of persons for ordained ministry. Members also act as a liaison to inquirers, postulants and candidates in the process for ordination. In the Diocese of El Camino Real, the convention elects four clergy and four lay members for staggered four-year terms. The Bishop appoints eight members.

**Communicant:** A baptized person who is faithful in corporate worship and has received the Sacrament of Holy Communion in this Church at least three times during the preceding 12 months, unless good cause prevented participation.

**Communicant in Good Standing:** A communicant who is 16 years old or older, and who is a recorded contributor to the support of the Church, sharing in worship and praying, working and giving for the health of the Kingdom of God.

**Discovery Day: My call: Lay, Priest or Deacon?:** A one-day workshop offered by the Diocese of El Camino Real to any lay person interested in learning about the four orders of ministry in the Episcopal Church – lay, deacon, priest and bishop. The Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Priest?: workshop is required for all persons seeking ordination, including Canon 10 clergy.

**Deanery Discernment Committee (DDC):** A continuing group of persons trained by the COM to work with inquirers in the call to ministry.

**Diaconal Ordination Exam (DOE):** The DOE, written and administered by the Diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains is a comprehensive examination of a person seeking to be ordained to the Vocational Diaconate.
Diaconate: The servant order of Deacons, who minister in Christ’s name to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the helpless.

Discernment: The process of testing, clarifying, and evaluating a perceived call to a particular ministry in the Body of Christ. An individual and the Church in the trust and belief that the Holy Spirit will be a faithful guide to understanding and acceptance of the truth concerning the call to ministry mutually enter into this process. Discernment is a life-long process.

Ember Day Letters: Postulants and candidates communicate quarterly with the Bishop through Ember Day Letters. This correspondence provides opportunities to share prayerful reflections about academic, personal, and spiritual experiences. Ember Days fall on the Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays following the first Sunday in Lent, Pentecost Sunday, September 14th, and the third week in Advent. These letters are private and do not become part of a person’s file.

General Ordination Examination (GOE): The GOE, written and administered by the Board of Examining Chaplains of the Episcopal Church, is a comprehensive examination of a person seeking ordination to the Priesthood.

Inquirer: A person who is contemplating a call to Holy Orders and entering into the beginning steps of the discernment process.

Inquirers Group Program: A twelve-week program, used by the Diocese of El Camino Real for a ministry discernment program. It is required of all persons applying for Holy Orders.

Inquirers Group Project: A project carried out during the Inquirers Group program to give a student a sample of ministry.

Laity: The word “laity” derives from the Greek word “laos” which literally means “the people.” The word refers to the non-ordained ministers of the Church, who become ministers through their baptism. The Diocese of El Camino Real sees the ministry of the Laity as an order of ministry that serves both inside and outside the Church.

Lay Professional: A trained individual who is pursuing a career in the Church as a layperson, such as an organist, parish nurse, and director of Christian education.

Liaison: A member of the COM who provides a person in process with a consistent link to the COM from the time the inquirer requests a Deanery Discernment Committee until the end of the process.

Licensed Lay Ministries: The canons of the Episcopal Church provide for the licensing by a Diocese for specific lay ministries: Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Evangelist, and Catechist. (Title III, Canon 4).
In addition to the six canonical licenses, the Bishop of the Diocese of El Camino Real offers licenses for Healing Minister and Small Group Leader.

**Master of Divinity (M. Div.):** The Master of Divinity is a degree granted by seminaries, normally after three years of graduate level study.

**Ministry Discernment Conference**  A comprehensive interview with the Commission On Ministry for invited Nominees.

**Nominee:** A person at the beginning of the canonical ordination process who has been nominated for Holy Orders by his or her sponsoring parish and who has accepted the nomination. The inquirer officially becomes a nominee when the Nomination Packet is received by the vocations secretary.⁸

**Postulancy:** A canonical step in the process. Postulancy is the period of time between nomination and candidacy.

**Priest:** An ordained minister called and trained to assist the Bishop in the governance, missionary, pastoral, preaching, and sacramental work of the Church. All Priests first serve as Deacons.

**Psychological Examinations:** A psychological examination is required in the Diocese of El Camino Real prior to consideration for postulancy. A second psychological examination will be required if ordination is scheduled more than 36 months after the first examination.

**Transitional Deacon:** A person called to the Priesthood, who serves at least 6 months as a Deacon before ordination as a Priest.

**Vocational Deacon:** A person called to and trained for ordained ministry in the order of Deacons who does not intend to seek ordination to the Priesthood. A Deacon is an ordained minister whose call is to be an icon of servant ministry in the Church and in the world by ministering in Christ’s name to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the helpless.

---

⁸ See Chapter 3 for contents of the Nomination Packet.
Appendix 4, Checklists

For the Rector

- In depth discussion with parishioner about discerning a call to ministry.
- Arrange for the parishioner to experience a variety of ministry opportunities in the parish.
- Send short introduction/support letter to Bishop
- Confirm that prerequisites for a Deanery Discernment Committee have been met
- Receive Deanery Discernment Committee Report
- Schedule vestry training with Commission member
- Schedule vestry interview with parishioner
- Sign Form 6, Endorsement of Nomination for Holy Orders
- Write letter of recommendation as part of Nomination Packet
- Sign endorsements for candidacy and ordination

For the Vestry

- Participate in vestry discussion with commission member on the orders of ministry and vestry’s responsibilities during the ordination process
- Complete and sign Form 6, Endorsement of Nomination for Holy Orders
- Complete and sign endorsements for candidacy and ordination
Appendix 5, Meeting Schedule

A Deanery Discernment Committee Meeting Schedule
Suggested by the COM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session Topic:</th>
<th>Participants:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Information, Training and Organization</td>
<td>Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Introductions/Life History, Spiritual Journey and Discernment of Call</td>
<td>Committee/Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Inquirers Group, Ministry Project, and the Faith Community</td>
<td>Committee/Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a Review previous sessions</td>
<td>Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Christ Centered and Spiritually Grounded&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Committee/Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gifted at Gathering and Developing Community</td>
<td>Committee/Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a. Review previous sessions</td>
<td>Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Emotional Maturity</td>
<td>Committee/Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Understanding Authority</td>
<td>Committee/Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7a. Review previous sessions</td>
<td>Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Stewardship/ Wrap-up</td>
<td>Committee/Inquirer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Preliminary Drafting of Committee’s Report</td>
<td>Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Review of the Final Report</td>
<td>Committee/Inquirer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>9</sup> Underlined topics are from Qualities to Consider in the Discernment of God’s Call found on page 4 of this document.
Appendix 6, Selecting a Spiritual Director

What is Spiritual Direction?
Spiritual direction is a relationship with a wise and grounded person with whom to discuss and pray about what is happening in one’s life in God. How is our most intimate and profound relationship with the Holy understood, entered into, and nurtured? What happens when God seems distant, absent, unavailable? You open your soul to your spiritual director to have reflected back to you what s/he sees God doing in you. A director is a critical element in any process of discernment, but particularly discernment for Holy Orders. Spiritual Directors are sometimes called Guides, Advisors, or Companions. A “confessor” – a role distinct and different from spiritual director – is a priest or bishop from whom one seeks sacramental absolution via confession. Once ordained your spiritual director becomes even more important as a dose of reality and undergirding for your life in ministry. Spiritual Directors International is a good resource for understanding the concept of spiritual direction. http://www.sdiworld.org. The COM does not recommend using this site to find a director as no screening has been done.

Why is it important? Why is it required?
Most simply put, you can’t make the journey in an ordained leadership role alone. You are at risk if you do not have the support and the tough questions a good spiritual director provides. You need to be as centered as you can before you can be unambiguously available to congregants, to marginalized populations, to your own family. You need someone to whom to turn when things go superbly and when they fall apart and especially when life and ministry is an abundance of ordinariness.

Choosing a Spiritual Director
There are several criteria that can govern your choice of spiritual director:

**Tradition.** During your journey toward ordination the director must be an ordained Episcopalian. Although it is not required, you should consider selecting a director who is a member of the order of ministry that you are discerning.

**Gender** can be a factor. Will you be most open, most attentive, most receptive to a person of your own or the opposite gender? Notice what feelings and issues come up as you ponder your answer.

**Convenience** is important. Meeting in person is the expectation. Even the most ideal person cannot function if the process of meeting together is significantly burdensome. If meeting in person is not always possible, meeting face to face using Skype or a similar video conference program, while not ideal, is acceptable. Meeting by telephone is not considered appropriate.

**Must Haves**

**Training.** A spiritual director must have some intentional training and spiritual formation as a director. There are a number of programs locally and across the country.

---

10 This appendix is adapted from the School For Deacons document *A Guide to Spiritual Direction* with input from The Reverend Linda Taylor, Rector, St. Mark’s Church, Santa Clara, CA (retired).
11 While many lay Episcopalians work with spiritual directors, this document is designed for those who are pursuing ordination in the Diocese of El Camino Real.
A director must be a product of one of them. There is currently no process for certifying or licensing spiritual directors.

**Supervision.** Your director must be in direction him/herself and/or in frequent peer supervision. Without accountability, a director can be less than helpful, even harmful.

**Identity.** A spiritual director is a spiritual director. A therapist is a therapist. They are two completely different roles, disciplines, and focuses. A number of therapists tack on spiritual direction as an additional “service” without the proper training.

**Must Avoid**
Your rector or anyone else from your home or field work parish cannot be your spiritual director. Your therapist, family member, close personal friend, employer, or employee cannot be your spiritual director. You are likely to develop a spiritual friendship with a director, but to seek direction from someone with too much shared history or/and where there are obvious or not so obvious boundaries is not a good idea.

**How to Proceed?**

**Get some names.** An approved list of directors is available at the Commission On Ministry section of the diocesan website: [realepiscopal.org](http://realepiscopal.org). Network with friends, colleagues, clergy to get their recommendations. If you wish to work with a director who is not on the approved list, you will need to discus the proposed director’s qualifications with the Bishop. Keep the whole process in prayer, asking for guidance.

Other resources for names include Mercy Center: [http://www.mercy-center.org/ProgramsSD/SpiritualDirector.html](http://www.mercy-center.org/ProgramsSD/SpiritualDirector.html) and/or contact Marilyn Granucci directly at 650-340-7416) and the Contemplative Center of Silicon Valley at Westhope Presbyterian: [http://www.ccofsv.org/index.html](http://www.ccofsv.org/index.html).

**Interview some prospects.** After ascertaining that the person is still an active spiritual director, ask for an initial meeting to explore the possibility. The first interview with a potential director is a time to become acquainted, clarify expectations, and begin to determine if this relationship is a good fit for both you and the director. Each should have questions for the other. Some of the questions the director might ask include:
- What is bringing you to seek direction at this time?
- Have you had any experience with helping relationships?
- What are your hopes for the spiritual director relationship?

Questions to ask the potential director include:
- What is your training and experience?
- Do you have experience working with people on the path to ordination?
- How do you receive the support you need to do this work?
- How do you understand this process?
- Do you charge a fee?

**Ask and listen.** You are looking for someone you can trust and someone who will be a “fit” for you. Pay attention to your feelings about the person and the conversation. Do you feel comfortable? What is it like to talk about yourself and your hopes with this
person? How does your body feel? You should not feel obligated to commit to this relationship at the time of the initial interview. It is a time for exploration but not yet the time for establishing a covenant.

**Other issues to be determined:**
- Frequency, place, time and length of the meetings
- Methods of contacting one another
- Methods of evaluation
- Time of the next meeting

*Pray about your interview/s* Ask for guidance and hold the memory of your time with the person/s in your prayer. Notice what happens in your prayer and in the days immediately following the interview/s. Continue to bring the question to prayer until you feel that you have discerned the path for you at this time. Then give thanks. Now is time to establish a covenant between you and the director.

*Give it a try.* Once you decide to begin a relationship, agree up front that there will be a mutual evaluation of how it’s working after three or so meetings, and then at least annually.

**Report your decision.** After you start working with a spiritual director, let the facilitator of your Inquirers Group know whom you have chosen. If you change directors later in the ordination process, you will need to inform both the Bishop and your liaison.
Appendix 7, Overview of the Discernment Process for Holy Orders

In shortened form the steps in the discernment process are listed below and can be used as a check list. See Chapter 3, First Steps in Discernment, for a full description of the process. Some of the steps can be done concurrently. Most people require more than a year to complete this process. The COM recommends that the parishioner is in close communication with the rector of the home parish while participating in these steps.

- Explore initial sense of call with rector, parishioners and family.
- Begin in depth Bible study.
- Attend Discovery Day: My Call-- Lay, Priest or Deacon?.
- Participate in Inquirers Group program, including a ministry project.
- Continue discussing the support of call with rector and others.
- Give your rector Qualities to Consider in the Discernment of God’s Call (pages 3-4)
- Begin work with a spiritual director.
- Provide rector with copy of Discerning Paths of Ministry, particularly encouraging the reading of Chapters 3 and 4.
- Toward the end of the Inquirers Group program, meet with rector to verify that you have his/her support for further discernment and that all prerequisites for a discernment committee have been meet.
- Rector writes letter of introduction to the Bishop.
- Meet with the Bishop.
- Request, with consent of the Bishop, a Deanery Discernment Committee (DDC) The COM appoints a liaison at the time of the request for a DDC.
- Upon the discernment committee’s recommendation to continue the process of discerning Holy Orders, the inquirer should work with the rector and liaison to ensure that a member of the COM meets with the vestry of the sponsoring parish to discuss the nomination process and parish responsibilities.
- Send Nomination Package to vocations secretary.
- Notify your liaison when Form 6 has been signed and submitted to the vocations secretary.
- Complete the Scripture Knowledge Assessment tool introduced during Inquirers Group and give it to your liaison.
- Begin reviewing the COM document Steps Toward Ordination.
- Send Application Package to vocations secretary.
- Attend Ministry Discernment Conference.
- Notified by Bishop of admission to postulancy or continuation in lay order.
Appendix 8, Guidelines for Rector’s Letters to the Bishop

When the parishioner is discerning a call to Holy Orders, the rector of the home parish will be asked to write two letters to the Bishop.

Letter of Introduction

This short letter is sent prior to the inquirer’s first meeting with the Bishop and should include:

- How long has the inquirer been a leader in the congregation
- How long the inquirer has been discussing a sense of call to Holy Orders with the rector
- A statement supporting further discernment of that call

Letter of Recommendation

This more detailed letter is written when the vestry has nominated the inquirer for Holy Orders. The rector should send the original to the Bishop and give a copy to the inquirer to be included in the Nomination Package which is sent to the vocations secretary. This second letter should include an assessment of the following items:

- How the rector has come to understand, through intensive discussion, what moves the person to seek Holy Orders. Do not state the recommendation of the Deanery Discernment Committee in the letter.
- Reasons for recommending this person seeking Holy Orders.
- Specific information about the person’s involvement in the life of the parish and community: How long the rector has known this person. How long this person has been a member of the parish. How this person has been active and involved.
- The rector’s impressions of the spirituality, faithfulness in worship and reception of sacraments, prayer life, understanding of the Church’s faith, knowledge of scriptures, loving interaction with others, and sense of social responsibility of the person seeking Holy Orders.
- Areas for growth and development that the person should consider.
- Ways that ordination of this parishioner will enhance the special gifts and talents of the ministry of all Christians.
Appendix 9

Lay Orders and Programs in the Episcopal Church

1. **LAY ORDERS WITH A RULE OF LIFE.** Many religious orders have lay or associate members of their community. A good website for Anglican/Episcopal Orders in America is: [www.caroa.net](http://www.caroa.net) (Conference of Anglican Religious Orders in the Americas). Below is a small sampling of religious orders that have lay associates:
   - Holy Cross Monastery, [http://www.holycrossmonastery.com](http://www.holycrossmonastery.com) (located in NY)
   - Mount Calvary Monastery, [http://www.mount-calvary.org](http://www.mount-calvary.org) (located in Santa Barbara, CA)
   - Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE), [http://www.ssje.org](http://www.ssje.org)
   - St. Gregory’s Abbey, [http://www.saintgregorystthreeivers.org](http://www.saintgregorystthreeivers.org)
   - Order of St. Julian of Norwich, [http://www.orderofjulian.org](http://www.orderofjulian.org)
   - Brotherhood of St. Gregory, [http://www.gregorians.org](http://www.gregorians.org)
   - Third Order of St. Francis, [www.tssf.org](http://www.tssf.org)
   - Camaldolese Hermits of America, [www.camaldolese.com](http://www.camaldolese.com) (located in Big Sur, CA). Catholic Order which welcomes all Christian faiths for their Oblate (Lay) members.

2. **HEALING MINISTRY** (having no rule of life)

3. **WOMEN’S SPIRITUAL SISTERSHOLD WITH A RULE OF PRAYER AND RULE OF SERVICE**
   - The Order of Daughters’ of the King, [http://www.doknational.org](http://www.doknational.org)

4. **VERGER**
   - The Verger’s Guild of the Episcopal Church, [http://www.vergers.org](http://www.vergers.org)
   - The Verger is a member of the laity who works under the parish priest to assist with the organization of religious services.

5. **EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY,** [http://efmsewanee.edu](http://efmsewanee.edu)
Form 1, Application for Nomination for Holy Orders

Diocese of El Camino Real

Name: ______________________________________________
Parish: ______________________________________________
Home Address: _________________________________________
Daytime Telephone: ______________ Evening Telephone: ______________
Email Address: ______________________________
Date of Birth: ______________ Place of Birth: ______________
Citizenship: ______________
Date of baptism, with a copy of proof:
Date of confirmation/reception into the Episcopal Church, with a copy of proof:

What is your highest level of education? ______________________________

What is your goal in seeking Holy Orders?  ☐ Vocational Diaconate  ☐ Priesthood

- Enclose your autobiographical statement with emphasis on your spiritual journey and discernment process.
- Enclose Form 6, from Steps Toward Ordination supporting your application signed by your rector and at least two-thirds of the vestry.
- If you have previously applied for Holy Orders describe its outcome in an enclosure.
- List on an enclosure your education beyond High School, including degrees earned and areas of specialization. Attach copies of official transcripts.

I, ______________________________________________, agree to accept nomination for Holy Orders.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature  Date

12 If you are not US citizen, enclose a copy of proof of your immigration status.