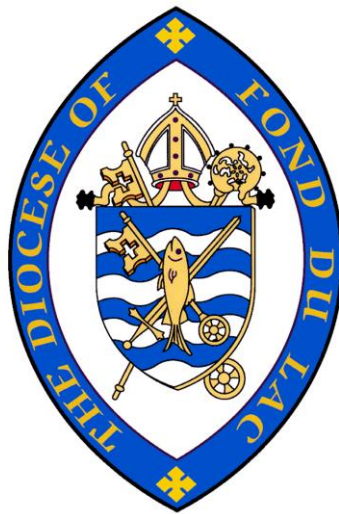


CIRCLES OF LIGHT

*A Process for Group Discernment
in the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac*



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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 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.

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. 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 or 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. In order 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 discernment practices of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and to the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola. The shared principles of Quaker and Ignatian discernment that undergird this process are as follows:

The discernment process must be entered as an act of free will by each member of the group. You are offering the gift to God and to one another of your lives for a significant period of time.

The habit of noticing, and reflecting upon what has been noticed, is a central dynamic in both systems of discernment.

What has been noticed and reflected upon is shared in order to seek the benefit of others' perceptions, observations, and suggestions. Both Ignatian and Quaker discernment include the use of reason in seeking a clearer understanding of God's call.

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.

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.

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.

Each session contains a list of preparatory Readings and Questions For Reflection & Discussion. These are to be engaged by each Seeker prior to meeting with his/her Companions as a group. When the group meets, this preparatory work will provide the focus and material for that meeting. All members of the group are expected to participate in, and contribute to, the discussions. At the end of each session are Individual Reflections. These are to be answered by the Seeker and the Companions as soon as possible after each session. The purpose of Individual Reflections is to capture the observations, responses, and thoughts of each group member while still fresh in preparation for writing the final Discernment Reflection and Discernment Narratives.

This workbook begins with the very broad vocational focus of *Here I Am, Send Me*. Each member of a *Here I Am, Send Me* group is a Seeker **and** a Companion to every other Seeker in the group.

Each person's prayers, wisdom, observations, honesty, and compassion will be needed as the group together listens for the whispered desires of God. The Holy Spirit will be at work throughout this process. Trust God, trust the discernment process, and trust each other. Pray for one another when together, and between gatherings of the group. Be faithful with your presence and participation. And finally, remember to honor the sacredness of one another's journeys and life stories. *Here I Am, Send Me* concludes with a session which focuses on writing a brief Discernment Reflection for each member of the group. 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. This more deeply focused exploration and discernment of lay and ordained ministries is contained in *Power From On High* and *More Deeply Into Christ*.

In *More Deeply Into Christ* and in *Power From On High* it is suggested that the group consist of one Seeker and her/his Companions. The group of Companions will ideally consist of: a Facilitator, two key members of the Seeker's congregation, one Companion from the *Here I Am, Send Me* group, a companion without a personal connection (perhaps from another parish and with discernment skills) and one person (not a close friend or family member) who knows the Seeker from a context other than Church.

Whether a Seeker or a Companion, pray for one another daily, listen deeply, and try to maintain an attitude of openness toward God's desires for the Seeker. Openness brings with it vulnerability; remember to honor the sacredness of the life stories that you hear. 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. Using the notes made in responding to the Individual Reflections at the end of each session, the final meeting will focus on the writing of a Discernment Narrative.

HOW TO USE THIS NOTEBOOK

This notebook has been 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 that 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 notebook 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.

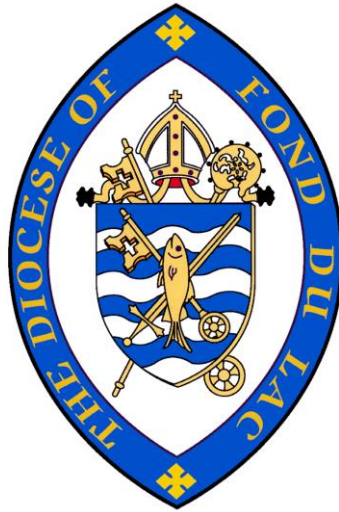
Feel free to read ahead. This will allow you to anticipate activities that will provide greater depth to the discernment process. Develop the habit of setting aside time regularly to spend with the preparatory Readings and Questions For Reflection & Discussion. This part of the process requires substantial time in order to adequately experience the exercise and reflect upon it prior to meetings of the group. When you meet together, these questions will provide the focus for your time. Together with the other Seekers and your Facilitator you will determine the meeting schedule that works best for your group.

Because we receive insight in a variety of ways, an Enrichment Resource List is provided at the end of *Here I Am, Send Me*. While these activities are not required, feel free to draw upon them for the benefit of your discernment process.

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

HERE I AM, SEND ME

*Group Discernment of Baptismal Ministries
in the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac*



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*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*

PREPARING FOR 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."

READINGS

I Thessalonians 1:2-5b
Micah 6:8

*For all that has been -- Thanks!
To all that shall be -- Yes!*

Dåg Hammarskjöld, *Markings*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

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 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?)

FOLLOWING VOCATION: SESSION I

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

PREPARING FOR VOCATION: SESSION II

To remember Biblical stories of calling; exploring each Seeker's spiritual life of prayer and commitment.

READINGS

Luke 19:1-10
Matthew 2:1-12
John 11:38-44
John 20:1-18
Acts 1:15-26

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. In the Baptismal Covenant we promise to “continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.” What nourishes your faith on a regular basis? We also promise to “persevere in resisting evil.” How do you resist evil?
2. At times we will “fall into sin.” The etymology of “sin” is to “miss the mark” or to “sunder/separate.” Identify a moment in your life when your self-image or a relationship has been broken because of sin. We promise that when we sin we will “repent and return to the Lord.” What are your stories about repenting and returning to the Lord? What does that homecoming feel like?
3. In our baptismal covenant we promise to “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.” Is it easiest to proclaim this Good News by word or example? Give examples of how you do both and explore why one is harder than the other.
4. In our baptismal covenant we promise to “seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself.” Is it easier for you to love your neighbor or yourself? Why? When and how have you experienced Christ in another person?
5. We also promise to “strive for justice and peace among all people” and to “respect the dignity of every human being.” How do you do this? Are there individuals or groups whom you know personally who experience the absence of justice and peace?

FOLLOWING VOCATION: SESSION II

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection.

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

PREPARING FOR VOCATION: SESSION III

To consider and identify the many varieties of Christian ministry.

READINGS

I Corinthians 12:4-13

I Peter 5:1-7

Philippians 1:1-2

Matthew 28:16-20

I Corinthians 11:23-26

James 5:13-16a

Romans 10:14-17

'It is a great mistake,' wrote Archbishop William Temple, 'to suppose that God is interested only, or even primarily, in religion.'

Tournier, "The Adventure of Living" from Eerdman's Book of Christian Classics

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What makes an activity "ministry?" What is ministry? What makes a gift a gift? What about gifts we don't want or which "dry up"? Make a list of the activities in your life that you identify as "ministry." What makes them "ministry"?

2. What do you love to do, simply for its own sake? What are the activities in which you "lose" yourself? (When did you last spend time doing any of these activities?) What do others say that you do well? Make a list and make it as long as possible so that some of your less obvious gifts may emerge.

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

3. When you have experienced being reconciled and being a reconciler? Which gifts have been most useful in receiving and in witnessing to God's reconciling love?

4. As you consider each Seeker's gifts, what vocational directions might they indicate? Don't be afraid to "play" with this. Open your imagination to many possibilities.

FOLLOWING VOCATION: SESSION III

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection.

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

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*

PREPARING FOR 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.

READINGS

Mark 6:30-46

Luke 10:38-42

Psalm 84

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. What are your present commitments and responsibilities? How do they support or conflict with doing something new? What freedoms and limitations do you experience at this time in your life?
2. 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. Choose a place you would like your life to go. Describe why.
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 (recreate)?
5. What do you want to accomplish before you die? What legacy do you want to leave? You might write a portion of your obituary as one way of approaching these questions.

FOLLOWING CONTEXT: SESSION I

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection.

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

PREPARING FOR CONTEXT: SESSION II

To ask with whom (age, condition, special needs, culture or nationality) each Seeker envisions and resists ministering, and why.

READINGS

Galatians 3:28

Matthew 25:31-46

Isaiah 61:1-3

Lesser Feasts and Fasts: Jonathan Daniels and David Pendleton Oakerhater

... in Christ, God makes Godself vulnerable; in Christ, God defines God as nonviolent. ... And if we really understand the parable of the last judgment, in which every hungry child is Christ, we can say: Christ is God's wound in the world. Therefore we need a window of vulnerability if we want to live in inward relationship with Christ.

Soelle, *The Window of Vulnerability*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Who are you drawn to in ministry? In whom do you take delight? For whom do you feel great compassion and affection?
2. Who do you resist being with in ministry? Who do you find offensive, overwhelming, or "difficult?" Who do you fear? What human conditions or character traits offend or disgust you?
3. Luther said that we are to be Christ to each other. When and how have you experienced Christ in and through another person?
4. After reading the biographies of Jonathan Daniels and David Oakerhater, found in Lesser Feasts and Fasts, reflect on your responses and observations about their lives and ministries. Do you find yourself drawn to ministry with people who are different or similar to yourself?
5. The Solemn Collects for Good Friday, found on pages 277-280 in the *Book of Common Prayer*, speak about Christ's love for the Church, all the nations and peoples of the earth, and those who have authority over them, all who suffer and are afflicted, and all who have not received the Gospel of Christ. How do you participate in this love?

FOLLOWING CONTEXT: SESSION II

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection.

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

PREPARING FOR CONTEXT: SESSION III

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

READINGS

Exodus 3:1-4:13

Jonah 1:1-3a

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Where have you always dreamed about going? Why? What draws your heart there?
2. Where do you envision yourself ministering? Why? What draws your heart there?
3. What commitments (family, financial, denominational, educational, etc.) influence your place of ministry?
4. If you have chosen to visit any of the following ...

Another Episcopal Church (different in size, liturgy, etc. from your own)

A place where you feel drawn to ministry

A place where you resist ministering

... then record through writing or art your response to the experience.

FOLLOWING CONTEXT: SESSION III

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

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.

Donovan, *Women Priests in the Episcopal Church*

PREPARING FOR EMPOWERMENT: SESSION I

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

READINGS

Isaiah 40:28-31

Matthew 11:28-30

Philippians 2:1-18

The Passion accounts from all four Gospels

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. With whom do you connect emotionally in the Passion stories? Why? With whom do you connect intellectually in the Passion stories? Why?
2. A spiritual trap in ministry is to identify with Christ and wrongly empty ourselves, crucifying ourselves. What does it mean to be faithful to the cross of Christ?
3. When have you experienced new life from brokenness, pain, and death? When have you hoped for, believed in, or known resurrection and its power?
4. Who has changed your life for better and for worse? Who has power and authority over you? How do you relate to these people? What have you learned about your relationship with the power and authority that others hold over you?
5. Whose life/lives have you changed for better and for worse? Who do you influence? Are you aware of your power over their lives? What is the style/volume/tenor of your power and authority? How do you relate to these people? What have you learned about your relationship with the power and authority that you hold over others?

FOLLOWING EMPOWERMENT: SESSION I

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection.

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

PREPARING FOR EMPOWERMENT: SESSION II

To ask whether and how any Seeker's life has been shaped by the Holy Spirit in a way that calls for exploring lay and/or ordained ministry through further discernment.

READINGS

James 1:5
Luke 11:1-13

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 (Vocation, Session I).

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 at www.churchpublishing.org/general_convention.

Spend a significant amount of time this week in prayer.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

Write or draw what emerges during your times of prayer this week. (When you meet together as a group, you may wish to use newsprint to capture the images and words that emerged from your times of prayer and reflection.)

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. How has the Holy Spirit shaped each Seeker's character in a way that seems compatible with lay ministry? With ordained ministry? Please be specific.
2. What is God asking of each Seeker? When you envision God doing with each Seeker what God wants, what do you see? (Where is each Seeker? What is he/she doing? Who else is there?)

FOLLOWING EMPOWERMENT: SESSION II

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection.

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

PREPARING FOR EMPOWERMENT: SESSION III

What does each Seeker want and/or need to learn or experience in order to grow into God's call to ministry?

READINGS

Hebrews 13:20-21

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.

Book of Common Prayer, p. 418

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. What are your hopes and concerns for each Seeker?
2. What does each Seeker need to learn or be equipped with in order to grow into God's call to ministry? What are the next "steps in faithfulness" for each Seeker at this time? (i.e. finish school, reduce debts, enroll in a class, follow-up on an unexplored interest, etc.)
3. Does any individual Seeker need to resolve anything in order to move on with his/her life and ministry? Are there wounds (or commitments) so deep that any Seeker really needs to tend to them before considering a further commitment to ministry?
4. What are you thankful for which has come about as a result of this process of discernment? What has been hard about this process?
5. What you are thankful for about each person's presence as part of the discernment process? How did they enrich your own process of discernment?

FOLLOWING EMPOWERMENT: SESSION III

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Reflection.

1. What new learnings about yourself have surfaced in this session?
2. What new learnings about each other Seeker have surfaced in this session?

WHAT WE HAVE SEEN & HEARD

PREPARATION FOR WRITING THE DISCERNMENT REFLECTION

BEFORE YOU BEGIN: We strongly suggest that you review all of your Individual Reflections for each session. Take time to read all of the following 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. 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 the Vocation sessions?

In the Context sessions?

In the Empowerment sessions?

2. What activities or experiences did each Seeker engage during the discernment process? How has this engagement sharpened each Seeker's sense of call to discipleship and ministry? How has it sharpened your sense of their call? Have there been responses from others; what have they been?

3. What are the images of each Seeker's vocation to ministry that emerge as you remember the discernment process?

4. What does the group and each individual Seeker believe are next steps in faithfulness to his/her vocation?

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

ENRICHMENT RESOURCE LIST

FILM

Babette's Feast
Brother Sun, Sister Moon
Christ of Montreal
Mother Teresa
My Dinner With Andre
What the Bleep Do We Know!?

ART

Bridge Building Images at www.bridgebuilding.com
The Episcopal Church & Visual Arts at www.ecva.org
Index of Christian Art at ica.princeton.edu

ACTIVITIES

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.

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. (Some suggestions: Prison, Street Ministry, Hospital, School, Diocesan/National Church Office, Nursing Home, Monastery/Convent.)

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.

Arrange to do the Stations of the Cross (found in the *Book of Occasional Services*) at your own or another church.

BOOKS

See Bibliography.

MUSIC

J. S. Bach: *The St. Matthew Passion*

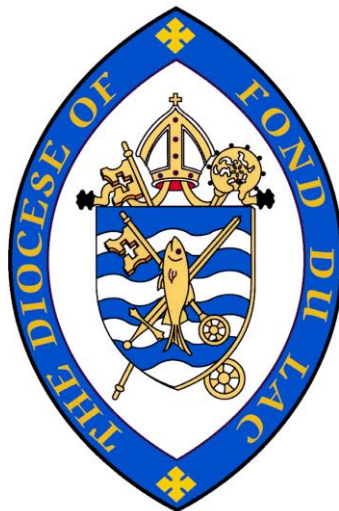
J. S. Bach: *The St. John Passion*

G. F. Handel: *The Messiah*

MORE DEEPLY INTO CHRIST

*Continuing Group Discernment of Baptismal Ministries
in the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac*

Deacons & Priests



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MORE DEEPLY INTO CHRIST: SESSION I

GETTING TO KNOW YOU...THE JOURNEY SO FAR

The Seeker should review and update the spiritual autobiography that she/he wrote during the course of *Here I Am, Send Me*, then distribute copies of the spiritual autobiography to the group members prior to their first meeting.

READINGS

Ephesians 4:11-13

Luke 22:24-27

I Corinthians, Chapters 12 & 13

The Baptismal Vows, BCP, pp. 302-305.

The portions of the Catechism concerning ministry and ordination, BCP, pp. 856, 860.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Spend some significant time reflecting on your ideas about the identity, role, work, and ministry of a deacon. Then spend some significant time reflecting on your ideas about the identity, role, work, and ministry of a priest.
2. Without consulting other sources, write down your own responses to the following questions: What is ordination? What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter? What is the ministry of a deacon? What is the duty of all Christians? What gifts and skills do you have to offer in ministry?
3. Write down what you notice about the relationship between your understanding of ordination and ministry and that provided in the Catechism. How are the two views compatible? How are the two views incompatible or divergent from one another?
4. Make a list of the gifts and skills required for the kind of ministry that a Deacon is called to live.
5. Make a list of the gifts and skills required for the kind of ministry that a Priest is called to live.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE GROUP: SESSION I

Seeker:

1. Share your spiritual journey with the Companions. (The Companions may ask the Seeker any clarifying questions regarding the Seeker's spiritual autobiography that will help them to more fully understand the Seeker's life journey up to this moment in time.)
2. Discuss the insights and surprises you encountered in examining the ministry of deacons and priests.

Companions:

1. Notice how the Seeker is (or is not) ALREADY exercising the ministry of a Priest.
2. Notice how the Seeker is (or is not) ALREADY exercising the ministry of a Deacon.
3. How easily does the diaconal or priestly "shoe" seem to fit? Tell how you reached this conclusion about "fit".

FOLLOWING SESSION I

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Narrative.

Seeker: What new learnings have surfaced for you during this session?

Companions: What insights have you received about the Seeker during this session?

MORE DEEPLY INTO CHRIST: SESSION II

IF THE SHOE FITS...HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

READINGS

II Corinthians 4:1, 5-12

The ordination vows for deacons and priests, BCP, pp. 526, 531-532 and 538, 543-544.

The canons regarding the ordination and discipline of deacons and priests.

(Available from your Church Office or online at [www.churchpublishing.org/general_convention.](http://www.churchpublishing.org/general_convention))

The declaration signed by all clergy prior to their ordination. BCP, p. 526 and p. 538.

The Litany for Ordinations. BCP, pp. 548-551.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

Prior to the group's second meeting, the Seeker should interview a deacon and a priest (neither of whom should serve in the Seeker's congregation) and ask them the questions listed below. The Seeker will not be reporting answers to the group. Rather, the Seeker will be sharing her/his reflections on what has been learned from these interviews. It may be helpful for the Seeker to explain how the interviews are being used when making arrangements to meet with the deacon and the priest. The time needed for each interview will probably range between an hour and two hours.

Interview Questions:

1. How did you experience your call to ordained ministry and how has your understanding and experience of that call changed, grown, or focused over time?
2. Describe the ministry of a deacon, as you understand it.
3. Describe the ministry of a priest, as you understand it.
4. Describe the process of vocational discernment that led to your ordination. What in or during that process helped clarify for you and the Church that your call to ordained ministry was that of the diaconate/priesthood?
5. Tell me about your experiences of greatest learning and growth while you were preparing for ordination and since being ordained.

6. What is the most difficult aspect of ordained ministry for you? For your household?

7. What has been the “cost” of ordination for you and your household? What have you and your household sacrificed in order to respond to this vocational call?

8. What are the special joys you have experienced in your ministry? Give a specific example or tell a story.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE GROUP: SESSION II

Seeker:

1. Share your reflections on your interview. (i.e. not “here’s what she said,” but “here’s what was stirred up in me as I listened and remembered the interview.”)
2. Explore with your Companions the cost of ordination to you AND to your household over time. In your discussions, spend time considering together the effect of ordination on your household’s income during your training and preparation for ordination, during your working life, and after your retirement.
3. Discuss the public nature of the role and the stresses that ordination will put on you and on your household.
4. Discuss your age – its positives and its negatives for ordained ministry.

Following a period of silence, the Companions share their reflections with the Seeker.

FOLLOWING SESSION II

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Narrative.

Seeker: What new learnings have surfaced for you during this session?

Companions: What insights have you received about the Seeker during this session?

MORE DEEPLY INTO CHRIST: SESSION III

ALL YOU NEED IS LOVE: GOD, SELF, AND OTHERS

READINGS

Hosea 11:1-4

The Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-8:1

Mark 6:30-31

John 12:1-3; 13:2b-5

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. In what situations or activities does time disappear for you? When did you last experience this?
2. What do you love to do for physical exercise? How often do you do it?
3. How do you take care of your emotional health? How often do you do it?
4. How do you take care of your spirit in terms of its life, health, and development? How often do you do it?
5. What happens in each of the above areas when life gets especially busy and stressful?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE GROUP: SESSION III

Seeker:

1. Describe your prayer life for the Group.
2. How has your relationship with God changed over time?
3. Who is Christ in your life?
4. Who has been an important role model for you in the faith?
5. Share with your Companions how, specifically, you take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
6. Share with your Companions the titles of three books that have played an important role in the development of your relationship with God.
7. How/in what ways do you share your faith outside church circles?

Following a period of silence, the Companions share their reflections with the Seeker.

FOLLOWING SESSION III

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Narrative.

Seeker: What new learnings have surfaced for you during this session?

Companions: What insights have you received about the Seeker during this session?

MORE DEEPLY INTO CHRIST: SESSION IV

PRINCIPALITIES & POWERS: THE CHAOS WITHIN

READINGS

Romans 7:15, 21

Romans 8:38-39

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Make a list of your strengths.
2. Make a list of your weaknesses.
3. Make a list of your growing edges.
4. What do you find difficult in your relationship with others? (What pushes your buttons?)
5. What sorts of people, situations, and relationships feed your Ego?
6. How do you react to being in a position of power & authority?
7. How do you react to being in a powerless position?
8. How do you feel and what do you do when something isn't done "right" or up to your standards?
9. How do you feel and what do you do when you are blamed for something that is not your fault?

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE GROUP: SESSION IV

Seeker:

1. What has emerged for you as you have reflected on your strengths and weaknesses?
2. What are your growing edges?
3. What are your goals for further spiritual growth?
4. What skills do you already have and what skills would you like to develop?
5. How do you learn best? (What is your “learning style”)?
6. What aspects of ordained ministry seem overwhelming or are of concern to you?
7. What “pushes your buttons”? What makes you really angry?
8. What conflicts have you had in your life? How have you handled them?
9. How do you cope with places you do not want to go to or be in? How are you exhausted and renewed there? (i.e. dentist’s office, medical treatment, late and stuck in traffic, required but unwanted course, etc.)
10. When have you felt like a failure? How have you found grace in that experience?

Following a period of silence, the Companions share their reflections with the Seeker.

FOLLOWING SESSION IV

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Narrative.

Seeker: What new learnings have surfaced for you during this session?

Companions: What insights have you received about the Seeker during this session?

MORE DEEPLY INTO CHRIST: SESSION V

WHAT WE HAVE SEEN & HEARD

BEFORE YOU BEGIN ... PRAYER, RECOLLECTION, AND REFLECTION:

Both the Companions and the Seeker will need to set aside a significant amount of time to prepare for the last session of *More Deeply Into Christ*. Settle down in a comfortable and quiet place with your Bible, your Individual Reflections, any other notes you may have made over the course of the group's meeting, pen or pencil, and a blank notepad.

Close your eyes and breathe deeply in a relaxed manner, neither forcing the air in or out. Remember that in Hebrew *ruach* ("spirit," "breath," "wind") is translated as Spirit, breath, and life. Let yourself experience God's *ruach* in you as you continue to breathe. When you feel gathered, centered, in a place of stillness and inner peace, ask God to guide your recollections and reflections as you consider the vocation of your sister or brother in Christ.

Session by session, reread your Individual Reflections and then spend some time reflecting on that session and its revelations in the greater light of the sessions taken as a whole. Use your notepad to jot down any insights, images, thoughts, concerns, etc. that arise as you remember and reflect on each session in turn. If a phrase or a passage of scripture comes into your mind, find it in your Bible and spend some time asking how the passage might be related to the discernment work at hand. At all times, try to do this work with an attitude of complete openness to God's possibilities for the Seeker.

Once you have completed your work of recollection and reflection, stop for a moment and notice your inner state. You may want to set your notes aside for a day before continuing your preparation work. When you are ready, you may turn to the questions that will guide the group through the process of writing the Discernment Narrative.

Take your time in responding to each of the questions. After you have written your response to each one, stop to notice your inner state. Is there a sense of peace and "rightness" about what you have written? Is it complete/whole or does something more need to be written?

When you have completed writing your responses to the Discernment Narrative questions, set your papers aside. Think of each member of the *More Deeply Into Christ* group and give thanks for their gifts to you and to the group during this process of discernment.

HOW IT WORKS: THE DISCERNMENT NARRATIVE PROCESS

When you gather for the final meeting, bring along your responses to the Discernment Narrative questions, along with your Individual Reflections and the *More Deeply Into Christ* notebook.

The Facilitator may find it helpful to use newsprint as a means of capturing the consensus or divergence of the group as you move through each of the Discernment Narrative questions in turn. Following this meeting, the Facilitator will type up one final copy of the Discernment Narrative. The Discernment Narrative will be given to the Seeker within two weeks of the group's final meeting. She/he will be responsible for providing copies of the Discernment Narrative, as required, to the parish priest and the Diocesan Office.

Since the discernment group disbands following the writing of the Discernment Narrative, members need to be intentional about bringing a sense of closure to the group and its work. Possibilities include sharing a simple meal together, perhaps with a Eucharist. There should also be an opportunity for each member of the group to say "thank you" to each other member of the group for the gift of their companionship throughout the discernment process.

PUTTING IT ON PAPER: THE DISCERNMENT NARRATIVE

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.

THE DISCERNMENT NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

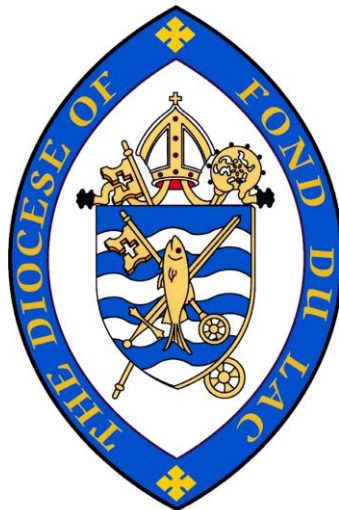
The Seeker and the Companions all answer each of the following questions, which will provide the structure of the Discernment Narrative.

1. Describe the Seeker's spiritual life and relationship with Christ; its maturity, depth, change over time, discipline (its form, content, and "personality"). Be specific.
2. How do the ministries, gifts, skills, and requirements of a deacon/priest "line up" with what the Seeker is already doing in his/her life? Be specific.
3. Are indications of Christian commitment, leadership, vision, and responsiveness to the needs, concerns and hopes of the world emerging in the Group's sense of the Seeker's vocation? Be specific.
4. What intellectual, moral, emotional and spiritual qualities for ordained ministry have emerged in the Seeker during this part of the discernment process? Be specific.
5. How would ordination affect the Seeker's closest relationships? (Economically, professionally, emotionally, and otherwise.) Be specific.
6. What issues of power, authority, obedience, and accountability may be present for the Seeker as we consider the possibility of ordination? How well does the Seeker know her/himself? Be specific.
7. What issues of health and self-care (physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, etc.) may be present for the Seeker as we consider the possibility of ordination? Be specific.
8. Describe the Seeker's current and potential relationship with the requirements of the canons and the ordination vows. Be specific.
9. Think of two suggestions you would give the seeker to help him/her acknowledge and support a "growing edge" in his/her life.
10. What does the Group believe are next steps in faithfulness for the Seeker?
11. Are there other things you would like to share?

POWER FROM ON HIGH

*Continuing Group Discernment of Baptismal Ministries
in the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac*

The Laity



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POWER FROM ON HIGH: SESSION I

HERE IN THE LABYRINTH

Prior to the Group's first meeting the Seeker should:

1. Review and bring up to date her/his spiritual autobiography and distribute copies to the discernment group members.
2. Review the Context section of *Here I Am, Send Me*. 3. Review the final Discernment Reflection from *Here I Am, Send Me* and distribute copies to the discernment group members.

READINGS

Luke 24:46-49

Acts 1:6-8

The Baptismal Vows. BCP, pp. 302-305.

The Catechism regarding the mission of the Church and ministry. BCP, pp. 855-856.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Review and reflect on your spiritual autobiography and on your responses throughout the Context section of *Here I Am, Send Me* as you consider the following questions:

1. How many of the things/places/people/activities that energize you and give you deep satisfaction are a regular part of your life? Which ones? How often?
2. What makes the sources of fun and recreation in your life so enjoyable for you?
3. How did you come to do the work that you currently do, did prior to retirement, or are preparing to do now?
4. What activity or relationship do you identify as the primary "ministry" in your life? How did that ministry come to be a part of your life?
5. How do you define ministry? How do you know that you are "doing" ministry?
6. What is our role and what is God's role in ministry?

FOLLOWING SESSION I

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Narrative.

Seeker: What new learnings have surfaced for you during this session?

Companions: What insights have you received about the Seeker during this session?

POWER FROM ON HIGH: SESSION II

DEVISES & DESIRES

READINGS

Psalm 13
Psalm 22
Luke 24:28-35
Romans 8:26-27

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Companions:

Prior to the first session, review the Seeker's spiritual autobiography and final Discernment Reflection from *Here I Am, Send Me*.

Seeker:

1. How do you communicate with God? How does God communicate with you? How do you experience the reality of God's presence with you?
2. When and how have you experienced God's silence and/or absence in your life? How often and for how long? What is that experience like for you? How have those times of absence/silence begun? How have they ended?
3. Through what activity or relationship in your life do you find the deepest soul satisfaction? Why?
4. How many of the things/places/people/activities that energize you and give you deep satisfaction are a regular part of your life? Which ones? How often?

Companions:

1. What stood out for you in what the Seeker has shared during this session?
2. As you consider the Seeker's life in the context of home, church, work, community, play, rest and restoration, where do you see the opportunity to draw upon the Seeker's interests, gifts, and skills for ministry in those areas that also energize and nurture the Seeker?

FOLLOWING SESSION II

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Narrative.

Seeker: What new learnings have surfaced for you during this session?

Companions: What insights have you received about the Seeker during this session?

Seeker:

POWER FROM ON HIGH: SESSION III

TRUTH & CONSEQUENCES

READINGS

Mark 8:17b-21

Luke 5:1-11

Luke 12:32-34

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What would be required of you, of others, and of God in order to incorporate more energizing, nurturing experiences into your life on a regular (or even daily) basis?
2. How might such changes affect you **and** your family or household?
3. However overwhelming, frightening, or “too good to be true” it may seem to you, what do you believe God may be calling you to do? To believe? To become?

Companions:

1. What might be the blessings and costs for the Seeker over time in saying "yes" to God's present call? (financially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually)
2. What might be the blessings and costs for the Seeker's family or household over time in saying “yes” to God's present call? (financially, emotionally, physically, and spiritually)
3. What might need to be mourned/grieved in saying “yes”?
4. What might be lost forever?

FOLLOWING SESSION III

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Narrative.

Seeker: What new learnings have surfaced for you during this session?

Companions: What insights have you received about the Seeker during this session?

Seeker:

POWER FROM ON HIGH: SESSION IV

POWER FROM ON HIGH

READINGS

Luke 17:20-21

John 1:12-13

I Corinthians 2:1-5

Romans 8:38-39

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. What might God, who loves you without measure, desire for you in your work, worship, family life, friendships, and play?
2. Are any of God's desires for your life visible now? Which ones?
3. Are any of God's desires for your life emerging now? Which ones?
4. Are any of God's desires for your life not yet visible? Which ones?
5. How might God be calling you to make the reign of Christ manifest?

Companions:

1. Is a change being called for in the Seeker's life? If so, is the change being called for primarily internal or external?
2. What must happen in order for the Seeker to take the next step in faithfulness?

FOLLOWING SESSION IV

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTIONS

You will use these notes in writing the final Discernment Narrative.

Seeker: What new learnings have surfaced for you during this session?

Companions: What insights have you received about the Seeker during this session?

POWER FROM ON HIGH: SESSION V

WHAT WE HAVE SEEN & HEARD

BEFORE YOU BEGIN ... PRAYER, RECOLLECTION, AND REFLECTION

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Close your eyes and breathe deeply in a relaxed manner, neither forcing the air in or out. Remember that in Hebrew *ruah* is translated as Spirit, breath, and life. Let yourself experience God's *ruah* in you as you continue to breathe. When you feel gathered, centered, in a place of stillness and inner peace, ask God to guide your recollections and reflections as you consider the vocation of your sister or brother in Christ.

Session by session, reread your Individual Reflections and then spend some time reflecting on that session and its revelations in the greater light of the sessions taken as a whole. Use your notepad to jot down any insights, images, thoughts, concerns, etc. that arise as you remember and reflect on each session in turn. If a phrase or a passage of scripture comes into your mind, find it in your Bible and spend some time asking how the passage might be related to the discernment work at hand. At all times, try to do this work with an attitude of complete openness to God's possibilities for the Seeker.

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HOW IT WORKS: THE DISCERNMENT NARRATIVE PROCESS

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THE DISCERNMENT NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

The Seeker and the Companions all answer each of the following questions, which will provide the structure of the Discernment Narrative.

1. Describe the Seeker's spiritual life and relationship with Christ; its maturity, depth, change over time, discipline (its form, content, and "personality"). Please be specific.
2. How do the Seeker's ministries, gifts, and skills identified during the discernment process "line up" with what the Seeker is already doing in his/her life? Please be specific.
3. What do the Companions and the Seeker sense or perceive about God's call to ministry in the life of the Seeker? Please be specific.
4. Does the Group believe that a change is being called for in the life of the Seeker? If so, describe your perceptions of that change. Please be specific.
5. How would such a change affect the Seeker's closest relationships? (Economically, professionally, emotionally, and otherwise.) Please be specific.
6. What issues of health and self-care (physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional, etc.) may be present for the Seeker as the Group considers the possibility of change or growth in the Seeker's vocation/ministry? Please be specific.
7. What does the Group believe are next steps in faithfulness for the Seeker?
8. Are there other things you would like to share?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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