



STEPS FOR PARISH LEVEL DISCERNMENT

During Parish-Level discernment, it is our hope that those interested in discerning for Holy Orders will begin discussions with their Rector/Priest in Charge, possibly take part in a parish discernment committee, and continue their studies of scripture. Below you will find some information regarding what we hope you will experience during this phase of discernment.

I. Reach out to your Rector/Priest-in-Charge* to begin discussions

In this initial meeting you might:

- Discuss your sense of call
- Read through and reflect on Ordination Vows and the Canons regarding the Life and Work of Deacons ([Title III.7](#)) and/or the Life and Work of Priests ([Title III.9](#)).
 - o What about the vows or the canons is stirring? Frightening? Thrilling? Confusing?
- Discuss whether a parish discernment committee is appropriate and who potential committee members might be. Please note, Rectors/Sponsoring Priests might determine that it would be more beneficial to have a series of one-on-one meetings with the applicant.

After the meeting, the Rector/Sponsoring Priest should:

1. Alert the Bishop's Office and Chair of the Commission on Ministry that parish level discernment is beginning with an individual. The Rector/Sponsoring Priests will then be assigned a COM liaison who can aid in navigating the parish level discernment process.
2. If needed, reach out to potential parishioners to serve on the discernment committee and identify a leader of the committee (if it's not the Rector).

**Please note, if your parish does not have a rector or priest-in-charge, please reach out to the Chair of the Commission on Ministry (The Rev. Polly Robb; rector@stlukesscottsboro.com) and they will connect you with a priest who can walk you through the parish level discernment.*

II. Scriptural Study & Discernment with Parish Committee or Rector/Sponsoring Priest

- Applicant's Scriptural Study
 - Applicant must study and explore the following
 - One Synoptic Gospel (Matthew, Mark, Luke)
 - The Gospel of John
 - One Epistle
 - One Prophetic Work
 - Resources for further study:
 - Study Bibles for purchase (one of these might be helpful in your studies):
 - [The New Oxford Annotated Bible](#)
 - [HaperCollins Study Bible](#)
 - [The New Interpreter's Study Bible](#)
 - [The CEB Study Bible](#)
 - Online Commentaries and Resources:
 - [Free Online Commentaries](#)
 - [Journey with Jesus](#) (lectionary based, but searchable)
 - [Working Preacher](#) (lectionary based, but searchable)
 - Commentaries for purchase:
 - [An Introduction to the New Testament](#), Raymond Brown
 - [Women's Bible Commentary](#)
 - [The Oxford Bible Commentary](#)
 - [HarperCollins Bible Commentary](#)
- Consider covering the following during Parish Discernment Committee Meetings or Meetings with your Rector/Sponsoring Priest
 - These meetings should extend over a minimum of six months, meeting a minimum of six hours and should cover the following items:
 - Discuss the Applicant's Spiritual Autobiography
 - Read through, discuss, and reflect upon [Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community](#)
 - Discuss the List of Questions for Applicants (Appendix A below)
 - Reflect upon the applicant's study of scripture and/or invite them to lead a Bible Study to open each session
 - Resources for Parish Discernment Committee Meetings
 - Sample Meeting Schedule & Agenda [Appendix B below]

III. Applicant & Rector/Sponsoring Priest Prepare to Meet with the Bishop

If the Rector/Sponsoring Priest, parish level discernment committee (if applicable), and applicant are in mutual agreement that further discernment is appropriate, the applicant and Rector must send the following documents to the Bishop after which the Rector should request a meeting with the Bishop. Please note, while some may have a clear sense of the order to which they would like to discern, others may not. The COM welcomes and is happy to discern alongside applicants anywhere on this spectrum.

Documents needed:

- Documents needed from Applicant (found on the Diocesan Website)
 - Vocational Discernment Application
 - Spiritual Autobiography
 - Ministry as a Baptized Person Essay
 - College and/or Post-Grad Transcripts
 - Resume
 - Recent Photograph of Applicant
- From Rector/Sponsoring Clergy Person (found on the Diocesan Website)
 - Letter of Support from Sponsoring Rector, including responses to Application Questions
 - Vestry Statement of Support

Preparing for the Meeting

- Pray individually and as a family for understanding.
- Study and reflect on the call of Moses, the role of the prophets, and the manner in which Jesus sent his followers out into the world. An understanding of these Biblical personalities and their calls will influence the applicant's personal discernment.

Who Attends the Meeting with the Bishop

- The Applicant
- The Applicant's Sponsoring Rector/Clergy Person
- The Bishop

After the meeting, the applicant will receive a letter from the Bishop with notification of the their decision about admittance into the next phase of the process of discernment. The Bishop may choose to change the direction of discernment for an applicant or move an applicant further along. If moving forward in the process, the applicant will now be called a "Nominee."