

**God is Calling Us to
Ministry:**
A Vocational Handbook for
all the Baptized.

The Commission on Ministry



The Episcopal Diocese of Rochester

Revised October 28, 2013

“Joy in Christ as a way of Life”

Discerning God's Call a communal process.....

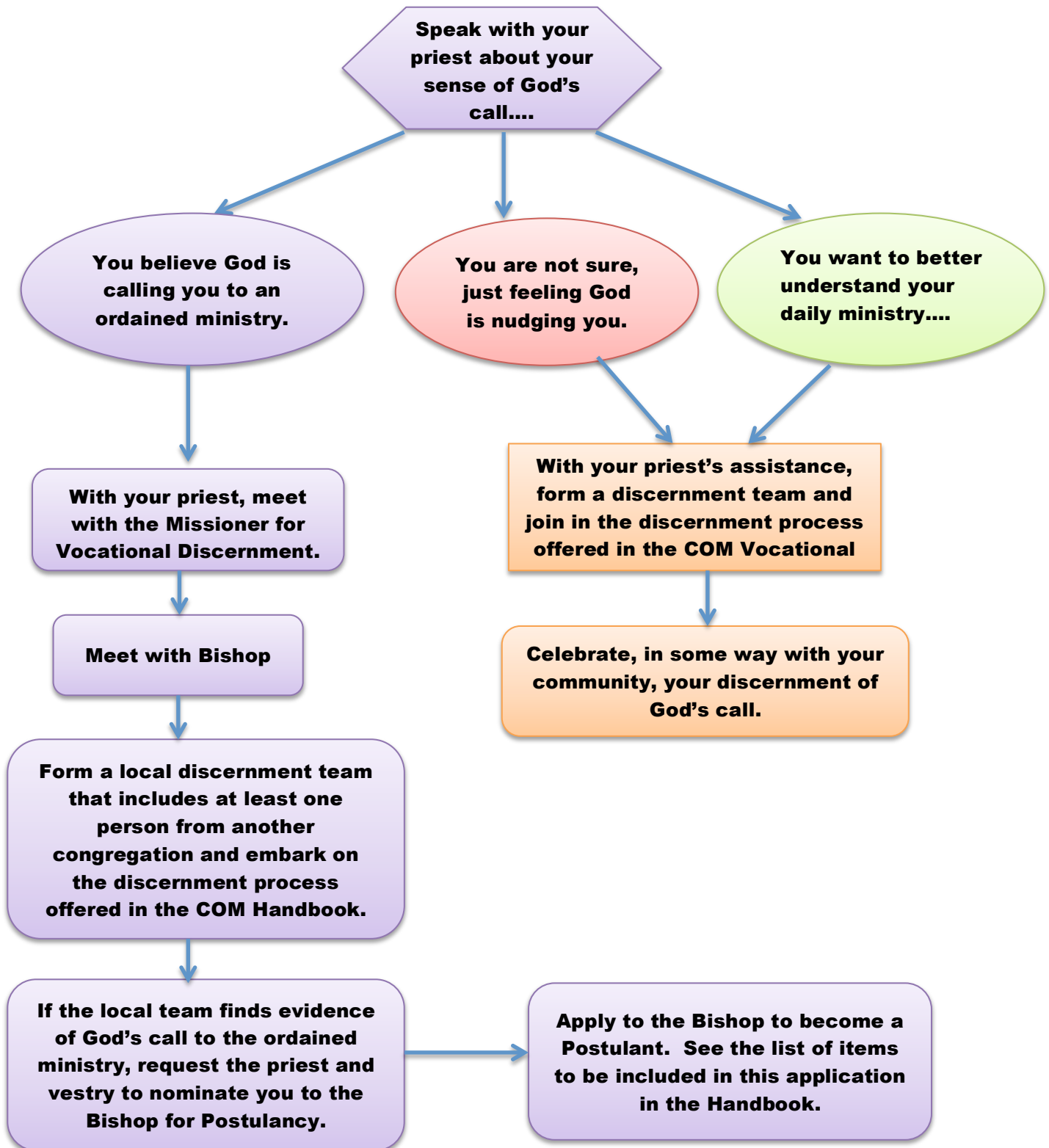


Table of Contents

Inside cover, a flow chart of the discernment process.

Introduction.....	Page 3
Forward – Bishop Singh.....	Page 5
Introduction <i>Discerning all of Life as Ministry</i>	Page 7
Section 1 The Ministry of the Laity.....	Page 13
Section 2: Licensed Ministries	Page 25
Section 3 The Ordination Process – General Considerations	Page 26
Section 4 Ordination to the Diaconate	Page 30
Section 5 Ordination to the Priesthood	Page 50
Section 6: Continuing Education.....	Page 69

Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary	Page 70
Appendix B: Whom to Call	Page 73
Appendix C: A Discernment Process.....	Page 74
Appendix D: Writing a Spiritual Autobiography.....	Page 93
Appendix E: Postulant Information Form.....	Page 95
Appendix F: Financial Information Form.....	Page 98
Appendix G: Medical Examination	Page 101
Appendix H: Life History Questionnaire.....	Page 106
Appendix I: Behavior Screening Questionnaire.....	Page 132
Appendix J: COM Interview Report Form.....	Page 136

Acknowledgements:

Several people who are not members of the Commission on Ministry read drafts of this handbook: Robert Sudlow, a lay member of this diocese, The Very Rev. Michael W. Hopkins, Dean of the Rochester District, and The Rev. Ann Kidder, a priest in the Diocese of Maine. Carolyn McConnell re-designed and improved the check off list for people in the ordination process and caught several errors in the final proofing. We thank them each for their very helpful comments and suggestions.

Members from each of the sub-committees of the Commission on Ministry contributed substantively to their section.

In addition much of the foundation for this handbook was generated under the leadership of the Rt. Rev. Stephen Lane, now the Bishop of Maine, when he was a Canon in this diocese.

Introduction

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons. (Book of Common Prayer, p. 855)

Our Book of Common Prayer says very clearly that all baptized members share in the ministry of the church. This book been created by the Commission on Ministry in the hope that it will inform and support all who seek to exercise their ministry be they lay or ordained.

Just as all ministry is always in some level of formation so this book is a book in formation. The Commission welcomes commentary and feedback as members of our diocese seek to better understand just what their ministry is and where God is calling us to exercise this ministry.

Forward

The Rt. Rev. Prince G. Singh, Bishop of Rochester.

Dear saints,

This vocational handbook attempts to respond to God's eternal dream in our time. The work of the members of Commission on Ministry (COM) – ably guided by the steadfast leadership of the Missioner for Vocational Discernment, the Rev. Peter Peters, and COM chair, the Rev. Jennifer Zogg – is to be commended. We continue to build on the foundation of those who served before us and pray that this effort will be a resource to move us closer to realizing God's dream.

The first person to introduce me to faith in Christ was a layperson - my mother. I did not come to engage clergy about my faith until much later. I understand that my story is not unique. Laity and clergy have their roles as ministers of the church, which is the body of Christ, and this handbook attempts to help us move intentionally in the direction of living fully into these roles. Imagine this: All 99% of Christians who serve out in the world putting on the mantle of Christian leadership wherever they are! Imagine each person becoming an agent of transformation helping to heal, reconcile, encourage, gladden, challenge, and correct. When this becomes real, the prophet Habakkuk's articulation of God's dream that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of God..." will be realized!

There is nothing new under the sun, says the preacher in Ecclesiastes. I think this is especially true when it comes to understanding the evolutionary unfurling of God's creative dream for and with us as we travel through this our island home. God's dream is for a beloved community where the reign of God is practiced and embraced. This dream is in the process of being realized over the millennia and will be abundantly realized at the coming of Christ, during what the faithful call the Second Advent. We, like our forebears, live in this in-between time, in the creative tension/freedom between the 'already' and 'not yet.' We catch glimpses of God's dream, while not realizing it adequately.

The church is one of God's instruments in helping form us for this work. She teaches us to blend God's Story of creation, redemption, and strengthened agency of sanctification with our stories. The church baptizes us as God's beloved children and nurtures us to build beloved communities that help actualize God's dream. Clergy are called into leadership to help us journey from womb to tomb and beyond. They companion us, along with other friends and strangers, reminding us to practice our

Vocational Handbook 2013 Introduction

faith by embracing love, joy, peace and more as our way of life. Faith, however, is not a spectator sport. All the faithful are called to serve as ministers of the church. We all have been endowed with God's seal of approval through baptism. We are given spiritual strength through the laying on of hands at Confirmation, which is a call to leadership of all the laity in the world right where they live – not just in the church where they congregate occasionally.

This handbook is a living document, which we pray will grow with us as we move forward humbly as beloved community that practices Godly leadership during this season of change.

Your fellow servant in Christ,

Prince

Discerning all of Life as Ministry

The Rev. Peter W. Peters, Ph.D.

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

What is your ministry? All baptized Christians have a ministry: what is yours? To be a baptized Christian is to join God in transforming the world into the realm of God's beloved community.

The primary call for all ministry is baptism. In our baptisms, we are brought into the ministerial understanding of what it means to be human: we are created in the image of God, redeemed into the fellowship of Christly reconciliation, and empowered by the unyielding love of the Spirit. In short, baptism means that we no longer live for ourselves but for the sake of others. This is what life as ministry is all about.

Ministry is also about viewing life in relation to the mission of God (*missio dei*) to which the whole of scripture bears witness. Our catechism says that the mission of God is "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." (BCP p. 855) It is the work of breaking down barriers that separate us from one another; it is the work of telling the Christian story in such a way that we are contributing to healing the world of its current state of divisiveness and creating the space for all to come to the table as sisters and brothers. It is about the joyful embrace of the stranger in radical acts of hospitality.

Our Anglican Communion has adopted a useful summary of God's Mission that we as church seek to live into—they are the "Five Marks of Mission":

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation.
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth¹

Living into our ministry as people who share in the mission of God happens at all levels of our human living—family, community, nation, global relations—nothing is immune from the impulse of God's love that is seeking to restore all people into the beloved community as it is embodied in Jesus the Christ. Ministry is not so much

¹ For the complete text and commentary go to <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm>

what we do to others, as some forms of aggressive and manipulative evangelism have it; it is about how we *live* with and for the other.

To encourage this kind of regard for the other, Jesus told his disciples that true leadership has the hallmark of service. (Luke 22:22-32) All ministry takes its impetus from the servant model that Jesus embodied among his friends and those to whom he reached out. Each expression of ministry—lay, diaconal, and priestly—is grounded in this serving dimension modeled for us by Jesus.

Servant ministry is not servile ministry: it is ministry that flows out of our identity as those who have been baptized into a covenanting relationship with God. When we reaffirm this identity at Confirmation, the Bishop prays, "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*." (BCP p. 309) Living as a servant minister means having a sufficient sense of identity and self-differentiation that we can take seriously the needs of those around us and become instruments in the building of God's beloved community. This kind of ministerial living begins in prayer, as we open ourselves to the presence of God in our daily living.

Each one of us who belongs to the community of the baptized is called upon to discern what our gifts are, and how we might use them to further the mission of God. No one, as Jesus reminds us (see Matt. 5:14; c.f. Eph. 5:8-10), is without some gift through which we can participate in God's mission. Each of us has some gift to offer and bring light to the challenges we face in building God's beloved community in this alien world.

This Vocational Handbook is designed to assist all baptized members to discern and celebrate the gifts of ministry that they bring to their communities – home, neighborhood, work place, church, or public-square – and doing this involves us in a major cultural change. It is a major change from a culture in which "ministry" was considered to be a special vocation limited to those who are ordained. That all changed with the advent of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer, where the Baptismal Covenant makes it clear that all baptized persons are involved in a life of ministry in some form or another—we are called to "seek and serve Christ in all persons", "to strive for justice and peace", and "to respect the dignity of every human being." (BCP p. 304 f.)

Even though this historical development is now over thirty years old, many continue to live as if this change has not occurred. In many of our congregations, it is still the unstated assumption that ministry is what the clergy do! When this is assumed, all kinds of misunderstandings and false expectations occur that often rest on the shoulders of the ordained clergy affecting the health and wellbeing of the

congregation. In truth congregational health in mission and ministry is a matter that is shared by all of the baptized. Every baptized person is welcomed into the community with the words, “confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.” (BCP p. 309)

The temptation to look at clergy as rescuers of the congregation is often compounded when a congregation finds itself in a precarious “survival” mode. This often happens when the surrounding community is in decline leading to a lack of resources and a loss in the average Sunday attendance. All of this is even more obvious as our culture witnesses the declining social function of religion—so many now say that they are “spiritual but not religious” reflecting the creeping cynicism our modern age expresses toward organized religion.

In the face of this post-modern and global world, where people are often more connected to one another through the Internet than they are through locally gathered communities, our churches need to discern and adopt a whole new way of being. Instead of despairing over the future of the church in the face of the changing world around us many are re-discovering the missional nature of the church—a nature that is not just about maintaining an institution but of partnering with God in bringing good news to our changing world. Congregations are learning to stop worrying about whether they will exist or not and instead are learning to exist and thrive as churches participating in God’s mission.

It is in this changing understanding of what it means to be church that we are all being invited to discern just what God is calling us to be in our baptisms—and this includes lay and ordained ministries. In this way the energy of the congregation is turned from survival to service, from fear to faith, from risk-avoidance to risk-taking, and from program development to people development.²

Our diocesan vision states this succinctly: we are a people who know *Joy in Christ as a way of life*. Note the first verb -- joy! When I was a child I recall seeing a sign outside of a church that read, *Joy is Jesus first, Others next, Yourself last*. This is not bad as far as it goes, but these many years later it now seems to me to easily re-enforce those with poor self-images into servile behavior. I now like to think of JOY in this way:

- **J**esus reveals God’s face of compassion and embraces all of us.
- **O**thers invite us to see Christ in them as we shape a peaceful world.
- **Y**ou and I are being called to embody God’s compassion with all persons.

² To further explore this theme see Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

The Commission on Ministry is attempting to help the members of our church learn that being a member of the church is not just about belonging to a congregation but about participating in the mission of God in the world, a mission that is about the transformation of all people through the embodied love we bring through our ministries. To participate in this mission means that all of us are involved in some form of discerning what God is calling us to be and to do in our own sphere.

In this handbook, you will find ways to explore three of the levels of ministry as recognized in our catechism (see BCP pp. 855-6.) Each order of ministry has its own *charism*, or gift:

- a. **Lay** ministry involves doing the work of the people in the liturgy and being in the presence of Christ wherever they find themselves and as they give witness to the reconciling love of Christ.
- b. **Diaconal** ministry involves bringing the needs of the world into the life of the worshipping community and enabling members of the community to find ways that serve the needs of the world around them.
- c. **Priestly** ministry involves being able to lead liturgical worship with a passionate spirituality; to proclaim the gospel with clarity and authenticity; and to offer pastoral care with wisdom and incarnational compassion.

As you pursue your own sense of call into this life of ministry, lay or ordained, we hope that you will find ways in your community to find time and resources for discerning God's will for your ministry. Here are some reflections on what we understand about discernment:

- Discernment is the process by which we move from the knowledge that all have a ministry to the discovery of our own particular ministry.
- **Some Biblical themes:**
 - The whole Bible is a witness to God's calling people as witnesses to God's realm/kingdom—from the patriarchs through the prophets to Jesus and the Apostles and now to us.
 - In calling witnesses, God often transforms our perception of the world around us—enslavement to liberation (Exodus narrative), racial, ethnic, or class exclusion to universal welcome (Jesus' table hospitality, and Paul's understanding of Christian community.)
 - God meets us in the very place we find ourselves: the Incarnation is the fundamental witness to God's embrace of our human experience.

Discernment is about going deeper into our humanity with all of its particularity around race, gender, personality, culture, history, education, and relationships -- and seeing how God is in the midst of all of this.

- God is continually seeking ways to renew, restore, and heal creation.

- **Some theological and practical observations:**
 - God seeks to be in a relationship with us—discerning is always a relational process.
 - Ministry is related to our gifts and our passions.
 - We discover our gifts and have them validated in community. Discernment is not done in isolation but in the communal setting where we share the biblical narrative and witness.
 - Discerning is not the same as deciding; discerning is discovering how our decisions reflect our life in God—how our values are informed by our baptismal identity.
 - Discerning is a life-long process that leads to deeper and deeper integration of our lives in God.
 - In discerning, we will use all of the faculties available to us, including memory, intuition, our body's awareness, imagination, reason, religious affiliation, and the environment where we are living.³

What is your ministry? This is the fundamental question, but it may also be expressed in another way: where are you being called to minister the reconciling and healing love of Christ? Some follow up questions to consider are: What passions do I bring to this call? What are my strengths in answering this call? What are my challenges in answering this call? Who am I sharing this with, as I seek to respond to God's call?

Our church's Canons (church legislation) encourage every congregation to establish ministry discernment groups that will enable all Christians in the community to discover their calling in ministry. Any person trying to come to terms with God's call to ministry is encouraged to speak with their priest and/or gather some fellow members for prayer and discernment. A suggested approach and resources for this will be found in Section Two, The Ministry of the Laity. Also, they may seek out the

³ For and extended commentary on these dimensions of discernment see Elizabeth Liebert, *The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2008).

Vocational Handbook 2013 Introduction

person on the bishop's staff who is charged with Vocational and Leadership Development at any time.

In the case of those who believe they are being called to one of the ordained ministries of the church, the Commission is proposing some specific ways to support their discernment process—see Section Three, Diaconal Ministry, and Section Four, Priestly Ministry.

It is our prayer, as you engage more fully into this intentional life of ministry, you will find the resources listed in this handbook valuable and helpful as you continue in your journey.