

Model 1 – A medium-sized suburban parish

Discernment Committee – Organization, responsibilities, and duration

The Parish Discernment Committee is charged to help an applicant discern the nature of his/her call to ministry.

The work of the Discernment Committee is to provide an environment in which the applicant and committee members may freely and openly discuss the applicant's call to ministry. The committee, and the applicant, must treat all of their meetings as confidential to this end.

Secondly, the Discernment Committee serves as a support system for the applicant during his/her seminary training and journey through the Diocesan ordination process. They will provide a regular liaison between the applicant, the rector, the vestry, and the rest of the parish. The committee's work does not end with Postulancy Conference. If the applicant is accepted for postulancy, the exploration committee should continue to provide support as the hurdles of seminary, candidacy, and ordination are faced.

The ongoing support must be intentional, using correspondence and periodic meetings throughout the applicant's educational process. The committee will be in receipt of quarterly letters from the applicant describing his/her progress in education and discernment. The work of the committee does not end until the applicant has been ordained, or has begun a lay ministry journey.

The committee will be made up of 4-5 people who do not know the applicant well, and who are as representative as possible of all ages and points of view in the parish. It meets for no more than 2 hours monthly for 6 months-1 year, until it is satisfied that the applicant is ready to proceed (or not). At that point they ask to meet with the Rector and make their recommendation to her/him.

The committee does its work independently and does not report to the Rector until its work is finished. The Rector is, however, available for consultation and advice if necessary.

(In the event that an applicant is not recommended by the parish for further discernment with the Diocese or approved to begin formation by the Diocese, the Discernment Committee, in consultation with the rector, may play a role in supporting the applicant in discerning other forms of ministry to which he or she might be called.)