

Model 4 – A large urban parish

Committees formed to assist in discernment of vocations to ordained ministry

This church has, in recent years, been presented with the gift of a number of people who discern a call to ordained ministry, either as a deacon or as a priest. We have worked to be good stewards of these vocations, and have developed the following process.

We have gathered about 25 people who have agreed to serve on Discernment Committees, which range in size from 4-6 people. We have offered training and opportunity for reflection with all these 25 people together.

After candidates have met with the Rector or the Vicar, they are recommended to the Discernment Committees, chaired by a member of the Vestry responsible for this area. The Chair assigns each candidate to meet with a committee.

Before meeting with the committee, the candidate is asked to write a spiritual autobiography, which is read by committee members prior to the first meeting.

Then the candidate meets with the committee in a series of gatherings in which the genesis of the call is explored, and in which particular questions are raised. There is no fixed number of meetings (usually 4). At the end of these meetings, the committee writes a report which is passed on to the Rector and Vicar. The report is a description of strengths and challenges facing the candidate, but is not shown to the candidate. Its substance is shared with the candidate.