



Explorer Discernment Process

COMMISSION ON MINISTRY
DIOCESE OF SOUTHERN OHIO

Goal and Objectives

- ❖ Goal: To equip the explorer with a stronger discernment period by offering a wide variety of experiences and information to assist them during this first stage of the process
- ❖ Foundational Assumptions:
 - ❖ Until applying for postulancy, everyone is assumed to be discerning for all three orders of ministry. Of course, people come in with a sense of call to a specific order, but the assumption of the process is that one of the functions of discernment is to help refine that sense of call and that it may change as discernment progresses.
 - ❖ The parish vestry and the bishop are the canonical decision makers regarding postulancy. The assumption of the process is that everything in this process serves to provide information & insight to the explorer, vestry and bishop.

February Explorer's Day

- ❖ Explorer & parish clergy (or ecclesiastical authority) attend
- ❖ 9 am to 4 pm
- ❖ Sharing about various lay ministries in congregation, in the community, religious life, diaconate, priesthood
- ❖ Bible Study & Theological reflection about ministry
- ❖ Outline of the ordination process
- ❖ Some truth telling about the reality of ordained ministry – joys, sorrow, and expectations
- ❖ Assigned tables at lunch with discussion questions
- ❖ Take home: questions for explorer & parish clergy to discuss together

Paperwork

❖ If you and your parish priest discern together that it is time for you to move forward in a formal discernment process at this time:

- Your priest will write a letter to Bishop White explaining why they are recommending you to move forward in this process, what gifts they see in you for ordained ministry, and how they plan to support you in the years to come.
- You will complete the DSO Explorer Information Form (Pages 20-23 of Booklet #1) and return it to us via email to transitions@diosohio.org.

Meeting with Bishop White

- ❖ Upon receiving your Information Sheet Form and the letter from your sponsoring priest, Sarah Beegle, Executive Assistant to Bishop White, will reach out to you about scheduling a 30-minute in-person meeting with the bishop, together with you and your priest at the Diocesan Offices.
 - 412 Sycamore Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45202

Forming a Parish Discernment Committee (PDC)

- ❖ After your in-person meeting with Bishop White, she will let you and your priest know if you may form a Parish Discernment Committee.
 - Possible responses include:
 - Yes, please move forward in the process at this time.
 - Not now, but maybe later.
 - Bishop White may give you some recommendations for next steps
 - You are not permitted to continue.

Parish Discernment Committee Training (post Easter)

- ❖ Ideally on Zoom and recorded for those unable to attend
- ❖ Explorer, PDC members & Parish clergy (or ecclesiastical authority) attend
- ❖ Review process, questions and report of the discernment committee
- ❖ Discernment committee should be made up of 4-6 lay people and should include:
 - ❖ 1 person who knows the explorer well;
 - ❖ 1 person who doesn't know the explorer well;
 - ❖ Someone who is considered to have abilities in the area of discernment.
- ❖ The following may **not** serve on the PDC:
 - ❖ Deacons or priests,
 - ❖ Postulants, Candidates, or other Explorers currently in the discernment process
 - ❖ Spouses, partners, or family members of any clergy of the parish or the explorer.
- ❖ The rector or priest-in-charge (or ecclesiastical authority) should meet with the committee at minimum for the 3 meetings about orders of ministry.

Parish Discernment Period

- ❖ Committee Meets from May thru November
- ❖ Each month during this period, the committee meets along with the Explorer. Each meeting is a various topic and contains work for the next meeting. Please see following slides.
- ❖ Parish Discernment Committee should be looking for the following in the explorer at this point:
 - ❖ Compelling Faith
 - ❖ Spiritual Practices (an understanding of the ones that work for them and knowledge of others)
 - ❖ Self-awareness and ability to reflect
 - ❖ Maintains appropriate boundaries
 - ❖ Understanding of baptismal ministry and the orders of ministry (developed during internship)
 - ❖ Understanding of Episcopal worship & polity
 - ❖ Willingness to engage with issues of Beloved Community, Creation Care, Substance Abuse and to confront issues of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism & religious bias in themselves and their community
 - ❖ Willingness and ability to be vocationally flexible
 - ❖ Willingness to take risks, to fail and to learn from failure

Parish Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

May Meeting and Reflection Questions: Spiritual Autobiography and Practices & Faith

Members of the Committee should have worked on a “spiritual autobiography” prior to this meeting. Share reflections and findings.

Each Member shares what their spiritual practices are. Explorer shares their own.

Discuss Daily Office and resources available; discuss Lectio Divina and resources available. Encourage explorer to engage spiritual practices to deepen sense of discipleship and discernment.

The first 3 questions in the Baptismal Covenant have to do with “what we believe” in declaring our beliefs in the Persons of the Trinity. Discuss each of the three questions and the members relationship with each person of the Trinity.

Committee is asked to read the “Baptismal Covenant” in the BCP, pages 304-305 in preparation for next meeting

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the question “When the explorer talks about their faith and spiritual practices what most stands out for you?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “When thinking about your faith journey, what common theme or themes do you see running through your life?”

Parish Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

June Meeting and Reflection Questions: Lay Ministry

The next 5 questions in the Baptismal Covenant have to do with “how we live” our Faith. Discuss each question and each members current practices, ministry, or reflections.

Committee is asked to read the ordination vows of a Deacon (BCP, pgs. 543-544) prior to the next meeting.

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the questions “As the explorer reflected on the variety of ministry of the laity, where did you hear the most passion and engagement? How have you experienced the explorer’s ministry in your congregation?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “As you reflect on your current ministries, what brings you the most joy and why?”

Parish Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

July Meeting and Reflection Questions: Diaconate

What is the role of the Deacon in the BCP 855 and 543-544?

What part of the vows resonated with the Explorer? Which did not?

How are the currently ministries of the Explorer like the Diaconate? Which are more like the Laity?

Committee is asked to read the ordination vows of a Priest (BCP, pgs. 531-532) prior to the next meeting.

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the questions “As the explorer reflected on the ministry of the diaconate where did you hear the most passion and engagements? In what ways could you see (or do you currently see) the explorer exercising diaconal ministry?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “In what ways can you see yourself (or do you currently see yourself) exercising diaconal ministry?”

Parish Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

August Meeting and Reflection Questions: Priesthood

What is the role of the Priest in the BCP 855 and 531-532?

What part of the vows resonated with the Explorer? Which did not?

How are the currently ministries of the Explorer like the Priesthood? Which are more like the Diaconate or Laity?

Committee is asked to read the Catechism in the BCP concerning Prayer, Worship, and Sacraments, pages 856-861 in preparation for next meeting

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the questions “As the explorer reflected on the ministry of the priesthood where did you hear the most passion and engagements? In what ways could you see (or do you currently see) the explorer exercising priestly ministry?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “In what ways can you see yourself (or do you currently see yourself) exercising priestly ministry?”

Parish Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

September Meeting and Reflection Questions: Sacraments

What are the Sacraments? How are they lived out in the life of the explorer and committee members?

What is Baptism? How is Baptism experienced in the life of the explorer and committee members? What are the effects of Baptism?

What is the Holy Eucharist? The BCP states that “The Holy Eucharist is the principal act of Christian worship” (BCP, 13). Is the Holy Eucharist central in your life? What did you experience in Mass this week that supports this claim? Name one meaningful moment you personally experienced.

Committee is asked to read the “Orders of Ministry” from the Catechism on pages 855-856 of the BCP as well as the ordination vows of a Deacon (BCP, pgs. 543-544)

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the question “As the explorer reflected on the sacraments, how did you hear echoes of your discussions about lay ministry, diaconal ministry and priestly ministry?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “As you reflected on the sacraments, how did you hear echoes of your discussions about lay ministry, diaconal ministry and priestly ministry?”

Parish Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

October Meeting and Reflection Questions: End of Parish Discernment Committee Reflection

How has the Explorer grown over the last 6 months?

What ministries has the explorer excelled? Which have been “growth moments?”

Where does the Explorer see their call growing?

The committee should prepare a document with the answers to the questions from each month and review and edit it as a group. The committee should add an answer to the following question “In the course of our discussions with the explorer, we believe that we heard a call (or calls) to the following order(s) of ministry”. It is okay for the committee to have heard a call to more than one order of ministry. Please follow your answer with a paragraph of explanation about why you believe that is the call you heard.

The explorer should prepare a document with the answers to the questions from each month and add with a paragraph about the order of ministry they believe they are called to and why. Should the explorer apply to enter the ordination process this document & the spiritual autobiography will serve as their application.

Nov – Jan Meetings

❖ November/December

- ❖ Parish Discernment Committee Reports to Vestry
- ❖ Vestry Endorses Application to proceed toward an Internship in another congregation for further discernment
- ❖ Parish Priest sends report to COM
- ❖ Explorer applies to COM to continue Diocesan process – several essay questions & spiritual autobiography
- ❖ Explorer meets with Bishop

❖ January

- ❖ Explorer meets with COM
 - COM makes recommendations to Bishop White
- ❖ If it is discerned that the Explorer should go forward, Parish Internship Assignments are made

Internship Parish Discernment Period

- ❖ Internship Period runs from February to July
- ❖ The internship will take place in a congregation other than the home congregation; physical distance and mentor fit will be strongly considered.
- ❖ The Commission on Ministry will assign someone as a “troubleshooter” for internship committees/explorer to address questions, issues etc....

Internship Parish

Discernment Period: Explorer

❖ During their Internship, the Explorer completes the following:

- ❖ Background Check
- ❖ Medical Evaluation
- ❖ Midwest CDC (psychological exam)

These are supervised and directed by Rev. Melanie Slane and Sarah Beege through the transitions office, and are held in strict confidence. They are reviewed by Bishop White only, and not seen by any member of C.O.M.

❖ Internship should include:

- ❖ Preaching at least once
- ❖ Public Role in Worship (chalice bearer, lector, verger, acolyte etc....)
- ❖ Leading a short term project (including recruiting volunteers, organizing an event, etc....)
- ❖ Teaching a class or session of a class
- ❖ Attending Vestry meetings

A learning covenant between the clergy of the internship congregation and the explorer will be established.

Internship Discernment Period

- ❖ Committee Meets from February to July
- ❖ Each month during this period, the IDC meets along with the Explorer. Each meeting is a various topic and contains work for the next meeting. Please see following slides
- ❖ Internship Discernment Committee & Clergy (or ecclesiastical authority) should be looking for the following in the explorer at this point:
 - ❖ Compelling Faith
 - ❖ Spiritual Practices
 - ❖ Ability to communicate their faith to different ages, groups, contexts etc... both in word and action
 - ❖ Self-awareness and ability to reflect
 - ❖ Maintains appropriate boundaries
 - ❖ Ability to both lead and follow and to transition between the two
 - ❖ Understanding of baptismal ministry and the orders of ministry (developed during internship)
 - ❖ Able to empower others
 - ❖ Understanding of Episcopal worship & polity
 - ❖ Has or is developing a comfort with public speaking & leading worship
 - ❖ Has or is developing an ability to engage in leadership of volunteers

Internship Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

Feb Internship Meeting and Reflection Questions: Spiritual Autobiography and Practices & Faith

Members of the Committee should have worked on a “spiritual autobiography” prior to this meeting. Share reflections and findings.

Each Member shares what their spiritual practices are. Explorer shares their own.

Discuss Daily Office and resources available; discuss Lectio Divina and resources available. Encourage explorer to engage spiritual practices to deepen sense of discipleship and discernment.

The first 3 questions in the Baptismal Covenant have to do with “what we believe” in declaring our beliefs in the Persons of the Trinity. Discuss each of the three questions and the members relationship with each person of the Trinity.

Committee is asked to read the “What is the Ministry of the Laity?” in the Catechism of the BCP, pg. 855 in preparation for next meeting

In preparation for the next meeting, the intern explorer should begin to determine with the Rector/Priest in Charge/Ecclesiastical Authority the following:

Ministries they will be engaging over the next several months

- Preaching date(s): at least one is required*
- Discuss the creation and implementation of a short term project*
- Discuss the creation and implementation of a small class*

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “As I continue in my discernment and think of my faith journey, what common theme or themes do you see running through your life? Which has deepened since I began the discernment process?”

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the question “When the explorer talks about their faith and spiritual practices what most stands out for you?”

Internship Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

March Meeting and Reflection Questions: Lay Ministry

Discuss “What is the ministry of the Laity?” in the Catechism of the BCP, pg. 855.

At this meeting, the intern should describe the following:

- *Which ministries they are/will be involved in over the next several months. What ministry have they served in before? What is new? What will be exciting and what will be challenging?*
- *When are they scheduled to preach?*
- *What small project will they lead? Have they lead a project like this before? What are their strengths and growing edges?*
- *What small teaching will they lead and when?*

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the questions “As the explorer reflected on the variety of ministry of the laity, where did you hear the most passion and engagement? When they discuss their ministry in your congregation what are their strength and growing edges?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “As you reflect on your ministries at this internship parish, what brings you the most joy and why?”

Committee is asked to read the Diaconal Vows at the Ordination of a Deacon on, pages 543 in the BCP in preparation for next meeting

Internship Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

April Meeting and Reflection Questions: Diaconate

What is the role of the Deacon in the BCP 855 and 543-544?

What part of the vows resonated with the Explorer? Which did not?

How are the currently ministries of the Explorer like the Diaconate? Which are more like the Laity?

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the questions “As the explorer reflected on the ministry of the diaconate where did you hear the most passion and engagements? In what ways could you see (or do you currently see) the explorer exercising diaconal ministry?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “In what ways can you see yourself (or do you currently see yourself) exercising diaconal ministry?”

Committee is asked to read the ordination vows of a priest (BCP, pgs. 531-532) prior to the next meeting.

Internship Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

May Meeting and Reflection Questions: Priesthood

What is the role of the Priest in the BCP 855 and 531-532?

What part of the vows resonated with the Explorer? Which did not?

How are the currently ministries of the Explorer like the Priesthood? Which are more like the Diaconate or Laity?

Following this meeting a member of the committee should write an answer to the questions “As the explorer reflected on the ministry of the priesthood where did you hear the most passion and engagements? In what ways could you see (or do you currently see) the explorer exercising priestly ministry?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “In what ways can you see yourself (or do you currently see yourself) exercising priestly ministry?”

Internship Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

June Meeting and Reflection Questions: Sacraments

What are the Sacraments

How are they lived out in the life of the explorer and committee members?

What is Baptism? How is Baptism experienced in the life of the explorer and committee members? What are the effects of Baptism?

What is the Holy Eucharist?

The BCP states that “The Holy Eucharist is the principal act of Christian worship” (BCP, 13). Is the Holy Eucharist central in your life? What did you experience in Mass this week that supports this claim? Name one meaningful moment you personally experienced.

Following this meeting members of the committee should write an answer to the question “As the explorer reflected on the sacraments, how did you hear echoes of your discussions about lay ministry, diaconal ministry and priestly ministry?”

Following this meeting the explorer should write an answer to the question “As you reflected on the sacraments, how did you hear echoes of your discussions about lay ministry, diaconal ministry and priestly ministry

Internship Discernment Period Meetings & Topics

July Meeting and Reflection Questions: End of Internship Parish Discernment Committee Reflection

How has the Explorer grown over the last 6 months?

What ministries has the explorer excelled? Which have been “growth moments?”

Reflect on the small project led by the explorer. What was a success and what is a growth moment?

Reflect on the preaching of the explorer. Did they engage the congregation? How was their preaching style?

Reflect on the teaching opportunity of the explorer. What was a success and what is a growth moment?

Where does the Explorer see their call growing?

The committee should prepare a document with the answers to the questions from each month and review and edit it as a group. The committee should add an answer to the following question “In the course of our discussions with the explorer, we believe that we heard a call (or calls) to the following order(s) of ministry”. It is okay for the committee to have heard a call to more than one order of ministry. Please follow your answer with a paragraph of explanation about why you believe that is the call you heard.

August to October Meetings

❖ August - September

- ❖ Internship Discernment Committee Reports to COM and Home Parish Vestry
- ❖ Internship Clergy reports to COM & home parish vestry
- ❖ Explorer reports on internship to COM & home parish vestry
- ❖ Application for Postulancy
- ❖ Home parish vestry endorses application
- ❖ Meet with Bishop

❖ Early October

- ❖ Explorer Meets with COM
 - COM makes recommendation to Bishop White
- ❖ Postulancy decision made by the Bishop