

PRAYING TOGETHER

PARISH DISCERNMENT FOR ORDERED MINISTRY



*A booklet designed by the Examining Chaplains
Committee of the Anglican Diocese of
Edmonton to guide the work of a Parish
Discernment Committee
(Revised 2025)*

To the Parish Discernment Committee:

Greetings from the diocesan Examining Chaplains Committee. We want to thank you for being willing to take on this important ministry of helping someone in your parish to discern if they have a calling to ordered ministry. Don't worry if you don't feel qualified for this work. In the Anglican tradition, discernment is an act of prayer and listening that takes place on several different levels with the church. Some of this listening happens with the Bishop, some of this listening happens with the Examining Chaplains Committee, and some of this listening happens among people the inquirer knows well – which is you, the members of their local church family.

This booklet is meant to guide you in your part of this process. The booklet outlines the shape of two meetings, each broken into two sections. Schedule an hour and a half for each meeting. The instructions for each meeting are elaborated below. At the end of the booklet, you will find an appendix with some suggested prayers that can be used during the meeting times.

HOLY ORDERS

The Holy
Scriptures and
ancient
Christian writers
make it clear
that from the
apostles' time
there have been
different
ministries within
the church. In
particular,
bishops,
presbyters
(priests), and
deacons. *BAS*
p.631

At the end of this process, we will ask you to write a one-page report about your discernment. Please note that you are not being asked to decide once and for all whether or not the inquirer is called to ordered ministry. That is the determination of the Bishop in consultation with the Examining Chaplains. What you are being asked to discern is whether you feel that the call you heard articulated is strong enough that it warrants further discernment at the diocesan level. This is important for us for two reasons: First, it is important because we want to know that the inquirer is part of a worshipping parish community, and that they have the support of their community. Second, because a calling to ministry is not just between the inquirer and God but is an act of the whole Christian community, and your discernment at the parish level is part of that act. Thank you again for your important ministry.

First Meeting: The Question of Calling

For the first meeting, please open in prayer, make any personal introductions that need to be made, and have a general conversation about the process so that everyone understands what is going on. Please also close the meeting in prayer and encourage everyone to continue praying for discernment until the second meeting.

SECTION ONE OF THE FIRST MEETING: THE INQUIRER'S CALL (30-45 MINUTES)

For the first portion of time, the committee will invite the inquirer to tell their faith story up to this point with a particular emphasis on why they feel called to holy orders. The story should be concise and should really be focusing on the important spiritual moments in the inquirer's faith journey. Faith stories are important to understanding a person's calling, but it should also be noted that they can run long. The focus should be on the call. Why does the inquirer feel that God is calling them to this ministry? How did they come to this point? After the inquirer tells their story, there should be time for questions and conversation about the story. After this, the committee should take a short break.

**SECTION TWO OF THE FIRST MEETING: THE
QUESTION OF CALL IN THE SCRIPTURES
(30-45 MINUTES)**

Read Together:

Jeremiah 1:4-10 (The Call of Jeremiah)

Matthew 4:18-22 (Jesus Calls the Disciples)

(Note: it would be helpful for the leader of the committee to take a few minutes to set the context for the readings and to highlight any helpful exegetical notes).

Using the scripture passages as a base, talk about what it means for God to call someone to ministry with an eye to the inquirer's call.

Some questions that might help guide the discussion:

- What is Jeremiah's response to being called by God?
- What is God's response to Jeremiah?
- What does God call Jeremiah to do?
- What does Jesus call the disciples to do?
- What do the stories have in common?
- How are they different?
- What does it mean to be called by God?

Second Meeting: A Call to Word and Sacrament

As with the first meeting, please open and close with prayer. This meeting will be different than the first meeting in that the inquirer will only be there for the first section of the meeting. The second section is for the committee to deliberate on the one-page report that will be submitted to the Examining Chaplains.

SECTION ONE OF THE SECOND MEETING: THE CALL TO ORDERS (45 MINUTES)

In this meeting, the committee will look at the specific callings to ordered ministry as a deacon or presbyter/priest as the Anglican Church of Canada understands them. This is done in the context of the ordination service in the *Book of Alternative Services* (BAS).

Step One: Read together the BAS "Baptismal Covenant" (pp. 158-59) and ordination "Examination" sections (pp. 646-47 and 655-56). Spend some time talking about how the diaconate and presbyterate are understood in the BAS, and how they relate to the universal baptismal call to ministry.

Step Two: Reflect with the inquirer about how they understand their call to ministry to be to the specific ministry of diaconate or presbyterate. We stress that it is very important that the inquirer answer this question as clearly as they can, without prompting. It is normal in the first stages of discernment to have difficulty clearly articulating a call, but the inquirer needs to try. It is not enough to be called to ministry generally, as we know that all Christians are called to ministry of one kind or

another. This is an exploration of the inquirers call to a specific form of ordered ministry.

At the end of this section, please thank the inquirer for their willingness to share their story and let them know that the next people to be in touch will be the Examining Chaplains to talk about next steps. At this point the inquirer will leave, and the committee will take a short break.

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**SECTION TWO OF THE SECOND
MEETING: THE ONE PAGE REPORT
(20-30 MINUTES)**

This is the part of the meeting where the committee talks about all that they have heard. Here are some things to consider in your conversations:

- Does the inquirer have a strong spiritual life and relationship with God?
- Did you hear a call to diaconal or presbyteral orders?
- Does the inquirer's life and ministry reflect a call?
- Could you see the inquirer as an ordered minister in your own church context?

After reflecting on these and related questions, talk about the main points that need to be in the report which will be written by the leader of the Parish Discernment Committee. Remember that you are not being asked to determine once and for all if the inquirer is being called to the ordered ministry. You are being asked to make a more modest determination: is the calling articulated by the inquirer at this stage compelling enough to warrant further exploration at the diocesan level?

Thank you again for your ministry! We appreciate your willingness to be a part of this process. Please keep the inquirer's discernment in your prayers.

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