



**The Diocese of Southwest Florida**

# **Commission on Ministry Parish Nomination Committee Guidelines**

*Approved by the Commission on Ministry March 9<sup>th</sup> 2010*

## PARISH NOMINATION COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

Although each congregation or community of faith has its own unique mode of operation in establishing committees, the Diocese of Southwest Florida requires each potential nominee to follow these guidelines. The intention of the Commission on Ministry is to help Nominees gain confidence in sharing their sense of vocation and calling with a parish group before moving through the more public stages of the discernment process. These guidelines have been revised to bring clarity and are supported by feedback from work done in the past:

### COMMITTEE FORMATION

1. 4-6 persons of a diverse, representative group of the congregation, chosen by the Parish Clergy and Applicant, whom the Vestry will be willing to support by Vestry resolution. The COM suggests that it will be very helpful to have at least one Vestry member on the committee. The COM representative will also bring one person to the committee who is 'outside' the parish and does not know the Applicant.
2. The Committee meets on three occasions for up to two hours (longer meetings are not desirable) in a comfortable, congenial environment in the congregation or home of a committee member.
3. The clergy leader of the parish should attend the first meeting of the Committee but not thereafter. However, if the Committee is having difficulty with its task, the clergy supervisor should be consulted.

### PROCESS FOR THE PARISH NOMINATION COMMITTEE

The principal function of the Parish Nomination Committee is to LISTEN and assist the aspiring parishioner in clarifying their calling to ministry.

The following process is designed to assist you, the Parish Nomination Committee, in your work with your parishioner. This is an exploration and journey in which all members will be involved. A member of the Commission on Ministry will be assigned to facilitate this process.

*FIRST MEETING: Orientation for Nominee and Parish Clergy Leader*

The clergy leader and a member of the Commission on Ministry will meet with the Applicant to discuss the process and the task of the Parish Nomination Committee. The canonically required documentation for nomination (Baptismal Certificate, Confirmation Certificate) is to be presented at this meeting.

- Who is on the Committee.
- What will happen in each meeting.
- If Nominated, what comes next:
  - Meet with Bishop for permission to proceed to the next stage
  - Get Psychological test, Medical test, and submit all other pre-Postulancy documents to Canon Michael Durning
  - Attend a Bishop's Advisory Panel

The following criteria for admission as Nominee in the Diocese of Southwest Florida will also be reviewed

1. A nominee must be a confirmed or received member of the Episcopal Church and a communicant member in good standing at a congregation or community of faith.
2. A nominee must have consulted with the minister in charge of the congregation or community of faith and not have made previous application in this or any other diocese in the last five years.
3. A nominee interested in the Vocational Diaconate must be able to serve the ministry needs of the Diocese with a minimum of five years of ordained ministry.
4. A nominee interested in the Priesthood must be able to serve the ministry needs of the Diocese with a minimum of ten years of ordained ministry.
5. A nominee interested in the Priesthood should be able to demonstrate the completion of an earned undergraduate bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
6. After meeting requirements 1 through 5 listed above, nominees will be considered on a case by case basis by the Bishop in conjunction with the Commission on Ministry.

Additional Information:

- i) A Master of Divinity Degree (M.Div) from an accredited Episcopal seminary is considered the usual standard for ordination to the Priesthood in the Diocese of Southwest Florida.
- ii) The standard length of preparation for Ordination in the Diocese of Southwest Florida is from four to five years.
- iii) A nominee seeking recognition in the Episcopal Church of their ordination in another denomination, having met requirements 1 through 5 listed above, is subject to the procedures Title III, Canon 10 of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America.
- iv) Where seminaries offer a Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading system as well as a Letter grading system, the Commission on Ministry requires Letter grade

*SECOND MEETING: Full Parish Nomination Committee*

The focus of this meeting is to explore the Applicant's sense of call to ministry.

- Open with Prayer
- Review Confidentiality
- Introduction of Committee Members
- Remind Committee that Nomination is about showing potential for ordination after further discernment and training. Their decision is not about whether or not Applicant is ready for ordination now, it is really about his/her potential.
- Discussion with Applicant

Suggested questions

1. What evidence do you have that this person is called by God to the ordained ministry?

- A. Is this person confusing a calling to Christian service with a calling to ordination?
- B. Does this person have primary interests that are compatible with the basic functions of the ordained priest or deacon?
- C. Does this person have the innate abilities commensurate with the demands of the ordained ministry?

2. What is this person's capacity for leadership?

- A. Does this person show initiative, self-confidence and enthusiasm?
- B. Can this person motivate others?
- C. Is this person at ease with a variety of leadership styles and able to use them as the situation indicates?
- D. How well does this person relate to other people in inter-personal relationships?
- E. How comfortable is this individual with having authority? To what extent are they ready to claim and use authority appropriately?
- F. How has this person's leadership already been evidenced in prior or current lay ministries in school, work or church settings?

- 10 Minute Break
- Resume Discussion with Applicant
- Close meeting with Prayer

### *THIRD MEETING: Spiritual Journeys*

- Open with Prayer
- Review Confidentiality
- Review any thoughts from previous meeting
- Share Spiritual Journeys - (5 to 10 minutes each)

Each person on the committee is to describe their relationship to God, beginning with the earliest childhood memories and continuing to the present. Pay particular attention to turning points, major changes, and important persons in their spiritual development.

- 10 Minute Break
- Resume Discussion
- At the conclusion of this meeting, the Nominee is to distribute to each member of the committee a written spiritual autobiography. Committee members are to read this and come prepared at the next meeting to interview the parishioner and hold discussion based on this statement. Special attention should be given to:
  1. What circumstances and events have shaped this person's life?
  2. What pressures are currently in this person's life?
  3. How has this person responded to those pressures?
  4. What does this person do for recreation, relaxation and fun?
- Each Committee Member will return the written Spiritual Autobiography to the Applicant at the next meeting.
- Close meeting with Prayer

#### *FOURTH MEETING: Reflection and Recommendation*

- Open with Prayer
- Discussion with Applicant

The committee meets to interview the applicant and to discuss the Commission on Ministry's basic questions. These discussions should include knowledge of the parishioner's home life, work life, congregation life and activities. At this meeting we recommend that you begin with the following questions; however, you may arrange them in any way that seems best to the committee.

1. What is this person's understanding of the Christian Ministry?
  - A. How does this person view the ministry of the whole Body of Christ?
  - B. How does this person differentiate between the ministries of lay persons and ordained persons?
  - C. How does this person understand the ordained person's central task in pastoral care? (Solving other people's problems? Giving answers? Helping one to discuss alternatives and to come to a resolution of their own problems, etc.?)
2. Does this person strike you as one who is growing in the Christian faith?
  - A. How well does this person understand the basics of the faith?
  - B. Is there evidence of this person having a personal relationship with God?
  - C. How does this person's spirituality or lack of it make itself manifest to you?
  - D. Is this person still questioning, searching and probing the mysteries of the faith?

- 10 Minute Break
- Each Committee Member will return the written Spiritual Autobiography to the Applicant at the end of the discussion
- End the discussion with Prayer
- After the interview concludes the applicant will be asked to leave the committee meeting. The Committee is then called to make a recommendation to the Vestry. The Committee may either recommend for Nomination, or decline to nominate the applicant. **Please note this is not a recommendation to Ordination**, the recommendation is to continued discernment by the Bishop, Commission on Ministry, and Nominee. **At this stage the Bishop and Commission on Ministry are looking to see how the applicant's parish community views the potential shown for ordained ministry.**

## FOLLOWING THE LAST COMMITTEE MEETING

When a Parish Nomination Committee decides not to recommend nomination, the parish clergy leader should offer pastoral support to the applicant. All committee members should be clear about the reasons that Nomination has not been recommended, these reasons must be shared with the applicant in a pastorally sensitive manner.

Following a decision by the Committee for Parish Nomination the following must take place,

1. A letter of congregational support pledging financial support and involvement in preparation for ordination must be signed by two thirds of the vestry and submitted to the Diocese of Southwest Florida. The letter should be addressed to the Bishop and mailed to Canon to the Ordinary.
2. The Nominee must also write to the Bishop accepting Nomination and must also provide,
  - Full name and date of birth
  - Length of time resident in the Diocese of Southwest Florida
  - Copies of Baptism and Confirmation certificates
  - Details of any previous applications for Nomination, Postulancy or Candidacy in any Diocese
  - A written description of the Nominees discernment process to date
  - Details of education and qualifications with transcripts
3. Once Nominated the Commission on Ministry expects all Nominees to step down from positions of Parish or Diocesan leadership in order to avoid potential conflicts of interest at later stages of the discernment process.