



**The Anglican Diocese of the Great Lakes**  
3810 Ridgewood Road, Copley, OH 44321

### **An Introduction to the Parish Discernment Process for Rectors or Priests-in-Charge**

Dear Rector,

This document is an introduction to the Parish Discernment Process, responding to questions you may have about diocesan protocols for those making inquiries regarding discernment for commissioning as a Lay Catechist, or ordination to the diaconate or the presbyterate. Thank you for being proactive in this regard and raising up new leaders who are focused on making disciples who make disciples. Also, thank you for all your efforts in assisting the Diocese in its desire to create a culture of mission minded people.

You, as the Rector or Priest in Charge, are the first line of discernment in an Inquirer's process that may or may not lead to their certification as a Lay Catechist or ordination as a deacon or presbyter. This person should be someone you know to be an active member in good standing of your parish or congregation for at least one year. It might occasionally be the case that this person is not necessarily a member of your congregation, but you know them through other channels of relationship and ministry. When such a person approaches you because they think they may have a call to a more active or ordained ministry, and you are considering that this may be a genuine call of God on their life, the first step is to notify the Diocese in writing that this person whom you believe may have a call has come to you. This letter will be the first document in their diocesan file, which will eventually be reviewed by the Bishop and the Vocations Committee.

When this person is a member of your congregation and the diocesan office has been informed of their inquiries into public ministry via your letter of introduction, the next step is to begin a formal Parish Discernment process by forming a discernment committee. If you do not have a standing discernment committee already in place, choose between five and seven mature and committed Christian lay persons, members of the congregation, who have good judgement, are available to come to all meetings, and can be objective as information is gathered and assessed.

This first layer of discernment is highly valued, for any person who senses a call to ministry is not operating in a vacuum; their call is rightly confirmed by those who know them best and have seen them operating in various ministry situations. To aid in this assessment, forms for the report of the Parish Discernment Committee, Vestry, and sponsoring priest, along with guidelines for meetings are available from the diocesan website. The questions asked and areas covered need to be addressed to the Inquirer (and their spouse if applicable) during the course of meetings over a three to six-month period. There is flexibility as to how this meeting time might look or the format it takes, but it should be thorough, and a synopsis of its final assessment sent to the Diocese upon conclusion. Please participate in this discernment process with care and thoughtfulness as your insights and comments are important, your opinion valuable.

After the Inquirer has been approved by the Parish Discernment Committee, the Vestry must also approve. It is not appropriate for the Discernment Committee and the Vestry to be the same persons. The assessment form of the Parish Discernment Committee as well as the signatures of

the Vestry reflecting both those who agree and those who disagree to put this person forward for commissioning as a Lay Catechist or ordination need to be included.

Once the Diocese has received these letters and forms, the process will continue with the guidance of the Bishop, diocesan staff and the Vocations Committee. If you have questions, concerns, or need more information please contact the Canon for Leadership Development at the diocesan office.

Thank you for your efforts to see God's Kingdom grow through influencing and developing leaders who are committed to God's value for reaching those who do not know him in every family, neighborhood, city and region of our country and the world. May he guide, empower and bless you in all your good work.