

Considerations for a Sponsoring Cleric

Supporting Discerners for Ordained Ministry in the Diocese of Ohio

A discerner who wishes to enter into the diocesan ordination process must be accompanied by their clergy-in-charge. The discerner must be a confirmed communicant in good standing in the Episcopal Church and have been active in their faith community for at least one year. As a sponsoring cleric, your role is both pastoral and evaluative—helping the discerner listen for God's call while reflecting on their readiness for ordained leadership. The questions below are designed to guide your prayerful reflection on whether or not you can accompany/sponsor them in this process.

Bishop Jolly invites us to discern in all leaders:

- Adaptability – Can this person adapt to the rapidly changing world? How do they react when things shift beneath them?
- Obedience – Listening deeply and responding to how God is speaking; a willingness to follow God's call even when it requires change.
- Creativity – The ability to find new ways of being the Church and reaching people with the transformative love of Jesus.
- Hope – Holding the Paschal Mystery of Good Friday and Easter; being a bearer of hope to individuals, faith communities, and the world.

The Diocese of Ohio seeks ordained leaders who embody these qualities:

- Deacons who animate and empower others for service and justice.
- Priests who are grounded in Christ, adaptable, creative, and hopeful servant leaders.

I. Spiritual Life and Sense of Call

1. Do you know the applicant well enough to make a decision or do you need more time? Have you observed the applicant in a variety of situations?
2. Does this person have a sense of the Holy present in their life? How do they attend to the presence of God? What do you know about their life of prayer?
3. Why is the applicant seeking ordination? What experiences have confirmed or challenged their sense of call?
4. How does the applicant understand ministry? How do they understand the differences between lay and ordained ministry?

 For Diaconal Discerners: Notice whether the applicant seeks to animate and empower others for service rather than doing all the ministry themselves.

 For Priestly Discerners: Reflect on how the applicant remains grounded in Christ while being open to new possibilities for mission.

II. Character and Emotional Maturity

5. In your experience, does this person behave in an open, honest, and respectful way with others?
How does the applicant listen and take initiative?
6. Does this person have clear personal boundaries? Can they discern what is and isn't their business?
7. How does the person respond to conflict or authority? Are they able to receive feedback?
8. How is this person viewed by others in the congregation?

III. Relational Awareness and Community Engagement

9. Does the person have healthy relationships with parishioners, family, and colleagues?
10. How does this person balance interests in their life? Are they overly focused on church activities?
11. Does this person show curiosity and engagement with the world beyond their local setting?
How do they relate to other cultures and communities?
12. How does the applicant model servant leadership in the congregation?

IV. Formation Readiness and Learning Capacity

13. Is this person eager to learn, open to new ideas, and able to be challenged?
14. When this person faces difficulty, how do they seek help?
15. Does this person maintain a healthy rhythm of life — rest, prayer, exercise, and community?

 For Priestly Discerners: Consider how this person demonstrates adaptability, creativity, and hope in ministry.

 For Diaconal Discerners: Consider whether this person inspires others to action and connects the Church to the world's needs.

V. Final Reflection

In your prayerful judgment, how do you see this person embodying Christ's call to servant leadership? What experiences, formation, or support might best assist their ongoing discernment?

If you would like to sponsor this discerner, you must accompany them to Ministry Discernment Day and compose a letter of recommendation to the Bishop.

Please reach out to the Canon for Leadership Development, Russ Tripi, with any questions.