



Initial Steps for the Sponsoring Priest Including Forming the Parish Discernment Committee (PDC)

Listening is the bedrock discipline of the spiritual life.

Parker Palmer, *Forward: Listening Hearts*.

Under the Canons of The Episcopal Church, “a confirmed adult communicant in good standing may be nominated for ordination ... by the person’s congregation or other community of faith.” This process begins when an Aspirant meets with the priest from their parish, or in the absence of a priest, the Dean of their Convocation, to discuss a potential call to ordained ministry. If the priest is supportive, the vestry must also certify that the congregation will support the Nominee throughout the process. The required form for this certification is: [Vestry Certification of Congregational Support](#). The priest will upload this certification to the Nomination form found here: [Nomination Form for Holy Orders](#). Nominations are due in the diocesan office no later than March 1 each year.

At this time, the Nominee should be directed to prepare their Spiritual Autobiography and resumé to be provided to the Parish Discernment Committee (PDC). At the same time, the Sponsoring Priest will form a PDC by identifying three to five lay members of the congregation who have a mature faith and deep understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This should be a diverse group representing a diversity of race/ethnicity, age, gender, experiences, etc. They should be able to articulate their own vocation and ministry in the work of the Church and be able to commit to the work of discernment, which involves asking tough questions of the Nominee and of themselves.

The Priest will determine in advance who will serve as the Chair and will meet with the Chair before the first full session of the committee to discuss the process and review the attached PDC Manual, *Parish Discernment Committee: Responsibilities and Sessions*.

The document’s introduction sets forth the underlying principles of this ministry. Each session is clearly outlined stating the purpose/theme of the session, prayer, questions, and discussion points to help guide you. There are nine sessions. Sessions one and nine meet without the nominee being present. At the end of the process, there is a recommendation form which the Parish Discernment Committee fills out.

Both the Parish Discernment Committee Report and a Sponsoring Priest Report must be completed and submitted to the diocesan office by June 15 in order for an application link to be sent to the Nominee. If the PDC has not completed its work, the chair is to notify the diocesan office by June 15 of their intent to recommend and must submit the report no later than Labor Day.

If you have any questions, please contact Pat Hawkins at phawkins@dioceseofnj.org.