

# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF CALIFORNIA



## Discerning Your Call to Ministry: Lay, Religious and Ordained Ministry in the Church

A Publication of the Commission on Ministry

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# DISCERNING YOUR CALL TO MINISTRY

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*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (I Corinthians 12:4-7)*

## **PREFACE**

The Commission on Ministry (COM) of the Diocese of California has prepared this document for those seeking to discern their call to participate in the ministry of the Church. We are mindful that all the faithful, by virtue of baptism, share in the ministry of Christ and we seek to assist you in discovering God's intent for you and your place in the work and ministry of the Church, whether your place is in lay ministry or ordained ministry.

This document was developed in consultation with the Bishop and Standing Committee of the Diocese. The COM serves the Bishop in an advisory capacity and works in concert with the Standing Committee, which has certain canonical responsibilities regarding holy orders.

As well as assisting those discerning vocation, this publication should also prove helpful and informative to clergy and congregations who find themselves advising others who seek to find their place in the ministry of the Church, as either laity or clergy. We refer at various places to Local Discernment Committees, which are not fully developed in each congregation or area. Where such development is lacking, we encourage efforts to form and empower them, and to make them available to parishioners seeking to clarify their calls to ministry of every kind.

Two related publications should be used with this document for those dealing with calls to the ordained ministry: *Guidelines for Those Seeking Holy Orders* and *Congregational Sponsorship for Holy Orders*, both of which are available through the Vocations Office. *Congregational Sponsorship for Holy Orders* is an important resource for clergy, vestries and Local Discernment Committees to use in assisting those whom the congregation raises up for Holy Orders. In addition, there is the document *Canons on Ministry*, an extract of the relevant canon law from the *Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church*.

The successive steps taken in the ordination process, from nomination to postulancy through candidacy, to ordination, are discussed in the document *Guidelines for Those Seeking Holy Orders*. Special or exceptional situations are described in supplemental guidelines: *Application Procedures for Holy Orders: Clergy from the Roman Catholic Church* and *Application Procedures for Holy Orders: Ministers from Protestant Traditions*. These special cases include ministers ordained in non-apostolic traditions and priests from other branches of the Catholic Church.

In this document, the canonical requirements are identified by reference to the *Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church* as revised by General Convention in 2009. A citation such as TEC Canons III. 6.6a, for example, means Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, Title III, Canon 6, Section 6, Part a.

Information and documents relating to discerning vocation and the ordination process are found online at [www.diocal.org](http://www.diocal.org). Click on "Resources," then "Ordination Resources."

# INTRODUCTION

## What is the Ministry of the Church?

“Ministry” as used in this document refers to the particular ways and means through which and by which each Christian takes part as a member of the Body of Christ. According to the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP p. 858), all Christian ministry is grounded in the sacrament of Baptism “...by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ’s body, the Church, and inheritors of the Kingdom of God.” As our active participation in God’s mission in this world, and our thankful response to the many gifts God gives to us, ministry is the vocation of all Christians. It is continually nourished in worship, particularly in the sacrament of Holy Eucharist.

The polity of our Church recognizes four orders of ministry: the laity, deacons, priests, and bishops (BCP p. 855). While the latter three are authorized through ordination, particular lay ministries may be commissioned, licensed or certified as described in later sections of this handbook and in the *Book of Common Prayer*. The history of the people of God is the story of special callings. Just as the whole people of Israel was called, Isaiah was called, Paul was called, Christian men and women are still called to special ministries. Most of these calls are to specific kinds of service as laity. Some may be called to the life of a religious community. Others may be called to the ministry of the diaconate. Still others may be called to the work of the priesthood

The process of discerning a call to ministry begins with reflection on our baptismal vows. There are times in our life when God seems to grasp our shoulders and turn us in new directions – toward God and toward every ministry that builds up the Kingdom of God’s love on earth as it is in heaven. All members of the Episcopal Church are to carry out the vows of the baptismal covenant:

- To affirm the beliefs in the Apostle’s Creed;
- To continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers;
- To persevere in resisting evil, and when falling into sin, to repent and return to the Lord;
- To proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ;
- To seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves;
- To strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being.

Episcopalians believe that in baptism God gives each individual a unique and equally valid ministry to serve as a living example of God’s love for all of creation. We believe that our shared life and worship empower each of us to explore and follow that call to manifest God’s love in the world. We also believe that call may be lived out in both lay and ordained ministries, both within and beyond the Church. The process outlined in these chapters is designed to help ascertain into which of those arenas an individual may be called. But it is most important to understand that baptismal ministry in our daily lives is the primary call for each of us. Our daily witness of Christ carries the Church into the world.

## What is Discernment?

All Christians—lay persons, the ordained clergy, and those considering ordination—“discern” the direction of their ministry. Therefore, discernment—which technically means “to separate,” “to distinguish,” “to determine,” “to sort out”—is a *word* and a *process* familiar to the conversations of and in the lives of the baptized. The Canons of the Episcopal Church envision the local faith community as the principal resource for this process of discernment.

Discernment is critical in the selection and practice of all ministry. Essentially, it is a matter of perceiving the difference between one thing and another—for example between God’s will and our wills, between our own sense of calling and that of the Church, or between various orders of ministry. Discernment means discovering and testing the gifts and skills we have, and those that are necessary to each ministry. Christians seek the illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit in all matters of discernment. This means we are to be open and prayerful at every point in our personal and communal work. The well-being of the Church is our special responsibility, not simply the satisfaction of our own needs or desires. Discernment generally happens over time, and in the case of ministries offered to and for the Church, it is a community as well as a personal exercise.

There are three essential phases to all discernment processes, regardless of whether the ultimate determination is for lay or ordained ministry. These essential components are:

- One’s self-understanding
- Community identification/recognition of a call from God
- Affirmation from the Church

Because the local faith community plays the initial and integral role in identifying and “recruiting” lay and ordained ministers, a substantial amount of time must be spent in conversation with its clergy and lay leaders, all of whom must be ready to fully endorse the individual at the conclusion of this process. That being the case, if the community determines that the call is to ordained ministry—in concert with the individual’s own understanding of call—then the authenticity of that call must be tested in the greater Church.

Discernment programs are now offered in this Diocese to support our people in their initial stages of discernment about ministry. While these are programs that would benefit everyone, participation in the Day of Discernment and completion of Time of Discernment are required of all persons exploring a call to ordained ministry. Further information about these discernment programs is available through the Vocations Office and our diocesan website.

## **The Orders of Ministry**

The Catechism in the *Book of Common Prayer* teaches that there are four orders of ministry: “The ministers of the Church are laypersons, bishops, priests and deacons” (*BCP* p. 855). Thus, all Christians, because they are baptized members of the Body of Christ, have a ministry. Some exercise this ministry primarily in the world, representing Christ by their life and labor. Others serve Christ primarily in the Church.

**The Ministry of the Laity.** “The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, work and governance of the Church” (*BCP* p. 855).

Lay persons discern their calls by understanding how best they can serve Christ in their work and ministry in the world, whatever and wherever that may be. Each Christian’s work, in diverse ways, helps build up the life of the world and can make Christ present in every sphere of human activity. There is a common misconception that the holiest, most devout members of the Church are those called to ordained and religious life when in fact it is the baptized laity through whom God does much of God’s work in the world. It is the lay ministers of the Church who are EMTs, human rights lawyers, loving parents, peace keepers and social workers. It is the lay carpenters who build our safe houses, lay civil rights leaders who prophecy justice and equality, and countless

other lay vocations that lift our fallen and fractured world more and more towards God's vision of peace and well being for all creation. This is the work of the Body of Christ and the ordained serve God by serving these lay servants through preaching, teaching and the sacraments.

The Church also encourages lay people to give of their time and talent in the work of building up the Body of Christ in the community of faith through such work as preachers, teachers, youth ministers, and hospital chaplains. Other opportunities to minister in the Church include serving on vestry, at the Deanery level as representatives from congregations, at the Diocesan and Provincial levels on commissions and committees, at the National level as delegates to General Convention and on the numerous program groups that spring from its work.

**The Ministry of the Diaconate.** "The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments" (*BCP* p. 856).

Among the ordained offices, the diaconate is scripturally identified in Acts. Best characterized by service in the pattern of Jesus Christ, it may involve providing acts of mercy, distribution of food, money, and other forms of aid to the needy. It means being a leader in bringing the world's needs to the Church's and facilitating the social ministry of the Church—which means getting everyone involved with the Church's engagement with the world and its needs. It may mean speaking and acting prophetically to invite the people to help realize justice in the world. Deacons often are found in institutional settings such as hospitals and hospices, prisons and schools, in ministry to the poor and the homeless, and among immigrants and the marginalized. In the Diocese of California deacons constitute a distinct ministry order whose members are sometimes called vocational deacons to distinguish them from transitional deacons, whose final order has been determined to be the priesthood, or presbyterate.

**The Ministry of the Presbyterate.** "The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God" (*BCP* p. 856).

The priesthood developed as bishops permitted "elders" to perform some liturgical functions formerly restricted to bishops. This most visible of the Holy Orders is often associated with administration of the sacraments. Some of its more common functions are preaching, teaching, spiritual formation within the parish, and administrative responsibilities on behalf of the community.

**Further Information.** Title III Canons of The Episcopal Church explain the requirements for ordination and are available at: [www.episcopalarchives.org/CnC\\_ToC\\_2009.html](http://www.episcopalarchives.org/CnC_ToC_2009.html). The Commission on Ministry advises that persons thinking about the ordination process become familiar with both the ordination canons and the procedures described in this document.

A full understanding of the Order to which a person is called occurs over time as the individual moves through the process of ministry assessment. The spiritual journey is one of learning, maturing, and challenge. Openness to the work of the Holy Spirit is of ultimate importance. It is also important to remember that each person's process is unique, even though all go through certain steps along the way.

## **The Commission on Ministry (COM)**

The COM is a resource for ministry. Its primary role is to:

- make provision for the development and affirmation of the ministry of all baptized persons in the Church;
- assist the bishop in providing for the ministry needs of the Diocese;
- support baptized lay persons for the exercise of their respective ministries;
- advise the bishop regarding the suitability of persons for the ordained ministry;
- support the preparation of such persons for ordination;
- support all ordained persons in the continuation of their respective ministries.

The COM is canonically directed to serve as a council of advice to the Bishop, with whom the commission confers and consults regularly. The COM assists persons in discernment for ministry and working with them as they follow their path toward their lay or ordained ministry. All persons entering into discernment of any kind of ministry in the Church should familiarize themselves with the Canons of the Episcopal Church, Title III.

### **Parish Discernment: Who's Involved and What Are the Roles?**

A valid ministry call is founded both upon a reasonable consensus within the local faith community and on a person's own sense that God is indeed calling the individual into ministry of a particular character. It may well be the faith community that first perceives that God is calling one of its members, and vocalizes that awareness; or it may be the individual who voices his or her perception to the larger body. The relationship that follows is an intimate discernment partnership between individual and faith community.

#### **The Individual**

The individual's contribution involves reflecting on the beliefs, experiences, gifts, desires, and abilities that give a sense that God is calling the individual to some particular role or service in the Church. Throughout the process of discernment the individual engages in prayer, reflection, active inquiry with a spiritual director, and conversation with members of the community, attempting at all times to ascertain the character of the call. In most cases, the actual commencement of formal congregation-based discernment follows a period in which the individual alone has been engaged in discovery. The journey of discernment is one that requires faithful responsiveness for each Christian since he or she is likely to encounter unique circumstances, questions and challenges. For some, the journey may move quickly; for others, the process may be more gradual or elongated. Nonetheless, some general guidelines follow that may help shape the journey's path.

**Pray.** Prayer, the means by which and through which we maintain communication with God, is essential. A rule of life that includes significant time for prayer so as to hear God's desires is foundational to discernment of ministry. Time to distinguish the voice of the divine from the din of human endeavor is invaluable. Further, while there are appropriate times for private prayer, individuals discerning call continue to participate in the corporate liturgical and sacramental prayer life of a worshipping community.

**Be active in the faith community.** By all means, one should not retreat to solitude for discernment. While there are necessary times for solitude and quiet during the process, being active in one's congregation may be the single most important factor in understanding one's call. If possible, one should participate in as broad and deep a way as possible. Such service also allows one a chance to see and experience the widest range

possible of parish life, test interests and skills, and provide a deepened sense of the life of the laity.

***Test it out.*** How can one determine whether the call is to lay or ordained ministry? How does one know God's desire for his or her life? These are essential discernment questions. It is helpful to explore other avenues of interest, such as taking courses and/or reading books on a diversity of subjects of interest. The idea is to expand the mind and heart in multiple directions to find where any resonance occurs.

***Read Scripture and talk with clergy in one's community of worship.*** Even while testing out other interests, one should continue to pursue the study of Scripture, Church history, devotional writings, and other readings of spiritual or religious interest. (See pp. 9-10 for suggestions). If possible, one should find a means of giving life to this reading by means of a discussion group, or in conversation with one's clergy person. In addition to the readings, make an opportunity to talk at some regular interval with the clergy person, who not only has personally experienced the discernment process, but also is capable of offering a confidential, supportive and honest environment for exploration of one's call.

### **The Clergy**

Because the clergy are among the first to meet officially with a person discerning a call, the clergy leader's role is important. By listening carefully and responding thoughtfully, the clergy leader may assist a person to perceive and express more clearly the nature of that call. In these initial contacts, the process of exploration and testing the vocation has begun. The clergy should note any recent problems in the individual's life and be alert to manifestations of stress or trauma at the time the notion of ministry call is voiced. These issues, if present, must be resolved before continuing the discernment process. If the priest cannot in good conscience support the individual, for whatever reason, this must be made known to the individual at the very beginning of the process. Further, it is not to be assumed that any such issues impacting discernment would or could necessarily be resolved at a later stage in the process.

### **The Community**

The Christian faith is a community faith. There is no such thing as a private Christian faith. There is only the faith of the Church—the body into which each of us is incorporated by baptism. A person who believes that he or she has a vocation to lay or ordained ministry must be particularly clear about the community nature of the faith. It is only in the midst of the active, worshipping community that a realistic and viable conviction about vocation can take shape. Here the Christian witnesses ministry at work, taking its distinctive forms of service and celebration in both commonality and diversity. In the Christian community, a person on the path of discernment can find models of various vocations. Life in the community context helps to clarify aspirations for and in the matrix of vocation.

In our Church such communities are our congregations. The Church's participation in the discernment process involves the community's experience confirming that the individual has demonstrated beliefs, experiences, gifts, desires and abilities consistent with the possibility that God is calling the individual through the Church to a particular kind of service. It is the Church which affirms the need for the particular role or position to be filled as part of its larger call to ministry and mission in the name of Jesus Christ.

The process toward ordained ministry described in this document assumes and requires three years' active membership in a parish or mission church where our brothers and sisters can witness, help identify, and support the development and use of our gifts for ministry. It is the responsibility of the local faith community and the Church at large to aid in the exploration, interpretation, and validation of this call by God to ministry. There is also the special work of discernment with a Local Discernment Committee (LDC), which may be constituted at the congregational, Area Ministry or Deanery level.

## **The Local Discernment Committee (LDC)**

The primary function of the LDC is to provide a forum for exploring the individual's call. This exploration includes discussing the general meaning of ministry; looking specifically at differences in calls to lay and ordained ministries; reviewing the communicant's life and spiritual history; and observing the applicant's ongoing life and ministry within the congregation. The Commission on Ministry may be consulted regarding training for LDC members.

Whichever ministry track the individual ultimately pursues, the LDC provides a context for growth, not only for the applicant, but also for the team itself, which leads to growth for the congregation and the Diocese at large. This growth is, in fact, the very proof that the team has succeeded in its work. If it is determined that the call is to lay leadership, the clergy leader will confer with the individual as to what future course of study or utilization of skills in the faith community may apply. If it is determined that the call is to ordained leadership, the clergy leader will help the individual begin the process for application for ordination to Holy Orders.

## **THE CALL TO LAY MINISTRY**

God calls people in the Church to numerous roles and servant ministries, of which only three are ordained. The Church conducts its fundamental ministry in countless roles and offices that do not require ordination. Most Church members who sense a call to serve Christ more fully find their call to ministry is as laypersons both in the Church and in the world where they live and work. Discernment may very well lead to clarifying, deepening, or strengthening a person's ministry as part of the Laity, the people of God.

The servant-ministries of the Church include, but are not limited to, serving as a Vestry member or a Warden; as sexton, Altar Guild, acolyte, musician, or Church School teacher; as an administrator, an advocate or outreach coordinator; a member of the Local Discernment Committee, a Healing Minister or a Spiritual Director. Most congregations provide their own process for raising up and training people to these ministries, although the Diocese also offers useful resources for training and enrichment for these ministries from time to time.

For those wishing to explore more fully their baptismal ministry as Laity, the Commission on Ministry recommends considering:

- Spiritual and pastoral discussions with their clergy;
- Spiritual and pastoral discussions with lay leaders who are intentionally involved in living out their baptismal ministries;
- Work with a Spiritual Director;
- Attendance at Day of Discernment and the Time of Discernment program offered in the Diocese;
- Work with a Local Discernment Committee;
- Reaffirmation of baptismal vows if already confirmed, preparation for confirmation, if not yet confirmed, or for reception;
- Educational offerings and spiritual formation opportunities offered by local congregations;
- Education for Ministry (EFM), a four-year program of study of scripture, liturgy and Church history, theological reflection, and spiritual growth developed by the School of Theology at the University of the South at Sewanee and offered by several parishes in the Diocese;

- § On-line resources such as the CALL (Center for Anglican Learning and Leadership) program at CDSP (Church Divinity School of the Pacific) in Berkeley. [www.cdsp.edu/center.php](http://www.cdsp.edu/center.php);
- § Various certificate programs as well as summer session and short courses offered by CDSP, CALL and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) in Berkeley [www.gtu.edu](http://www.gtu.edu);
- § The Spiritual Director's Institute at Mercy Center, Burlingame [www.mercy-center.org](http://www.mercy-center.org);
- § Cursillo and other spiritual renewal groups;
- § Membership in organizations such as the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer or Daughters of the King;
- § Books, videos and other resources. Contact the Diocesan Resource Center, at St. Thomas Episcopal Church, 231 S. Sunset Avenue, Sunnyvale CA, 94086-5938; Telephone 08-736-4155; [www.stthomas-svale.org/](http://www.stthomas-svale.org/);
- § The website of the Office of Ministry Development of the Episcopal Church. [www.episcopalchurch.org/ministry/](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ministry/).

**For Spanish-speaking individuals, the Academia Teológica Latina**, in cooperation with the Diocese of California, offers Episcopalians the opportunity to equip themselves to better serve God while fostering their own Christian formation. The Formation Program offers three years of education in theology, practical theology, and Anglicanism. While the Formation Program is offered on site in Berkeley, summer classes have also been offered in the Latino congregations of the Diocese. The Academia is designed principally for Latino Episcopalians. While Classes and workshops are in Spanish, students represent a diversity of cultures, nationalities, careers, and levels of formal education. The schedule accommodates people who work or engage in other courses of study. For more information: [www.cdsp.edu/center\\_academia.php](http://www.cdsp.edu/center_academia.php) or contact: [academia@cdsp.edu](mailto:academia@cdsp.edu).

## Lay Professional Vocation in the Church

A lay professional is a paid employee in the Church with professional training who is not ordained. The title has significantly raised the consciousness of the Church about the presence, needs and contribution of laypersons employed in the Church and has served both to confirm many in the role and to point to the significance of their sense of call and their commitment to ministry in and for the Church.

Lay professionals view their work in the Church as a vocation, a response specific to God's call in their lives. Lay professional workers include parish administrators, Christian educators, lay ministry coordinators, youth workers, secretaries, seminary professors, organists, music directors, pastoral care workers, and chaplains. Lay professionals are part of congregational and diocesan staff teams and special outreach ministries. Most lay professionals are paid, and the salary range varies with the scope of the work. The Church is increasingly supporting lay professionals as a vital and valid call to service.

As people pursue their calling, they will find professional training useful in building their gifts, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses to choose professional courses which will complement and aid them in this endeavor. The opportunities to learn are wide and varied and will be useful to the Church. We need all the professional skills in order to serve Christ and his Church. Such education could include:

- Community colleges, university extension courses;
- Trainings offered by community groups;
- Leadership skills;

- Listening skills;
- Working with volunteers;
- Community development;
- Organizational skills;
- Financial and clerical skills;
- Teacher training;
- History and religious teachings in the Church;
- Psychological, social work, and medical skills;
- Web-based education extension courses such as CALL at CDSP;
- Course work at the CDSP/GTU.

## **Licensed Lay Ministries**

The Canons of the Episcopal Church (Title III.4) suggest that certain ministries within congregations and other communities of faith be licensed by the Ecclesiastical Authority. Requirements and guidelines for the selection, training, continuing education and deployment of such persons, and the duration of their licenses shall be established by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission on Ministry. All licensed ministers must be adult communicants in good standing as defined by the Canons.

The member of the clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation may request such licenses and their renewal (or revocation) by contacting the Ministry Development Officer 415-869-7817. A layperson must be a confirmed communicant in good standing and be recommended by a member of the clergy, usually their Rector, for one of these licenses. A person licensed in one congregation of the Diocese may serve in another congregation in the Diocese only at the invitation of the clergy in charge, and with the consent of the Bishop.

A Eucharistic Minister is a lay person authorized to administer the consecrated elements at a celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Persons seeking to serve in this ministry are selected by the clergy of their parish or region. Their names are put forward to the Bishop for licensing, generally for a term of three years. Lay Eucharistic Ministry training is available through the Diocese of California.

A Eucharistic Visitor is a lay person authorized to take the consecrated elements in a timely manner following a celebration of the Holy Eucharist to members of the congregation who, by reason of illness or infirmity, are unable to be present at the celebration. Such a person is selected by the clergy of the parish and trained by the Diocese of California. Training must be completed prior to assuming the duties of a Visitor. Names for this ministry are submitted to the Bishop, together with a list of their qualifications. They generally serve a term of three years.

***The following ministries are not currently developed in the Diocese of California. If you are interested in these ministries, contact the Diocesan Department of Adult Education.***

A Pastoral Leader is a lay person authorized to exercise pastoral or administrative responsibility in a congregation under special circumstances as defined by the Bishop. The Bishop will determine the qualifications, suitability, and term of each individual so licensed on a case by case basis.

A Preacher must have completed a course of study approved by the Bishop, and satisfy other qualifications and requirements as are suitable to this ministry.

A Catechist is a lay person authorized to prepare persons for Baptism, Confirmation, Reception and the Reaffirmation of Baptismal Vows. A person seeking to become a Catechist must complete a course of training approved by the Bishop. Catechists function under the direction of the member of the clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the congregation

A Worship Leader is a lay person who regularly leads public worship under the direction of the member of the clergy or other person exercising oversight of the congregation. That person will train and supervise persons for this ministry, or engage with others in their region or the Diocese to do so. Their names will be put forward to the Bishop for licensing, generally for a term of three years.

## **Religious Orders**

As you reflect upon the baptismal covenant and explore a call to ministry, you also may wish to consider exercising your gifts in the Church as a member of a Religious Order. The Religious Life in the Episcopal Church is governed by TEC Canons III.30. A Religious Order is a society of Christians who voluntarily commit themselves to a life of poverty, chastity and obedience. Religious Orders vary in their way of life and in the kinds of prayer and ministry they do, but they share several common purposes:

- to bear witness to God within and beyond all things and to the coming of God's reign;
- to be signs of the total commitment in which God calls all who would follow Christ;
- to show forth the true value of human relationships by the offering of a Christian commitment to love their sisters and brothers within the community and their neighbors;
- to be communities of worship where prayer to God is practiced, and in so doing to be sources of encouragement and inspiration to others;
- to give to its members the freedom to devote themselves permanently to the loving service of God within a disciplined common life;
- to stand alongside the powerless, the poor, the exploited and the marginalized, not only in prayer but also through ministry.

There are 22 recognized Religious Orders in the Episcopal Church, who are members of the Conference of American Religious Orders in the Americas (CAROA). More information is available on their website: [www.caroa.net](http://www.caroa.net).

The Canons of the Church also govern Christian Communities which do not follow all the forms of traditional religious orders. They may, for example, not be a residential community, or may include married and single people. Christian Communities vary greatly in their composition and their purposes. The National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC) has a website with further information: [www.home.earthlink.net/~naecc/](http://www.home.earthlink.net/~naecc/).

## **Certified Chaplaincy**

Members of the Diocese seeking certification for hospital chaplaincy must meet the following criteria set by the Chaplaincy Board of the Association of Professional Chaplains:

- A Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree or its equivalent;
- Four units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) from an accredited (ACPE) center with a certified supervisor;

- The ecclesiastical endorsement from a known faith body;
- Applicants must appear before the Chaplaincy Board mentioned above;
- Work as a chaplain for at least one year.

## **THE CALL TO ORDAINED MINISTRY**

The Episcopal Church understands that an authentic call to ordination comes to an individual within a community of faith. It may come first to the individual or the community, but either way, it must be affirmed by the person involved and others within their community and the Diocese. Recognizing and testing a call to ordination continues the process of discernment.

### **We uphold these values when discerning a call to ordained ministry:**

- God calls people both by inward spiritual experience and by the outward beckoning of the community, the Body of Christ;
- Our process of discerning various calls to ministry is rooted in the history, doctrine, community, and worship of the Episcopal Church;
- Each individual is treasured and held in the highest esteem;
- Baptism calls each person to ministry. All orders of ministry — laity, deacons, priests, and bishops — are equally important in carrying out the mission and ministry of Christ’s Church. The purpose of the ordained orders is to lead and support the ministry of all the People of God.
- In the discernment process we are to be prayerful, centered in God, patient and yearning for gracious guidance;
- Conversations concerning discernment are always to be open and honest;
- For those pursuing ordained ministry, thorough evaluations and recommendations from sponsoring clergy and vestries are essential and vital;
- Domestic Stability. The life of an ordained person is stressful, and the ability to form enduring marital bonds is important for the health and welfare of the clergy and the congregations they serve. For this reason, it is the policy of the Diocese of California that no one who has been married/legally partnered and divorced three times will be accepted into the ordination process. Clergy who obtain a third divorce are required to resign their posts.

The COM encourages inquirers to be prayerful and patient each step of the way. We are created as diverse people, yet we are also one in Christ through our baptism, and it is important that we treat one another with care and respect. There are no definitive criteria for those called to ordained ministry, but in general there are certain personal qualities that may help to inform the discernment of those who meet with inquirers.

### **We look for these qualities in persons seeking ordination:**

- A deep commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord;
- A desire to seek God’s will;
- A love of Jesus Christ that can inspire and empower others;
- A spiritual practice of prayerfulness and servanthood demonstrating durable Christian faith and witness;

- A significant leadership involvement in Church activities;
- Involvement in and a keen awareness of the issues of society and a willingness to engage in advocacy;
- The ability to integrate the needs of the world with the message of the Gospel — a quality especially important for a deacon;
- Being at home in the Church’s community and worship, and participating regularly in the sacraments;
- Commitment to the development of moral character patterned after the life of Christ;
- A capacity for perseverance in difficulty, a resilience in adversity, and an ability in using life experiences as vehicles for personal growth;
- Intelligence and imagination with a sound educational background;
- The ability to learn and a desire to continue to learn;
- The ability to communicate well;
- The ability to teach and to give a reasoned account of the Gospel;
- A desire to help others grow in faith and knowledge;
- A commitment to listen with sensitivity and understanding;
- The ability to hear and accept constructive criticism;
- Initiative and energy; the capacity to be a self-starter and to work hard;
- A sense of humor and humility;
- Self-awareness, including a firm grasp of one’s personal strengths and weaknesses;
- A healthy sense of personal and institutional boundaries;
- The ability to care for and serve others and to be with them in times of crisis;
- An enjoyment of others, pleasure in human interaction, and a history of getting along well with others and cooperating in team efforts;
- Breadth of vision and tolerance of others; and an ability to relate to people of different personalities and ages and from varying religious, cultural, and economic backgrounds;
- A demonstrable ability to be a leader, to motivate and enable the ministry of others, and to be an agent of change;
- Being among those who gather people, reconcile differences, and support others in their journey;
- Ability to articulate an understanding of the vocation to ordained ministry and to express the way in which their vocation differs from Christ’s call to all Christians to minister to each other and to the world.

## **The Life and Work of a Deacon**

The ministry of the deacon, as outlined in “The Examination” in the ordination service in the *Book of Common Prayer* p. 543, is expressed in this way:

*As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your work and example to those among whom you live, and work, and worship. You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God’s Word and Sacraments, and you are to*

*carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time. At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.*

The deacon's role has both symbolic and functional dimensions. One of the Greek meanings for the word "Diakonos" is servant or minister. Another is agent or one who speaks on behalf of another. Deacons are therefore primary reminders that we are a Servant Church. They enable all the baptized to claim their authority as ministers of Christ in the Church and in the world.

In the liturgy, the deacon proclaims the Gospel, assists at the Table, guides the Prayers of the People, and sends the assembly out to love and serve in Christ's name. In these ways the deacon reminds us of our call to proclaim the Good News by word and example and to serve others in Christ's name. Deacons interpret the needs of the world to the Church, and bring those concerns into the center of the Eucharistic gathering. They do not do the work of the Church alone in the larger community, but lead, equip and inform the whole Church in that work.

A deacon serves under the direction and guidance of the Bishop, who appoints the deacon to a particular congregation or institution. The deacon may exercise a ministry of pastoral care in the congregation and assist in "the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry," with a special concern for facilitating the social ministry of the Church, the engagement of the Church with the needs of the world. A deacon may also exercise a servant ministry in the larger community, which further embodies the Church's ministry in the world. Most deacons serving in the Diocese of California are not financially compensated by the Church for their diaconal ministry.

In this diocese we honor both transitional deacons (those who serve in this capacity until they become priests) and vocational deacons, those for whom the diaconate is their calling. Most deacons in the Diocese of California are formed and trained at the School for Deacons, a theological school serving our Diocese, as well as the surrounding dioceses. For more information: [www.sfd.edu](http://www.sfd.edu).

## **The Life and Work of a Priest**

The work of a priest, as outlined in 'The Examination' from the ordination service in the *Book of Common Prayer* p. 531, is expressed in this way:

*...to work as a pastor, priest, and teacher, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.  
As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor.  
You are to preach, to declare God's forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God's blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.  
In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.*

The priest's role has symbolic and functional dimensions because it is a sacramental office, in which the priest is an icon for the Church and the world of what it means to live our lives as an offering to God. The locus of a priest's responsibility is the parish, mission, hospital, educational institution, prison or other institutional structure within which the Gospel is preached, the sacraments administered, and the faithful are equipped for their service in the Church and in the world. In congregations where there is no deacon, the priest also performs the diaconal role stated above in the ordination rite for a deacon in the *BCP*.

The Order of Priesthood is an extension of the Bishop's ministry as chief pastor and guardian of the Faith. Priests have the responsibility to participate in the councils of the Church (diocesan and general conventions) and within their communities they preach the Gospel, declare God's forgiveness, celebrate Holy Communion, and bless the people.

In the Diocese of California full-time employment for priests in congregations is limited. Often priests have full-time or part-time employment in a secular job or seek parochial employment in another diocese.

## **First Steps toward Ordained Ministry**

The Church, in its community of dioceses, congregations, and individuals, is the authority to which all baptized persons look in discerning a specific vocation as members of Christ's body. A personal sense of calling may be a first indicator that God is calling the person to a particular ministry as an ordained person, but the local community may also encourage those they see as having potential for leadership. This personal call will be tested both by the individual and by the wider Church community.

By the time the Commission on Ministry becomes involved in the discernment process, an inquirer should have been discussing the possibility of a call with family members, a few close friends, a spiritual director, the Local Discernment Committee, the clergy and Vestry or Bishop's Committee of the congregation. During this preliminary period, persons considering Holy Orders should also talk to priests and deacons in other parishes, missions, and institutions of the Diocese about their work and read some of the various resources on lay and ordained ministry. Each person seeking ordination must have been a communicant in good standing and have demonstrated leadership for at least three years in a congregation of the Diocese. Although it is no longer canonically required, those persons seeking the priesthood must, in most cases, hold a bachelor's degree or its equivalent.

It should be noted that the process leading to postulancy must include the *Day of Discernment*, offered one or more times annually by the Commission as well as the on-going *Time of Discernment* program. The purpose of these programs is to create an environment for interested persons who want to discover more about how the four orders of ministry in the Episcopal Church (laity, diaconate, priesthood, and bishop) complement and support each other. The programs are open to all interested laypersons, but individuals considering Holy Orders must participate in both programs. ***It is therefore critical that clergy and inquirers note the annual date for this program since it would create an unnecessary delay in the entire process if the opportunity to participate in that program is missed.***

## **Theological Education**

While theological education is requisite for ordination, it is inadvisable to pursue seminary or a diaconal training program prior to beginning the ordination process. There have been cases in which individuals had a

strong sense of God's call to ordained ministry, and spent much time and money on theological education, only to discover that their call was not affirmed by a community of faith or the greater Church. This regrettable and often painful situation can be avoided by taking the recommended steps in the ordination process in order.

For those discerning a lay scholarly vocation or wanting to deepen their faith through academic study, a theological education can add great richness to one's life, and there are many different ways of pursuing a theological education. The Masters of Divinity and the Bachelor of Diaconal Studies aim at preparing candidates for ordained ministry, and those discerning a call to a lay scholarly vocation may do well to instead consider academic tracks like Master of Arts in Theology or Biblical Studies, the Masters of Theology, the Doctorate of Philosophy and the Doctorate of Theology, or various certificate programs such as the Certificate of Theological Studies at CDSP. If one discerns a call to study theology or scripture in an academic setting, these degrees can be good alternatives to a strictly vocational formation program.

### **The Role of the Commission on Ministry (COM) and Standing Committee**

The COM discerns and helps prepare persons for the ordination process. An inquirer, postulant or candidate who perceives a vocation to holy orders presents that call to the Church for interpretation, evaluation and discernment. Together, the bishop and the COM represent the church in the evaluative and pastoral dialogue. The COM guides the formation and training of those studying for the vocational diaconate and the priesthood and recommends to the Bishop the readiness of a candidate for ordination.

The COM works closely with the Standing Committee of the Diocese throughout the ordination process. Members of the Standing Committee serve as liaison to the COM and regularly attend meetings. Members of the Standing Committee participate in the annual Vocations Conference conducted by the COM. The Standing Committee certifies that canonical requirements for ordination have been met and that "there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, doctrinal, or spiritual grounds and recommends to the Bishop that a candidate be ordained deacon or priest" (TEC Canons III.6.6c, 8.6d and 8.7c.)

The COM delegates the work of evaluating the academic preparation of candidates for ordination to the Diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains, the chair of which is normally a member of the COM.

The COM also serves as a pastoral guide and a source of support and direction to the applicant as that individual moves along through postulancy and candidacy toward ordination. Therefore the COM seeks to establish an enduring relationship with each of our postulants and candidates throughout the process. A member of the commission (the COM Liaison) will be assigned primary responsibility for establishing and nurturing this relationship. However, the individual has a major share in this responsibility: he or she must be thoroughly familiar with the steps toward ordination and it is important that he or she maintain regular contact with the member of the commission serving as liaison. The commission nonetheless exerts every effort to meet its awesome responsibility in assisting the candidates and postulants in priestly and diaconal formation.

### **The Vocations Office**

The Vocations Office is the primary avenue of communication with the Bishop, the COM and the Standing Committee. All required documentation for the various steps in the ordination process should be sent to the Vocations Office, which maintains a file on each person in the process. The address is 1055 Taylor St., San Francisco CA 94108. The telephone number is 415-869-7814.

All along the way from inquirer to ordination, an important element in the Process is the initiative of the individual, who is solely responsible for scheduling and keeping appointments and for seeing that the required steps are taken and any required papers are provided in a timely fashion to the Vocations Office. Each person in the process should make copies of all documents sent to the Vocations Office. All communications concerning Holy Orders should be addressed to the Vocations Office.

***At no stage in the process is anyone guaranteed ordination.***

It is important that we all be as clear about this process as we possibly can. At no stage in the process is anyone guaranteed ordination. The process of discernment is continuous. It is not at all useful to think of the various requirements described here as “hurdles” or “hoops,” as if they were obstacles which, when successfully negotiated, would leave one on a clear track to ordination. Fulfilling the requirements is absolutely necessary but it is by no means a sufficient condition for ordination. The requirements are dry bones only, onto which flesh must be put and into which spirit must be breathed. At any stage in the process, the postulant or candidate may realize that his or her call is not to the ordained ministry and may resign. There is no dishonor in such a decision; it may reflect, on the contrary, admirable wisdom. At any stage in the process, the Bishop or the Commission on Ministry may decide that the call they thought was to ordination was not, in fact, and permission to proceed may be withdrawn. There is no dishonor in that decision, either. We pray, however, that such a decision would be made in wisdom, with careful discernment.

**For more information about The Process for Ordination, read the Diocese of California document *Guidelines for Those Seeking Holy Orders*, available online at [www.diocal.org](http://www.diocal.org). Click on “Resources,” then “Discernment Resources.”**

# APPENDIX 1

## Discernment Glossary

*“Words, words, words, I’m so sick of words....!”*  
- Eliza Doolittle

These may prove useful as you participate in the discernment process of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of California.

**Academia Teológica Latina** — Diocese of California educational program in theology for Spanish-speakers.

**Board of Examining Chaplains**—the appointed body delegated by the COM to evaluate the academic preparation of candidates for ordination.

**Candidate** — One who has moved into the last step of the Process prior to application for ordination.

**Canons** — The laws of the Church. There are national Canons for the Episcopal Church, found in the *Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church* and there are diocesan canons.

**Certified Chaplain**—A hospital chaplain who has been certified by the Board of the Association of Professional Chaplains.

**COM** — The Commission on Ministry. A canonically established body of clergy and laypersons appointed by the bishop, which supports the bishop in providing for the ministry needs of the diocese (both lay and ordained) and advises the bishop in the ordination process.

**COM Liaison** — A member of the COM who meets with a postulant or candidate at least four times each year, and, particularly, before each time a postulant or candidate meets with the COM. This person is available to provide advice and answer questions about the process.

**Communicant in Good Standing** — A baptized person, 16 years old or older, who is faithful in corporate worship and has received the Sacrament of Holy Communion in this Church at least three times during the preceding 12 months, and who is a recorded contributor to the support of the Church, sharing in worship and praying, working and giving for the health of the Kingdom of God.

**CPE— Clinical Pastoral Education** —An accredited program of education, which focuses on discovering and forming the student’s pastoral style, abilities, and psychological and spiritual well-being in circumstances when the student is practicing pastoral care for others. CPE normally involves in-hospital supervised chaplaincy for those on the priesthood track.

**Day of Discernment** — A one-day workshop offered by the COM for any lay person interested in learning about the four orders of ministry in the Episcopal Church – lay, deacon, priest and bishop. The Day of Discernment workshop is required for all persons seeking ordination.

**Diaconate** – The servant order of deacons, who facilitate the Church’s ministry with the poor, the sick, the suffering and the oppressed.

**Discernment** — The process of testing, clarifying, and evaluating a perceived call to a particular ministry in the Body of Christ.

**Ember Letters** — Letters written to the bishop four times a year reflecting on personal development as well as academic and field experience. These are required of all in the ordination process. Ember Days fall after the first Sunday in Lent, Pentecost Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, and the third week of Advent.

**Field Education** — A supervised practicum in ministry, based in a site, usually a congregation but sometimes an agency or chaplaincy, in which the student learns hands-on ministry.

**GOE - General Ordination Examination** — Comprehensive exams required by canon law to be successfully passed by candidates for the priesthood. They are administered by the General Board of Examining Chaplains. Subsequent evaluation at the diocesan level takes place with the bishop and the Diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains.

**Inquirer** — One who is working toward entering the ordination process.

**GTU** — Graduate Theological Union, located in Berkeley. The nine member schools of the GTU are

ABSW - American Baptist Seminary of the West

CDSP - Church Divinity School of the Pacific (this is our Episcopal Seminary)

DSPT - Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

FST - Franciscan School of Theology

JSTB - Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley

PLTS - Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

PSR - Pacific School of Religion .

SFTS - San Francisco Theological Seminary, San Anselmo (Presbyterian)

SKSM - Starr King School for the Ministry (Unitarian)

There are an additional twelve affiliated centers of the GTU.

**Intern Year** — A year during which a student takes a leave of absence from seminary to work full-time in a parish or similar setting. A full intern year may be substituted for the required year of concurrent seminary.

**Laity** — The word “laity” derives from the Greek word “laos” which literally means “the people.” The word refers to the non-ordained ministers of the Church, who become ministers through their baptism. The laity is an order of ministry that serves both inside and outside the Church.

**Lay Professional** — A trained individual who is pursuing a career in the Church as a lay person, such as an organist, parish nurse, or director of Christian education.

**LDC — Local Discernment Committee** —The group of laypersons appointed from a congregation, Area Ministry or Deanery to journey with the individual contemplating lay ministry or ordained ministry to help in discernment of his/her vocation.

**Licensed Lay Ministries**—Lay Ministries which the canons specify as licensed by the bishop, such as Lay Eucharistic Minister.

**M.Div.** — The Masters of Divinity degree, granted (usually) after a three-year course of study at a school of theology. The M.Div. is the normative educational requirement for priesthood.

**Multicultural Sensitivity Requirement**—Second language and intercultural ministry experience required of all candidates prior to ordination.

**Nominee**—An individual who has been presented to the Diocese as one seeking ordination to Holy Orders. This is the first step in ordination process and involves the support of the clergy and the Vestry/Bishop’s Committee of the sponsoring congregation.

**Postulant** — One who has formally begun the ordination process with the approval of his/her bishop.

**Priest** – (also called **Presbyter**) An ordained minister called and trained to assist the bishop in the governance, missionary, pastoral, preaching, and sacramental work of the Church. All priests first serve as deacons.

**Religious Life**—Lifestyle followed by the members of traditional Religious Orders and Christian Communities.

**SFD — School For Deacons.** The Diocese of California school which provides a three-year course of study for those aspiring to the diaconate. This is a requirement for ordination to the vocational diaconate.

**Standing Committee** — A group of eight elected individuals, four lay and four clergy, who represent the Diocese and act, in some ways, as the Bishop’s Vestry. Their role in the discernment process is primarily to attest to the completeness of the required documentation.

**Time of Discernment** – An on-line program required of all who are seeking to become a Nominee for Holy Orders and recommended for those who are exploring a lay vocation in the church.

**Transitional Deacon** — The ordination preceding that of priest. Transitional deacons serve in the manner of all deacons, but only for six months or a year before being ordained priest.

**Vocational Deacon** – A person called and trained for the Order of Deacons who does not intend to seek ordination to the priesthood.

**Vocations Conference** — Normally held once a year, a daylong series of interviews with a nominee for ordination conducted by members of the COM, and usually, of the Standing Committee. At a meeting of the Bishop and the COM following the conference, the interviewing team presents its evaluation and recommendation along with the other information in the nominee file. Shortly after this meeting, the nominee will receive a letter from the Bishop stating whether or not the Bishop grants permission for admission to postulancy.

## APPENDIX 2

### Some Sample Discernment Questions

- 1) What is it that I really want to discern?
- 2) How much of a benefit is it to the Church as a whole for me to want to go into that direction?
- 3) Am I just sticking to discerning things that are within my comfort zone, and why?
- 4) What does Scripture say about what I am discerning, and who are those in Scripture that have followed that path?
- 5) Who are people I have known who have followed that path, and how did they discern their path?
- 6) What does the Baptismal Covenant mean to me?
- 7) What is ministry and what are things that I do that are ministry?
- 8) How do I go about not feeling alone in my ministry?
- 9) Where did this call for this type of ministry come from?
- 10) What kind of ministry do I not want to do, and why?
- 11) What are ministries that I am seeing other people do and how could I get involved in those ministries?
- 12) What kind of ministry have I done in the past that I felt was rewarding and why aren't I doing it now?
- 13) Do I expect to be paid for this ministry? Would I do this ministry without pay?
- 14) Where do I see this ministry in five years?
- 15) Do I want to be the "Lone Ranger" in this ministry? How would I get others involved in this ministry?
- 16) How is this ministry being done at other churches?

#### *And for those discerning a call to ordained ministry:*

- 17) Is this a ministry which requires wearing collar? If so, what difference would it make?
- 18) What scares me about the role?
- 19) What draws me to the role?
- 20) How do I see myself as a clergy person in 10 years?

## APPENDIX 3

### A Selected Reading List for the Discernment of a Calling

- The Authority of the Laity.* Verna L. Dozier. The Alban Institute, 1988
- Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World.* Rosalind Brown. Morehouse Publishing, 2005
- Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation.* William C. Placher, ed. Eerdmanns, 2005
- The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times.* Dean Brackley. Crossroads, 2004
- Crossing the Jordan: Meditations on Vocation.* Sam Portaro. Cowley Publications, 1999
- The Diaconate, A Full and Equal Order.* James M. Barnett. Seabury Press, 1981
- The Deacon's Ministry.* Christine Hall. ed. Gracewing, 1991
- Discerning the Will of God: An Ignatian Guide to Christian Decision Making.* Timothy M. Gallagher, OMV. Crossroad Publishing, 2009
- Discerning Your Spiritual Gifts.* Lloyd Edwards. Cowley Publications, 1988
- The Discerning Heart: Discovering a Personal God.* Maureen Conroy. Campion, 1993
- Discovering Your Personal Vocation: The Search for Meaning through the Spiritual Exercises.* Herbert Alphonso. Paulist Press, 2001
- Ears to Hear: Recognizing and Responding to God's Call.* Edward S. Little. Morehouse Publishing, 2003
- Grounded in God: Listening Hearts for Group Deliberations,* Suzanne Farnham et al. Morehouse Publishing, 1991
- A Hidden Wholeness.* Parker Palmer. Jossey-Bass, Inc., 2004
- Inner Compass: An Invitation to Ignatian Spirituality.* Margaret Silf. Loyola Press, 1999
- Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation.* Parker Palmer. Jossey-Bass, Inc., 2000
- Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community.* Suzanne Farnham. Morehouse Publishing, 1991
- Listening to the Music of the Spirit: The Art of Discernment.* David Lonsdale. Ave Maria Press, 1992
- Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All.* William L. Countryman. Morehouse Publishing, 1999
- Make Decisions That Matter: Discerning God's Hope for Us.* Sandra Hold. SPCK, 2004
- A Manual for Lay Eucharistic Ministers,* Beth W. Ely. Morehouse Publishing, 1992
- Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons.* Revised edition. Ormonde Plater. Cowley Publications, 2004
- Ministry and Imagination.* Urban Holmes. Seabury Press, 1976
- Ministry in Daily Life: A Guide to Living the Baptismal Covenant.* Linda Grenz and Fletcher Lowe, ed. Episcopal Church Center, 1996

- The Monday Connection: A Spirituality of Competence, Affirmation, and Support in the Workplace.* William E. Diehl. Harper, 1991
- Moving in the Spirit: Becoming a Contemplative in Action.* Richard J. Hauser. Paulist Press, 1986
- On Being a Priest Today.* Rosaline Brown and Christopher Cocksworth. Cowley Publications, 2002
- The Once and Future Church: Reinventing the Congregation for a New Mission Frontier.* Loren B. Mead. The Alban Institute, 1986
- Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience.* John Neafsey. Orbis Books, 2006
- The Scandal of Service.* Jean Vanier. Continuum, 1998
- Selecting Church Leaders: a Practice in Spiritual Discernment.* Charles M. Olsen and Ellen Morseth. The Alban Institute, 2002
- The Servant Church.* John Booty. Morehouse-Barlow, 1982
- Together and Apart: A Memoir of the Religious Life.* Sr. Ellen Stephen, OSH. Morehouse, 2008
- Servanthood.* Bennett Sims. Cowley Publications, 1997
- Shared Wisdom.* Mary Benet McKinney. Tabor, 1987
- Total Ministry: Reclaiming the Ministry of All of God's People.* Stewart G. Zabriskie. The Alban Institute, 1995
- Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness.* Eugene H. Peterson. Eerdmans, 1992
- Weeds among the Wheat.* Thomas Green. Ave Maria Press, 1990
- What God Wants for Your Life: Finding Answers to the Deepest Questions.* Frederick W. Schmidt. Harper San Francisco, 2005
- The Woman Behind the Collar: The Pioneering Journey of an Episcopal Priest.* Joy Carroll Wallis. Crossroad Publishing, 2004
- The Wounded Healer.* Henri Nouwen. Doubleday, 1972