



Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Part of your responsibility as Rectors/Vicars/Priests-in-Charge is to provide candid advice to the Bishop and those charged with advising me about those who wish to discern a possible call to Holy Orders. Ordinarily, extensive conversations have taken place between you and the applicant before you recommend them for the Aspirancy program. As the sponsoring priest, you will take care to verify that the applicant is a confirmed, adult communicant in good standing of the Episcopal Church, who is a member of your congregation and has been active for at least a year. You will serve as a central advisor and pastor throughout the process. Please be aware that there are no guarantees as to the timeline or outcome of anyone's discernment.

I ask that you submit a letter, no later than May 31, containing your honest reflections about the gifts, suitability, and background of each applicant. **Please also be aware that an endorsement by your Vestry or Bishop's Committee is required of all applicants** (The form is contained as p. 3 of this packet.) If you are willing to support a given applicant, please plan to put this endorsement on the Vestry's or Bishop's Committee's agenda no later than the April meeting, so that we can receive it in advance of the May 31 deadline. (An additional nomination, requiring signatures of two-thirds of your vestry will be required toward the end of Aspirancy for all Aspirants who wish to attend BACAM.) In the absence of your letter and this initial endorsement, no applications can be considered.

Three broad questions lie at the heart of the discussions you should have with those who wish to discern a possible call to Holy Orders. Your letter should address each of them:

1. What in the applicant's life indicates a call to a more committed and disciplined lay ministry, or to ordained ministry?
2. What particular gifts does the applicant bring to leadership, be it lay or ordained? How have these gifts been demonstrated already within and/or beyond the congregation?
3. What work needs to be done to make the applicant known to your congregation and to address gaps in experience and bring gifts to maturity before she or he is ready to ask for an application and begin discernment at a diocesan level?

Other questions for discernment, which your letter should also address, include:

1. What most draws and challenges the applicant to serve others, both within and outside the Church?
2. To what needs of others is she or he most drawn? Least drawn? What might discourage the applicant from such service?
3. Where among the needs of the world or the work of the Church is the applicant's passion? What are the applicant's inner resources to support this passion?

4. In what ways are the life and work of the applicant steeped in Scripture, in the sacraments, and in corporate worship?
5. What are the applicant's gifts and capacity for leadership? How has this leadership been experienced by others?
6. For which order of ministry are the gifts, skills, and interests of the applicant best suited? Or are you genuinely undecided? What is the most compelling evidence of this

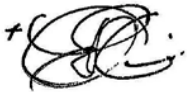
In every case, a primary consideration is the applicant's potential for exercising leadership in a congregation and in the wider Church. Please make this the context of your work with those who are considering a possible vocation.

Please encourage the applicant to seek out spiritual direction, develop and practice faithfully a rule of life, and devote time and energy to a well-developed reading list. Also, help the applicant explore and bring more clearly into focus opportunities for continued or new lay ministry. In doing this, the applicant may come to realize that a more fulfilling lay ministry was their true calling all along. Finally, please attend to any particular personal or family-related problems that may be part of the applicant's recent history and require time to address. Early in this part of the process, it is recommended that the priest involve the family along with the applicant. This involvement should continue until the priest is reasonably satisfied that the family can and will support the expected effort and survive stresses associated with the process. Lives that are already too heavily burdened may not have enough room for this work.

The application is extensive and will form the basis of consideration not only by the Bishop, but by those who work with the Aspirant in every step of discernment. Your advice and counsel may be of help to the applicant as it is completed. You will decide if and when it is appropriate for the applicant to enter the diocesan discernment process, keep a pastoral connection throughout the process, and may be consulted further on particular questions raised during the COM's work and deliberations. If a decision is reached to discontinue the process toward ordination, either by the applicant or anyone else who may have authority to do so, your continued pastoral relationship will be essential to helping the person reflect and find acceptance of this as well as reconsider what his or her vocation to lay ministry may be. Finally, the costs for the evaluations, assessments and other aspects of the Aspirancy Program will be divided equally among the Aspirant, the sponsoring congregation and the diocese.

Thank you for your assistance as we work together to raise up mission-minded clergy for the Church.

Faithfully,



The Rt. Rev. Dr. Edward J. Konieczny Bishop of Oklahoma



The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

Date

The Vestry of _____ prayerfully supports _____, a confirmed, adult communicant in good standing of our congregation, in his/her discerning a vocation within the Episcopal Church and respectfully recommends this person to the Bishop of Oklahoma, The Rt. Rev. Dr. Edward J. Konieczny, for admission as an Aspirant to Holy Orders.

Name
Rector

Name
Senior Warden

Name
Clerk of the Vestry