

Anglican Diocese of the South
Attn: Canon Greg Goebel
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Rector Pre-Discernment Information

The formal process of discerning a call to ordination begins with the Rector's careful inquiry – a series of 2 or 3 (or more) conversations between a rector (or a priest appointed by the rector)[†] and the person seeking ordination ("seeker"). At least one of these conversations should include the seeker's spouse or fiancé(e), if applicable. At the end of these conversations, the Rector should be comfortable about encouraging the individual to pursue ordination. If this is the case, the Rector writes the Rector's Support Letter, which is included in the Application materials. If the Rector is not comfortable about proceeding, the fact and the reasons for it should be communicated to the person. Please consult the Canon to the Ordinary if you have any questions about the careful inquiry or if you need help in determining how to proceed with a particular individual. This is important and holy work. Please undertake it with a prayerful heart, and do not hesitate to ask for help from the Diocesan office.

** The Rector of a parish may appoint another priest to do the "careful Inquiry."*

† In Mission Fellowships, a priest-in-charge may fulfill this role.

What a Rector should be seeking to see in a person who is to be recommended for ordination:

- Deep, growing personal faith that can be easily expressed
- Clear sense of a call that is connected to gifts
- Some understanding and experience of the nature of the church and the place of ordained ministry within it
- Demonstrated leadership ability
- Emotional and Physical Health – including healthy family relationships
- Intellectual and Academic Ability; curious, learner
- If married, spouse is supportive of move to ordination

Suggested topics for conversations:

CONVERSATION 1

- A brief spiritual autobiography. This might include a discussion of who or what has shaped him or her as a person; what things have contributed to spiritual growth; personal spiritual disciplines; growing edges in spiritual or emotional life; family and relational history.
- Initial conversation about the call – what has brought this person to seek ordination? What gifts seem to fit or not to fit such a call?
- Suggest some things to think about in preparation for the next conversation. Suggest writing a theological reflection on ministry paper, which will be required before Postulancy.

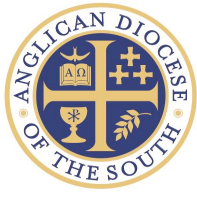
CONVERSATION 2

- Discussion of ordination – for example, you could look at the ordination service in the prayer book and discuss it.
- Discussion of Theological Paper, if written. What was interesting? Helpful? What questions or concerns does the paper raise?
- Discuss the ways in which the shape, challenges and demands of ordained ministry fit the person's personality, gifts and skills.
- Include spouse or fiancé(e) in this conversation and ask for his or her input. o Discuss his or her thoughts and about this direction.
- Discuss the expected impact of ordination on the family.
- Suggest some things to think about in preparation for the next conversation.

CONVERSATION 3

- Follow up on issues, questions, thoughts, second thoughts raised in earlier conversations.
- Have a frank conversation about insights, hopes and concerns regarding this person's pursuit of ordination with as much specificity as possible.
- Directions about the next steps in the ordination process.

After having these discussions, if you are ready to support the beginning of Parish Discernment, you will write the Rector Support Letter (please see next page).



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Rector Support Letter Guide

Before a person can be admitted as an Aspirant into the discernment process in our Diocese, a supporting letter from the Rector must be included with the application.

This letter should relate the following:

- How long the person has been a regular attendee of the church?
- What ministries the person has been involved with in a significant way?
- Do you have a sufficient personal knowledge of this person to give a character reference? If so, please include.
- Do you discern that this person may be called to ordained ministry? Do you know of any impediments?
- Do you believe this person is sufficiently formed as a person, as a Christian, and as an Anglican to begin this process?
- If they are married, is their spouse supportive of ordination and is their marriage healthy?
- To which order might this person be called, Deacon or Priest?
- Are you ready and willing to form a parish Discernment Team for this person at this time?
- Are you willing to serve as this person's clergy sponsor should the call to ordained ministry be affirmed? If you are assigning another clergy person as sponsor and mentor, please let us know.
- What recommendations do you have for this person's preparation, in terms of education, Anglican studies, and pastoral ministry?
- Please share an insights or concerns you may have.
- Please email or mail the letter to my office.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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