

Holy Orders Discernment Committee (HODC) Guide

A Discernment Process Guide for use by Rectors, Commission on Ministry representatives, Local Discernment Committees and Inquirers exploring Ordained Ministry in The Diocese of Northwest Texas

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This guide has been designed to help Rectors and Faith Communities in the formation, preparation and implementation of Holy Orders Discernment Committees (HODC).

Materials for this guide have been gathered from various sources, including guides published by other dioceses.

Each HODC member should have a copy of this guide in advance of the first planning meeting in order to become familiar with its contents, including the attached “Appendix A: Seeking Out Inquirers.” In addition, members should read the Ministry Discernment Handbook (*Dioc. of NWTx 2000*) and may be asked to read other materials related to vocation and discernment.

Some Preliminary Information and Terms:

Holy Orders Discernment Committee: The Rector, in consultation with the Church Wardens or Vestry and with the Inquirer, appoints from three to five members of the Faith Community to the HODC, who serve at the Priest's discretion. Membership should reflect the diversity of the congregation in terms of sex, age, race, and life circumstances. If possible, it should include both persons who do not know the Inquirer and persons who do. In many of our smaller congregations, especially those which are part of a cluster, it may be desirable to incorporate into the membership of the HODC a participant from another Episcopal congregation in the Deanery.

Inquirer: This term refers to the person in the first steps of exploring a call to ordained ministry. The selection of a HODC is the beginning of steps that will determine if the Inquirer will be made a Nominee.

Nominee, Nomination: A confirmed adult communicant in good standing may be nominated for ordination by the person's congregation or Faith Community. The first step in the Nomination process will be the Report of the HODC, attached as Appendix B.

Faith Community: This term will refer to all congregations and communities, including parishes, missions, congregations, or Canterbury communities.

Rector: For purposes of this guide, the term *Rector* will be used when referring to the clergy in the leadership role of a Faith Community, whether a parish, mission, congregation, or Canterbury community. This includes a Rector, Vicar, Interim Rector or Priest-in-Charge, Canterbury Chaplain, or Regional Missioner.

Vestry: Use of this term will include reference to any Vestry, Bishop's Committee, Board, or other comparable body of a Faith Community.

Convener: A member of the Committee, chosen by the Rector or by the members of the Committee, who will serve as chair for meetings and will be the person responsible for seeing that the Report of the HODC (Appendix B) is completed and submitted to the Rector and Vestry.

Commission on Ministry, COM: Laity and clergy from around the Diocese who have been appointed by the Bishop to oversee and review various processes leading to ordination. The COM serves in an advisory role to the Bishop.

THE HODC AND THE INQUIRER

Ministry happens in community. The call to ministry comes through the community. We are committed through our Baptismal Covenant to support one another in ministry. Therefore, it makes sense to begin discernment of a call within the community of the person being called, where the person is well known and has been observed over a lengthy period of time. Thus, the work of a HODC focuses on discernment of a call to ministry of a member of its own community. A byproduct of that discernment is everyone's increased learning about ministry, the orders of ministry, individual gifts, and the ways in which each person's gifts complement the gifts of others in the congregation. It is hoped that the result for the HODC members is a broader picture of how we live as God's people both in the Church and in the world. It is hoped that the result for the Inquirer is a clearer picture of the ministry to which he or she is called.

The Inquirer, along with the members of his/her home parish, seeks to answer the fundamental question, "Is ordination the form my ministry as a Christian should take?" Before the question can be answered, a time of exploration, prayer, reflection and evaluation is required. The role of the HODC is to help the Inquirer determine an appropriate response to this question by delving into the serious questions of vocational choice: reflecting on the Inquirer's potential for ordained and lay ministry; evaluating his/her readiness to pursue this course; and exploring the depth of the Inquirer's Christian faith and spiritual development.

At the same time that the HODC facilitates exploration for the individual, it will also be an opportunity for personal reflection for each HODC member, as well as an opportunity to carry the discussion about ministry into the larger community. While specific content of the HODC's discussions with the Inquirer are strictly confidential, the discernment process itself can serve as a training course in ministry and faith development for the whole parish.

The HODC is asked to enter into a special relationship with the Inquirer on behalf of the parish and the larger church. This requires a commitment of time, energy, sharing of themselves, and a commitment to ask difficult and challenging questions of one another. This task calls for humility and a willingness to be open and candid in the context of a caring community, both to comfort and to support the Inquirer. As the Inquirer is asking "Is ordination the form my ministry should take?", the HODC, Vestry and Rector are asking: "Does ordained ministry seem to be the form of ministry to which God is calling this person?", "Can we in good faith nominate this person to become an ordained leader for our or another

congregation?”, “What is it about this person’s gifts and the way they are utilized that makes her/him especially suitable to the ordained ministry?”, “What ministries excite, inspire, and satisfy this person and what areas elicit discomfort and apathy?”

HODC PROCESS

The first task of the HODC is to come together as a group, to develop trust, and to assist one another in understanding how to go about discerning a call to ministry for the Inquirer. The HODC’s work is definitely much more than a matchmaking process in which the Inquirer’s gifts are matched to the talents needed for a particular ministry. This is work that touches on the divine, work that is done with minds and hearts in prayer, open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It is good to keep in mind that the HODC process is only the beginning of the effort to assist the Inquirer and the Diocese in learning about God’s call for this person. Since members of a congregation may not be experienced in the work of ministry discernment, the HODC sessions will be a learning experience for all involved. At times, there may be a feeling of not knowing what to do. It is important to trust your intuition as to what God would have you do and not be afraid of making mistakes. Stages that follow the HODC discernment offer a safety net for errors in judgment in these matters; however, the HODC’s report is of great value at the beginning of this process.

HODC MEMBERSHIP AND GETTING STARTED

The HODC, on behalf of the Faith Community and the larger Church, is asked to deal with daunting questions and, in doing so, enters into a special relationship with each Inquirer. As mentioned earlier, this requires an important commitment of time, energy, prayer, and a willingness to share one’s *own* life and faith. Such openness also requires a strict commitment to complete confidentiality.

Some people entering this commitment say with reluctance, “What do I have to offer?” or “Who am I to judge the truth of another’s call?” The basic qualifications are:

- + knowledge of and experience in the Anglican and Episcopal tradition
- + a sense of one’s own ministry and vocation
- + being known and trusted by the congregation

- + a willingness to make a sustained commitment to prayer and to the discernment process

Before meeting with the Inquirer, the Rector and a member of the Diocese's Commission on Ministry will lead an orientation meeting (*Session I described below*) with the HODC to begin the process. The Convener will be a member of the HODC whose primary task is to help facilitate the work of the committee.

Responsibilities of the Convener are as follows:

- + set the time and location of the meetings
- + work to create a safe and confidential environment for discussion
- + help to maintain the continuity of discussion from meeting to meeting
- + make sure that all members have an opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings and observations.

HODC MEETINGS

Development of Committee Procedures

The HODC process should include at least four to six meetings to be held over a period of 6 to 8 weeks. It is hoped that each individual will take additional time to allow for adequate consideration of issues, and prayer about those issues, between times when the HODC is together.

Each HODC will determine its own format and style for sessions with the Inquirer. Some of the issues in development that need to be agreed upon by HODC members at the end of Session I are:

- + leadership style; if not assigned, select a Convener,
- + format for the meetings with the Inquirer,
- + record-keeping needs and reporting procedures,
- + options for ongoing relationships with the Inquirer.

The following considerations can be used as a guide in establishing a meeting format. These are suggestions, please modify them as needed.

Length It is recommended that each meeting be between one and three hours in length.

Climate Because of the personal nature of HODC discussions, it is important to establish a climate of acceptance and trust. Each person needs to know that whatever they say will be honored and will be held in confidence within the group, that they will not be criticized or judged, and that there will be no advice offered to solve perceived problems. Competition or control issues do not belong in the HODC. Patient, careful listening will greatly aid the process. Questions can be asked for clarity, but should not be asked out of curiosity or in the manner of an interrogation. Because of the need to receive information about the Inquirer, there is a real danger that the discussion can become an inquisition of sorts. It is recommended, to the degree that is practical, that *all members* share their experiences and points of view in response to the questions. For the sake of continuity, it is most helpful if each member can attend every session.

Structure Following is a suggested format for each meeting: Opening Prayer, Reflection on Scripture or suggested parts of the BCP, Update Status, Discuss Content, Evaluate, and Closing Prayer. These elements are explained below:

Opening and Closing Prayer By beginning and ending with prayer, we place ourselves in God's hands and submit to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (See BCP pp. 832-33 for suggestions).

Reflection on Scripture or suggested parts of the BCP Read together the suggested readings from Scripture, Catechism or Ordination services which relate to the task at hand.

Update Status

Before entering into discussion, it is usually helpful to review the progress to date and briefly to state the goals for the current session.

Discuss Content

Discuss whatever material is designated for that session.

Evaluation

Evaluation is an important part of each session. Near the end of the meeting, take time to review the highlights of what was discussed and shared. It is recommended that a few quiet moments be provided at the end of each session so that each HODC member may take time to make personal notes for future reference. Much of the HODC discernment process is based on impressions which can easily be

lost a week or a month later.

HODC SESSIONS AND CONTENT

A BRIEF OUTLINE

The number and length of sessions will be determined by each HODC, however each begins with the Planning Session I, chaired by a Commission on Ministry representative. Below, the content for subsequent sessions - with the Inquirer - are listed as unnumbered Discernment Stages; depending on the schedule determined, a more lengthy “stage” may be divided and covered in several meetings, or one or more of these “stages” may be covered at a single meeting. The Inquirer is not present for the Final Evaluation Session, but the report of that meeting shall be shared with the Inquirer by at least two HODC members before it is submitted to the Rector and Vestry.

Session I: First Planning Meeting

Attended by: Rector, HODC, and a Commission on Ministry Representative, who will chair this first meeting.

Preparation and Activity: At this meeting, the group will thoroughly read this HODC Guide to get an overview of the whole process and to address initial questions. Prior to or at this Planning Meeting, all members should review the separate booklet entitled Ministry Discernment Handbook, with particular attention to “Chapter Seven: The Community Discerns a Call to Ordination.” Selection of the Convener and development of a schedule should also be completed.

Discernment Stage: Spiritual Journey; Faith and Spiritual Development

Preparation and Activity: Read and discuss “Spiritual Journey Session Preparation” and “Faith and Spiritual Development” in this Guide, the *Catechism* in The Book of Common Prayer (pp. 845-862), and review “Chapter Two: The Congregation” in the Ministry Discernment Handbook.

Discernment Stage: Perceptions of Christian Ministry; Call to Ordained Ministry

Preparation and Activity: Read and discuss “Perceptions of Christian Ministry” and “Call to Ordained Ministry” in this Guide, and review “Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six” in the Ministry Discernment Handbook.

Discernment Stage: Intellectual, Emotional and Leadership Capacities

Preparation and Activity: Review “Chapter One: Ministry” in the Ministry Discernment Handbook and read and discuss “Intellectual, Emotional and Leadership Capacities” in this Guide.

Final Evaluation Session (committee only, without Inquirer)

Preparation and Activity: Review your notes or journals made during the previous stages and sessions. Read and discuss “Evaluation Session WITHOUT the Inquirer” in this Guide. Assign a member to prepare the Report of the HODC.

Share Evaluation with Inquirer: After it is written, the report is to be shared, by at least two members of the committee, with the Inquirer before submission to the Rector and Vestry.

HODC SESSIONS AND STAGES, expanded

As you begin your work and enter into the Discernment stages, please keep in mind that the committee should use this Guide as an outline for discussion, not as something to be slavishly followed. Don’t feel constrained to ask every question – and always allow for the Holy Spirit to guide the conversation!

SESSION I: FIRST PLANNING MEETING

Topics that will be covered at the planning meeting with the Commission on Ministry representative and the Rector include:

- + Explanation of the purpose and task of the committee;
- + Exploration of members’ understanding of ordained ministry and calling;
- + Discussion of the strengths each member brings to this committee’s work. This will give the HODC information on how to structure its work, allow members to get to know one another, and recognize each individual’s contribution to this ministry.
- + Discussion of the biases or tensions each member brings to this

committee's work. An honest exploration of each member's attitudes, values, and biases will enable the committee to recognize when they are interfering with the process of discernment.

Time should also be spent discussing the HODC's role in the discernment process, particularly its relationship with the COM and with the Rector.

HODC'S Relationship with the Commission on Ministry (COM)

As mentioned earlier, the COM is an advisory body to the Bishop which serves completely at his/her discretion. The Committee advises the Bishop on the suitability of Nominees, Postulants and Candidates for ordination to the Priesthood and to the Diaconate. In carrying out that charge, the COM considers carefully the work and Report of the Holy Orders Discernment Committee. The Report is included in the candidate's file (held by the Diocese) and is read and discussed by all members of the COM. It is one of a number of evaluative materials that COM members consider.

When an HODC is formed, a member of the COM will meet with the group and will become the liaison between the HODC and the COM. That person or the Chair of the COM will be available to answer any questions about the process which may emerge as the committee engages in its work.

HODC'S Relationship with the Rector

The Rector appoints the HODC with Vestry concurrence. Before appointing the HODC, the Rector should also consult with the Inquirer with regard to potential members. Once the HODC has been appointed, it is recommended that the Rector attend the first planning meeting along with the representative from the COM. The HODC should then meet alone with the Inquirer during the discernment phase of their work together.

After concluding their meetings with the Inquirer, the HODC completes a report on its observations and recommendations and sends that report to the Rector, who will provide it to the Vestry. Whether or not the Inquirer is nominated for ordination, it is important that he or she be affirmed and supported as one who has a calling to ministry through Baptism and who is valued as a person and child of God.

After receiving the Report, the Rector and Vestry then make a decision as to whether or not to nominate the Inquirer for Postulancy (Deacon or Priest). They

make this decision prayerfully based on the report of the HODC and their own observations. If they wish to nominate the Inquirer for Postulancy, they complete the Vestry form for that purpose and send it to the Bishop.

If not called to ordination: Through the discernment process, it may be that the Inquirer has received some clarity that he or she is not called to ordained ministry. In such case, the HODC can be very helpful in working with the person to look at the next steps that might be taken to deepen his or her lay ministry.

DISCERNMENT STAGE: (*first meeting with the Inquirer*)
Spiritual Journey; Faith and Spiritual Development

Preparation before the meeting: As preparation for the discussion in this Discernment Stage, *each member* of the HODC and the Inquirer should prepare a brief (10 minute) “spiritual journey” statement. This is a brief account of each individual’s life viewed through their relationship to God. There are many possible ways to construct such a statement; a few examples are:

- + Make a list of significant experiences in your life that are related to your relationship with God (not just with the Church); or
- + Consider the theme of relationship with God; briefly illustrate how that theme has been present in your life; or
- + Divide your life into 10 or 15 year segments and select a phrase that describes a major theme for each segment, reflecting your relationship with God for that time period; or
- + Consider persons in your life who have been role models for you, or who have had a significant influence in guiding your relationship with God, and briefly explain that influence.

The Meeting: At this session, which is the first with the Inquirer, begin with introductions and a discussion of how the group will function. Discuss how the committee will work together to build a climate that encourages risk-taking, sharing and caring; a climate that discourages judgment, competition, and advice. Also spend a few minutes sharing expectations about what you are beginning. The Inquirer’s expectations and attitude toward this step in the discernment process are a key factor in its outcome.

Have everyone share the Spiritual Journey statements prepared before the meeting.

Faith and Spiritual Development

The first and most important criterion in discernment of ministry is the faith of the Inquirer. Some sense of the depth of faith can be pursued in a full group discussion of personal faith. Some information may be drawn from the sharing of spiritual journeys. The HODC may also gain a deep sense of this from the way the Inquirer answers other questions. For example, family life and goal setting are topics that are not usually focused around spiritual relationships. If the Inquirer brings God, prayer life, or some such reference into the discussion, it may speak much louder than the answers to questions directly asked about spirituality.

In your deliberations, bear in mind the specific circumstances of the Inquirer and consider responses that are age-appropriate and that may reflect cultural, generational, or experiential differences between the Inquirer and members of the Committee.

Consider the answers to the following questions when forming an impression about the Inquirer's spiritual development.

1. How well does this person understand the faith expressed in Scripture and the Book of Common Prayer? (*See BCP pp. 845-862*)
2. What evidence of having a personal relationship with God does the Inquirer give in word and deed?
3. Has this person done any teaching in the parish? Would I entrust my own religious education to him or her?
4. What has *each member* and the Inquirer established as his or her Rule of Life and how is it followed? What benefits are derived from it? What is the Inquirer's Rule of Life, how is it followed, and what benefits are derived from it?
5. What indication is there that the Inquirer is still questioning, searching, and probing the mysteries of the faith?
6. How do the Inquirer's financial commitments reflect his or her spiritual commitment?

DISCERNMENT STAGE:

Perceptions of Christian Ministry; Call to Ordained Ministry

This Discernment Stage should be a discussion of ministry and orders. The following questions may help to stimulate discussion and establish the Inquirer's views on these issues.

1. What is your understanding of the Christian ministry?
2. How do you view the ministry of the whole Body of Christ?
3. How do you differentiate between the ministries of lay persons, Deacons and Priests?
4. How are gifts of ministry developed and manifested in the Church? Discuss talents and gifts given to each of us by our Creator. What are the Inquirer's gifts? How are these gifts and personal characteristics being used by the Inquirer in current ministries in a way that is especially effective? (Consider ministries in the context of all aspects of life, not just in the church.)
5. With an awareness of each person's involvement in employment, family, and church community, focus on the Inquirer's involvement in these areas. What are this person's current ministries in those areas? How does she or he tie together the secular and sacred realms of life?
6. What do you see as the primary function of the ordained minister?
7. How do you understand the central task of pastoral care? (e.g. Solving other people's problems? Giving answers? Helping one come to a resolution of one's problems?)

Call to Ordained Ministry

The discernment of a call from God requires careful listening to what is said directly and what is said indirectly. While we often perceive that the urging of this call starts in the individual, for some, the sense of call may come from others, based on observations, relationships, or insights about another's gifts and talents. A sense of a call from God may be to any order of ministry – Lay, Episcopate, Diaconate, or Priesthood. A call is different from a conventional decision to pursue a new career. A call heard from God carries with it a kind of imperious constraint: it must be pursued.

The task at hand for the Inquirer and the Committee involves listening, first, for a sense that it is a call from God and, then, to determine the type of ministry to which the individual is called. It should be emphasized that a call to a committed Lay ministry may be very likely. Consider the following questions about the Inquirer's and/or the group's recognition of a call from God to *ordained* ministry.

1. What does it mean to each member to be "called" by God?

2. What evidence do you have that this person is called by God to the ordained ministry?
3. Is the Inquirer confusing a calling to Christian service with a calling to ordination?
4. Are the Inquirer's primary interests congruent with the function of an ordained minister?
5. Are the Inquirer's innate abilities commensurate with the demands of the ordained ministry?
6. Why does the Inquirer want to be ordained? What can the Inquirer do as a Priest or Deacon that he or she cannot do as a committed lay person?
7. How does the prospect of extended schooling and training mesh with the Inquirer's family life and employment/income sources? Does the Inquirer have family support for following such a pathway?

DISCERNMENT STAGE:

Intellectual, Emotional and Leadership Capacities

Preparation: In addition to any other assigned resources, review the attached "Appendix A: Seeking Out Inquirers."

Capacity to Learn

The ordination process for the Priesthood includes graduate level education that requires the abilities to understand and analyze complex ideas, speak articulately, write clearly, and be open to new concepts. Depending upon circumstances, this may be completed through Seminary or through local formation and Reading for Orders. The ordination process for the Diaconate in this Diocese includes a four year commitment to formation that requires the same abilities. The ordained minister must have a lifelong commitment to learning and personal growth. Consider these aspects of the Inquirer's attitude about, and capacity for, learning.

1. What is this person's capacity to learn?
2. What is his or her academic history and record?
3. How open is she or he to questioning, self-exploration, and reality testing?
Have you seen the Inquirer grapple with a difficult issue and emerge with a new viewpoint? What openness have you seen during the sessions?
4. What evidence is there of his or her continuing commitment to learning and intellectual growth?

Emotional Health

HODC members often feel uncomfortable assessing the Inquirer's emotional health. We realize that most HODC members are not competent to make a professional assessment. The Diocese relies on a certified consultant for the assessment of emotional health. The HODC is asked to respond on the basis of feelings and observations, just as one might respond to a member of his or her own family. Some direct discussion may be appropriate, e.g., discussion of what makes one happy, angry, sad, and how one deals with those feelings. But, the questions that follow are primarily a guide for the committee's reflection after each session.

1. Does the Inquirer have a realistic view of the world?
2. How aware is she or he of her or his own feelings?
3. How well does he or she express strong positive and negative feelings?
4. How well is the Inquirer able to work under pressure, with conflicting demands and/or stress? Talk about the pressures of your lives. What pressures have there been in the Inquirer's life? How does the Inquirer respond to pressure? Is there a current situation, such as pending or recent divorce or other unresolved issue, that might indicate waiting or delaying entry into the process until such issues are resolved?
5. How does the Inquirer deal with conflict? Flight or fight? Non anxious presence?
6. To what extent is she or he aware of and comfortable with her or his own sexuality?
7. Are there any indications that he or she aspires to the ordained ministry as a way of solving personal problems?
8. Does he or she have a level of maturity and ability to adapt that is commensurate with chronological age?
9. Is there anything that makes me uncomfortable around this person? Is it my problem or his/hers?
10. Does the Inquirer have a healthy relationship with family and friends?
11. Would the Inquirer willingly seek counseling, therapy, a twelve step group, etc., if having difficulty handling feelings, behavior, a certain situation or relationship, etc.?

Leadership Capacities

Leadership skills are essential for persons entering ordained ministry. The characteristics of leadership which the Diocese seeks are listed in Chapter Seven of

the Ministry Discernment Handbook and in Appendix A attached to this Guide. Consider these general questions concerning leadership.

1. How does this person make important decisions that will affect others as well as herself or himself?
2. Does he or she show initiative, self confidence, enthusiasm, flexibility, trust?
3. Can he or she motivate others, drawing them together to elicit the use of their spiritual gifts and resources?
4. Is she or he aware of and at ease with a variety of leadership styles and able to use them as the situation indicates?
5. How does she or he function in interpersonal relationships?
6. How has her or his leadership already been evidenced in prior or current lay ministries in school, work, or church settings?
7. How do other people respond to his or her leadership?
8. How does she or he respond to the leadership of others?

Responsibility and Authority

1. How does the Inquirer view the question of authority in the Church?
2. How comfortable is he or she with being a person upon whom authority rests? Can that authority be claimed and used appropriately?
3. How comfortable is she or he being under the authority of the Bishop and others who may have supervision over her or him?

The group might utilize some “What if...?” scenarios to prompt discussion of reactivity to authority.

Communication Skills

Presentation of a clear message with a caring and pleasant delivery is essential for a person whose ministry is often focused on preaching, teaching, offering pastoral care, and facilitating others in ministry. In meeting with the Inquirer, be aware of how ideas are expressed and how well the person listens to others.

1. Does this person express ideas clearly, both in speaking and in writing?
2. What listening skills does the Inquirer make use of? How do I feel when this person is listening to me?
3. Can this person read other people’s nonverbal cues accurately and tailor a response of appropriate length and complexity?
4. When dealing with his or her feelings, do physical gestures and movements

(body language) match the words spoken?

5. Does this person interrupt, override, or attempt to verbally dominate others?
6. Does the Inquirer take the time to listen to each person and respond appropriately, without regard for age or status of the person?

FINAL SESSION: Evaluation Session WITHOUT the Inquirer

This may involve several meetings for discussion, preparation of the Report and sharing the Report with the Inquirer before submission to the Rector.

The purpose of the evaluation session(s) is to review progress to date and to come to a decision and recommendation, as well as to form the statements for the written Report of the HODC. Please note that there may be other times during the process that the HODC members may wish to meet without the Inquirer in order to evaluate progress. Such review might be scheduled for the end of other sessions or for a few minutes at the end of each stage.

At this Final Evaluation Session the committee considers what type of ministry they feel would be appropriate for the Inquirer in this period in his or her life. Ask yourselves, “Can I envision this person as a/my Priest or Deacon?” If you have some feelings that you would not be able to turn to this individual as your Priest or Deacon, your feelings should be explored with the group. They may point to deeper feelings, perhaps shared within the group, that there is hesitation about the individual proceeding toward ordination.

Ask yourselves, “Do we want to present the Inquirer to the Rector and Vestry for approval and nomination?” If you have reservations, decide whether or not the areas of doubt include skills, experience, or characteristics that have a reasonable potential for improvement. If so, state your reservations clearly on the Report form with your recommendation either for delay for improvement or to proceed in the process with the understanding that there are specific areas to work on. Another very real possibility is that the person is a very capable Lay minister and is so called. In this case, the committee will need to review their discussions of whether or not the Inquirer is responding to a call from God for ordained ministry. If it becomes very difficult for the members to make such a discernment or if you are still unsure of your recommendation, you are advised to consult with your Rector and then, if necessary, with the COM representative who met with you at your planning meeting.

Discuss, from a broad point of view, what changes in your own attitudes or concepts of Christian ministry have occurred in these meetings.

A formal report to the Rector and Vestry should be composed in the format provided by the Diocese (Appendix B). It is very helpful to the Bishop and COM and Standing Committee members if you state your reservations clearly in the report and explain any difficulties in coming to your final decision.

Reviewing the Report with the Inquirer: After completion, the Report should be read to the Inquirer by a minimum of two people from the HODC before it is presented to the Rector. If it is the case, it may be necessary to assist your brother or sister to recognize that the HODC understands his or her call differently than he or she envisions it. In any case, explain how you understand the call, with both its challenges and areas of satisfaction. Reiterate the Inquirer's talents as they have been revealed to you and relate them to the call as you see it. Additional meetings of the group may be needed for this.

Determine what, if anything, you need to do to conclude this series of meetings between yourselves, the Inquirer, and the Rector.

HODC Service

You have served the Inquirer, the Parish, and the Diocese in a very important way. Your Report will be passed on to the Rector and the Vestry. We hope you realize how much your service is valued by them. At the same time, we ask you to understand that your recommendation is only one part of a broader discernment process. Others involved in the various stages also seek to discern God's will for the Inquirer.

At times, Inquirers recommended by a HODC are redirected to another ministry or delayed for more preparation at later stages of the discernment process. We know how disheartening it is when this happens to someone in whom you have invested a lot of time. It is especially important that you trust the persons who are continuing the discernment process you began in the parish. And remember, the goal of all your work is to further the ministry and mission of the Church.

PLEASE SUPPORT THE INQUIRER IN THE COMING MONTHS!

Appendix A: Seeking out Inquirers

The first step in any process leading to ordination is identification of those entering the process. In years past, that step has been seen almost exclusively as the responsibility of the Inquirer. The way in which such an Inquirer about ordination is identified is when the person goes to his or her rector and says, “I want to be a Priest or Deacon.”

Clearly that self-identification will continue. However, a new emphasis needs to be placed on “raising up” or recruiting people who seem to be appropriate candidates for the specific calling of the ordained ministry. The initiative must come from the Church as well as from individuals. The extent to which that initiation actually happens will depend to a large degree on the clergy and laity who serve in worshiping communities. Clergy and laity need to be educated and encouraged to raise up high quality people who are well suited for ordination.

Two factors need to be clearly stated and seriously considered in recruitment:

The first factor is what the Church seeks in terms of character of those who will be its clergy. The following is intended as a starting point for those praying to discern whom God might be calling to ordained ministry:

- + Sense of self: self-knowledge, psychological health.
- + Personal integrity: authentic, trustworthy, accountable, dependable.
- + Spiritual depth: a growing relationship with God in Christ.
- + Intelligence: the ability to learn and think theologically and to understand and analyze complex ideas, speak articulately, write clearly, and be open to new concepts.
- + Leadership: initiative, vision, willingness to risk, ability to motivate others, including:
 - Ability to handle conflict;
 - Ability to deal with people;
 - Ability to engage and participate in community/group work;
 - Ability to communicate.
- + Loving heart: capacity and inclination to be close to and care for others.
- + Sense of the fitness of things: judgment, boundaries.
- + Loyalty to the institution of the Church: a healthy respect for the tradition and authority of the Church from a position of challenge as well as from a position of support.

- + Commitment: continuing personal, professional and spiritual growth and study.
- + Awareness: power of sacrament, word and liturgy
- + Humility: understanding and acceptance of his or her humanity and ultimate dependence on God.
- + Willingness to become a symbol bearer.
- + A sense of humor.
- + A mature and appropriate sexuality.
- + Ability to manage finances.

The second factor has to do with the mission of the Church. Put simply: What does the Church need in its leadership in order to live out its mission in this and the next generation?

As the Church in the United States seeks to serve and proclaim the Gospel in an environment of ever-increasing diversity, the ordained leadership itself must reflect increased diversity. In the Diocese of Northwest Texas we are especially interested in raising up people called to minister to Hispanic communities, in areas of small population, and in prison ministries.

The Church needs leaders committed not only to the nurture of a community but to the calling of that community to a broader ministry of proclamation and service. A relevant question for those entering the process toward ordination is, “Are you willing and able to serve where needed?”

**APPENDIX B:
REPORT OF THE HODC
*Form Outline***

DATE: _____, 200__

INQUIRER: _____

HODC CONVENER: _____

HODC Members: _____

*Use the following as a guide in the preparation of the HODC's report.
When answering the questions, please be as specific as possible and
provide examples to support your responses.*

TO: The Rector and Vestry of _____:

The findings of the Holy Orders Discernment Committee (HODC), based on the Guide and considerations furnished by the Diocese of Northwest Texas, are as follows:

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

1. Please consider the following:
 - a) How have you experienced the Inquirer's ability to articulate his/her understanding of Christian Ministry?
 - b) How does the Inquirer see himself/herself fitting into the Christian Ministry?

GROWTH IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

2. Please consider the following:

How able is the Inquirer to describe and interpret his/her spiritual journey and growing relationship with Christ? Give examples.

CURRENT MINISTRIES

3. Please consider the following:
 - a) Describe the Inquirer's current ministries within the parish community, home, and workplace (if applicable).
 - b) Describe the Inquirer's ability to interact with the Parish family and to develop relationships with others.
 - c) Describe the qualities the Inquirer brings to his/her current

ministries that make them especially effective.

CAPACITY FOR LEADERSHIP

4. Please consider the following:
 - a) In what ways has the Inquirer demonstrated his/her leadership skills in the parish?
 - b) How do people respond to his/her leadership?
 - c) How does he/she respond to the leadership of others?

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

5. Please consider the following:
 - a) How have you experienced the Inquirer's overall emotional health in the periods before and during the HODC process?
 - b) What is your sense of the Inquirer's ability to work under pressure, with conflicting demands or under stress?
 - c) How have you experienced the Inquirer's ability to recognize appropriate boundaries, e.g., regarding issues of leadership, finance, sexuality, sense of responsibility?
 - d) From your observation, is the Inquirer comfortable with his/her sexuality?
6. In what ways can you envision this person as a Deacon or Priest? As your Deacon or Priest?
7. What are your reservations about the Inquirer?
8. Are there any issues that the Inquirer needs to address prior to pursuing formal theological education?
9. Describe how the Inquirer responded within the group, e.g., his/her willingness to share personal concerns and commitments; openness to differences of opinions; willingness to consider new insights.

Include additional comments, as necessary. Please be specific.

In conclusion, we recommend that _____ pursue:

1. Lay Ministry _____; in the area(s) of _____.
2. The Diaconate _____
3. The Priesthood _____