

Deanery Discernment Interview Guidelines

Dear Clergy Interviewers,

Thank you for being willing to serve as part of the credentialing process for our diocese by interviewing our current aspirants. We value the wisdom and experience in ordained ministry that you bring to this task of discernment. The purpose of diocese interviews is for you, the clergy interviewers, to engage with the aspirant through his/her written materials, and interpersonally in the interview, to assess and then articulate your sense of the aspirant's calling to ordained ministry.

Prior to meeting with the aspirant or reading his/her materials, we encourage you to pray with confidence for God to guide. For centuries, the Church has discovered the Holy Spirit is pleased to move through properly ordered, communal discernment processes. Our hope is that the grace of God will be at work in this process to both build up the Body of Christ with ordained leaders and edify the aspirant with a clearer sense of his/her vocation.

It will be helpful to this process to read through the aspirant's documentation before the interview and discuss with one another the perceived strengths of each aspirant. For example, what are the gifts evident in the aspirant based on reading his/her materials? It will then be equally important to note together, prior to the interview, perceived weaknesses or any gaps in the documentation (i.e. areas where you need more information to form a clearer vision of the aspirant's theology, ministry role, or commitment to Christ).

Approach the interview prayerfully, with a posture to work in tandem with the Holy Spirit and your interview partner toward the goals of clarity and unity in your understanding of the aspirant's calling to ordained ministry. While you should be cordial and generous, this is more than a friendly visit to get acquainted with one another. There is important work to do in a short amount of time. On the next page, there are some potential questions to help guide your discussions.

Note that in every good interview there are two levels of listening which need to be going on simultaneously by the clergy interviewers. The first level is listening to the direct answers given to the questions being asked. The second level is listening for indirect but revealing insights which may reveal the character and competence of the aspirant (e.g. body language, anger, or distance).

Two weeks after the interview (or sooner), you will need to provide Canon Ben Bowman (bbowman@adhope.org) at the DCH Office of Leadership Development with one report that contains your shared perceptions of the aspirant, including your affirmations of gifts/calling, your concerns, and your suggestions for addressing those concerns. If there are clear concerns, give the aspirant concrete suggestions for growth. In the end, you need to be able to offer some variation of the following:

- We believe there is a clear calling on *N*'s life for ordained ministry in the Body of Christ, particularly in the realm of _____ (offer any suggestions you may have about a context for the aspirant's ministry, where might be a good fit, urban? suburban? rural? campus? etc). To that end, we affirm his/her desire and sense of calling, and we commend him/her on in the discernment process.
- We affirm *N*'s gifts and his/her current role in ministry. We sense that ordination is important for him/her to fulfill his/her call in the Body of Christ. We commend him/her on to local parish discernment committees and the care of his/her bishop and priest as he/she seeks further clarification.
- We encourage *N* to resolve the concerns we identified in the suggested ways before continuing his/her pursuit of ordination to the diaconate.

Thank you again for serving the Church, our diocese, and these aspirants in this way. May God bless your interviews!

Potential Questions

These are some questions you could ask to generate some helpful conversation or clarify the aspirant's understanding of ordination and ministry.

1. How will ordination help your ability to minister or better enable you to fulfill your calling in ministry?
2. How do you understand your calling to the diaconate? Unpack for us what it will mean for you to be a Deacon in the Church?
3. Describe some of the highlights of your walk with Christ.
4. What have been some of the struggles?
5. In your life, what do you believe has most prepared you for ministry?
6. How has your relationship with God been influenced by your ministry?
7. When and how did you know that God wanted you to pursue ministry?
8. Name one person who has been a model of Christian faith to you? Why?
9. What writers and teachers have shaped your understanding of Christian theology?
10. What experiences in your life have shaped your understanding of the faith?
11. What most excites you about the possibility of ordained ministry?
12. Which most concerns you about the possibility of ordained ministry?
13. What are the particular gifts you believe you bring to the Church?
14. How do you want to exercise those gifts and what will you do to grow and enhance them?
15. What are the greatest perceived concerns for you as you consider ordained ministry?
16. What is your plan for addressing those concerns?
17. In the midst of the demands of ministry, what do you have in place for taking care of yourself (physical, financial, mental, emotional, and spiritual) and for keeping your family commitments?
18. What has your church/community said to you about your call to ministry? What have your pastors and colleagues said? What does your family say? Do you agree with them?
19. How do you deal with failure, discouragement, or those times when things do not go well?
20. Is there anything in your past that, if it came to light, could harm your church or damage your ministry? If so, how have you dealt with those events? Is there more that needs to be done?
21. In your mind, what would disqualify a person from ministry? What steps will you take to protect yourself from falling into disqualification?
22. What aspects of ministry have you found the most fulfilling? What about ministry gives you energy and joy? What has been most disappointing? In what ways do these surprise you?