

Diocese of Northern Michigan – Discernment Process – Revised June 1991

HELPING CONGREGATIONS DISCOVER THEIR SUFFICIENCY GIFTEDNESS

WORKING THROUGH THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

STEP ONE

- a. Two-hour meeting with Bishop's Committee/Vestry and those whom they invite to assure as broad an awareness of the membership as possible.
- b. Consultant describes the vision of 1995 and the sufficiency support team's place in this. Also, identify the purposes of the discovery process and review the scope, limitations, and possible outcomes of this process.
- c. Consultant and participants talk through the "generally desirable characteristics" and participants receive their "homework" assignment:
 - After a time of personal prayer, and on your own, read slowly through the adult membership list (16 years of age and up), putting a plus next to those whom you would say you know well-to-very-well.
 - Next, read through the names of those whom you have marked, and put a check beside those for whom you feel the general characteristics are mostly true.
 - Bring your marked list to the next meeting.

STEP TWO

- a. Consultant leads participants through the sufficiency team categories, one at a time, as they place a check beside those whom they have observed to possess a capacity for a specific sufficiency category .
- b. Those marked for each category are written into the appropriate section of a second sheet of paper provided, and this is returned to the Bishop's Committee/Vestry for collation.
- c. The separate lists of names are collated by one or more members of the Bishop's Committee/Vestry .

STEP THREE

- a. The Bishop's Committee/Vestry and other participants in the first two steps receive the collated lists, which are to be considered to be confidential.
- b. The Bishop's Committee/Vestry meets to look at the collated lists, and to arrive at consensus on those members to be invited to consider membership in the Covenant Group.
- c. With the consultant, the Bishop's Committee/Vestry decides how to contact those to be invited this time around. An agreed deadline for these contacts is established related to a date for gathering those to be invited.

STEP FOUR

- a. Those who have accepted the invitation meet with representatives of the Bishop's Committee/Vestry and the consultant. The representatives share their understanding of the vision and invite people to accept specific invitations related to sufficiency.

- b. Each person receives a written identification of their specific invitation and a list of all accountabilities, which the consultant then identifies with them one by one.
- c. Each person is asked to give prayerful consideration to their response to their invitation.
- d. Representatives of the Bishop's Committee/Vestry contact each person for their response.

DISCOVERING A SUFFICIENCY SUPPORT TEAM

One key to effectiveness in this task is to be clear from the outset with people, starting with the Bishop's Committee or Vestry, about the fact that expecting a congregation to discover its own giftedness for supporting daily ministry is a new emphasis in most congregations. This certainly need not frighten us away from doing it, but it does call for great sensitivity and care.

Here are some other points which we will want to stress in our initial conversations.

This search is fairly limited in scope and is intended to address the need for structured or organized support for the important daily ministry being carried out by many members in homes, schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and community responsibilities.

This is an initial search. This will be just the first round of an ongoing process. It is not expected that those affirmed in the first round will make lifetime commitments to these responsibilities. Therefore, others will need to be discovered in future years.

The purpose of this discovery process is not to reward or give recognition to those who have given faithful service to the church over the years. On the other hand, some of those who have done so will prove to be gifted for sufficiency support.

Those who will participate in the discovery process should be assured that it is appropriate to consider themselves among the rest of the members.

It may be useful to be "upfront" with people that in this first round some people whose gifts are more subtle may be overlooked. Also, there may be a tendency to look toward the stronger personalities since we are not experienced with this process.

Where ordination, licensure, or certification is involved, the Bishop and appropriate diocesan bodies, such as the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee, will participate in the discovery and affirmation process as it unfolds over the 18-24 months.

Let's take a look now at some characteristics, skills, and experiences which are observable, and which may give clues to a person's capacity for sufficiency support related to the priesthood, diaconhood, and bishophood of the congregations .

DISCOVERING SOME MEMBERS TO SUPPORT OUR CONGREGATION'S DAILY MINISTRY

SOME GENERALLY DESIRABLE PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Most of us know the kinds of people we find helpful, or to whom we might turn when we hoped to get help accomplishing something. Here is a list of some of these general characteristics of helpful people.

We need people who:

In relating to others:

- Listen attentively to others and seem truly interested.
- Show as much willingness to accept help from others as to offer help.
- Can disagree without being disagreeable.
- Offer suggestions/criticisms in helpful, sensitive ways.

As members of the Church:

- Worship regularly and frequently because they are committed to God and the Church.
- Share from their time and money as generously as possible within their circumstances.

As human beings:

- Exhibit enough flexibility to respect the past while being open to necessary changes.
- Can exhibit good-natured humor about themselves without putting themselves down.
- Are generally optimistic, but can live with disappointments or delays, and go on.
- Find opportunities to affirm other peoples' valuable qualities and skills.

As members of groups:

- Cooperate with others in group activities.
- Don't stake out "territory", preferring to share activities with others.
- Usually can find ways to get others involved, rather than usually preferring to do jobs alone.
- Remain a loyal member of a group even when disagreeing with decisions made by a group.
- Accomplish assignments by the time agreed upon.
- Know the difference in the time to be a leader and when to be a follower.
- Usually appear well prepared for accepted responsibilities.

The Priestly Ministry of the Congregation

"...to minister the sacraments of the New Covenant that the reconciling love of Christ may be known and received. "

This responsibility will focus on the sacramental features of liturgy and worship that illuminate and support our daily ministry of reconciliation; draw the congregation by anamnesis into reliving Christ's life known through observing the Christian Calendar and supporting the events of human life from birth through death; celebrating God's loving initiative in making possible harmonious relationships with God and humanity. It is planned for a locally affinned presbyter to share this responsibility.

PRESBYTERS/PRIESTS

We need people who:

- Appear comfortable in public gatherings.
- Read well and with understanding in public.
- Exhibit natural dignity and poise in public ceremonies.
- Participate in worship unless prevented by serious circumstances.
- Participate as leaders of worship without dominating.
- Exhibit concerned awareness for those absent from worship.
- Respect past worship practices, yet are open to change in worship.
- Arrive early for worship and are well-prepared for their part.

Respond to unexpected worship circumstances with grace and ease.
At the time of Ordination will be at least 32 years of age, an Episcopalian for at least 5 years, and a confirmed or received member .

PREACHERS

We need people who:

- Show sensitivity to the diversity of attitudes, values, and conditions within a congregation.
- Demonstrate skill in public speaking.
- Appear comfortable as a focus of attention in public gatherings.
- Exhibit a broad awareness of human experience.
- Can cope with disturbances/disruptions while speaking.
- Show willingness and ability to study and learn.
- Exhibit curiosity for learning.

COORDINATORS OF WORSHIP

We need people who:

- Demonstrate good personal organization.
- Show openness to using others' skills without favoring some.
- Demonstrate willingness and ability to provide leadership when appropriate, but can also be a follower when appropriate.
- Accomplish assignments or preparations after taking responsibility.
- Seem comfortable delegating responsibility; follow up to offer help to those delegated but don't do their jobs for them.
- Offer suggestions/criticisms in sensitive, helpful ways.
- Exhibit regard and excitement for worship.
- Participate in worship unless prevented by serious circumstances.
- Tend to invite wide participation in activities, rather than preferring to do things on their own.

The Congregation's Diaconal Ministry

"...look for Christ in all others, being ready to help and serve those in need" and
'...strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being."

This responsibility will focus on the mutual pastoral care among the membership of the congregation; identify and respond to human need in the community,. interpret to the congregation the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world--sensitizing the congregation to the issues of peace and justice, the social concerns and responsibilities present locally and internationally; it is planned for a locally affirmed deacon to share this responsibility .

DEACONS

We need people who:

- Offer assistance with kindness and courtesy, without pushiness or superiority.
- Exhibit common sense in meeting needs.
- Presently involved in activities that provide effective assistance to people with specific needs.
- Persist and seem generally optimistic, even when positive results are delayed.
- Encourage wide participation of others in activities, rather than preferring to work alone.
- Show confidence in others' abilities, while offering help desired.
- Express awareness of an appreciation for what others do.

Exhibit openness to receiving caring attention or help from others.
Appreciate and honor confidentiality about other people; don't gossip.
Appear comfortable working cooperatively with others.
Seem open to and expectant of receiving from those being helped.
Demonstrate awareness of human suffering inside and outside the Church.
At the time of Ordination will be at least 32 years of age, an Episcopalian for at least 5 years, and a confirmed or received member.

COORDINATORS OF DIACONAL MINISTRY

We need people who:

Demonstrate good personal organization.
Show openness to using others' skills without favoring some.
Demonstrate willingness and ability to provide leadership when appropriate, but can also be a follower when appropriate.
Accomplish assignments or preparations after taking responsibility .
Seem comfortable delegating responsibility; follow up to offer help to those delegated but don't do their jobs for them.
Offer suggestions/criticisms in sensitive, helpful ways.
Tend to invite wide participation in activities, rather than preferring to do things on their own.
Presently involved in community activities which help meet human need.
Respect other denominations or religious traditions in the community.
Exhibit ability to interact with various community groups and helping agencies in a spirit of mutual respect.

The Congregation's Apostolic Ministry

"...boldly proclaim and interpret the gospel of Christ, enlightening the minds and stirring up the conscience (of the congregation)" and "...encourage and support all baptized people in their gifts and ministries. "Three elements of this are:

Stewardship
Education for Christian Responsibility
Ecumenical Cooperation

STEW ARDSHIP COORDINATORS

Stewardship - discovering and coordinating voluntary participation for the talent and money necessary to support daily ministry.

We need people who:

Seem genuinely interested in other people in the congregations, and are aware of their skills, experience, gifts, and talents.
Are comfortable talking informally about personal and family commitment to Christian responsibility.
Exhibit some excitement and optimism for what human and financial resources can accomplish.
Consistently show regard for confidentiality; don't gossip.
Have the reputation of being good stewards in daily life of their own money and talent.
May demonstrate in the home or workplace one or more of these:
property care
budget making
planning for the future.

EDUCATION COORDINATORS

Education for Christian Responsibility - providing catechetical preparation and study opportunities necessary to support daily ministry.. this is where persons become better prepared to share the Good News with those they encounter in daily situations.

We need people who:

- Show interest in the questions and experiences of others.
- Might have a reputation for being a creative & imaginative public educator.
- Demonstrate enthusiasm about learning - finding and sharing information.
- Give evidence of spending some time thinking about what life's about, how religion helps make sense of life, and how that fits with their own life story .
- Exhibit intellectual curiosity about religion - "the facts of the Faith."
- Participate in study/learning groups in the congregation.
- Appear imaginative and resourceful in using materials that are available.
- Ask others for help/information when needed.
- Generally are good at adapting to the needs/interests of others.

ECUMENICAL COORDINATORS

Ecumenical Cooperation - seeking to interact with any other denominational and religious groups in focusing support for our common mission.

We need people who:

- Speak proudly of their Episcopal heritage without putting down other religious traditions.
- Seem generally open to and respectful of differences in other people.
- Participate in local ecumenical gatherings and activities.
- Usually appear comfortable and courteous in talking to others to invite their participation in something.
- Demonstrate some awareness of the contributions made by various religious traditions.

PRIESTLY/DIACONAL COORDINATORS

We need people who:

- Express/practice hospitality.
- Offer assistance with kindness and courtesy, without pushiness or superiority.
- Exhibit good sense in meeting needs of those who seek need.
- Have the ability to encourage wide participation of others in activities, rather than preferring to work alone.
- Express awareness of an appreciation for what others do.
- Appear comfortable working cooperatively with others.
- Are inclusive and open to diversity and have an ability to offer radical hospitality.