

Letter of Support from the Sponsoring Clergy or Leader Exercising Oversight

Form 3

Instructions for the Sponsoring Clergy to express support for an aspirant to continue discerning a call to the Priesthood.

If the member of the clergy or leader exercising oversight of a congregation discerns the aspirant might have a call to ordination, and that broader discernment by the church is appropriate, then a letter shall be written in support of the person. The points listed below shall be addressed in the letter. The purpose is to create a full and rich picture of the person being supported for nomination. If there is something unique about the person which has not been elicited in the following points, please include details. The Bishop's Advisory Committee on Ordained Ministry (BACOM) will use this letter to further their discernment of the nominee's call to Holy Orders.

Please address the following points:

1. How often over the past year have you been meeting with the aspirant?
2. Do you believe this person has been called by God to be a Deacon or Priest in the Episcopal Church? Describe how the call has been reflected on and tested in your congregation, in the community beyond, and with you. Tell how the aspirant is currently proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed (*cf.* p. 531 BCP.)
3. Describe your understanding of the aspirant's spirituality and prayer life.
4. What sets this aspirant on fire? Describe the passion demonstrated by this person.
5. What gifts does this person demonstrate that match with those needed to be an effective Deacon or Priest? What talents and skills would this person bring to the Diocese? What are the aspirant's strengths and weaknesses? How do you see the Lord's grace and wisdom working through these areas?
6. What are the aspirant's leadership qualities and how has the congregation responded to them? How does Christ's light shine through to the people? Give examples.
7. Describe how the aspirant communicates (speaks, writes, listens) in a variety of settings. Do Christ's love and compassion come through? Please give examples.
8. Give an example of how this parishioner has lived out the Baptismal Covenant.

9. What close personal relationships does the aspirant have? What is the response from the spouse or significant other (if applicable), the family, close friends, and (if any) the children, to the aspirant's pursuit of ordained minister? If possible, give quotes. Do you believe these persons will be supportive of the time, energy and money required for the Holy Orders Process? Give examples or details to back up your answer.
10. If this person has been divorced, describe any reconciliation that has occurred with the aspirant and the former spouse. What work has been done to address this division with the children (if any), the community, and with God?
11. How does this person react and interact with those in authority? What is the aspirant's behavior when in a position of authority? Is a Christ-like quality evident? Please give examples.
12. Given the present state of the church and the world and the need for leadership, describe the aspirant with respect to the following: dealing with change within a congregation; having a high enough energy level; being willing to risk; being self-differentiated; being faithful, responsible and accountable; and understanding and embracing the ordination vows.
13. By lifting up the aspirant for ordained ministry, you and your congregation are pledging to be spiritually, emotionally, and financially supportive throughout the ordination process. How do you intend to fulfill these responsibilities? No matter what the outcome of this process, will you continue to hold this person in prayer for God's direction and peace?
14. Is there anything else the Bishop, the COM, and the BACOM should know about the aspirant?
15. The Clergy of the church are in a unique position to notice potential new leaders for the church. Creating a process that encourages all followers of Christ to answer their vocation (call) is important to the COM. We would appreciate your feedback: what works for you in this process; what doesn't work; what is confusing; what suggestions for improving the Holy Orders process could you offer; how can we help you encourage lay ministries?

Send this form to:

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