Guidelines for the Parish Discernment Team

*These Guidelines should be reviewed together by the whole Team at their first meeting.*

The task of the Parish Discernment Team (PDT) is to assist the Rector and Vestry in discernment of God’s will for Aspirants who feel called to ordained ministry. Historically, the laity helped affirm the call to ordained ministry in a effort to prevent clergy orders from being a self-selected body. For this reason, discernment, accomplished in the context of the Aspirant’s home church with lay peers, is of critical importance.

Each member should commit to:

* Pray for yourself, the other committee members, and the Aspirant
* Read the Aspirant’s materials and be prepared at committee meetings
* Attend all committee meetings
* Respond in a timely fashion to communications from the committee Chair
* Commit to confidentiality

An Aspirant will have already indicated to the Rector whether they sense the call to ministry as a deacon or as a priest. As the PDT, you will either:

* “Affirm” the Aspirant’s call to ordained ministry
* “Affirm with conditions” or
* “Not affirm at this time”

If you are not able to affirm a call to ordination, it is our hope that the PDT will continue to work with the former Aspirant until you, and the Rector, have helped him/her find the unique place in the Body of Christ that the Lord has prepared in advance for this person to do.

The task of discernment is truly an awesome responsibility, especially as it has direct implications for future decisions of another’s life. This work should be undertaken with a humble awareness of the privilege it is to participate in what God is doing in someone else’s life, and in the life of the Church. The PDT is not an advocacy group, nor a support group. Likewise, the discernment process is not a job interview. Instead, its goal is to hear from the Lord about the future direction of the Aspirant’s life and speak truth in love through the leading of the Holy Spirit, whether that is an “Affirm,” an “Affirm with conditions,” or a “Not affirm at this time.” Please ask yourself if you are willing and able to give the Aspirant, your fellow churchgoer, whichever of these three determinations is deemed appropriate.

Your recommendation will be given consideration by the Vestry of your parish, who along with the Rector, will decide whether or not a person should continue in the process toward ordination.

The composition of the PDT, including designating a Chair, is the prerogative of the Rector. The Chair will meet with The Diocesan Parish Liaison to guide them in this process. Each person on the PDT will sign the Theological Statement that our Aspirant is asked to sign early in the process (see Appendix B). If the Aspirant is a woman, the Bishop asks that the PDT members be open to the ordination of women as this is not the arena for her to have to address or defend that issue.

The PDT should be aware that this work is intensely personal for the Aspirant and will be most effectively conducted in an atmosphere of trust and respect. PDT members will assure the Aspirant of the confidential nature of this work, help the Aspirant grow in his/her self-understanding, where he/she is gifted and where grace needs to be sought. The PDT may request the Aspirant develop and complete a ministry project in the parish, especially if he/she has not been deeply involved in the life of the parish. With concurrence of the Rector, the PDT may also request to receive copies of the written work the Aspirant is doing for the Diocese.

There is no set number of meetings required for the PDT, though we see this taking four to six months in most settings. The first and final meeting with be alongside the Diocesan Parish Liaison to help guide the process and the writing of the Report. The Aspirant’s spouse or fiancée, should be invited to attend some of the sessions with the PDT (usually Session 4). After the second meeting, and after every meeting thereafter, the PDT Chair will communicate with the Rector. The Rector and PDT Chair will determine when the work of the PDT is finished. The PDT Chair will complete the evaluation. This document and the signed theological statements will be sent to the Diocesan Office along with the Vestry Recommendation.

Parish Discernment Team Report Form

*THIS FORM IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE*

The following is to be completed by the Chair of the Parish Discernment Team (PDT), though every member of the PDT should have a copy with which to work.

Aspirant’s Name:

Parish, Location:

Names of PDT Members and email address (denote who served as Chair):

Date of all PDT meetings:

Did each PDT Member sign the Theological Statement (see Appendix B, p. 27)? Attach copies of each to this Report.

Key Objectives to be Reported on:

 Session 1: PDT with Liaison [INTRODUCTION]

* Logistics
* Theological Statement
* Forms
* Purpose
* Questions about Diaconal Minister / Priest

Session 2: PDT with Aspirant [CALLING]

* Background
* Personal faith, testimony
* Education
* Calling to ordained ministry (pastoral focus and purpose for pursuing ordained ministry)
* Character

Session 3: PDT with Aspirant [MINISTRY]

* Experience in church
* Gifts
* Experience in ministry
* Interpersonal relationships in the church
* Experience in leadership
* Articulating the Gospel

Session 4: PDT with Aspirant & Spouse [SUPPORT SYSTEMS]

* Current household
* Family of origin
* Support systems (including those pertaining to prevention of moral failures)
* Dealing with Conflict

Session 5: PDT with Aspirant [SPIRITUAL LIFE]

* Devotional life
* Passions
* Protection against burnout
* Hopes for future
* Reflections/questions from previous sessions

Session 6: PDT with Liaison [CONCLUSION]

* Forms
* Report
* Questions

Signature of PDT Chair: Date:

Please submit completed work by email:

The Venerable Jessica Jones, PhD

Archdeacon & Canon for Leadership

archdeacon@gulfatlanticdiocese.org

Vestry Recommendation of the Aspirant

Date:

The Vestry of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name and Location of Church)

believes that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Aspirant) is being called by God to ordained ministry as a

* Vocational Deacon
* Priest

in God’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and commends him/her for further discernment by diocesan leadership.

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Senior Warden (Printed Name) (Signature)

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Junior Warden (Printed Name) (Signature)

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Rector (Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

*THIS FORM IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE*

Please scan and submit this form by email:

The Venerable Jessica Jones, PhD, Archdeacon & Canon for Leadership

archdeacon@gulfatlanticdiocese.org

Appendix B

 Theological Statement

*THIS FORM IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE*

I have read, understand, and endorse

1. The [Constitution of the Gulf Atlantic Diocese](https://www.csmedia1.com/gulfatlanticdiocese.org/the-constitution-canons-for-gad-approved-11-6-2021.pdf) and
	1. The mission of the diocese: *To proclaim the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ in every facet of our faith and life.*
	2. The strategy of the diocese: *To Encourage Missional Initiatives and Planting of Congregations; To Strengthen Existing Parishes and Ministries; To Identify, Train and Deploy Missional Leaders.*
2. The [Constitution of the Anglican Church in North America](http://archives.gulfatlanticdiocese.org/files/policies/parish/ACNA%20CURRENT%20C%20and%20C%20-%202019.pdf)
3. The [Jerusalem Declaration](https://www.gafcon.org/about/jerusalem-declaration)

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Name

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Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Copies of the three documents listed above may be found on the Gulf Atlantic Diocese Website.

Please return signed form by scanning and emailing to:

The Venerable Jessica Jones, PhD

Archdeacon & Canon for Leadership

archdeacon@gulfatlanticdiocese.org