

# Letter of Support from the Congregational Discernment Committee

Form D4

*Instructions for the Congregational Discernment Committee to express support for an aspirant to continue discerning a call to the Vocational Diaconate. The Vestry/Bishop's Committee/Council shall be informed of the final discernment. The instructions for the CDC's final report to the Vestry/Bishop's Committee/Council are at the end of this document.*

If the Congregational Discernment Committee (CDC) discerns the aspirant might have a call to the Vocational Diaconate, and that broader discernment by the church is appropriate, then a letter shall be written supporting the person's nomination for admission as a postulant. The points listed below shall be addressed in the letter. The purpose is to create a full and rich picture of the person being nominated. 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, will read this material for the BACOM weekend.

Send the letter to:

Executive Administrator  
The Diocese of Colorado  
1300 Washington Street  
Denver, CO 80203-1311

Please address the following points:

1. Describe the CDC's understanding of a deacon's role in the Episcopal church? Why do you believe this aspirant has been called to the diaconate instead of the priesthood or lay ministry?
2. Describe the discernment process used by this committee.
3. What passion does the aspirant have for God and God's people? What sets him/her on fire?
4. Tell how this aspirant is currently reaching out to or serving the marginalized of the world (the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely; cf. p. 543 BCP) and bringing those needs back again to the parish? Please give examples. (*Read The Examination on pages 543-4 BCP.*)
5. Describe the CDC's understanding of the aspirant's spirituality and prayer life.
6. What other gifts does the aspirant have? How well do they match with those gifts needed to be an effective Deacon? How else do they build up and serve the body of Christ? Please give examples.
7. How does the aspirant facilitate lay leadership, manage personal control issues, and reconcile conflicts with others? Please give examples.

8. Describe how the aspirant reacts and interacts with authority and in a position of authority? Please give examples.
9. Do you respect this person and how was that respect gained? Would you want the aspirant to be your deacon? Please give personal examples.
10. Describe the factors that might inhibit this person's ordained ministry. Will remedial work or further training overcome those limitations?
11. What are the significant relationships in the aspirant's life? What are the *responsibilities* of the aspirant towards these relationships? How do these persons respond to the aspirant's pursuit of Holy Orders? Will these persons be supportive of the time, energy and money the Holy Orders Process and the ordained life will require? Please give quotations and examples.
12. If this person has been divorced, describe the 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), with the community, and with God?
13. 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 with in 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.
14. Is the aspirant aware of the following: ordination is a call, not a right; the Bishop decides where a deacon serves; there is no guaranteed position upon completion of the process; and there are varying amounts of compensation and pension for deacons in the Diocese of Colorado? Does the aspirant accept these conditions?
15. Is there anything else the Bishop, the COM, and the BACOM should know about the aspirant?
16. By lifting up this person for ordained ministry, the congregation is pledging emotionally and spiritually support throughout the ordination process. Also, the Canons require the sponsoring parish to give financial support to a deacon's education. The COM has set that support at 50% of the yearly tuition for the Diaconal Formation Program, the educational and formational process for Vocational Deacons created by the COM and required by the Canon. As of 2005 the amount of this obligation is \$500 per year of education. Is this committee willing to accept and to encourage this support from the Sponsoring Clergy, the Vestry/Bishop's Committee/Council and fellow parishioners?
17. No matter what the outcome of the process, will you continue to hold this person in prayer for God's direction and peace?
18. The CDC is a vital part of raising up leaders in the church. The COM would appreciate your comments about your experience of being on a PDC: what worked, what didn't work, what was confusing, and other suggestions for improving this part of the Holy Orders process.

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*Instructions for the CDC's final report to the Vestry or Bishop's Committee/Council.*

The Parish Discernment Committee needs to present a report to the Vestry/Bishop's Committee/Council summarizing, clarifying and answering any questions the Vestry/Bishop's Committee/Council might have. **It is, however, important to respect the confidentiality of the discernment process and not to divulge personal information of the aspirant that would compromise confidentiality.**

The focus of the report to the Vestry should be:

1. the process of discernment,
2. the outcomes of that process, and
3. any further recommendations in the development of the aspirant's ministry

Encourage the Vestry/Bishop's Committee/Council to pray for God's peace and direction in the life of the potential aspirant.