

Menu of Discernment/Formation Support Options for Parishes

Spiritual Support

Parish Discernment

- Appoint/recruit/gather a Parish Discernment Group and maintain it in readiness (this is proactive rather than reactive – it assumes that discernment is a normal part of people’s growth in faith, so there will not be a need to hastily assemble one when someone comes forward to ask for this kind of support)
- Identify people in the parish who are particularly skilled/gifted in discernment to include on or consult regarding the PDG
- Host a PDG training with members of the COM
- Incorporate teaching/instruction on the nature of discernment into corporate worship and education (talking about it, providing resources material, sending people for training as spiritual directors)
- Provide forums to clarify and describe distinct ministries within and outside the church (various types of lay ministers, deacons, priests, bishops)

Prayer

- Add aspirant/postulant/candidate’s name to the DOK prayer list
- Invite a/p/c to communicate any specific prayer requests with a DOK liaison/representative
- Create a category in the pew bulletin prayer list or newsletter prayer list for those in discernment so it’s clear why they’re being prayed for (ie – they’re not sick)
- PDG members and sponsoring priest could keep a card with the person’s name on it with appropriate prayers to remind them to pray regularly for the a/p/c during discernment and afterwards through to the conclusion of that person’s process
- Include a/p/c’s name in the Prayers of the People
- Write a collect for those in discernment and include it in corporate worship periodically or regularly
- Invite the a/p/c forward and pray for them at critical points in the process

Material/Financial Support

Financial Assistance with Seminary/Formation Expense

- Establish a fund for support of seminarians/members in formation; invite contributions and/or designate loose plate for that fund on Ember Days (4 per year) or other day(s) each year
- Pay a percentage of tuition
- Pay an amount per credit hour (can divide funds among multiple people in the process from one parish this way)
- Provide a scholarship or grant in a flat amount
- Pay for books or give a book store gift card
- Pay mileage for the commute (if nearby)
- Assist with moving expenses (if relocating for seminary)

Vestments, etc.

- Make, purchase, or otherwise provide any, some, or all vestments (alb, cassock, surplice, etc)
- Make, purchase, or otherwise provide a stole (or stoles)
- Give a gift card to a vestment supply store
- Purchase/provide an oil stock
- Purchase/provide a pectoral cross
- Create/provide business cards (for instance, if the person will be staying in your parish)

Emotional Support

Mentoring

- Sponsoring parish clergy maintain contact with a/p/c throughout the process and/or meet periodically to check in and offer prayer, support, guidance, resources
- Assist as needed in locating a spiritual director or spiritual direction resources

Communication

- Send an encouraging card or note periodically, signed by any of various people/groups (priest, all clergy/staff, PDG, card ministry, other groups of which the person is/was a part, and/or any group in the church who would like to participate)
- Send a card especially if there is a critical, stressful event (ie – G.O.E.s)
- Communicate to the members of the parish what the a/p/c is doing and how they can be appropriately supported (being considerate of what the person would like shared)

- Communicate especially clearly (ahead of time) any change of status or location of the a/p/c that will result in a major change to the relationship (ie – the person is going to be ordained and will have a new role in the church as well as a new title, or the person will be assigned to serve an internship or a permanent position in another church and will be leaving temporarily or permanently)
- Allow the a/p/c to communicate what they are doing to the parish in whatever form is most appropriate (newsletter, email, announcement during service, sermon, step talk, education forum, etc)
- Designate a member of the vestry (or the clergy) to promptly communicate vestry decisions relating to the a/p/c to that person directly
- Be particularly clear and precise about any tuition-related financial support to be provided

Celebration

- Pass a vestry resolution in support or congratulations of the a/p/c and provide a copy
- Recognize milestones in public settings as appropriate
- Attend the ordination service and/or related celebrations
- If the ordination service is at a distance from the home parish, provide or organize transportation to encourage attendance from home parish
- Designate someone to take pictures of the service, the celebrations, and/or special groups of people: the ordinand and parish members, presenters, family, sponsoring clergy, classmates, etc. Provide copies of photos to the ordinand. Publish some in parish communications material (newsletters, website, diocesan publications, etc)
- Host a party/reception at the church to mark the person's transition, especially if they will be assigned somewhere else. Ordination often means "goodbye" to one's home parish.
- Note/remember parishioners who have been sent out from the parish as ministers within the wider church: clergy, missionaries, etc (send a card on ordination anniversary, post pictures on the wall of the church, include information in church history, newsletter features, invite to parish reunion-type events such as church's 100th anniversary, etc)

Service-related Support

This category will be wide-ranging and very particular to the needs of the individual; the following suggestions are simply examples:

- Help with moving (or temporary property arrangements) if the person will relocate for seminary or for their assigned placement (for example, watch their pets while they're in seminary if they can't take the pets with them, or help pack boxes or load them into the moving truck)
- Offer some type of service to free up study time (ie - baby-sitting)
- Depending on the person's needs and the resources of the parish, offer academic support (ie. if the person is struggling with Greek or theology, or church history, connect them to a parishioner who teaches or has a background in the subject and would be willing to tutor – or if academic writing is a challenge, connect them with a parishioner with editing, writing, and/or research expertise)
- If the person is open to it, offer expertise in financial planning

Helping with the Ordination Service (particularly a priest's ordination)

- Offer food or accommodations for out-of-town guests/family
- Help with planning as desired by the ordinand – help ensure all roles are filled with a backup plan (acolytes, ushers, oblationers, readers, musicians) and provide signage, hospitality and clear directions for guests and visiting clergy participating in the liturgy
- Secure an alternate venue if the church is too small to host the ordination
- Host a party/reception afterwards
- Decorate the parish hall or other place for the party
- Organize or provide food