



# Understanding Discernment

In general, the idea of discernment is about seeking God's specific calling as clearly as possible on one's life.

In the context of discernment for ministry, the process is an intentional way of seeking guidance and understanding, and invites the active participation of other members of the Church. It involves commitment on the part of the person inquiring, and on the part of those engaging in the process with them.

All Christians are called to ministry by virtue of their baptisms. Sometimes, we are very aware of our calling in God's Kingdom and how that manifests itself in ministry, and sometimes further clarity is needed. A formal discernment with the help of a community can clarify not only God's call for you, but can help the community find clarity as well.

True discernment can churn up unexpected results. Listening to God's Spirit allows us to hear God's call. The prescribed discernment process allows time and focus for this type of deep listening, and opportunity for thoughtful response to God within a supportive community.

Spiritual discernment can be challenging for us. We live in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century, a fast-paced, straight to the goal, don't-waste-time-world, where decision-making can be quick and predictable. The discernment process is intentionally unhurried and deliberate. It strives to work on God's time, and sets the participants in a world where they are patiently waiting for the Holy Spirit, putting us in step with God's vision for us.

Sometimes discernment results in the affirmation of an existing ministry, perhaps with renewed commitment and vigor. Other times, people come to an awareness of a different sort of ministry than they have been engaged in before. Sometimes a call might be discerned as a call to ordained ministry in the Church. Each of these callings is vital to the continued health and vitality of our churches.

The discernment process usually takes from six months to a year once the Commission on Ministry (COM) becomes involved:

1. You either feel yourself being pulled by God's Spirit to ministry or an exterior influence has suggested you are suited for ministry, and feel led to explore all this further.
2. Meet with the clergy leadership of your church to pray and discuss your sense of calling and your role in your church community.
3. Your clergy leader contacts the Commission on Ministry (COM) when you both agree that you are ready to begin a formal discernment.
4. You and your clergy leader form your discernment committee following the guidelines provided in the Discernment Process and in consultation with the COM.
5. The COM will help you schedule a committee orientation with the Diocese.
6. You and your Discernment Committee immerse yourselves in the discernment process for seven more sessions.
7. Your Discernment Committee reports the clarified vision of your calling to your vestry.
8. Your vestry sends an official recommendation for your ministry to the COM.
9. You are entered into the process.

A discernment must be completed before a person can be recommended into process for priesthood, the diaconate, or WISE Lay ministry by their vestry.

*For those wishing to enroll in the Wyoming Iona School for their ministry education, this means discernment must be completed prior to enrollment.*

If you are feeling called to leadership in ministry, you are encouraged to spend some time in prayer, contact the clergy leadership in your church, and consider whether a formal discernment for ministry may be a helpful step on your journey to living into God's vision for you.