

The Formation and Work of Regional Discernment Committees



The nature of this ministry requires high confidentiality on the part of all members serving on a Regional Discernment Committee. Please refrain from speaking about a seeker and his/her process apart from the RDC meetings themselves. At the end of the process, shred any papers or materials that would divulge personal information about the seeker or the members of the RDC.

The members of the Regional Discernment Committee may at any point recommend discontinuing or ending the RDC. Please contact the Rev. Canon Hannah Anderson to discuss your concerns before making a final decision (handerson@nhepiscopal.org) (603) 224-1914 (o); (603) 724-1558 (cell).

A. Purpose and Authority

1. The purpose of the Regional Discernment Committee is to assist the Bishop by
 - a. Helping a seeker explore a perceived call to ministry and the path that may follow that call and
 - b. Determining whether a call to ordained ministry is discerned by both the seeker and the church.
2. The Regional Discernment Committee is responsible to the Bishop.

B. Formation of the Regional Discernment Committee (RDC)

1. The Canon to the Ordinary, in consultation with the Bishop, will appoint a RDC for each person who, having worked with a Clearness Committee, continues to seek discernment of a perceived call to ordained/lay ministry in the church.
 - a. The RDC will be comprised of three to five persons and will include a member of the seeker's congregation, a current member of the Commission on Ministry (COM)/Standing Committee, and one to three others of demonstrated discernment capability. At least one of its members must be a clergy person. Its membership should be as balanced as possible and mindful of the geography of the diocese.
 - b. All RDC members will have been instructed in the process, trained in observation, and equipped with the statement of the Five Practices of a healthy congregation along with a list of the qualities and capabilities the COM expects of ordained ministers.
 - c. The Canon to the Ordinary will appoint one member of the RDC to serve as its Convener.
2. The Canon to the Ordinary will provide the seeker with a list of the members of his or her RDC, including contact information for each member.

C. Discernment Process

1. The seeker will provide each RDC member with a resume and spiritual autobiography.
2. Within one month of receipt of the list of RDC members (B.2) the seeker will visit each RDC member individually for informal conversation, at time and place convenient to each and preferably on the RDC member's home ground. The seeker is responsible for making arrangements for these visits. Each visit should last no more than one hour. *During this same

time, the Convener of the RDC *may choose* to call a meeting of the members as a way of building relationships and common understanding.

3. After individual meetings have been completed by the seeker, the Convener calls a meeting of the members of the RDC to review their visits with the seeker, identify areas and issues they wish to explore, and plan the remainder of the discernment process. Members will review the Five Practices of healthy congregations and the list of qualities expected of clergy adopted by the Commission on Ministry.

4. The Convener will then ask the seeker to arrange a meeting with the entire RDC, at a time and in a place chosen by the seeker. At that meeting, the seeker will describe his or her process to date, offering as much or little detail as he or she wishes. RDC members are free to ask direct and probing questions and to inquire into the seeker's expectations. The meeting should take no longer than two hours.

5. Following this meeting, the Convener contacts the Canon to the Ordinary by phone or email to give her an update on the progress of the RDC.

6. The Convener will then ask the seeker to schedule at least two additional meetings with the RDC, choosing from in a variety of settings.

a. The seeker will be encouraged to take the lead in arranging the meetings and directing the activity. RDC members may suggest to the seeker various meeting places (such as a common meal, the seeker's workplace or favorite nature setting, or the conference room at Diocesan House) and may suggest subjects (such as "Lead us though a bible study," "Introduce us to a subject you love and help us understand your passion for it," "Lead us in a conversation about the most important people in our lives or our spiritual practices").

b. RDC members should be cooperative and helpful as the seeker arranges meetings, but not directive, allowing the seeker to demonstrate leadership and initiative.

c. In all encounters, RDC members should be mindful of the expected qualifications and capabilities identified by the COM.

7. At any time, RDC members may choose to meet in the absence of the seeker to share their responses to written materials and encounters, to compare those responses to COM expectations of ordained ministers, to identify additional areas to be explored, and to shape the process.

D. Report to the Bishop

1. At the agreed upon conclusion of the meetings with the seeker, RDC members will convene to develop the RDC report to the Bishop. The committee's deliberations should be informed by the Five Practices and by the COM's list of its expectations of ministers.

2. The RDC will submit a written report to the Bishop, setting forth their discernment of the seeker's call to ministry and their recommendations.

3. The RDC's written report to the Bishop is a confidential document and may not be shared without the permission of RDC members.