

The Episcopal Servant Ministries Seminar

A Pre-Discernment Tool of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey

A Step Before Discernment of Call...

The Episcopal Servant Ministries Seminar

- Why did we take this route?
- What happens in the seminar?
- What have we learned?

Ministry in the post-Christendom world...

- Church is no longer a central power in society
- We exist on the margins of our society, much like the early church
- While we look like the early church, we are not the early Church
 - ✓ Our world *thinks* it knows the church and can discount it as an institution that has proven irrelevant
 - ✓ Many in the church do not accept that it is okay to exist at the margins in these days

A personal bias on order of priority ...

- The church witnesses best through spiritually alive and well-formed, committed lay Christians
- Deacons are essential for a church seeking to witness to a post-Christendom world because *only* the deacon is specifically tasked with interpreting for the church community the needs, hopes & concerns of “the outside world”
- The Christendom church lost much of its witnessing power because it was too clergy-centered (essentially too priest-centered)

What the Bishop, the COM, the COP, and the COD saw:

- Very limited understanding of the ministry of the laity
- Very limited understanding of diaconal ministry:
 - ❖ “Deacons are mini-priests helping with liturgy”
 - ❖ “Deacons directly care for those in need”
- Strong assumption that only the priest needs deep formation in scripture and theology
- *Exceptions – e.g., those who took EFM*

Task handed to me:

Develop a 2-3 session seminar that provides greater clarity for discerners

Objectives: After the ESM seminar, participants will:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the mission of the church as set forth in the BCP
2. Understand the priority of lay ministry for the work of the church
3. Clearly and accurately differentiate between the servant ministries
4. Identify the gifts that support effective service in each order of ministry
5. Identify their own gifts; Assess the intersections between those gifts and the needs of God's people
6. Become familiar with the open pathways and prepare to discern with others the pathway to which God calls them at this moment

In the Seminar

Format

- Three 2 ½ hour online seminars
- Group no more than 12 participants
- Offered 6 times / year
- Encouraged for those who feel drawn to new or deeper service to God's people
- Expressly not limited to those considering a call to ordained ministry

Where We Begin...



The Journey ...



We rely a lot here on BCP p 855

The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.

These words reflect the Baptismal Covenant, which requires that we

- Continue in the apostles' teaching, the breaking of bread & the prayers
- Persevere in resisting evil
- Proclaim the good news of God in Christ by word and deed
- Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves
- Strive for justice & peace among all and respect the dignity of every person

The Church carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members.

The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Objectives by session:

- 1) The mission of the Church and how it is accomplished
- 2) The 4 orders of ministry and aligned spiritual gifts
- 3) Call, possibilities, support for the journey

Session 1

- 1) Introductions
- 2) The mission of the Church as distinct from its activities and concerns
- 3) Church leadership over the millennia
- 4) Overview of the 4 orders of Servant Ministry in TEC today, including introduction to the 7 lay ministries licensed under the canons
- 5) Introduction to how these orders should work together to accomplish the mission entrusted to us

Worth Noting!

In the ancient church the great distinction was not between clergy and laity, but between baptized Christians on the inside and the surrounding multitude of Gentile pagans on the outside.

Many have alluded to the irony that in the early church one studied for perhaps three years and then, after formal testing and approval, was baptized in a complicated and traumatic ceremony. Later in life a man might be elected a presbyter and be ordained within minutes.

Today one can be baptized in a few minutes after a few questions are asked. Later in life one might study three years and, after testing and approval, might undergo a complicated ceremony and be ordained. It is a complete reversal.

E. Boone Porter, "Church and Ministry from Hippolytus to the Conciliarists"

Session 2:

Deeper Drive into the Orders of Ministry

- 1) Review the mission of the Church
- 2) The orders as reflected in the catechism, the rites of ordination, the canons
- 3) Varieties of Lay Ministries (volunteer, paid, licensed, certified)
- 4) Unique role of deacons in the post-Christendom world
- 5) Introduction to spiritual gifts and how these align the orders with but do not necessarily determine one's call

Canonically Licensed Lay Ministries

- Eucharistic Minister
- Eucharistic Visitor
- Evangelist
- Catechist
- Worship Leader
- Pastoral Leader
- Preacher

Between sessions 2 & 3: Spiritual Gifts Assessment

Administration	Service	Craftsmanship	Artistic Communication
Hospitality	Apostleship	Evangelism	Teaching
Encouragement/ Exhortation	Mercy	Giving	Shepherding/ Spiritual Care
Discernment	Knowledge/ Insight	Wisdom	Prophecy
Faith	Intercession	Healing	Leadership
Questioner			

Also between Sessions 2 & 3

Each participant receives:

1. A listing of their primary, secondary, and “stretch” spiritual gifts, as presented by their responses in the assessment
2. A document which details, for each spiritual gift:
 - What the Spirit enables within the recipient...
 - What is required for the recipient to exercise this gift...
 - Scripture passages to explore for those entrusted with this gift...
 - Examples of how/where in TEC this gift might be exercised/needed

Session 3

- 1) Look back to sessions 1 & 2
- 2) Group and individual reflections on their personal gifts & their early sense of a possible call to a particular order of ministry
- 3) About discernment in TEC
- 4) Practical next steps for those sensing the call to new lay ministries, and for those sensing the call to ordained ministries

What We've Learned

Observations from the first year of ESM seminars

1. There are so many in our communities sensing a call to something different
2. Most priests currently serving were formed by a church that did not yet recognize or accept our post-Christendom realities
3. Consequently, many priests are not well situated to help those experiencing a new, deeper, or different call
4. Most clergy do not grasp the fullness of lay ministry; for this reason, laity who may be called simply wander
5. We need to keep expanding everyone's appreciation of all 4 orders and how they serve a post-Christendom mission

Questions

Contact
Information

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About the School for Ministry

NJSfM – Who Are We?

- Lay Leaders, Deacons, Non/Low-Stipendiary Priests formed for servant ministries together
- Integrates Academic, Spiritual, Practical Formation for Ministry
 - ✓ 4 eight-week academic sessions per year; 24 academic classes over 3 years; 20 in-class hours per course; final project & final reflection paper
 - ✓ Spiritual formation should be happening in every activity of the SfM; in addition, 3 Gathering Weekends each year (focused on spiritual practices, time for retreat, practical skills, and the church-in-the-world); and spiritual companionship
 - ✓ Practical formation for ministry through 2 internships (6-9 months each) with accompanying seminars and through other structured experiences
 - ✓ For deacons and priests and for licensed lay leaders: 2-year post-ordination mentorships

Both internships must afford these 2 opportunities:

- ✓ To serve the needs of the community outside the church
- ✓ To interpret for the local church the needs, hopes, and concerns of a community outside the church walls

At least one internship must provide each of these experiences:

- ✓ Preaching
- ✓ Supervised pastoral care visits to members of the community in need
- ✓ Exposure to the work of Adult Christian Formation
- ✓ Exposure to Youth Ministry
- ✓ Christian Fellowship activities
- ✓ Liturgical and sacramental ministry
- ✓ Engagement with other ministries of the congregation