

QUESTIONS TO THE PERSON SEEKING DISCERNMENT

From: *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*: Rev'd Suzanne G. Farnham, J.P. Gill, R.T. McLean, S.M. Ward. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1991

- Do you have an image or vision of your potential ministry?
- What are the benefits of your course of Actions? What are its risks or hazards?
- How would you advise another person with a similar questions?
- How will this course affect your family? How will it affect others? How does your family feel about what you want to do?
- What are your feelings? How intense are they?
- Is the course that you are considering motivated by zeal? By Love?
- Do you have goals, long-range and short-range?
- How long have you wanted to do this? Is now the time? How do you know?
- What are your present commitments?
- Are you overworked? Are you too busy? Not busy enough?
- Are you feeling rushed to do or complete your task? Your journey? Do you feel in a hurry to get on with it?
- Does your kindness and affability make you vulnerable to manipulation by others? Do you feel obligated to do this? Do you feel that it is your duty? Is this expected of you?
- Will you resent doing this?
- Does your need for love or desire for approval unduly influence you?
- Are money, glory, or reputation factors in your decision?
- What are your instincts? Impulses? Inclinations? What are their sources?
- What people have influenced you in your perception of call? How?
- Are physical problems (for example, recurring headaches) trying to tell you something? Is God trying to tell you something through them?
- Is there an image that describes how you feel? Or how it would feel?
- What colour does it feel like?
- If you were to paint a picture of your situation, what would it look like?
- If you were to compose music to describe your situation, what would it sound like? If you were to select music, what would it be?
- Does Scripture shed any light on this issue?
- What are the needs of the community? What do those needs suggest to you?
- Are you trying to be obedient to God? What if God say no?
- Are any stories from your life related to this issue?
- A person considering whether to continue a ministry (for example, working at a shelter for the homeless) may be asked to consider these questions: Do I see Christ in the people involved? Do they see Christ in me? Will a new direction help me reflect Christ in a better way?

QUESTIONS FOR MEMBERS OF THE DISCERNMENT GROUP TO CONSIDER

- Has the person told us everything? Are there gaps or inconsistencies in what the person has told us? Is the body language consistent with what is being said? How can we best elicit the unsaid?
- Is the person's perception of a call limited because of social context, role, and stereotype? How can we explore this issue? How can we help expand the horizons?

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR PEOPLE SEEKING DISCERNMENT OF CALL TO ORDAINED MINISTRY

- Why are you seeking the ordained ministry?
- Can you perform your ministry without being ordained? Why not?
- What is your attitude toward authority?
- How important is Scripture to you?
- Do you see pastoral care as a part of your ministry?
- Do you see yourself as a "servant"?
- Are your abilities commensurate with the demands of ordained ministry? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- How are you perceived by others?
- Do the people in your congregation experience you as a leader within their community? How do you know?
- To what extent does your sense of call come through your faith community? Do you have a strong sense of the Church as community?
- What debts do you have? Is seminary financially feasible for you? How would you finance your seminary education? Could the debt you might incur affect your ability to carry out God's call once ordained? What if you became ordained and could not find a paid position in the church?
- Are you aware of the criticism and rejection an ordained minister often receives? Could you handle this?
- Are you aware of the adulation an ordained minister often receives? How would you handle this?

All involved in discerning a call to an ordained ministry need to become fully familiar with all the pertinent guidelines and publications issued by their respective denomination. Such documents will generate their own questions.

Those who will be serving in a discernment group to consider a possible call to ordination, including the focus person, will benefit from reading books that explore the history of ministry and ordination. *The Emerging Laity* by James and Evelyn Whitehead can provide valuable insight within denominations in the apostolic succession.

When discerning what may be a call to ordination, it is particularly important that the group await a strong and clear consensus to confirm that the call is perceived by both the candidate and the corporate body.