

*"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-12.*

To all Clergy and Wardens,

For over twenty years our diocese has been raising up locally formed individuals to serve as deacons and bi-vocational priests. During the transition in the episcopate, we have continued to raise up and ordain deacons and those called to full-time ministry. Before actively encouraging bi-vocational ministry, we have worked to strengthen the local formation process. While that work is ongoing, we now have the necessary procedures and processes in place to once again begin to discern, form and place fit persons for ministry in many of the underserved areas of the Diocese.

As leaders in your congregation, we are asking your help in identifying those individuals with outstanding leadership capacities and a strong commitment to the mission of the church. Some may be called to ordained ministry and others to licensed lay ministries.

This fall the Northwestern Pennsylvania Institute for Ministry Education will begin a new cycle of courses. These courses are designed not only for those contemplating ordained ministry (the diaconate or the priesthood) but also for those called to licensed lay ministries such as Worship Leader, Preacher, Catechist and Evangelist. Licensed lay ministries are integral components of successful bi-vocational ministry because such ministry requires the active support of the entire congregation and the particular support of a ministry team. Each order of ministry carries its own set of required coursework.

Enclosed for your information is an overview of the local formation process for the priesthood. It is the primary vehicle for preparing those called as priests to bi-vocational ministry. Bi-vocational priests serve congregations which cannot afford full time clergy. They are non-stipendiary and support themselves financially through secular employment. The local formation process then serves two functions. First, it greatly reduces the cost of education. This is critically important given the non-stipendiary nature of this ministry. Second, it allows the person preparing for this ministry to stay in place during their time of study. This allows the individuals to retain the necessary employment and/or other means of economic security.

I encourage you to prayerfully consider who God may be calling forward from your congregation. Engage them in a conversation about opportunities for ministry. Ask them if they are willing to pray about it. Discernment of course is an ongoing process, one that won't be complete before the first class starts. Sometimes the first step is all that is required.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me and I will be glad to assist you. Thank you for all the work you do on behalf of God's people.

Blessings,

The Rev. Martha Ishman  
Canon to the Ordinary