

Anti-Bias Tool for Parish Discernment

For use with Sponsoring Clergy and Congregations forming a Discernment Committee
or for Parish Discernment Committees as they begin their Work

Why is this topic important?

It is not just about doing the right thing. It is about reminding ourselves to be open to the movement of the Holy Spirit in the discernment process. You might think you have a good idea of what a deacon or priest should be like but understanding the dynamics of bias can help us to understand how we perceive an inquirer's call to ordained ministry and encourage a wider variety of people in this exploration.

Ways to exploring bias:

Watch this video together and talk together about your own experiences of bias:

<https://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000004818663/peanut-butter-jelly-and-racism.html>

Read together and reflect on this passage of scripture: *Jesus said "Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Friend, let me take out the speck in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye. [Luke 6:41-42]*

Watch together this clip from *The Vicar of Dibley* and discuss the assumptions on the part of the parish counsel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrUal4mUmAk>

Finally, discuss ways to raise awareness of bias as the discernment committee is formed by considering these questions:

- Think about the community in which your church is located. Describe it. How does your church community reflect the wider community
- Does the inquirer reflect the surrounding community?
- How might the descriptions above impact biases, explicit or implicit, in your parish community and influence the way you envision the ministry of deacons and priests?
- Are there people in your congregation who can be invited to join a discernment committee who can help to address these biases?
- How does the membership of your discernment committee overlap with the inquirer along the lines of race, gender, gender expression, ability, class and other expressions of diversity? In what ways might this impact this discernment work?
- Are there people in your congregation who may feel that you wouldn't support their exploration of ordained leadership because of inherent bias in your community?

Additional Resources

A reflection about names: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1854687028158846>

An anti-bias worksheet – <https://blogs.anl.gov/leadership/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2016/07/2016-04-11-Bias-Interrupters-Worksheet.pdf>