

Exploring Baptismal Ministry

Exploring Baptismal Ministry (EBM) is the first part of formal discernment in the Diocese of Maryland. It is not the beginning of discernment but is another stage in the Christian walk with God. Those entering EBM will hopefully have already been exploring the nature of God's call in their lives with other people both inside and outside their parishes and with a spiritual director. This process continues in a more formal structured manner during EBM. The Church recognizes a variety of ministries, both lay and ordained. Participants in EBM usually believe God is calling them to one of these ministries, but discernment can also lead to the recognition that their professional and family lives are the work to which God has been and is calling them.

The Diocese of Maryland believes that discernment is best facilitated in a variety of ways. Not only does EBM include peer group meetings overseen by a mentor team, but participants must also work with a spiritual director. A link to a list of spiritual directors is on the diocesan discernment webpage.

While in EBM, discerners will also work with a lay committee in home parish. The home parish rector or vicar will choose three people to discern alongside the discerner. Both the committee and the discerner will be trained using the *Listening Hearts* method of prayerful listening before they begin to meet.

EBM uses a variety of reading materials over the course of the program. Everyone needs a Bible and a Prayer Book. Once accepted into the program, the mentors will send out a list of books required for the program, including several that are to be read over the summer, and some questions to think about and bring to the first group meeting in September. They also will ask for a short spiritual autobiography, which is the discerner's introduction to the group.

Most discerners find it helpful to keep a journal to reflect on time with the group, with the lay committee, and on the readings. Many discerners also find Education for Ministry (EfM) helpful in their discernment. Meg Kimble is the diocesan coordinator for EfM and she can be reached at meg.kimble@verizon.net and will tell you more about the program and suggest a group for you to join.

Those in EBM who believe they are called to ordained ministry and who have the support of their rectors/vicars and vestries apply for Discerning Ordained Vocation (DOV), the second part of the discernment process. Prior to acceptance into DOV, nominees complete *Mending Creation* and *Anti-racism Trainings*, have psychological evaluations and background checks, and interview with the Commission on Ministry. Following an interview with the Bishop, they are invited to join DOV.

EBM meets at the Diocesan Center in Baltimore on one Saturday in the months of September, October, November, February, March, April and May. In June the group has a retreat at the Bishop Claggett Center.

The cost of the program is \$600 payable in September to the Diocese of Maryland with EBM on the memo line. This does not include the cost of books, EfM, the psychological evaluations, or the background checks. Home congregations may wish to support people in discernment financially, but their support is not required. Payments must be mailed to The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, 4 E. University Pkwy, Baltimore, MD 21218 Attn: Dawn Kline.