

A GUIDE FOR PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT IN THE ELECTION OF A NEW BISHOP

ADNE Clergy, Lay Delegates to the Synod, and all who are joining us in prayer as we discern the Lord's leading in the election of a new bishop ~ *Welcome into this prayerful process!*

At this point in the election process you are being presented with two very strong candidates; both have been well-vetted and are highly qualified for the job of bishop. Thus our task now is not *primarily* about making a mental check-list of qualifications and deciding who best fits it. Rather, at this time we are invited to listen to the Lord to see which candidate is his choice for us--not our choice, but his choice.

Far from being a time of political caucusing for a favorite candidate, the next two months are a discernment process. This time is more akin to that of the eleven apostles in Acts 1 who, in choosing a replacement for Judas, put forth two candidates who already met the full requirements of being an apostle. They then prayed to the Lord "Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry," and then they cast lots (Acts 1:21-26). Your prayers, your reflecting and conversing and listening, and eventually your voting, are all a part of opening your minds, hearts, and votes to the determining action of the Lord.

Below you'll see prayers, Scripture verses, and questions in a series of four "movements" towards the election of the Bishop of the ADNE in November.

- I. Preparation to Begin your Discernment Process
- II. Reading the Candidates' Written Materials
- III. Attending the Walk About
- IV. Voting at Synod

As you move through the guide, use the questions and suggestions for prayer that open up deeper reflection for you. Linger with them, letting them become an ongoing listening with and in the Lord.

May the Holy Spirit give us all true discernment of his voice, his ways and his will, in Christ our Great Shepherd, to the glory of God the Father.

Collect for the Election of a New Bishop in the ADNE

O Great and Mighty God, who bestows all good gifts and who anoints leaders to lead your church and advance your Kingdom, graciously guide the minds and hearts of those who will choose a new bishop for this Diocese. Let them follow in the examples of faith set forth by our Savior and his Apostles to trust in your provision of the person whom you desire to fulfill this office. Lord, bless and guard the candidates that from among them we would receive a shepherd who by your power will protect, feed and tend the flock of Christ. Grant us grace to obediently follow him, receiving in unity your chosen leader. Go before him and us, that by your grace, help, and favor, we may continue the work you have prepared for us to do, that we your church may bring honor and glory to your holy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture verses for meditation

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (qualifications of a bishop)

James 1:5-8 (seeking wisdom)

I Corinthians 2:11-16 (discernment comes from the Holy Spirit)

I. Preparation to Begin your Discernment Process

Read carefully the “Profile of the ADNE” and the “Profile of the Bishop of the ADNE” found on the diocesan website: <http://www.ad-ne.org/resources/adne-episopal-election/>

Explore your own predispositions as you come into the discernment process:

- Prayerfully Notice
 - *What am I feeling about the election of the bishop? Am I anxious, afraid, hopeful, excited, angry, frustrated?* Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal what’s in your heart as you come into this process, and listen to him as together you explore what that might be about.
 - *What am I carrying into this process that’s about my experience under previous bishops?* How might I have been frustrated, disappointed, or wounded by a previous bishop, or nurtured, encouraged, or empowered by one, so that I already have particular projections, predispositions, or expectations?
 - *What am I carrying into this process that’s about my agenda for the future?* How might that be about personal or congregational or agenda-based control or power?
- Pray
 - Honestly acknowledge and release to God any anxiety, fears, anger, personal agendas, particular expectations, or anything else that keeps you from coming into this process freely and trustingly.
 - Ask God for humility, trust, wisdom, clarity, and the overall guidance of the Holy Spirit.

II. Reading the Candidates’ Written Materials (mid-to-late September)

In preparing to read: Approach this as a conversation with the Lord

- Set aside a quiet undistracted time and space in which to read
- Release once again any anxiety, fear, desire for control, agenda
- Ask the Holy Spirit to open you in mind, heart, soul, and strength to whatever he wants you to notice.

While engaging with the written materials:

- Prayerfully Notice:
 - What stands out to you as you read each candidate’s documents
 - What gifts and strengths do you see? Are there weaker areas?
 - What evokes concern in you? What’s that about? Talk it through with the Lord. Is the concern actually about the candidate himself or is it about something in you, in your own experience, fears, desires, etc?
 - What evokes excitement in you? Explore what that’s about. Notice any temptations to promote your personal agenda, and separate those from what might be God’s desire for our churches and our diocese.
 - Are there particular questions that arise for you?

Make some notes about what you are noticing.

- Pray
 - As you read, pause frequently, returning to brief prayers for openness to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As you process what you've read:

- Prayerfully Notice
 - Has reading the materials stirred up thoughts and emotions? What are they? What are the negative thoughts and feelings? What are the positive thoughts and feelings? Jot down what you notice.
- Pray
 - Invite the Holy Spirit into your reflections to help you discern what is from God, and what may be from your own personal needs, concerns, past wounds, etc. Ask him what he's revealing about you. Ask him what he might be revealing about the candidates.
 - At this stage in the process, remain open to both candidates as the Lord's choice. Pray for them, with thanksgiving and in blessing.
 - Each day: Pray the collect above, then holding each of the candidates, everyone voting, and the churches and diocese we all represent before the Lord in prayer, ask the Lord how to pray for each of us. Notice what's going on in your own heart and mind and soul as you do so.

III. Attending the Walk About (October 11-13)

In preparing to attend and listen:

- Prayerfully Notice:
 - What do I hope to learn about the candidates to help my discernment? What questions have arisen in me about them? What do I especially want to be listening for? Jot down what you're noticing.
- Pray
 - Offer these questions to God, asking the Holy Spirit to show you what you need to know.

While listening:

- Prayerfully Notice:
 - As you begin to listen, are you able to open your hands in a posture of prayerful trust? Are you seeking to listen to the Lord at the same time as you listen to the candidate? How open are you to God?
 - Are there distractions that might draw you away from listening well? Is your cell phone off? Are you able to focus on the speakers?
 - What do you notice about the candidates? How are you responding to what they are saying?
 - What are you learning that's new about the candidates? Are there surprises, answers to questions, further questions?

- Pray:
 - Ask God to help you discern the difference between what *you're* trying to hear, and what has the feel of the *Lord* drawing your attention.
 - Try to breathe out your own agenda, and breath in Holy Spirit freedom and trust, listening with your mind as well as your heart and soul.

As you process what you've experienced:

- Prayerfully Notice:
 - What's going on inside you as you think about each candidate? Notice feelings of concern, unease, hesitation, even neutral dis-interest. Notice feelings of peace, trust, invitation, freedom.
- Pray:
 - Pray for each one as if he were becoming the bishop. Notice which prayer has more the feel of life and light and invitation to trust God.
 - On each following day leading up to the election, continue praying the collect above, then hold each of the candidates before the Lord in prayer, asking the Lord how to pray for each of them. Notice what's going on in your own heart, mind and soul as you do so.

IV. Voting at Synod (November 17)

In the weeks leading up to Synod:

- Prayerfully Notice:
 - Which is the candidate that has risen to the top in your heart and mind? Can you identify moments when it seemed God was guiding you toward this candidate?
 - As you consider this candidate, where is your sense of peace now in this discernment process? Your sense of trust? Your sense of freedom?
- Pray:
 - As you reach a decision about which candidates will receive your vote, test your decision in prayer. Ask God to give you the confirmation of his peace, trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

While present at Synod:

- Prayerfully Notice:
 - Where is my heart now in regards to the candidates? Am I still at peace with the candidate I intend to vote for? Avoid engaging in conversations or "caucusing" about the candidates that may persuade you away from what you have discerned in prayer.
- Pray:
 - Continue to prayerfully listen for the Holy Spirit, trusting that God has been guiding you towards your decision. Place your trust in the Lord to bring forward the candidate of his choosing.

As you process the vote:

- Prayerfully Notice:
 - Was the candidate you voted for elected or was the other candidate elected? How do you feel about the election? Elated? Happy? Disappointed? Fearful? Offer those feelings to God, asking him to guide you to a place of peace, joy and trust.

- Pray:
 - Faithfully continue to pray daily for our bishop-elect, that the Holy Spirit would minister grace, wisdom and peace to him as he prepares to take on the role of bishop of the ADNE.
 - Pray for his preparations to leave his current work and for a smooth transition to ADNE.
 - Pray for his health and well-being and that of his family as they go through the process of finding housing, relocating, etc.
 - Pray for the ADNE that we might be prepared to receive with joy and openness the new bishop as he takes leadership among us.
 - Pray for the candidate who was not elected. Pray for his comfort and assurance in the Spirit, and for that of his family. Pray that he may continue in ministry in strength, grace, faithfulness and fruitfulness, trusting in the Lord's call.
 - Pray for the Anglican Province in North America, for the place that our new bishop will take in provincial leadership, and for the ongoing health of the church worldwide.
 - Pray for Bishop Bill and Sally Murdoch, for their encouragement in heart and soul as they transition from serving us into the service that the Lord has ahead for them.

Closing Prayer

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. (BCP, Liturgy for the Ordination of a Bishop)