

## **Prayer of Discernment for Beginning Experience Board of Directors Election**

*NEEDED: Bible, paper and pens, flip chart and pens, Christ candle, tapers for board members, music*

### **Discernment for Nominations**

**Presider:** We gather and begin our prayer in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

*Prayer to the Holy Spirit for openness and guidance of whom to ask to serve us as our leaders.*

**All:** God the Holy Spirit, come among us to bring light and life from this time together.

**Presider:** As we begin this discernment on behalf of this Beginning Experience Ministry lead us and guide us.

**All:** Lead us to unity and guide us in peace.

**Presider:** Let us pray...

**All:** Lord, we depend on you and the inspiration of your Holy Spirit.  
Help us to fulfill our mission as the team members who minister to those hurting through the death, divorce, or separation from a spouse.  
Help us to respond generously to the needs of the divorced, widowed and separated in our midst.  
Help us to listen to one another, to trust one another, to support one another.  
Help us to bless you in all that we do during this time.

### **First Reader:**

Reading from James 3:13, 17

“If you are wise and understanding, show this in practice through a humility filled with good sense. Wisdom is first of all innocent. It is also peaceable, lenient, docile, rich in sympathy and the kindly deeds that are its fruits, impartial and sincere.”

**Presider:** We are gathered in the Spirit. Let us seek true wisdom for our task. That we may put aside any self-interest in favor of the good of the whole Beginning Experience Ministry, and as wounded healers serving the divorced widowed and separated, we pray to the Lord.

**All:** **Grant us wisdom in our discernment.**

**Presider:** That each member of this team may openly express his or her thoughtful vision for the sake of the divorced, widowed and separated persons we serve, we pray to the Lord.

**All:** Grant us wisdom in our discernment.

**Presider:** That we may respond in ways that will empower us all, we pray to the Lord.

**All:** Grant us wisdom in our discernment.

**Presider:** That you will grace us now in our time of silence to hear your voice and know your presence, we pray to the Lord.

**All:** Grant us wisdom in our discernment

**Presider:** I now ask you spend ten minutes in prayerful reflection on the question, which I will write on the flip chart, “What are the major gifts and qualities are needed at this time in the persons who will become the board of directors of this Beginning Experience Ministry, and as such, will be the servant leaders of this ministry?”

I ask that you spread around the room in silence, reflecting and writing briefly on this question. When we return to the group, we will each voice the top two or three leadership gifts and qualities we see as needed at this time, attempting to avoid repetition but mentioning all that are necessary. These will be listed on our flip chart.

*Time for reflective writing*

**List the leadership needs on flip chart.**

**Presider:** Our prayer continues with these readings as we reflect on persons with these gifts to accept a call to servant leadership on the Beginning Experience Board.

**Second Reader:**

1 Cor. 12:1-4

“There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

Reflection on gifts from the book *Come To The Feast* by Richard Fragomeni:

“It is a stretch, difficult and subtle, to make Christianity a way of life rather than just a set of religious practices. Christian life demands that we be receptive and vulnerable and open to being flooded with a gift, to be humble and human.... In the presence of any gift, we face the urge to take it, not have it given to us. In a world that says on good days we are entitled to what we earn and on bad days entitled to what we can take, we are pilgrims. (As a eucharistic people) we enter a world of gift in which we receive everything without reference to entitlement. We are helpless to take; we can only receive as gift.”

**All:** Spirit of God, open us to receiving those gifts you have given each of us out of your overflowing love—the gift that is you. Call forth from among us our ability to

recognize and embrace both our own gifts and the gifts we see in others, including gifts that may not be developed fully—gifts needed to lead the Beginning Experience family at this time in the history of our Ministry. As one, we seek to serve you, to serve this team and to serve your hurting people. Amen.

**Presider:** Our prayer continues with these readings.

**Third Reader: 1 Cor. 12:11**

“It is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts, distributing them to each as is willed.”

Reflection on gifts and giftedness from *I Have Come To Give You Life* by Josie Piranio:

“The variety of gifts to believers is endless. Vatican II clearly stated, “However, for the exercise of the apostolate, ‘the Holy Spirit gives the faithful special gifts besides allotting them to each one as is willed.’ From the receptions of these charisms, even the most ordinary ones, there arises for each of the faithful the right and duty of exercising them in the Church and the world for the good of all people and the development of the Church.” These gifts are not restricted just to those in scripture but are limitless, as every individual who receives charisms from the Holy Spirit grows to be used to transform the world. When grace works through people, it takes on many faces and expressions. God desires us to be transformed, saved, healed and empowered.”

**All:** Spirit of God, give face and expression to those you will call forth to lead us. Continue to guide us in our discernment of those to be called up from among us. Speak to our hearts and minds, opening us to listen to the gentle stirrings which come to us through grace. Amen.

**Presider:** At this time, I ask you to spend a few minutes in prayer and to please list five persons you see as having the gifts needed to be a member of the board of directors of this Beginning Experience team. We will collect the names as those nominated for service. As we do this, we ask for you to continue your prayer in silence. Those persons having three or more mentions will be written on the flip chart and carried forth in our discernment. Perhaps you can take a break while we are recording these nominations.

BREAK while names are recorded

**Presider:** We will now announce the nominees. If we mention your name, please bear in mind that you are not being asked if you want to be board members, but rather, will you serve if you are called. We ask you to be **open** to serving as a board member.

Below are questions and scripture passages we suggest you use privately in your personal discernment for those whose names have been mentioned.

- How does Jesus lead His people? John 10: 7-18
- What leadership qualities did Jesus possess? John 13, 1-7
- What does Jesus’ example mean to me?
- Do I possess any of these leadership qualities?
- How do I feel about being in God’s team? John 15:16

“It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you to go forth and bear fruit. Your fruit must endure, so that all you ask the Father in my name, He will give you.”

**I would like to repeat that you are not being asked if you want to be members of the board, but rather, will you serve if you are called. We ask you to be open to being a servant leader.** We’ll give you 10 minutes for this discernment. I ask the rest of you to join them in silent prayer that those who are called will be willing to accept this call. As we pray, we consider the needs of this team and the needs of those we serve—the divorced, widowed and separated in our midst.

*Everyone prays in silence.*

**Presider addresses this question to each person nominated:**

(Name \_\_\_\_\_), knowing the crucial needs of this ministry to the divorced, widowed and separated and knowing that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, you will do a wonderful job serving on this board, will you accept the nomination?

### **Discernment for Elections**

**Presider:** Let us begin the election phase of this process by again reflecting on scripture.

**Fourth Reader:** Isaiah 42: 1-3

“Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit; He shall bring forth justice to the nation, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He shall not break, and a smoldering wick, He shall not quench.”

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 4: 1-6.

“I plead with you, then, as a prisoner of the Lord, to live a life worthy of the calling you have received, with perfect humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another lovingly. Make every effort to preserve the unity which has the Spirit as its origin and peace as its binding force. There is but one body and one Spirit, just as there is but one hope given all of you by your call. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and works through all, and is in all.

**Presider:** As you vote, bear in mind to follow the way of love. Please take a ballot and vote for those persons to serve as members of the board. Following the election, we will draw for those whose initial term will be for two years; the remaining persons will serve an initial term of one year.

Hand out ballots—see sample. Break while ballots are tallied.

**Presider:** With the grace of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, those you have elected to serve as the Board of Directors of our Beginning Experience Ministry are:  
**Announce names in alphabetical order.**

If electing a first time board:

*Each person elected draws a slip of paper—one per person. Half plus one of the slips say “Two year term”; the others say “one year term.”*

**Announce these results.**

**Presider:** The newly elected board will now select its officers—a president, a vice-president (optional) who will function as a president-elect, a secretary and a treasurer. Each will serve a one-year term in that office but is eligible to re-elected for another term.

**Let us review the general responsibilities of these positions** (read from Bylaws).

Let us remember that we are gathered in the Spirit. Let us seek true wisdom for our task, that we may put aside any self-interest in favor of the good of the whole Beginning Experience Ministry. As wounded healers serving this team in its service to the divorced, widowed and separated, we pray to the Lord.

All: **Grant us wisdom in our discernment.**

**Presider:** That each member of this board may openly express his or her thoughtful vision for the sake of this ministry and those we serve, we pray to the Lord.

All: **Grant us wisdom in our discernment.**

**Presider:** That we may respond in ways that will empower us all as we share, each in our own capacity, the responsibilities of leading this ministry, we pray to the Lord.

All: **Grant us wisdom in our discernment.**

Leader: That you will grace us now to hear your voice and know your presence, we pray to the Lord.

All: **Grant us wisdom in our discernment.**

**Presider: I will now meet with the members of the board to help with their discernment. (Board adjourns to another room)**

I now ask you spend five minutes in prayerful reflection on these questions, “What are the major gifts and qualities are needed at this time in the person who will serve on this board as its president? As its vice president? As its secretary? As its treasurer?”

**Remember that the vice president and all other elected board members will share in the leadership tasks and responsibilities, each in a different capacity—** for example as weekend coordinator, as team training chair, as publicity chair, or assuming responsibility in other needed roles.

I ask that you each reflect briefly on these questions, on the gifts with which God has graced you, and the gifts you see in your fellow board members.

*Time for reflection*

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**Presider:** One way of choosing officers is by consensus. That is, following prayerful and reflective discussion by each board member of the gifts you feel you can offer and the gifts you see in the others who have been elected, the officers of the board may become apparent. Thus they can be agreed upon by all the members of the board by consensus and elected by acclamation.

Where the person best suited to serve in a particular office is not so apparent, each person named will be considered a nominee and a formal election will be held among those accepting the nominations.

As you reflect and discuss, keep in mind that both present and future officers may come from those now serving on this board. Thus both present ministry leadership needs and needs for the next year or so should be kept in mind.

May we now ask each member of the board to speak openly of the gifts they see in the persons they believe should be considered as president?

*Discussion time*

May we now ask each member of the board to speak openly of the gifts they see in the persons they believe should be considered as vice-president?

*Discussion time*

May we now ask each member of the board to speak openly of the gifts they see in the persons they believe should be considered as secretary?

*Discussion time*

May we now ask each member of the board to speak openly of the gifts they see in the persons they believe should be considered as treasurer?

*Discussion time*

*If everyone either agrees initially, or comes to agree on the four positions by the end of the discussion, the officers are chosen by consensus; otherwise each person named for a particular office is considered a nominee. An election among those accepting the nominations is then held; the votes are cast by the members of the board.*

Announce the results.

All return to the main room where the results are announced to everyone and all are invited to participate in the Commissioning ceremony.

### **Commissioning Ceremony**

*Light Christ candle; from the Christ candle, light a taper for each board member.*

**Presider:** We celebrate now the commissioning of the Board of Directors of this Beginning Experience Ministry.

As the Beginning Experience® ministry cannot be borne on the shoulders of one person, the growth of the team and the weight of critical decisions must be shared by a body representing the Beginning Experience® community. The Board of Directors is that group of persons to which this team has entrusted the authority for team administration. Please respond, "We do."

**Presider:** Do you as the elected Board of this Beginning Experience of Ministry accept this authority and responsibility?

**Board:** We do.

**Presider:** The Beginning Experience® ministry is sacramental in nature, therefore church. Do you hold yourselves accountable to that which is church, namely the entire people of God?

**Board:** We do.

**Presider:** The Board's fundamental responsibility is to maintain the integrity of the Beginning Experience® process as it continues to heal people going through the stages of grief and transition. Do you accept this responsibility?

**Board:** We do.

**Presider:** Do you pledge to ensure the on-going formation of the team with team selection and training in keeping with the guidelines furnished by the Beginning Experience International Ministry, Inc.?

**Board:** We do.

**Presider:** Do you pledge to cooperate with the Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_ and its representatives in its ministry to the separated, divorced and widowed?

**Board:** We do.

**Presider:** We have heard your pledge. (Turns to the team.) Do you, as the team of this Beginning Experience Ministry accept their commitment to function as your Board? Please answer, "We do."

**Team:** We do.

**Presider:** This discernment, election and commissioning celebration of this Beginning Experience Ministry is now complete. We rejoice together in the love and commitment you pledge to leading this ministry as it seeks to help the wounded in our midst.

SONG (Here I Am Lord, The Servant Song, May the Blessings of God Be Upon You or other appropriate music).

**Presider:** Let us close by blessing each newly elected member of the board with the sign of the cross and a hug.