

CANON FOR FORMATION

It has been an honor to serve as the Canon for Formation for the last two years. God has done remarkable things with the Commission on Ministry and with the those individuals who have heard God's call to pursue ordained ministry, as well those who have been called to a more committed form of lay ministry.

I do not wish to restate all that the Commission on Ministry, in conjunction with the Standing Committee and the bishop, has accomplished. As a process, we are hoping to develop into a discerning, supportive community that "walks with" those who enter the discernment process for ministry.

Traditionally, the formation process involved getting a four-year college degree, then attending three more years of seminary, followed by serving as an assistant in a parish and then, eventually, becoming a full-time rector. It is important to understand that this traditional process is changing. This is due to several factors:

1. The increasing burden of debt associated with a college and seminary education.
2. The escalation of health insurance costs due to the high cost of modern medicine.
3. Declining resources in parishes as economically-strapped families are able to give less.

Formation is important not only for seminarians, but for everyone. Under Chuck Noll, the Steelers hired their first "strength and conditioning" coach in order to have a team with "strength, flexibility, and speed." This commitment to formation resulted in four Super Bowls under Noll. For those involved in ministry and for those "equipping the saints for ministry," we certainly need to be a team that has "strength, flexibility, and speed" as we move into the future.

I am hoping to develop more support groups for the newly-ordained and to continue to be a "Barnabas" (encourager) to those whom God is calling into a more committed ministry, whether lay or ordained. Empowered by our "baptism covenant," we are all called to share in the ministry of Jesus Christ, each in our own unique way.

Peace and prayers,
The Rev. Dr. Jay Geisler
Canon for Formation