

# ORDINATION DISCERNMENT MANUAL

*Discerning and Responding  
to a Call to Ordained Ministry*

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## THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

*And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I said, "Here I am! Send me." (Isaiah 6:8, ESV)*

Dear Friend in Christ,

The Christian life is not a spectator sport; all Christians have a call to serve the Lord in his Church. Some Christians, however, are called by Jesus to serve as ordained ministers in the Church. The word "calling" might remind us of young Samuel's experience in the temple (1 Samuel 3) when he heard the Lord call to him. Samuel heard the call, yet he needed the help and discernment of Eli to recognize the call and, again, in knowing what to do with it.

If you are reading this manual, you have likely had some experience of hearing the call of the Lord. You will need help and discernment in clarifying that call. The discernment process in our Diocese is designed to assist you in that.

Discernment is at the heart of this. Discernment quite rightly helps us find answers to hard questions like, "Is this the Lord's calling, or is it just my own desire or need?", "To what am I being called?", "Do I have the gifts, faith, and character for this calling?" And none of these things should be discerned on our own, nor can they be. Calling to ordained ministry is discerned by the Candidate, the local church, and the wider Church. Our process seeks to engage all three, that we might hear the Lord together.

Your own experience or even inclination toward ordained ministry is often the beginning of the call, but it may also come initially from others who perceive certain gifts or capacities in you. The local church, first in your rector and then in the parish discernment committee, pray and listen to affirm a call, if they perceive it. The bishop and the Commission on Ministry perform a similar function for the wider Church.

Ultimately it is the bishop who makes the final decision regarding ordination. That is why there are a number of touchpoints with the bishop in the process, some in person and some in the form of regular Ember Day letters. This helps me know the Candidate better, which always helps in discernment.

I invite you to embrace this discernment process with a sense of openness and expectancy—not an expectancy that assumes an outcome, but one that looks to encounter the Lord. I have been through any number of discernment processes in my Christian life and regardless of the outcome, I have always learned more about Jesus and about myself. In affirmation and in disappointment, I have found love, mercy, and grace from the Lord in discernment. I know that you can, too.

Grace and peace to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex W. Cameron". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Right Reverend Alex W. Cameron  
*Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh*

# Introduction to the Ordination Discernment Manual

Discerning and responding to a call to ordination is an important and holy work for everyone in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh. The Bishop and the Commission on Ministry (COM) have worked hard to design a process that allows the Holy Spirit to work throughout, as they seek His best for their leaders and parishes, and which aligns the ordination discernment process with the vision, mission, and guiding values of the diocese. It is their hope that this manual will be a useful guide to all who are involved in discerning and responding to a call to ordained ministry.

## *The Ordination Discernment Process: Four Phases*

The ordination discernment process has four main phases with requirements within each step. The four phases are:

1. Exploration: Conversations with rector and bishop
2. Aspirancy: Congregational discernment phase and diocesan discernment phase
3. Postulancy: Academic and practical preparation for candidacy
4. Candidacy: Assessment of readiness for ordination to the diaconate

### **IMPORTANT**

There is no specific timeframe applicable to everyone. Some people will proceed steadily through each step and requirement while others may take many years. Do not assume that one person's timeframe will match another's.

## *Definition of a Deacon*

A deacon is a person called by God to a ministry of servanthood directed by the bishop. In the name of Jesus Christ, a deacon is to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely and interpret to the Church the needs and concerns and hopes of the world. A deacon is to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments. In this Diocese, the work of the deacon is to administer and apply the resources of the Church for ministry to the needy both inside and outside the Church and, in so doing, to serve as a bridge between the Church and the world. The deacon is to model, encourage, and equip servanthood and mission among laypeople. The diaconate is the foundational ordination on which ministry as a priest or bishop is built.

## *Definition of a Priest*

A priest, or presbyter/elder, is a person called by God to lead a community of faith and charged to encourage, call out, and orchestrate the gifts of the people of God so that the church can live up to its responsibility of reaching those outside it with the transforming love of Jesus Christ. As such, he or she speaks and acts as Christ's representative, with the authority of the Church. The priesthood is a unique expression of the priesthood of all baptized believers. A priest is commissioned to make Christ's presence a tangible reality through the preached word, through the sacraments and

through being an example of Christian living. A priest is called to work as a pastor, priest and teacher, and to share in the Councils of the Church. A priest is to minister to the people committed to their care, to preach the Word of God, to baptize, to celebrate the Eucharist, and to pronounce absolution and blessing in God's name.

## Our Beliefs

Rooted in the ancient church and affirming the [Nicene Creed](#), [Apostles' Creed](#), and [Athanasian Creed](#), we, like all Christians, believe in and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ crucified, risen, and ascended.

Our beliefs are best summarized in the [Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion](#), the foundational statement of Anglican belief. We both hold to the fundamentals of the ancient church and embrace the central tenets of the Reformers, such as salvation by Christ alone, the authority and sufficiency of the scriptures for defining belief and doctrine, and justification by faith.

We are committed to promoting and protecting the biblical gospel and mission to the world, as stated in the [Jerusalem Declaration](#).

## Our Guiding Values

### PRAYERFUL

Prayer is at the heart of all we do. While we are co-laborers, the work of transforming people with the gospel is, firstly, the work of God. Being first and constantly at prayer reminds us that we can do nothing without his power and presence.

### RELATIONAL

As we nurture our clergy and raise up the next generation of church leaders, we follow Jesus' model of walking alongside the twelve apostles. Through our work and programs, our priority is developing personal relationships to effectively provide pastoral care and skill development.

### KINGDOM-MINDED

We are unapologetic about the mission and work of the church, which is to make disciples. Our desire is to bring people into a saving relationship with Jesus because it changes our lives—in this world and for all eternity.

### AGILE

We strive for operational excellence in our diocese and churches, to be worthy of our congregations' trust and to be better ready to support and fulfill the mission of the gospel.

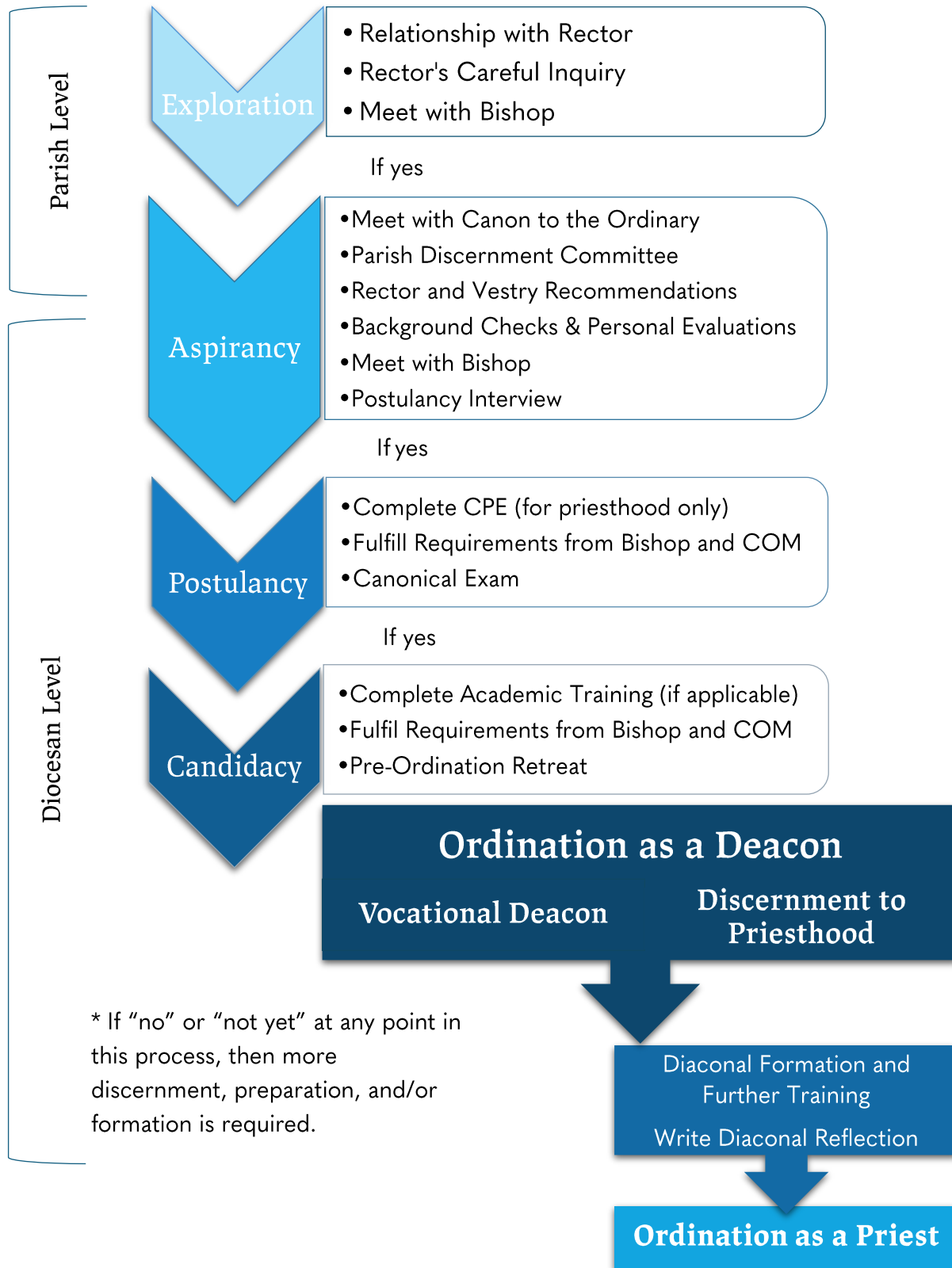
# Safeguarding Requirements

The Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh is strongly committed to protecting persons from sexual and professional misconduct by clergy, lay employees, and volunteers.

Before an individual comes before the Commission on Ministry for a Postulancy Interview, he or she must complete a background report by Oxford Document Management Co. (which includes a state-wide Criminal Record Check), the FBI Criminal Record Check (via fingerprinting), and any other state-required background checks, as well as complete the MinistrySafe Sexual Awareness Training (a diocesan-sponsored training program on sexual abuse prevention).

Additionally, all clergy and Candidates must review the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh's "Safe Church Policy", as well as submit the signed "Acknowledgement of Receipt of Policies".

# Diagram of the Ordination Discernment Process



# Checklist for Those Discerning Ordination

*ALL documents submitted by the individual must be signed and dated.*

## I. EXPLORATION PHASE

- Individual writes an Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
- Rector's Careful Inquiry is conducted
- Rector sends the Careful Inquiry to the Bishop's Office
- The Bishop's Office will send a link to the individual for the online Discernment Process Path
- Individual completes and submits:
  - Application for the Discernment of Holy Orders
  - Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
  - Signed Statement of Alignment with the Fundamental Documents of the Province
- Individual contacts the Bishop's Office to schedule a meeting with the Bishop (spouse/fiancé(e) attends, if applicable)
- Bishop meets with individual and spouse/fiancé(e) (if applicable). If the Bishop approves, he will give permission to the rector to continue discernment. The Bishop will submit a recap to the rector and COM. He or she is now considered an Aspirant.

## II. ASPIRANCY PHASE

### *Congregational Discernment Phase*

- Rector forms Parish Discernment Committee (PDC)
- PDC meets with Aspirant and submits its assessment to the Vestry
- Vestry reviews work of PDC and, if it concurs, submits a formal report and recommendation for the Aspirant to the Bishop

### *Diocesan Discernment Phase*

- Bishop's Office receives from the rector:
  - Parish Discernment Committee Evaluation
  - Vestry Recommendation for Postulancy
  - Rector's Letter of Recommendation for Postulancy
- Aspirant meets with the Canon to the Ordinary to discuss the discernment process, as well as academic and practical training in preparation for Canonical Exams
- Aspirant seeks out and begins spiritual direction
- Aspirant submits to the Bishop's Office:
  - Signed Waiver of Rights, Release of Claims and Indemnity Agreement
  - Signed "Individual Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policies" after reviewing the ADP *Safe Church Policy* (found on the ADP website)
- Aspirant makes a request to the Bishop's Office to initiate the following:
  - Psychological Evaluation

- Oxford Background Report
- Aspirant completes the MinistrySafe Sexual Abuse Awareness Training and submits Certificate of Completion to the Bishop's Office (parish admin should initiate)
- Aspirant completes all other background checks / clearances, as required by state of residence, and submits clearance reports to the Bishop's Office (see ADP website for detailed clearance instructions)
- Aspirant schedules and has a routine medical examination, using the Medical Exam Form
- Bishop's Office Receives from the Aspirant:
  - College and/or other School Transcripts
  - Confirmation of Spiritual Direction
  - Medical Exam Form
- Aspirant contacts the Bishop's Office to schedule a meeting with the Bishop to review background checks and evaluations
- Bishop meets with the applicant for Holy Orders. If approved, he or she may schedule the Postulancy Interview
- The Postulancy Interview is conducted with the Aspirant and COM members
- The Bishop meets with Aspirant within two weeks to discuss next steps. If approved, he or she is now considered a Postulant. The Bishop will submit his approval for Postulancy to the COM.

### **III. POSTULANCY PHASE: PREPARING FOR CANDIDACY**

- Postulant begins writing Ember Day letters to the Bishop
- Postulant selects, enrolls in, and completes a certified Clinical Pastoral Education program (for those called to be priests)
- Postulant continues spiritual direction and submits an updated Confirmation of Spiritual Direction (within a month of the Canonical Exam)
- All Postulants should have had some supervised ministry experience in a parish, either during the discernment process or before (can be outside of ACNA). Reports for this experience include:
  - Internship/Ministry Experience Reflection
  - Internship/Ministry Experience Report
- Postulant writes and submits the Local Mission Reflection
- Postulant submits Seminary transcripts and/or Middler (or otherwise) Evaluation
- Postulant writes an updated Spiritual Autobiography, focusing on personal growth and the Lord's work in the individual's life during Postulancy (as needed)
- Postulant submits CPE Supervisor's Report (for those called to be priests)
- Postulant's rector submits a Letter of Recommendation for Ordination to the Diaconate, and Vestry submits Recommendation for Ordination to the Diaconate.

- Postulant confirms the date of the Canonical Exam with Bishop's Office.
- Canonical Exam is conducted.
- Postulant meets with the Bishop within 2 weeks to discuss next steps. If approved, he or she is now considered a Candidate for ordination to the diaconate.

#### **IV. CANDIDACY PHASE: PREPARING FOR ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE**

- Candidate continues writing Ember Day letters.
- Fulfilment of other requirements by the Bishop or COM, as applicable.
- Candidate attends Pre-Ordination Retreat (scheduled by the diocesan office).

**Ordinations to the diaconate are normally held twice a year, in June and January.** The pre-ordination retreat is often held on the Wednesday before the service.

If the individual is pursuing ordination to the priesthood, he or she will continue in the process.

#### **TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE: PREPARING FOR A LIFE-LONG MINISTRY OF SERVICE**

- Candidate continues writing Ember Day letters.
- 6-12 month "Internship" that includes
  - Relationship with a mentor
  - Participation in clergy trainings and gatherings, as offered
  - Continued writing of Ember Day letters
- Fulfilment of requirements by the Bishop, or COM, as applicable.
- Deacon requests a letter of recommendation from "internship" mentors and/or rectors.
- Deacon writes and submits a reflection on how diaconal servanthood is expressed in ministry as a priest (submitted within 2 months of presbyteral ordination).
- Deacon contacts the Bishop's Office to schedule a meeting with the Bishop.
- Conversation with the Bishop regarding a continued sense of call to priesthood. If approved, the Bishop approves the deacon as Candidate for ordination to the priesthood.
- Office of the Bishop arranges/confirms ordination particulars with the Candidate and parish.
- Candidate attends Pre-Ordination Retreat (scheduled by the diocesan office).

**Ordinations to the presbyterate are held as needed, throughout the year. They may be held either alongside of diaconal ordinations or separately in the candidate's parish.** The pre-ordination retreat is often held on the Wednesday before the service.

# Checklist for Those Seeking Ordination from Another Tradition (in which they were ordained or appointed)

## I. EXPLORATION PHASE

- Individual writes
  - An Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
  - Description of discernment and preparation for the previous ordination/ministry appointment
  - Essay comparing tradition in which he or she was ordained with Anglicanism
- Rector's Careful Inquiry is conducted
- Bishop's Office receives:
  - Rector's Careful Inquiry Report
  - Application for Holy Orders
  - Essay on Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
  - Signed Statement of Alignment with the Fundamental Documents of the Province (BCP 2019, p766 ff.)
- Explorer contacts the Bishop's Office to schedule a meeting with the Bishop (spouse/fiancé(e) attends, if applicable)
- Bishop meets with explorer and spouse/fiancé(e) (if applicable). If the Bishop approves, he will give permission to the rector to continue discernment. The Bishop will submit a recap to the rector and COM. He or she is now considered an Aspirant.

## II. ASPIRANCY

### *Congregational Discernment Phase*

- Rector forms Parish Discernment Committee (PDC).
- PDC meets with Aspirant and submits its report to the Vestry.
- Vestry reviews work of PDC and, if it concurs, submits a formal report and recommendation for the Aspirant to the Bishop.

### *Diocesan Discernment Phase*

- Bishop's Office receives from the rector:
  - Parish Discernment Committee Report
  - Rector's Letter of Recommendation
  - Vestry Recommendation for Postulancy
- Aspirant submits to the Bishop's Office:
  - Signed Waiver of Rights, Release of Claims and Indemnity Agreement
  - Signed "Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policies" (from the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh's "Policy for the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults")

- Aspirant completes FBI Fingerprinting and state-level Child Abuse History clearances, and submits clearance reports to the Bishop's Office.
- Aspirant makes a request to the Bishop's Office to initiate the following:
  - Psychological Evaluation
  - Oxford Background Report
  - MinistrySafe Certification
- Aspirant schedules and has a routine medical examination, using the Medical Exam Form
- Bishop's Office receives from the Aspirant:
  - College and/or other School Transcripts
  - Confirmation of Spiritual Direction
  - Medical Exam Form
- Aspirant contacts the Bishop's Office to schedule a meeting with the Bishop.
- Second conversation with Bishop
  - Signed statement of support from the spouse
- Decision by Bishop regarding next step:
  - Interview with COM?
  - Further preparation?
  - Canonical Exam?
- Bishop's Office arranges and confirms ordination service date
- Candidate attends Pre-Ordination Retreat (scheduled by the diocesan office).

# Checklist for Vocational Deacons Discerning Ordination to the Priesthood

*ALL documents submitted by the individual must be signed and dated.*

## I. EXPLORATION PHASE

- Individual writes an Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry (with emphasis on sense of call to the priesthood)
- Rector's Careful Inquiry is conducted
- Rector sends the Careful Inquiry to the Bishop's Office
- The Bishop's Office will send a link to the individual for the online Discernment Process Path
- Individual completes and submits:
  - Application for the Discernment of Holy Orders
  - Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
- Individual contacts the Bishop's Office to schedule a meeting with the Bishop (spouse/fiancé(e) attends, if applicable)
- Bishop meets with individual and spouse/fiancé(e) (if applicable). If the Bishop approves, he will give permission to the rector to continue discernment. The Bishop will submit a recap to the rector and COM. He or she is now considered an Aspirant.

## II. ASPIRANCY PHASE

- Bishop's Office receives from the rector:
  - Vestry Recommendation for Postulancy
  - Rector's Letter of Recommendation for Postulancy
- Aspirant seeks out and begins spiritual direction
- Bishop's Office Receives from the Aspirant:
  - Updated graduate school transcripts (as applicable)
  - Confirmation of Spiritual Direction
- Aspirant contacts the Bishop's Office to schedule a meeting with the Bishop to review background checks and evaluations
- Bishop meets with the applicant for Holy Orders. If approved, he or she may schedule the Postulancy Interview
- The Postulancy Interview is conducted with the Aspirant and COM members
- The Bishop meets with Aspirant within two weeks to discuss next steps. If approved, he or she is now considered a Postulant. The Bishop will submit his approval for Postulancy to the COM.

## III. POSTULANCY PHASE: PREPARING FOR CANDIDACY

- Postulant begins writing Ember Day letters to the Bishop

- Postulant continues spiritual direction and submits an updated Confirmation of Spiritual Direction (within a month of the Canonical Exam)
- Postulant's rector submits a Letter of Recommendation for Ordination to the Diaconate, and Vestry submits Recommendation for Ordination to the Diaconate.
- Postulant confirms the date of the Canonical Exam with Bishop's Office.
- Canonical Exam is conducted.
- Postulant meets with the Bishop within 2 weeks to discuss next steps. If approved, he or she is now considered a Candidate for ordination to the diaconate.

#### **IV. CANDIDACY PHASE: PREPARING FOR ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

- Candidate continues writing Ember Day letters.
- Fulfilment of other requirements by the Bishop or COM, as applicable.
- Candidate attends Pre-Ordination Retreat (scheduled by the diocesan office).

**Ordinations to the presbyterate are held as needed, throughout the year. They may be held either alongside of diaconal ordinations or separately in the candidate's parish.** The pre-ordination retreat is often held on the Wednesday before the service.

# Rector's Careful Inquiry Guidelines

The formal process of discerning a call to ordination begins with the Rector's Careful Inquiry, a series of 2 or 3 (or more) conversations between the rector (or a priest appointed by the rector) and the person exploring ordination. At least one of these conversations should include his or her spouse or fiancé(e), if applicable. At the end of these conversations, the rector must be comfortable about encouraging him or her to pursue further discernment. If this is the case, the rector completes the Rector's Careful Inquiry and sends it to the Bishop.

If the rector is not comfortable about proceeding, that fact and the reasons for it should be communicated to the person. **Rectors, please consult the Canon to the Ordinary if you have questions about the careful inquiry or if help is needed in determining how to proceed with the individual.** This is important and holy work. Please undertake it with a prayerful heart, and do not hesitate to ask for help from the Bishop.

Listed is what a rector should be looking for in a person who is to be recommended for ordination, all of which should be addressed in detail in the Rector's Careful Inquiry Report:

- Deep, growing personal faith that can be easily expressed and shared with others (Has he or she led anyone to Christ?)
- A clear sense of call that is connected to gifts
- Some understanding and experience of the nature of the church and the place of ordained ministry within it
- Demonstrated ability in areas of leadership, discipleship, mission and pastoral care seen through at least 100 hours of observed ministry
- Emotional and physical health – including healthy family relationships
- Intellectual and academic ability; curious, life-long learner
- If married, spouse is supportive of move to ordained ministry.

## SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR CONVERSATIONS:

### CONVERSATION 1

- Discuss who or what has shaped the explorer as a person; what things have contributed to spiritual growth; personal spiritual disciplines; growing edges in spiritual or emotional life; family and relational history.
- An initial conversation about call – what has brought this person to seek ordination: What gifts seem to fit or not to fit such a call?
- Suggest some things to think about in preparation for next conversation: Discuss the process of writing the Essay on Personal Life, Call, and Ministry.

## CONVERSATION 2

- Discussion of ordination – for example, you could look at the ordination service in the prayer book and discuss.
- Discussion of Essay on Personal Life, Call, and Ministry. What was interesting, helpful? What questions or concerns did the essay raise?
- Discuss the ways in which the shape, challenges and demands of ordained ministry fit the person’s personality, gifts and skills.
- Include spouse or fiancé(e) in this conversation and ask for his or her input. Discuss their thoughts about this direction. Discuss the expected impact of ordination on the family.
- Suggest some things to think about in preparation for next conversation.

## CONVERSATION 3

- Follow up on issues, questions, thoughts, second thoughts raised in earlier conversations.
- Have a frank conversation about insights, hopes and concerns regarding this person’s pursuit of ordination with as much specificity as possible.
- Directions about the next steps in the discernment process.

If after the third conversation, the individual is assessed as ready for further discernment, the Bishop should receive:

- Rector’s Careful Inquiry Report
- Application for Holy Orders
- Essay on Personal Life, Call and Ministry
- Signed Statement of Alignment with the Founding Documents of the ACNA

## The Parish Discernment Committee and Process

The Parish Discernment Committee (PDC) assists the rector and Vestry in discerning whether an individual is called to ordained ministry. It is the understanding of this Diocese that a call to ministry comes out of community. Often the PDC is a standing committee, appointed by the rector. In some cases, a PDC is called together on an ad hoc basis for one individual. Please reference the “Parish Discernment Committee Handbook” for instructions; questions may be directed to the Canon to the Ordinary or the COM Chair.

## Vestry Interview Guidelines

It is the Vestry of the parish, under the guidance of the rector and with the recommendation of the PDC, which recommends an individual to the Diocese for Postulancy. The Vestry must formally attest to the individual’s suitability for ordained ministry on the *Recommendation for Postulancy* form. While the exact nature of Vestry participation varies from parish to parish, the Vestry, having received the PDC Report, will meet with the individual at least once prior to making a recommendation.

- The Vestry will discuss with the individual how he or she plans to meet the cost of theological education.
- The parish is expected to pay one-third of the individual's psychological examination.
- The Vestry should confirm that the individual supports the parish financially.
- If the rector and Vestry recommend that he or she apply for Postulancy, all documents previously gathered will be forwarded to the Bishop.

## College and/or Other School Transcripts

The applicant must contact every college or graduate school attended and have an official transcript mailed directly to the Bishop’s Office.

If the applicant has not completed college, then an official high school transcript should be submitted.

## Rector’s Letter of Recommendation

Similar to a letter of recommendation that one would request for employment purposes, this document should be specific and to-the-point as to why the rector continues to support and endorse the individual’s next step of the ordination discernment process.

## Local Mission Reflection

The Postulant should write 2-3 pages, reflecting on and describing the characteristics and needs of the community in which they live and worship, how the congregation fits within the community, and what effective outreach and ministry looks like (or could look like) in that particular community. In order to complete this, the Postulant is required to interview 3-4 people known to not be practicing Christians, asking inquisitive, open-ended questions which would help one to understand what people in the community value. Examples may include (but aren't limited to):

- What does a successful life look like to you?
- Can you put these in order of importance to you:
  - Job/work
  - Family
  - Friendships
  - Health
  - Leisure/fun
  - Marriage/romantic relationships
  - Service/volunteerism
- Are there others that you would add?
- What are the things that cause you the most fear or anxiety?
- What qualities or characteristics do you most appreciate in others?
  - Least appreciate?
- What do you think are our culture's biggest strengths?
  - Greatest weaknesses?
- What do you think that our community needs most?

## Internship/Ministry Experience Reflection

The Postulant should write a reflection on their experience observing parish ministry systems (at least 100 hours). This experience may have taken place before or during the discernment process, and it may or may not be in an ACNA church.

## Internship/Ministry Experience Report

A ministry supervisor or mentor submits a written report on the Postulant's prior experience of mentored ministry. The report should include the location, the time frame, and the tasks/roles of the ministry performed by the Postulant, as well as the supervisor's evaluation of the Postulant's work.

# Spiritual Direction

Spiritual direction in its simplest form is the ministry of one member of the body of Christ to another, acting as support, companion and guide along the pilgrim's way. Traditionally the term has been used to describe the pastoral ministry of confessor and guide in the spiritual life. It might be considered a school for Christian discipleship. Together, the director and the directed seek to make sense of their earthly pilgrimage in the light of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Spiritual direction is about living into a future in Christ. Consistent with this aim, it may involve learning and appropriating classic spiritual disciplines, intended to bring a more intimate relationship with Christ, that one may know grace. It is about becoming who one truly is in Christ, being open to the Holy Spirit, in whom one lives and moves, so that one may be guided and governed even as they are sanctified.

Spiritual direction is, before all else then, about learning to listen and respond to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Together, the director and the directed seek to distinguish the still, small voice from the clamor, to recognize those thoughts that find their origin and inspiration in God, to find life in anguish and in joy, and to discern the presence of the Holy Spirit in the ordinary. Because all are made in the image and likeness of God, contemplative awareness of God will bring with it a deepening self-knowledge and understanding. And as "we, who with unveiled faces all contemplate the Lord's glory," so too we will be "transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

What passes between the director and the directee is absolutely confidential. The certification that the spiritual director must submit to the Commission on Ministry is to certify only the duration and frequency of the individual's consultations. It is not a character reference. Spiritual directors who are also members of the Commission on Ministry or otherwise involved in the assessment of individuals in the discernment process will be asked to recuse themselves from discussion and voting relating to the suitability of their directees for ministry. **The spiritual director is not his or her rector or direct supervisor.**

The ordinand is required to meet with their director on a monthly basis for the duration of the discernment process. If they are away from the Diocese to attend seminary, he or she may wish to change directors.

## FINDING A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR

The spiritual director must have completed a cohort/training in spiritual direction and currently be a part of a spiritual director's network or association. Spiritual directors do not need to be in ordained ministry, nor do they need to be members of the Anglican Church. Directors should, however, have some knowledge of and be sympathetic towards the Anglican tradition. If an individual is having difficulty finding a spiritual director, please contact the diocesan office.

# Oxford Background Check

The Diocese of Pittsburgh is strongly committed to protecting persons from sexual and professional misconduct by clergy. Before an individual comes to the COM for a Postulancy Interview, they must complete a series of background checks to determine if there is any history of criminal behavior, child abuse, financial difficulty, or serious motor vehicle offenses. Background checks are conducted or renewed on all persons prior to ordination or employment in the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The Oxford Document Management Company Inc. is contracted and paid by the Diocese to conduct and to administrate these background investigations on its behalf. Oxford Document Management is an entity created by a Certified Public Accountancy firm in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for the purpose of assisting the Anglican Church in its inquiries. Individuals should be assured that confidentiality is of utmost importance to the Diocese and is written into its contract with Oxford Document Management.

Upon completion of the discernment process on the parish level (i.e. Parish Discernment Committee Report and Vestry Recommendation must be received and reviewed by the COM), the Aspirant must contact the Bishop's Office to initiate the background report; the Oxford Document Management Company will in turn contact the individual. She or he will be asked to complete and return forms on which they identify teachers, employers, congregational leaders and bishops who have had authority over them in the ten years prior to entry into the Diocese's discernment process. **Please do not use the ADP bishop as a reference.** The communication with the individual's schools, employers, congregations and bishops will make it clear that the Diocese's inquiry is being made to comply with our diocesan policy and not because we suspect that the individual is, or has been, implicated in cases of sexual or professional misconduct. The individual will be asked to authorize, on a form provided, the release of any relevant information held by these authorities. In addition, the individual will be asked to sign a separate form authorizing the release of Credit and Motor Vehicle Records.

If any information concerning sexual misconduct or criminal conviction is reported, the information will be given directly and confidentially to the Bishop to determine what action, if any, should be taken in response to the report. If any such report is made, the individual will be given the opportunity to respond.

The initial cost of the background check is \$155 and is covered by the Diocese. There is an additional cost from Oxford for the public records fees. These costs vary by applicant and are covered by the individual. Once Oxford has invoiced the Diocese for public records fees, the diocesan office staff will invoice the individual.

# Psychological Evaluation

The COM recognizes that ordained ministry is a rigorous endeavor that exerts significant pressures on those involved. Furthermore, because ministers are in positions of visible leadership, they strongly influence the lives of the people they serve. Given these realities, the purpose of the psychological assessment is, to the extent possible, to identify any issues of coping or mental/emotional/ psychological health that could bring harm to either the minister or to those served, if left unaddressed.

After Vestry approval, the Aspirant contacts the Bishop for instructions on scheduling an appointment for the assessment. The Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh uses Anthony J. Isacco III, Ph.D., Puritan Psychological Services, to conduct the evaluation. If the individual lives outside the geographic area, they may, with the Bishop's approval, have the evaluation done by another mental health professional.

The following tests are administered by Dr. Isacco:

- Clinical Health Interview
- Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2-RF (MMPI-2-RF)
- Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF)
- Millon clinical Multiaxial Inventory-IV (MCMI-IV)
- Rotter Incomplete Sentence Blank Test
- Internet Sex Screening Test (ISST)
- Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire
- Corroborating phone call with Counselor

The evaluation lasts 4-5 hours; the report is completed and sent to the Bishop normally within 2 weeks. There is a "Feedback Session" which lasts 30-60 minutes and is in-person with the applicant and Bishop to review the test findings, recommendations, and answer questions.

The cost of the consultation by Dr. Isacco starts at \$1800 per applicant (and can be higher depending on services required). This cost is shared equally among the individual, the presenting parish, and the Diocese (\$600 apiece). Once the psychologist has invoiced the Diocese, the diocesan office staff will invoice the individual and their parish.

## Second Conversation with the Bishop: What to Expect

[Aspirant initiates by contacting Bishop's Office]

The pre-Postulancy conversations may be scheduled with the Bishop throughout the year; the conversation lasts 45-60 minutes. During the conversation, the Bishop and Aspirant will discuss questions arising from the background checks and/or the evaluations, as well as pastoral concerns that may have come up.

During this meeting, the Aspirant and Bishop will also discuss any previous oaths, vows, or promises that the Aspirant has made which may conflict with oaths and vows in the ordination rite. Aspirants who have been ordained in another tradition will need either to seek release from oaths, vows, or promises related to that ordination or to renounce anything that might be incompatible with ordination in the Anglican Church in North America (for example, oaths of conformity and obedience).

Aspirants who have been members of secret societies will need to renounce any oaths, vows, or promises made during the rituals of those societies. Ongoing involvement in a secret society is incompatible with ministry as a deacon or priest in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh.

## Interviewing with the Commission on Ministry

The Commission on Ministry (COM) is the Diocese's equivalent of the Parish Discernment Committee. The initial phase of the parish's ministry of discernment having been completed, the COM continues to review each individual's calling and helps to direct his or her training. The COM representatives are charged with the task of meeting with each individual to evaluate his or her qualifications and to make a recommendation to the Bishop regarding Postulancy. The Postulancy Interview is their initial contact with the COM. The interview team is made up of two or three members of the COM and lasts 60 – 90 minutes. He or she should come accompanied by their spouse or fiancé(e) (if applicable), the presenting rector, and a support person such as spiritual director or Vestry member.

### POSTULANCY INTERVIEW

A **Postulant** (from the Latin *postulare*, to ask) was originally one who makes a request or demand. In the Diocese of Pittsburgh, it is also used to describe the ecclesiastical status of a person who has discerned a call to ordination and received parish and diocesan endorsement. A Postulant is normally made a Candidate at some time before ordination to the diaconate as a way of indicating continued discernment about the "fitness" of the call to ordination.

Postulancy Interviews are held on an as-needed basis, throughout the year.

**It is the responsibility of the Aspirant to ensure that ALL required materials have been received four weeks before the interview.**

At the Postulancy Interview, the COM will be asking questions arising from the material in the Aspirant's file, as well as other questions that may arise in the context of the interview itself. The Aspirant will likely not have met his or her interviewers before the interview, and the interview is by its very nature probing, of necessity asking difficult questions. It is nevertheless important that the Aspirant trusts that all involved in the process are earnestly seeking God's will for their life and for the Church. Members of the COM will be looking for evidence of:

- a personal commitment to the risen Jesus of Nazareth as uniquely revealing the very nature of God;
- a mature faith, informed by and conforming to the creeds of the historic Church, which energizes him or her to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ with passion and conviction;
- a disciplined life of prayer, both personal and corporate;
- an integrated approach to life and a wholeness of personality and emotional health;
- a regard for physical, emotional, and mental health and well-being;
- a recognized and demonstrated ability to lead others toward faith in Jesus Christ through teaching, preaching and personal example;
- a recognized and demonstrated ability to disciple others in Christian leadership;
- a clear call to ordained ministry;
- a growing understanding of Holy Scripture fed by ongoing study and meditation;
- a curious and incisive intellect fed by a commitment to personal continuing education and spiritual development (i.e. the heart of a learner, is teachable);
- a sense and knowledge of the contemporary culture in which, to which, and, at times, against which the Gospel must be addressed;
- an acceptance and a celebration of the richness of the Anglican tradition;
- an ability to articulate the Gospel, clearly and succinctly.

During the next COM meeting, typically the Wednesday following the Postulancy Interview, a recommendation will be made to the Bishop; the discussion will include the entire COM. In the days to follow, the Aspirant will meet with the Bishop regarding the outcome.

# Ember Day Letters

As the 2019 ACNA BCP notes, “Ember Days are set aside for prayers for those called to Holy Orders”, and Ember Days occur on the following Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays:

- After St. Lucy’s Day (December 13)
- After the First Sunday in Lent
- After the Day of Pentecost
- After Holy Cross Day (September 14)

Because these days are meant to focus on ordination, Ember “weeks” have become a time when those in the ordination discernment process write to their bishop, detailing their “progress” in spiritual growth, theological understanding, and other aspects of their preparation for a life in Holy Orders.

These letters are a key way for the bishop to get to know the individual, to pray for them, to respond to specific concerns, and to recognize common issues that need systemic attention.

## WHAT SHOULD AN EMBER DAY LETTER INCLUDE?

The letter should include a report of the individual’s condition and growth: spiritual, intellectual, emotional/relational, vocational. Answer questions such as:

- What things are being learned?
- What is God teaching or re-teaching the individual?
- How have his or her studies affected the individual’s understanding and practice of ministry?
- How is the individual’s work in a parish or other ministry context challenging what they learn in class?
- What is the individual most excited and/or worried about?
- How is the individual’s family responding to the movement toward ordination?

These are only **suggestions!** Do not try to answer them all. The idea is to give the bishop a sense of how he or she is being shaped by God in this season, so that he may pray for them and offer such assistance as is appropriate.

**Please do not include urgent messages in Ember Day letters.** We do not want to overlook important needs. Urgent information or needs should be communicated directly to the bishop.

# Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)

The Bishop and COM believe the practical experience of ministry gained from a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) to be of great importance in the formation of those preparing for Holy Orders. The Diocese requires that every Postulant for the priesthood complete at least **400 hours of supervised learning at an accredited Clinical Pastoral Education Center**. Candidates for the vocational diaconate ordinarily do an internship in place of CPE.

## GOALS OF CPE

CPE training facilitates the development of personal and professional identity and assists the growth of professional competence as a minister, lay or ordained. Specific objectives of CPE training are to:

- Become more aware of oneself as a minister and aware of the ways that his or her ministry affects persons.
- Develop an understanding and the ability to utilize the clinical method of learning: visits, written and oral reflection, more visits.
- Develop the ability to utilize the peer group for support, confrontation, and clarification in a way which will assist the individual to integrate personal attributes into pastoral functioning.
- Use individual supervision for personal and professional growth and for developing the capacity to evaluate his or her ministry.
- Become aware of how his or her attitudes, values and assumptions affect his or her ministry.

## STRUCTURE OF A CPE UNIT

The 400 hours are often divided as follows:

- A summer intensive is a 40 hour a week commitment over 10 weeks. An extended unit may be over 4, 6 or 9 months, the same 400 hours become 25, 15, or 10 hours a week, respectively.
- Whether a summer intensive or extended unit the 400 hours are further divided as follows:
  - 90 hours of structured group time where students present case studies of their pastoral visits to the peer group and engage in other group processing activities.
  - 10 hours are in individual supervision with the CPE supervisor, spread out over the course of the unit.
  - 300 hours are for clinical pastoral visits by the student, and depending on the CPE site, didactic opportunities and reading assignments.

## IT IS THE POSTULANT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO FIND AND APPLY TO A CPE PROGRAM

There are currently two accredited CPE organizations in the Pittsburgh area, and multiple accredited on-line options. For more information and an application, individuals can access the following websites: The College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP) at [www.cpsp.org/](http://www.cpsp.org/), Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE) at [www.acpe.edu](http://www.acpe.edu), Spiritual Care Association (SCA) at <https://www.spiritualcareassociation.org/clinical-pastoral-education-cpe/>, and Clinical Pastoral Education International at <https://cpei.edu/applications/> (CPEI).

Currently the CPSP program is offered in the UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) Presbyterian and Shadyside Hospitals, and the ACPE program is offered at the Veterans Administration Hospital.

On occasion, when there are valid mitigating circumstances that inhibit a Postulant from completing a full CPE unit, the COM has approved the CPE requirement to be met through a CPE-like alternative program. This requires the Postulant to submit a written request with their proposal to the COM. The proposal should integrate the five goals of CPE listed above. The request must be approved by the COM before the Postulant further pursues this option.

# Guidelines for Canonical Examinations

One of the roles of the Commission on Ministry (COM) is to help the Bishop assess a Postulant's readiness for ordination and to help set specific learning goals in preparation for that. To this end, during an individual's time as a Postulant, he or she will be required to take a Canonical Examination. The Canonical Exam consists of two parts: a written exam, which will be read by a Canonical Examiner, and an oral interview with a Canonical Exam Team (2-3 hours). This entire process should be expected to take 4-6 weeks.

The written exam and the interview time with the Canonical Exam Team will serve to confirm that the Postulant has, and can apply, the knowledge necessary to serve as an ordained Anglican minister of the gospel. There may be some areas where further work or reading is required either before ordination to the diaconate or during the diaconal season.

There are two different exams: one specific for those who are seeking ordination to the vocational diaconate and another specific for those who are seeking ordination to the transitional diaconate, leading to ordination to the priesthood. See below for more specifics of the topics that will be discussed.

If the individual is entering into theological education, we would encourage them to make sure that his or her studies are shaped in a way that allows them to gain the knowledge and experience they will need to successfully complete their Canonical Exam. Direct any questions about the Canonical Exam, or preparation for the Exam, to the Canon to the Ordinary.

## VOCATIONAL DIACONATE

If the individual is in the discernment process and seeking ordination to the vocational diaconate, there are 5 canonical areas in which he or she will be required to show proficiency.

1. Holy Scripture
  - Biblical Content
  - The Authority of Scripture
  - Salvation History
  - The Unity of the Old and New Testaments
2. Doctrine
  - Creation and Fall
  - Anthropology
  - The Gospel
  - The Trinity
  - The Two Natures of Jesus
  - Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification
3. Liturgics
  - BCP 2019
  - Sacramental Theology
  - Church Calendar
  - Preaching
  - Liturgical Role of a Deacon
4. Service in the Church and World
  - Biblical Foundations of Diaconal Ministry
  - Pastoral Care
5. Personal Devotions and Prayer
  - Daily Office
  - Spiritual Disciplines
  - Bible Study and Devotion

## TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE AND PRIESTHOOD

If the individual is in the discernment process and seeking ordination to the transitional diaconate and the priesthood, there are 9 canonical areas in which he or she will be required to show proficiency.

1. Holy Scripture
  - Biblical Content
  - The Authority of Scripture
  - Salvation History
  - The Unity of the Old and New Testaments
2. Church History
  - The Early Church
  - The Medieval Church
  - The Reformation
  - The Modern Age
3. Anglican Church History
  - 18th Century Evangelical Revival
  - Oxford Movement
4. Doctrine
  - Creation and Fall
  - Anthropology
  - The Gospel
  - The Trinity
  - The Two Natures of Jesus
  - Justification, Sanctification, and Glorification
  - The 39 Articles of Religion and the Historic Creeds
5. Liturgics
  - BCP 2019
  - Sacramental Theology
  - Church Calendar
6. Moral Theology and Ethics
  - The 10 Commandments
  - An ability to name and pastorally address the significant ethical issues of contemporary times.
7. Ascetical Theology
  - Spiritual Disciplines
  - The Daily Office
  - Bible Study and Devotion
8. Practical Theology
  - Preaching
  - Pastoral Care
9. Mission
  - Missio Dei
  - Domestic and Overseas Mission
  - Local Community Engagement

# Transitional Diaconate

## **DIACONAL YEAR INTERNSHIP**

After diaconal ordination, the Canon to the Ordinary will help the new deacon to establish and schedule a 12-month “internship” at one or more diocesan congregations. This time will include a relationship with a mentor (usually the rector of the primary placement), ongoing spiritual direction, and participation in clergy trainings and gatherings, as offered. The deacon should continue to write Ember Day letters to the Bishop throughout this year. CPE will be completed during the Diaconal Year, if not already done. Fulfillment of requirements by the Bishop or COM, must also be completed, as applicable.

## **DIACONAL REFLECTION PAPER**

At the end of the diaconal time, the deacon will write and submit a 1-2 page reflection on how diaconal servanthood is expressed in ministry as a priest. This should be emailed to the Bishop’s Office 2 months prior to anticipated presbyteral ordination.

## **LETTER(S) OF RECOMMENDATION**

At the end of each internship placement, the deacon will request a “Letter of Recommendation for Ordination to the Presbyterate” from that rector/supervisor. The letter should include what types of ministry were assigned and observed, as well as the perceived strengths of the deacon in ministry and areas of growth. The letter should be addressed to the Bishop and emailed to the Bishop’s Office promptly after the completion of the placement.