

ORDINATION PROCESS HANDBOOK

Revised May 10, 2013

From Aspirant to Ordination



Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth

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Getting Started: From Aspirant to Parish Nominee

At any time, an individual may request a meeting with the Chair of the Commission on Ministry to discuss the process. Contact the diocesan offices for the contact information for the current Chair.

1 – Active Member

Your process begins with the understanding that you have been an active confirmed/received member of a congregation in the Diocese of Fort Worth for at least one year prior to being in conversation with the priest in charge of that congregation for a year.

2 – Attend Diocesan Discernment Conference

You will attend a discernment conference offered annually by the Diocese of Fort Worth. Contact the diocesan offices for the date of the next conference. Through this process you will discern one of three paths within the ministry of the Baptized: ministry of the laity, diaconate, or priesthood. Please note that another approved program of discernment may be chosen by the Bishop and Commission on Ministry.

3 – Conversation with Priest-in-Charge.

You will enter into conversation with your priest and other trusted friends as to the feasibility of possible discernment outcomes.

4 – Complete Applications

If, at the end of your year of conversation with your priest, you discern a call to ordained ministry, complete Postulancy Packet #1 [Priesthood] or #2 [Diaconate]. Samples are on the next page.

- a. Application for Postulancy
- b. A spiritual autobiography
- c. A vision statement.
- d. Attach a recent photograph

You keep a copy, give one copy to the priest in charge and the Parish Discernment Group, and send one copy to the diocesan office.

**You are responsible for keeping copies of all the forms, letters and materials created as part of the process from this point forward.*

At this point in the process, you will enter the phase of meeting with your Parish Discernment Group.

APPLICATIONS FOR POSTULANCY FOR THE PRIESTHOOD/DIACONATE

*** Sample Only ***

DATE OF APPLICATION:		
PERSONAL INFORMATION		
First/Middle/Last Name:		
Permanent mailing address:	Current address (if different from permanent):	
PHONE NUMBERS		
Home:	Work:	Cell:
E-mail:		
Date of birth:	Gender: <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> F	
RELIGIOUS INFORMATION		
How long have you been considering the possibility of ordained ministry?		
Sponsoring congregation and city:		

Autobiographical Sketch
<p>In your essay, consider it as a spiritual autobiography. A reflective view of your spiritual journey. Outline the major influences and events of your life, especially what has led you to your participation in this discernment process. Be sure to include information such as family and personal circumstances and your age at the time of a major event. Use no more than 5 typed pages single-spaced or 10 typed pages double-spaced. Include your name and the date at the top of each page.</p>
Vision Statement
<p>In a brief typed essay of no more than two pages double-spaced, articulate your vision of your future ministry as you discern it to be at this moment. Please answer the following questions within this essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of a priest or deacon? • What is the role of a priest and deacon and how are the two orders different? • What type of ministry do you contemplate? • What are your plans for theological education? • If applicable, how does your spouse view your vocational aspirations? • If applicable, what plans have you for your family during your education, training and ministry?

The Parish Discernment Group and You:

5 – Parish Discernment Group (PDG) Formed

The priest in charge names a Parish Discernment Group (PDG) **to be trained and commissioned by members of the Commission on Ministry.**

6 - PDG and Aspirant meet.

At designated times, you will meet with the PDG. The conversation will help you discern your next step in the ordination process. Questions will be taken from your work in the previous discernment program as well as from other areas of potential ministry. This is a wonderful and candid opportunity to help bring focus into your discernment.

7 – PDG and Priest(s) Reports completed

The PDG, Vestry, and Priest will complete their reports which will include a pledge to contribute financially to your training. A portion of Canon III.8.2 (a) for priests and Canon III 6.2(a) (1) for deacons states that the parish/vestry, “. . . (1) pledge to contribute financially to that preparation, and (2) involve itself in the Nominee’s preparation for ordination to the . . .”

8 – Recommendation to the Bishop.

The priest in charge will send the parish’s written recommendations along with the Parish Discernment Group’s report and the priest’s own report to the bishop. The date those recommendations are sent to the Bishop is the official beginning date as a nominee for the transition to postulant status.

From Nominee to Postulant

9 – Interview with Bishop

When the required paper work is completed and in the Diocesan office, **an interview with the Bishop is scheduled by the nominee.** After the interview and with the written permission of the Bishop, you may begin the following canonical requirements.

Medical and Psychological Evaluations

10 A - Background Check

Background checks are initiated by the Diocesan office, but paid **for equally by the community of faith, the individual, and the diocese**. Currently, Oxford Document Search is the outside firm used. It includes a check of personal references, past employers, a credit history, as well as a legal search. Results are held in confidence by the Bishop. In rare instances, the Chair of the Commission on Ministry may need to be informed of a particular fact. To get the background check started, on a separate email or sheet, send the following to the Diocese Office and state this is for the COM background check:

- **Your full and complete name**
- **Your current mailing address**
- **Your birth date.**

Cost is \$210.00 - \$300.00.

Aspirant pays one-third of the cost when background check is complete.

10 B - Psychological Examination

The results are held in confidence by the Bishop. The Church Pension Fund provides the appropriate forms, which can be obtained from the Diocesan Office or downloaded from the "Online Forms" sheet included in your information. With the Bishop's permission, the aspirant must make the appointment with the Pastoral Counseling and Education Center.

Dr. Wayne Albrecht
Pastoral Counseling and Education Center
4525 Lemmon Ave, Suite 200
Dallas, TX 75219
214-526-4525
albrecht-pcec@sbcglobal.net

Cost is \$450.00

Aspirant pays one third of the cost at least two weeks prior to appointment. Send check to the Diocesan office. Earmark check COM Psychological Evaluation for: Your Name. Sponsoring Congregation and Diocese each pay one-third.

Prior to interview, send \$150.00 to the Diocesan Office, ATTN Book Keeper, with the following:

- Full name, address and Parish;**
- For: Psychological Evaluation COM;**
- Date of first interview with PCEC.**

Immediately following your first interview, email Book Keeper at bookkeeper@episcopaldiocesefortworth.org affirming the date of completion. Include the above information as well as the date interview was completed.

10 C - Medical Exam

This is a general exam, done by your physician (at your expense). Results are confidential, held by the Bishop. In rare instances, the Chair of the Commission on Ministry may need to be informed of a particular fact. The Church Pension Fund provides the appropriate forms, which can be obtained from the Diocesan Office or on the "Online Forms" sheet included in your information.

Medical and Psychological forms

**Formatted for Word forms are available from the Diocesan Office. They can also be obtained online from the Church Pension Fund. The following must be completed.

Life History
Authorization for Release
Required Medical Examination

Behavioral Screening
Psychologist Evaluation

The Commission on Ministry and You

11. – The Bishop informs the Commission on Ministry that Nominee may proceed.

Once examinations are completed and the Bishop approves nominee's visit to the Commission on Ministry, written notification will be sent to the Nominee and the Commission on Ministry.

12 – Meet with Commission on Ministry

Once you have completed all of the requirements above, it is time to meet with the COM. During a series of meetings, time will be spent going over your application and helping further your discernment.

13 – Commission on Ministry Recommendation

After the COM interviews, a recommendation will be sent to the Bishop, who will then notify you in writing of your canonical status.

14 – Nominee Accepted

If you are accepted by the Bishop as a postulant, preparation for education and formation begins.

Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and may initiate the formal preparation for ordination. Postulancy involves continued exploration of and decision about the Postulant's call to the Priesthood. Canon III.8.3.

15 – A COM Liaison will be appointed to each new postulant.

When you have received that person's contact information, try to touch base with them on a regular basis. Feel free to ask him or her any questions related to your process.

It is important for the postulant to be aware of all the steps in the Ordination Process. ***Please read this book carefully.*** There are requirements for every next step. When in doubt, contact the chair of the Commission on Ministry. If you are not sure who that is, contact the Diocesan Office for his or her contact information.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS – ASPIRANT TO POSTULANCY

From Aspirant to Nominee

1. The aspirant will be an active member of a congregation in the Diocese of Ft. Worth for at least one year.
2. The aspirant will attend the *Diocesan Discernment Conference*. Christian Ministry is primarily an action in the Name of Christ; something done in response to discerning God's will. Some ministry demands immediate action. Other ministry requires special training, and sometimes, ordination. The aspirant must prayerfully discern whether or not his or her ministry requires ordination in order to be fully realized.
3. The aspirant discusses discernment with the priest in charge of the congregation.
4. Aspirants who discern a call to ordained ministry complete the following forms which can be obtained from the diocesan office. Aspirant, PDG, Diocesan Office, and Commission on Ministry each get one copy.
 - a. application for Postulancy,
 - b. spiritual autobiography and
 - c. vision statement.
5. The priest in charge names a Parish Discernment Group (PDG) to be trained and commissioned by members of the Commission on Ministry.
6. PDG and aspirant meet.
7. PDG and priest in charge complete their reports, which include a pledge to contribute financially to the person's training.
8. The priest in charge sends the parish's written nomination/recommendation to the bishop. The next phase officially begins with the Parish's nomination.

From Nominee to Postulant

9. Nominee schedules an appointment with and meets the bishop.
10. Nominees approved by the bishop to continue the process will be sent written permission by the Bishop to complete the following documents required by the Church Pension Group. Appropriate diocesan administrator will be notified. Cost will be shared equally among the nominee, the sponsoring parish, and the diocese.
 - a. Background check
 - b. Initial psychological review
 - c. Physical examination
11. Once examinations are completed and the Bishop approves nominee's visit to the Commission on Ministry, written notification will be sent to the Nominee and the Commission on Ministry.
12. Nominee has series of meetings with Commission on Ministry.
13. The Commission on Ministry sends recommendations to the Bishop, who will then notify the nominee of canonical status.
14. Nominees accepted as postulants are notified in writing by the Bishop. It is time to make preparations for education, formation, and future discernment.

From Postulancy to Candidacy **The Episcopal Diocese of Ft. Worth**

Bishop's Notification of Postulancy

Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and may initiate the formal preparation for ordination. Postulancy involves continued exploration of and decision about the Postulant's call to the Priesthood. Canon III.8.3.

The Bishop shall inform in writing the following persons of the fact and date of admission to Postulancy: the Postulant, the member of the Clergy having oversight of the Postulant, the Standing Committee, the Commission on Ministry, and the Dean of the Seminary where the Postulant is attending or plans to attend. The Commission on Ministry shall assign a member to be a liaison to the Postulant/Candidate in order to facilitate communication between the two.

Program of Preparation

The Postulant for Priesthood shall enroll and attend a program of preparation for ordination at an institution approved by the Bishop, the Commission on Ministry, and the Standing Committee.

Approved seminaries and/or other educational institutions will provide opportunities to study in the following canonical areas: The Holy Scriptures; Church History, including the Ecumenical Movement; Christian Theology, including Missionary Theology and Missiology; Christian Ethics and Moral Theology; Studies in contemporary society, including racial and minority groups; Liturgics and Church Music; and Theory and practice of ministry. A program of Anglican/Episcopal formation must be included.

Prior to ordination to the Priesthood, the individual will have completed an approved program of **Clinical Pastoral Education** as well as *supervised* **Field Education** in other than his or her sponsoring parish.

The Postulant for Diaconate, often referred to as Vocational Diaconate, will enroll and attend a program of preparation that fosters the formation to fulfill the vocation of a Deacon. As of July 2012, this program is **The Iona School for Ministry** in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. <http://www.epicenter.org/iona-school-for-ministry/> They will be prepared to demonstrate basic competence in these five general areas:

The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church; Diakonia and the diaconate; Human awareness and understanding; Spiritual development and discipline; and Practical training and experience.

The Iona School for Ministry is **NOT approved for training for the priesthood** in the Diocese of Fort Worth.

In addition, all Postulants shall have training regarding the following: (1) prevention of sexual misconduct; (2) civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse; (3) the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, particularly Title IV thereof; and (4) the Church's teaching on racism.

Ember Letters

Each Postulant shall communicate with the Bishop by letter four times a year, in the Ember Weeks. The Ember Weeks are traditionally observed on the Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays after the First Sunday in Lent, the Day of Pentecost, Holy Cross Day, and December 13 (BCP 18).

Postulants and Candidates for the diaconate, transitional diaconate or priesthood are required by canon law to report to their Bishop in writing at each of these seasons. Your letters might include references to the following.

- The content of your studies.
- Exciting ideas or people you have encountered
- The nature of your prayer life.
- Joys and challenges of Family & Community life.

Reflect on what the experiences you encounter mean for you. How have they affected you? Were they helpful or challenging? Any struggles with personal beliefs? It is important for you to know and to explain your own spiritual journey.

A One Page Letter is sufficient. Be succinct. Don't ramble. If you use e-mail, make your letter look like one that you would send through the mail: Your name and address in the upper right (unless you have your own letterhead), the current date in the upper left. Underneath the date is the inside address for the bishop:

Date

**Your name
Address
Address**

**The Rt. Rev (complete name)
Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth,
4301 Meadowbrook Drive
Forth Worth, TX, 76103.**

Dear Bishop ____,

At the end of your letter include a closing (Sincerely, Faithfully, etc.) and type your name. If you send a hard copy, be sure you sign it.

If you send your letter via e-mail, check with the Diocesan office for the correct address.

From Parish Nomination to Ordination

Priesthood: The minimum time frame from date of parish nomination to ordination to the Priesthood is 18 months. For those called to the Priesthood, a person may be ordained a “Transitional” Deacon during these eighteen months. However, a person called to the Priesthood must be a “Transitional” Deacon for at least six months.

Diaconate: The minimum time frame from date of parish nomination to ordination to the Diaconate is 18 months. Those called to the Diaconate have sometimes been referred to as “Vocational” Deacons.

Candidacy

Candidacy is a time of education and formation in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate or Priesthood. It is established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the congregation or other community of faith. A person desiring to be considered as a Candidate for ordination shall apply to the Bishop. The application for Candidacy will include:

- (1) the date of admission to Postulancy, and
 - (2) a letter of support from the Postulant’s congregation signed by the Vestry and Rector, and
 - (3) transcripts or record of academic formation.
- The Bishop will notify the Commission on Ministry that the Postulant’s application is complete.
 - The Postulant shall be interviewed by the Commission on Ministry at this point; the COM shall then send a statement to the Bishop attesting to the continuing formation of the Postulant.
 - The Postulant shall then be interviewed by the Standing Committee which shall, after the interview, review all pertinent documentation and send a written letter of approval of candidacy to the Bishop.
 - The Bishop may admit the Postulant as a Candidate for ordination to the Diaconate, Transitional Diaconate, and/or Priesthood.
 - The Bishop shall communicate the status to the applicant, the Member of the Clergy exercising oversight of the congregation, the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the Dean of the Seminary the Candidate may be attending.
 - The Bishop shall record the Candidate’s name and the date of admission in a register kept for that purpose.

The Seminary or other programs of formation shall provide for, monitor, and report on the academic performance and personal qualifications of the Postulant/Candidate at least once a year or as requested by the Bishop and/or Commission on Ministry.

Ordination to Priesthood

Canon III.8.7. Ordination to the Priesthood

(a) A person may be ordained Priest:

- (1) after at least six months since ordination as a Deacon under this Canon and eighteen months from the time of acceptance of nomination by the Nominee as provided in III.8.2(b), and
- (2) upon attainment of at least twenty-four years of age, and
- (3) if the medical evaluation, psychological evaluation, and background check have taken place or been updated within thirty-six months prior to ordination as a Priest” (III.8.7 – pp. 81-2).

A lifetime calling to the Priesthood means the person desires to fulfill the Priestly Charge found in the Ordination Liturgy beginning on page 525 of the Book of Common Prayer. Here is a summary.

Now you are called to work as a pastor, priest, and teacher, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church. As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts.

You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God's forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God's blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.

In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.

Before ordination to the Priesthood, the Candidate must apply to be ordained as a **Transitional Deacon**. The Candidate will provide the Bishop with the following.

- Application for ordination to the Transitional Diaconate
- A letter of support from the Candidate's congregation signed by the Vestry and Rector.
- Written evidence of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy
- Certification of formal education in the subjects required by the Canons
- A certificate from the Commission on Ministry recommending such ordination
- The Standing Committee may request a meeting with the Candidate prior to certification.

The General Ordination Exam (GOE) will be required for those seeking Priesthood. The Diocesan Bishop will determine the appropriateness of the GOE result.

Upon receipt of above, the Standing Committee, a majority of all members consenting, shall certify that canonical requirements have been met, etc, as in Canon III.8.6 (d).

- Persons seeking ordination to the Priesthood must serve as a Transitional Deacon at least 6 months.

Before Ordination to the Priesthood [See Canon III 8.7 (a) & (b)]

The Bishop shall obtain in writing and provide to the Standing Committee the following.

- Application requesting ordination to the Priesthood including dates of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy and ordination as a Transitional Deacon
- Letter of Support from the Deacon's congregation signed by the Vestry and Rector
- Certification of completion from seminary or other program of preparation
- Commission on Ministry attests to successful completion of program of formation. (Ordination exams within the Diocesan structure)
- Proof that the Transitional Deacon has been appointed to a Cure within this Church.
[See Canon III 8.7 (e)]

Upon receipt of above, Standing Committee consents and certifies.

Ordination to the Diaconate (sometimes referred to as the Vocational Diaconate)

A lifetime calling to the Diaconate means the person desires to fulfill the Diaconal Charge found in the Ordination Liturgy beginning on page 537 of the Book of Common Prayer. Here is a summary.

God now calls you to a special ministry of servant hood directly under your bishop. In the Name of Jesus Christ, you are to serve all people particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely. As a deacon in the Church, you are to study the Holy Scriptures, to seek nourishment from them, and to model your life upon them. You are to make Christ and his redemptive love known, by your word and example to those among whom you live, and work, and worship.

You are to interpret to the Church the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world. You are to assist the bishop and priests in public worship and in the ministration of God's Word and Sacraments, and you are to carry out other duties assigned to you from time to time.

At all times, your life and teaching are to show Christ's people that in serving the helpless they are serving Christ himself.

Ordination to the Diaconate shall not occur any earlier than eighteen months from the time of acceptance of nomination by the Nominee as provided in Canon III. A person must be at least 24 years old before ordination to the Diaconate. Background check, psychological and medical evaluations must be completed no more than 36 months prior to ordination as a Deacon.

The Candidate will provide the Bishop with the following.

- Application for ordination to the Diaconate
- A letter of support from the Candidate's congregation signed by the Vestry and Rector
- Written evidence of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy
- Certification of formal education in the subjects required by the Canons
- A certificate from the Commission on Ministry recommending such ordination
- Consent and Certification by the Standing Committee

Upon receipt of above, the Standing Committee shall certify that canonical requirements have been met.

***2013 Commission on Ministry
Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth***

Melanie Barbarito, Chair

*Fred Barber
ClayOla Gitane
Sharla Marks
Diane Snow*

*David Brockman
Cynthia Hill
Tracie Middleton
Judy Upham*

*Richard Cabes
Slavin Manning
Susan Nanna
Joel Walker*

The Right Reverend Rayford B. High., Provisional Bishop