

DISCERNMENT LEADING TO ORDINATION TO PRIESTHOOD

1. Introduction

A. The priest

According to the Catechism, the work of the presbyter or priest is "To minister to the people committed to his [or her] care by the Bishop; to lead them in the worship of God and to preach his Word; to baptize; to celebrate the holy Communion; and to pronounce Absolution and Blessing in God's name" (BCP p. 554). The ordination rite furthers this saying that the priest is "to work as a pastor, priest, and teacher, together with [his or her] bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take [his or her] share in the councils of the Church" (BAS p. 646)

B. Discernment leading to ordination

The Bishop is the primary agent in the discernment of a call to ordained ministry. The following process is designed to assist the Bishop in making decisions regarding postulancy and candidacy. Since a call to ordained ministry normally develops in the context of the parish, discernment begins in the parish and is to be based upon an already discernable ministry.

C. Guarantee of ordination

The process of preparation, education and training for the priesthood is extensive. The discernment process is essential to the goal of ordination and unique to each individual. The final decision to ordain belongs to the Bishop in consultation with and as advised by all involved in the discernment of a potential candidate. There is no guarantee of ordination prior to reaching the status of candidate. Ordination depends also on the availability of an appointment (license) to a specific ministry. The normal standard of education for the priesthood is the completion of a Master of Divinity degree program. It is the expectation of the Bishop that there will be episcopal input on the choice of a theological institution.

D. Responsibility for process

- i. Authorization and Release. Potential candidates submit the "Authorization and Release" early in the process enabling the request for information in the discernment process.
- ii. Records and files. All files and information requested is the property of the potential candidate in accordance with the Diocesan Privacy Policy. All files are kept confidential at the office of the Bishop and used for the purpose of the discernment process.
- iii. Initiative. It is the responsibility of the potential candidate to maintain the momentum of the steps of the discernment process. Applications for status,

required forms and documentation and the completion of study requirements will set the pace for movement toward the goal of ordination but at no time restrict the Bishop in his permission or agreement with outcomes.

2. Prerequisites for Inquirers

The potential candidate for ordination to the priesthood:

- Has been a confirmed member of the Anglican Church for at least three years.
- Has been an active member of the parish for at least one year.
- Clearly demonstrates:
 - Experience in reading scripture and leading public worship
 - Basic knowledge of Scripture and Creeds
 - Reasonable communication skills
 - A capacity for administration
 - Sympathy and empathy
 - Appropriate spiritual maturity
 - A call to priesthood discernable by the individual and the Church.

3. Expanded Checklist - Discernment Leading to Ordination to the Priesthood

A. Inquirer to Aspirant

i. Initial meeting with parish incumbent

The inquirer meets with the parish rector, priest-in-charge or interim to discuss possibilities and the sense of call. The incumbent should discuss the ministry options within the Church and clarify questions concerning processes of discernment, educational options and formation requirements of the Diocese.

ii. Parish discernment process

a. Incumbent initiates Parish Discernment Committee (PDC)

If the incumbent believes there is a call requiring testing, he or she initiates the formation of the Parish Discernment Committee according to the outline in "[Directive 7.1 The Parish Discernment Committee.](#)"

Membership on this committee is important and should be determined and appointed in consultation with the inquirer. The PDC meets first with the territorial Archdeacon who assists the Committee with orientation and the outlining of the task ahead.

b. PDC meets with the Archdeacon

The Archdeacon assures that the required materials are available, negotiates a time for the first meeting which confirms that the Committee clearly understands the process and its importance. Committee leadership roles are decided upon at the first meeting. The work of the Committee is

as a much an educational endeavour for the Parish as it is a ministry to and for the inquirer. Committee members should become familiar with the parish discernment process materials in advance to make opportunities for clarification possible during the meeting with the Archdeacon.

- c. PDC meets in sessions with the inquirer

As outlined in the "[7.1 The Parish Discernment Committee](#)," the Committee meets as specified using the session outlines provided.

- d. PDC meets and prepares report

The PDC meets without the inquirer present to compare notes and prepare the report as outlined. Committee members may be assigned specific parts of the report to prepare in advance and seek consensus of the other members.

- e. PDC meets with the inquirer to review report

The final meeting of the PDC with the inquirer is an opportunity to present the report and review the process with the inquirer. The Committee should not feel compelled to alter the report following this meeting but should be able to provide truthful justification for its findings. The report becomes the property of the inquirer at the end of the parish discernment process and will be submitted to the Bishop for reference.

- f. PDC makes a request to the parish corporation for Parish Commendation and Nomination to Holy Orders.

- iii. Inquirer submits to the Bishop:

- a. Application for status as Aspirant
- b. Parish Discernment Committee report
- c. Parish Commendation and Nomination for Holy Orders

The Application for aspirant status makes a request for a meeting with the Bishop. With the Application, the Report of the Parish Discernment Committee, and the Parish Commendation and Nomination in the hands of the Bishop, a meeting with the Bishop will be scheduled.

- iv. Inquirer meets with the Bishop

- v. Bishop grants permission by letter of status as aspirant

The Bishop grants aspirant status for the inquirer or offers advice as to other steps that might be taken prior to granting status. Inquirers should not be discouraged should remedial recommendations be made. The discernment

process is a testing, sorting out, and affirmation of call both individual and in community. Early recognition of the possibility of a valid call to ministry is essential in discernment leading to ordination.

B. Aspirant to Postulant

- i. Aspirant submits “Authorization and Release” to Bishop.
- ii. Vocational Chaplains appoint a “Chaplain to the aspirant” and assure that the aspirant has necessary forms and outlines for required documentation.
- iii. Aspirant begins to prepare and collect necessary required documents:
 - a. Resumé (using prescribed format)
 - b. Certificates of Baptism and Confirmation
 - c. Essay outlining the aspirant’s sense of call, devotional life, current ministry and financial plans for educational requirements
 - d. Security and background check
 - e. Medical examination with “Medical Declaration and Report”
 - f. Credit check
 - g. Academic transcript(s) (unofficial)
 - h. Commendation of incumbent or priest

Should the result of the PDC process be a recommendation leading to ordination to priesthood, the priest in the inquirer’s parish provides a letter of commendation including the following:

- 1. The length of time the individual has been known and a description of associations with the individual.*
- 2. A description of the role the individual has played in the life of the parish or congregation.*
- 3. The particular gifts and characteristics the individual possesses which make him/her particularly suited for the ordained ministry.*
- 4. Any limitations or concerns of which they are aware which might hinder the individual in the exercise of ordained ministry.*
- 5. Whether referees and members of the PDC would be prepared to accept the individual for service as an ordained person in the parish or congregation which they attend, given proper preparation for ordained ministry.*
- 6. Any further advice or counsel to the Bishop.*

- iv. When all documentation has been submitted, a first interview with representatives of the Vocational Chaplains will be scheduled. The interviewers submit a report to the Bishop.
- v. Aspirant meets with Bishop to review the report of the Vocational Chaplains.

- vi. Bishop confirms advice re education and next steps with the aspirant by letter
 - a. Aspirant completes psychological examination and report scheduled through the Bishop's Office or the vocational chaplains.
 - b. Aspirant makes "Application for Postulancy" to Bishop.
 - c. At the recommendation of the Bishop, aspirant attends the provincial Advisory Committee on Postulants for Ordination (ACPO) conference usually held in the spring of each year. Following the report of ACPO the Bishop may request a meeting with the aspirant.
 - d. Aspirant receives confirmation of status as postulant from the Bishop (or direction or advice on re-application for postulancy).

- vii. In accordance with House of Bishop's guidelines, theological students shall send to the Bishop letters of progress at least once per term during study. Regular reports from the theological institution will be expected.

- viii. During the summer between year 2 and 3 of the course of study, the postulant will complete a four-month internship in a parish, under supervision of the Vocational Chaplains and a parish priest.

C. Postulant to Candidate

The educational standard as accepted by the House of Bishops for priesthood is the Master of Divinity Degree obtained through an accredited theological school or college.

- i. Upon completion of the required degree requirements, summer internship, and CPE the postulant meets with representatives of the Vocational Chaplains to review completion of requirements, discuss learnings, ministry opportunities and expectations.

- ii. The postulant submits an application for candidacy to the Bishop.

- iii. Bishop meets with postulant to discuss future ministry and grants candidacy status if possible.

D. Candidate to "transitional" Deacon

- i. "Si Quis" read and completed by parish and submitted
- ii. "Letters Testimonial" (three) are completed and submitted
- iii. Memorandum regarding understanding as (transitional) deacon signed
- iv. Ministry appointment is arranged including first year training and supervision
- iv. Details of ordination arranged by the Bishop's Office and ordination host

E. Post-ordination Training

Completion of components of post-ordination training as set by the Diocese, including but not limited to:

- Employment orientation
- Conflict management
- Practicalities of Pastoral liturgy (Funerals, Reconciliation, Ministry to the Sick)
- Practicalities of Sacramental liturgy (Marriage, Baptism, Confirmation)
- Christian Education
- Sexual Misconduct Policy Training
- Professional Conduct
- Parish Administration
- Diocesan legislation
- Preaching
- Spirituality

F. On-going Requirements

All ordained clergy are expected to attend to regular continuing education and development.

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Appendices

[House of Bishops Discernment Leading to Ordination Guidelines 1986](#)

[Discernment Process Flowchart](#)

[Discernment Leading to Priesthood Checklist](#)

[Documentation Required by Aspirants](#)

[Discernment Authorization and Release](#)

[Medical Declaration and Report](#)

[Discernment Status Applications](#)

[Memorandum of Understanding at Ordination to the \(transitional\) Diaconate](#)

From the Office of the Bishop

Si Quis

Letters Testimonial