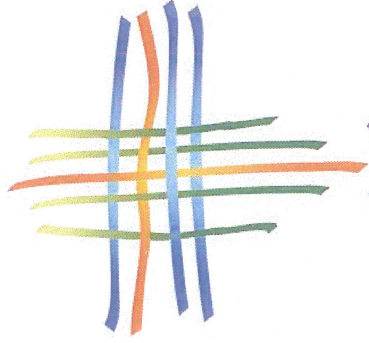


An Overview of the Discernment and Formation Process



Answering God's urgent call
TOGETHER

Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts
www.diomass.org

Ministry Discernment Conference

February 6, 2016

Applying for Holy Orders

Attend Ministry Discernment Conference
Write autobiography and ministry statement
Submit commitment form by February 28
Meet with Discernment Committee and COM liaison from March through May
Discernment Committee submits report to COM liaison for review in June
Vestry endorses application for Holy Orders
Submit application by August 1
Review Committee decides whom to invite for interviews in September
Interviews in November or December
Notifications about admission to postulancy by late December or early January
Postulancy begins officially on June 1

Training and Guidance of the Discernment Committee

Orientation Meeting with the Commission on Ministry Liaison

- Review questions that should be asked of the Inquirer
- Review guidelines for writing the report

Final meeting with the Commission on Ministry Liaison

- Review the written report before it is submitted to the Vestry

The written report is a major component in the inquirer's application for Holy Orders: the better the report, the stronger the application.
If the Committee needs extra help with the discernment process, don't hesitate to ask for it right away!

Composition, Qualifications and Work of the Discernment Committee

Four to six members of the congregation are appointed by the sponsoring priest with the Vestry's consent; one must be a Vestry member.
Their charge is to explore and challenge the individual's call to ministry.
They should reflect diverse backgrounds and have differing perspectives yet demonstrate the ability to listen and to learn from others.
They must be willing to ask hard, probing questions and record their discernment about the inquirer's call in a written report.
They must have room in their schedules for **eight** regular meetings.
Those who **cannot** serve on a discernment committee: employees of the inquirer's congregation; a current postulant or candidate for Holy Orders. Close friends and relatives of the inquirer should not be asked to serve.

Postulancy

Orientation dinner with the Bishop (January/February)
Individual consultations about formation, including leadership development training (January-June)
Background check—covered by diocese
Medical exam—covered by postulant with her or his own physician
Psychological testing—cost shared
Psychiatric evaluation—cost shared
First meetings with COM advisor and chaplain
Effective Date of Postulancy: June 1
Seminary or Diaconal Formation Program begins
Clinical Pastoral Education (priesthood)

Financial Support from Congregations for Postulants and Candidates

Cost of initial psychiatric and psychological examination shared among:

- New Postulant (\$600)
- Sponsoring Parish (\$600)
- Office of Ordained Vocations (\$800)—includes cost of background check

Ongoing Financial Support

Canon III.8.2 states that a Vestry nomination also includes a pledge to contribute financially to the applicant's preparation for ordained ministry.

One percent of the parish's annual budget is a good working guideline for determining a budget for financial support. The amount will vary according to the circumstances of the congregation and need of the postulant or candidate.

Candidacy

- Candidacy interviews in January
- Continue seminary or diaconal formation program
- Complete required canonical trainings: Safe Church, Anti-racism, Title IV
- Second supervised field education placement (diaconate and priesthood)

Every Year

- Quarterly Ember Day letters to the Bishop
- Attendance at Diocesan Convention in November
- Attendance at the Postulants and Candidates Retreat in March

Preparing for Ordination

- Complete seminary or diaconal formation program
- Complete all canonical requirements
- Examination in six areas of theological study (Holy Scripture, Church History, Theology, Ethics, Liturgy, Pastoral Theology) in January
- Ordination planning and pre-ordination retreat in the Spring
- Ordination to the Diaconate in June
- Ordination to the Priesthood in December and January

Placement

Deacons are assigned by the Archdeacons to congregations that have applied for a deacon. Deacons generally serve congregations for three years before reassignment and are not paid for their work as deacons.

Transitional deacons work with the Director of Transition Ministry to find placements in congregations. **There is no guarantee of full-time employment.** Many newly-ordained priests are bi-vocational.

By Rev. Tracie Middleton, Deacon and Ministry Support and Communications Officer from the Website of The Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth <http://episcopaldiocesefortworth.org/vestry-resources/>

