

Discerning and Responding  
to a Call to Ordained Ministry  
*The Ordination Manual*



The Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh  
2020 March

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## Bishop's Introduction Letter

“If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task” (1 Timothy 3:1, ESV).

Dear Friend in Christ,

“Is Jesus calling me to serve His Church as an ordained minister?” I’m assuming that question is why you are reading this manual. The ordination process in our Diocese is designed to help you confidently answer that question through your own prayer and self-reflection and through the affirmation of Christ’s Body. I’m excited to walk with you on this adventure of discernment.

Discernment is crucial. As our culture relates to the Church with increasing hostility and apathy, we are in one of the most challenging and exciting seasons of ministry since the time of the Apostles. “Business as usual” is impossible. In this season, the Church needs ordained leaders who are women and men of radical faith, godly character, winsome devotion, courageous compassion, and unshakeable confidence in the Gospel. We need deacons and priests who share our Core Convictions and Core Values (see following page) and who can lead individuals and congregations into gospel-centered mission, who preach a life-transforming gospel in the power of the Spirit, who live righteous and holy lives, who care for Christ’s people, and who orient their lives to God’s glory. Because it is hard to see those traits in ourselves, we depend on the Body to help us in the process of discernment.

Our discernment together will include your sense of being called by God and the confirmation of that call by the Body. The alignment of these two perspectives points powerfully towards God’s will. The process in this manual provides for both aspects of discernment.

As you clarify your sense of call, you may find the Lord working in one or both of these ways.

- The Lord may speak to you very clearly, as He did with apostles and prophets. Like Paul, the Apostle, you may have an Ananias who gives you a prophetic word. Or you may have an Isaiah or Jeremiah conversation with the Lord. Or the Lord may give you a clear leading through your intuition or imagination. You may be able to share exactly when you were called.
- The Lord may align your gifting, passion, experience, circumstances, ministry fruitfulness and the assessment of the Body to give you clear direction; like runway lights that align to direct pilots. You might be unable to describe your call as a specific experience because it seems to be how you were wired. Folks may have recruited you for ministry based on leadership gifts they observed in you. They may have encouraged you to offer your gifts to the Church. And you are moving forward in that offering, trusting that the Lord can steer a moving ship.

Regardless of how you have gotten to the place where you are pursuing further discernment, this process is designed to increase your confidence in God’s call on your life.

The role of the Body (both parish and diocese) in discernment is crucial.

- Rector: the official process begins with a series of prayerful conversations with your Rector who will help you clarify your sense of call.

- Bishop: when your Rector believes that the Lord may be leading you into ordained ministry in the Church, we will talk. Ultimately, as the Bishop, I'm the one who will make the final decision regarding ordination. So, it is important that we begin to get to know each other early on in the process and that we meet again before your time with the Commission on Ministry.
- Parish Discernment Committee: when I concur with your Rector's sense that God might be leading you towards ordination, I will send you back to the Parish for a wider and deeper discernment that focuses on character, maturity, and ministry fruitfulness.
- Commission on Ministry: when the Parish affirms that they see God's call on your life, you will meet with the Commission on Ministry. This group will review all the work done so far in order to affirm your call and to guide further preparation (academic, practical and personal) for ordained ministry.

As you go walk through this adventure of discernment, I invite you to open your heart to all that the Lord wants to do through it. My prayer is that He will use this process to marinate your heart in His love and grace, to deepen your confidence in His Gospel, to clarify your sense of His call, and to lead you into the "good works He has prepared for you beforehand" (Eph. 2:10).

Peace,

+ Jim

## **Core Convictions**

### **God Is Our Mission**

#### **Jesus Is Lord**

- Joyful Worship
- Faithful Prayer
- Prompt Obedience (to God's Word and the leading of the Spirit)
- Reconciled Relationships (personally, racially, socially, etc.)
- Charitable Assumption (the choice to assume the best in others)
- Peaceful Confidence
- Abundance Mentality
- Openness to Adventure
- Discernment Focus (rather than decision-making)
- Whole-life Stewardship

#### **The Holy Spirit Empowers Us**

- Expectation of signs and wonders
- Power of the Gospel of Grace

#### **The Church Is Essential in God's Mission in the World**

#### **We Follow Jesus in an Anglican Way**

- Gospel-centered
  - Reformation's emphasis on Scriptural authority, grace, and faith
- Trinitarian/Creedal
- Missional
  - Celtic Mission Movement's passion for God's glory and salvation of the world
- Sacramental/Liturgical
- Collaborative: locally, regionally, globally
  - Diocesan networks
  - Ecumenical cooperation
  - Global Connections

## Core Values

### Inner Dispositions

- Healthy
- Humble
- Inquisitive

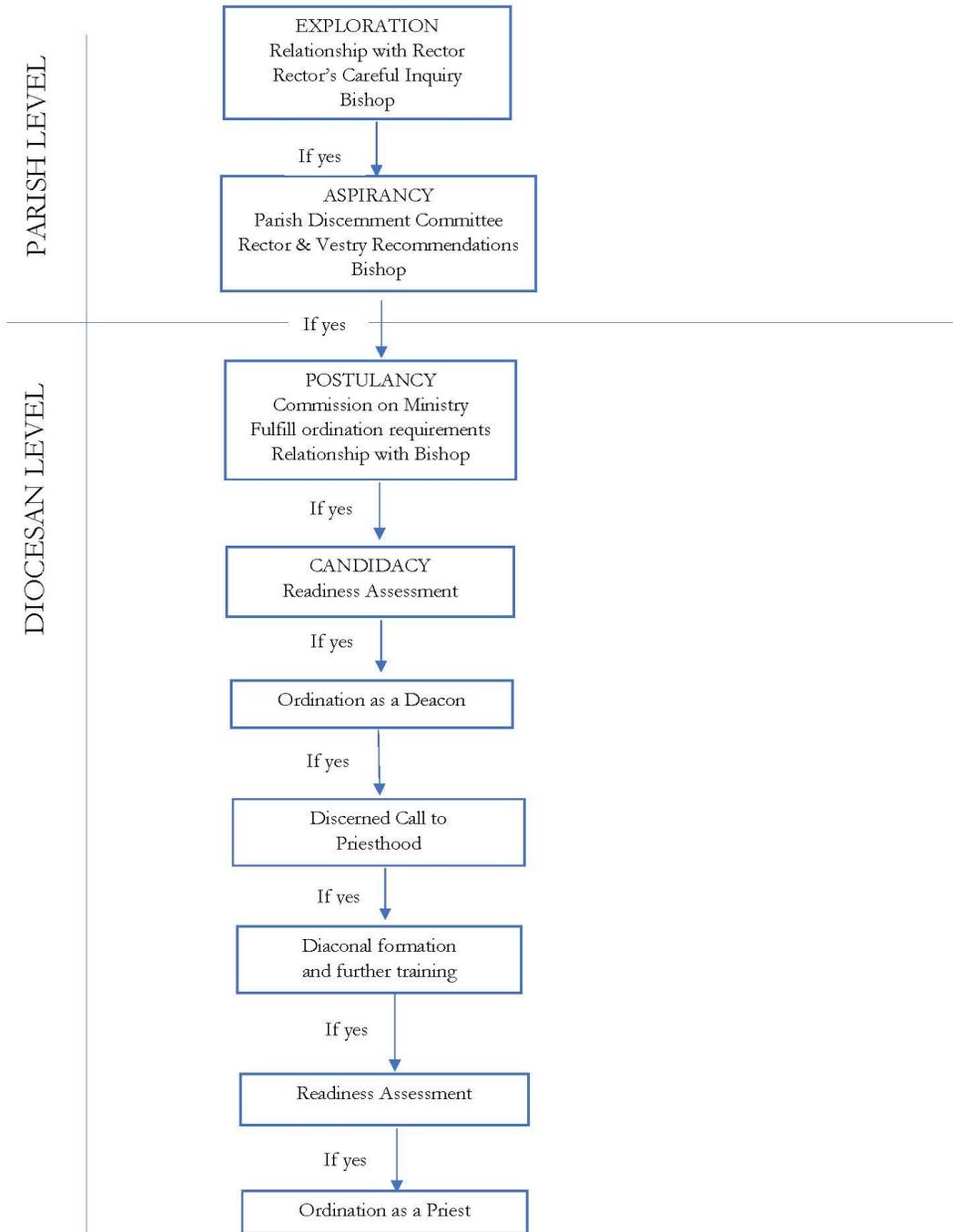
### Relational Disposition

- "High-hearted" (gracious, generous, optimistic, fun)

### Work Dispositions

- Trustworthy
- Competent
- Cooperative

## Diagram of the Ordination Process



A “no,” “not yet,” or “not sure,” at any point in this process will require more discernment, preparation and/or formation.

## **The Ordination Discernment Process: Four Phases**

The ordination 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 & 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.

~ THIS IS NOT A RACE, BUT A JOURNEY. ~

The submission of all required documents to the Bishop's Office by the applicable deadlines is ultimately the responsibility of the individual in the ordination process.

All documents are due four weeks before the scheduled interview and should include:

- Document title
- Individual's name
- Date

### **Required Forms**

The following forms are available online.

- Rector's Careful Inquiry
- Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
- Application for Holy Orders
- Statement of Alignment with the "Fundamental Documents of the Province"
- Parish Discernment Committee's Evaluation
- Vestry Recommendation for Postulancy
- Authorization to Release Information from the Psychological Health Evaluation
- Waiver of Rights, Release of Claims and Indemnity Agreement
- Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policies
- Confirmation of Spiritual Direction
- Medical Evaluation
- Vestry Recommendation for the Diaconate
- Application for Ordination to the Diaconate
- Application to the Sacred Order of Priests

## **Introduction to the Ordination 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 in the midst of the process as they seek His best for their leaders and parishes; and that aligns the ordination process with the vision, mission and guiding principles 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 Process**

The first phase of the ordination process takes place in the parish of the person exploring ordination. Because they know him or her well, it is the local community of faith that is best suited for this initial work of discernment and support. The Rector and the Parish Discernment Committee (PDC) each meet with him or her to listen, ask, and pray about a particular call. Those called to ordination are called by the whole church, not just a unique worshipping community. For this reason, the next steps of the process are carried out by the Bishop and the COM.

### **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 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.

## Checklist for Those Seeking Ordination

[Explorer Initiates]

### EXPLORATION PHASE

- Rector's Careful Inquiry
  - Conversation regarding personal testimony, spiritual maturity, sense of call and ministry experience. (Reference Pp 15-16 for clarification.)
    - Has he or she led anyone to Christ?
    - Has he or she disciplined anyone towards maturity in Christ?
    - Has he or she led a small group? Developed new leaders?
    - Does he or she have any experience in praying for the sick or with demonic activity?
  - Written reflections by individual
    - Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
  - 100 hours of observed ministry in areas of worship, discipleship, mission and pastoral care
  - Conversation about books on Anglicanism and ordained ministry, reflection on ordination services and ACNA founding documents
- Application for Holy Orders
- Bishop receives
  - Rector's Careful Inquiry
  - Application for Holy Orders
  - Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
  - Signed Statement of Alignment with the "Fundamental Documents of the Province" (BCP 2019, p766 ff.)
- Conversation with the Bishop and Ordination Chaplain; includes spouse/fiancée, if applicable

### ASPIRANCY: CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT PHASE

- Bishop gives permission to the rector to continue discernment (and submits his report). He or she is now considered an aspirant.
- Rector forms Parish Discernment Committee (PDC). Reference the Parish Discernment Committee Handbook.
- PDC meets with aspirant and submits its assessment to the vestry
- Vestry reviews work of PDC, and, if it concurs, recommends aspirant to the Bishop

## **ASPIRANCY: DIOCESAN DISCERNMENT PHASE**

- Contact the Bishop's Office for the next step(s)
- Bishop Receives:
  - Parish Discernment Committee Evaluation
  - Rector's Letter of Recommendation
  - Vestry Recommendation for Postulancy
  - Official College and/or other School Transcripts
  - Authorization to Release Information from the Psychological Health Evaluation
  - Waiver of Rights, Release of Claims and Indemnity Agreement
  - Confirmation of Spiritual Direction
  - Review Policies Regarding the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Child Abuse by Clergy, Employees, and Volunteers in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh and the Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations and Incidents and submit Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policies (p.15 of aforementioned)
- Aspirant makes a request to the Bishop's Office to initiate the following:
  - Psychological Evaluation
  - Church Planter Assessments
  - Oxford Background Report
  - Ministry Safe Certification
- Second Conversation with Bishop
  - Medical Evaluation
  - Spouse's conversation with Ordination Chaplain or pastoral team
    - Signed statement of support from the spouse
- COM Receives
  - Bishop's Interview Report
  - Aspirant's File
- Postulancy interview with COM: First Friday and/or Saturday of March & October; ALL requirements listed above **must be submitted four weeks before the actual interview**. This is the responsibility of the aspirant, see p.8.

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

- Ordination Preparation Plan for academic and practical training outlined by COM and postulant
- Write Ember Day Letters to the Bishop
- Updated Spiritual Autobiography: Focusing on personal growth and the Lord's work in the individual's life during postulancy
- Updated Rector's Letter of Recommendation
- Updated Confirmation of Spiritual Direction
- Cross-cultural mission experience reflection
- Postulant's Internship Reflection (on 100 hours of observing parish ministry systems)

- Apprenticeship Report (on 300-400 hours of mentored ministry from ministry supervisor or mentor)
- CPE Supervisor's Report (on 200-400 hours of ministry with small group and personal reflection; **for those called to the be priests**)
- Seminary transcripts; Middler [or otherwise] Evaluation
- Readiness Assessment for Ordination (January of Senior year for those in M.Div. program; or when training for Diaconate is completed)
  - Proctored Content Exam (Bible, History, Theology): Objective and Short-answer (Coffee Hour) Questions
  - Written and recorded sermon
  - Essays (written in preparation for orals)
    - A summary of the work of Christ
    - A reflection on the diaconate
    - An outline of the Gospel story and an application of its message to specific pastoral situations
  - Oral Exam
- Review of Readiness Assessment by the COM

### **CANDIDACY PHASE: PREPARING FOR ORDINATION TO DIACONATE**

- Ember Day Letters
- Vestry Recommendation for the Diaconate
- Successful completion of academic training
- Fulfilment of other requirements by the Bishop or COM
- Application for Ordination to the Diaconate
- Attend Pre-Ordination Retreat

After the submission of the above documents or the documents stated by the COM as necessary, the Candidate will be ready for ordination.

**Ordinations to the diaconate are held the second Saturday of June and December.** The pre-ordination retreat is normally held Tuesday through Thursday the week of, or the week before, the service.

### **DIACONAL TIME: PREPARING FOR A LIFE-LONG MINISTRY OF SERVICE**

#### **Individual:**

- 9-12 month "Curacy" that includes relationship with a mentor and involvement in the New Clergy Cohort
- Fulfillment of requirements by Bishop or COM (*if applicable*)
- Application to the Sacred Order of Priests
- Reflection on how servanthood is expressed in ministry as a priest
- Conversation with the Bishop regarding a continued sense of call to priesthood
- Readiness Assessment for Priesthood
- Bishop confirms ordination date

## Checklist for Those Seeking Ordination from Another Tradition

[Explorer initiates]

### EXPLORATION PHASE

- Rector's Careful Inquiry
  - Conversation regarding personal testimony, spiritual maturity, sense of call and ministry experience. (Reference pp.15-16 for clarification.)
    - Has he or she led anyone to Christ?
    - Has he or she disciplined anyone towards maturity in Christ?
    - Has he or she led a small group? Developed new leaders?
    - Does he or she have any experience in praying for the sick or with demonic activity?
  - Written reflections by Explorer
    - Essay on Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
    - Description of discernment and preparation for the previous ordination
    - Essay comparing tradition in which he or she was ordained with Anglicanism
  - 100 hours of observed ministry in areas of worship, discipleship, mission and pastoral care
  - Conversation about books on Anglicanism and ordained ministry, and reflection on ordination services and ACNA founding documents
- Application for Holy Orders
- Bishop receives
  - Rector's Careful Inquiry
  - 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.)
- Conversation with the Bishop and the Ordination Chaplain; including spouse/fiancée if applicable

### ASPIRANCY: CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT PHASE

- Bishop gives permission for the rector to continue discernment (and submits his report). He or she is now considered an aspirant.
- 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, recommends aspirant to the Bishop

### ASPIRANCY: DIOCESAN DISCERNMENT PHASE

- Contact the Bishop's Office for the next step(s)
- Bishop Receives:
  - Parish Discernment Committee Evaluation
  - Rector's Letter of Recommendation
  - Vestry Recommendation for Postulancy
  - Official College and/or other School Transcripts
  - Confirmation of Spiritual Direction
  - Authorization to Release Information from the Psychological Evaluation

- Waiver of Rights, Release of Claims and Indemnity Agreement
- Review Policies Regarding the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Child Abuse by Clergy, Employees, and Volunteers in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh and the Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations and Incidents and submit Acknowledgment of Receipt of Policies (p.15 of aforementioned)
- Make a request to the Bishop's Office to initiate the following:
  - Psychological Evaluation
  - Church Planter Assessments
  - Oxford Background Report
  - Ministry Safe Certification
- Second Conversation with Bishop
  - Medical Evaluation
  - Spouse's conversation with Ordination Chaplain or Pastoral Team
    - Signed statement of support from the spouse
- Decision by Bishop regarding next step:
  - Interview with COM?
  - Further preparation?
  - Diaconal readiness assessment?
- Bishop confirms ordination date

## 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 Bishop 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 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 ordination

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, which is required before postulancy.

### 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, if written. What was interesting, helpful? What questions or concerns does 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 and 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 ordination process.

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

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

## 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; you may also direct your questions to the COM Chair.

Four areas to be explored:

1. Call
2. Character
3. Maturity
4. Ministry Experience

The parish discernment process is a series of conversations (normally 2-4) between an individual seeking ordination and a PDC to assess the individual's readiness in the four areas listed above. Usually, the rector or other ordained parish priests do not participate in the conversations with the PDC; although sometimes the rector is present for the first one. If he or she is married, the spouse attends the sessions; they are required to attend at least one. When the PDC has finished meeting with the aspirant, it writes a report that is presented to the vestry.

A suggested format for conversations with the aspirant is as follows:

- Session 1: Questions about the aspirant's background, personal faith, life and calling, health of the marriage
- Session 2: Questions about his or her ministry and gifts
- Session 3: Follow up on questions or issues raised in first two conversations
- Session 4: Summary conversation, once again focused on things raised in earlier conversations

It is important for these conversations not to be rushed, allowing both the individual and committee members enough time to ask and answer questions prayerfully and thoughtfully. Additional sessions may be added at the discretion of committee members or the individual.

## 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.

**Postulancy interviews are normally held on the first Friday and / or Saturday of March and October; the Bishop must receive ALL required materials four weeks before the postulancy interview.**

## Professional Conduct

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

Before an individual comes before the COM for a postulancy interview, he or she must complete a background report by Oxford Document Management Co.; Ministry Safe Sexual Awareness Training (a diocesan sponsored training program on misconduct prevention training); review Policies Regarding the Prevention of Sexual Misconduct and Child Abuse by Clergy, Employees, and Volunteers in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh and the Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations and Incidents and submit the Acknowledgement of Receipt (Appendix B on p.15 of the aforementioned).

## College and/or other school transcripts

The applicant must contact every college or graduate schools attended and have an official transcript **mailed directly to the Bishop.**

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

## 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 one will be "transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

What passes between the director and the directed 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 ordination process, will be asked to absent 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 journey into ministry. While they are away from the Diocese attending seminary, he or she may wish to change directors.

### Finding a Spiritual Director

Any person in ordained ministry could serve as a spiritual director. But directors do not have to be in ordained ministry, nor do they have 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 contact the Bishop for a list of suggestions.

## 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 offences. Background checks are conducted or renewed on *all* persons prior to ordination or employment into 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 acceptance as an aspirant, contact the Bishop's Office to initiate the background report; the Oxford Document Management 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 ordination process. **Please do not use Bishop Hobby 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.

## 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 is \$900 per applicant, this is shared among the individual, the presenting parish, and the Diocese. Once the psychologist has invoiced the Diocese they will, in return, invoice the individual and their parish.

## **Second Conversation with the Bishop: What to Expect**

[Individual initiates by contacting Bishop's Office]

The Bishop schedules conversations throughout the year; the conversation lasts between 60 and 90 minutes. During the conversation, the Bishop will discuss Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) options, introduce the individual to the Core Reading List and handle pastoral concerns that may have come up. This second conversation may occur at the psychological evaluation follow up appointment; after the Bishop has received his or her evaluation.

During their second meeting, the Aspirant and Bishop will 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. On-going involvement in a secret society is incompatible with ministry as a deacon or priest in the Anglican Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Before scheduling this conversation, the Aspirant's file should include the following.

From the initial conversation:

- Rector's Careful Inquiry
- Essay of Personal Life, Call, and Ministry
- Application for Holy Orders
- Signed Statement of Alignment with the "Fundamental Declarations of the Province"

Now including the following:

- Parish Discernment Committee Report
- Rector's Letter of Recommendation
- Vestry Recommendation for Postulancy
- Official College and/or other School Transcripts
- Authorization to Release Information from the Psychological Evaluation
- Waiver of Rights, Release of Claims and Indemnity Agreement
- Psychological Evaluation
- Church Planter Assessments
- Confirmation of Spiritual Direction
- Oxford Background Final Report
- Acknowledgement of Receipts of Policies
- Ministry Safe Sexual Awareness Training Certification

## Interviewing with the Commission on Ministry

The 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 his or her calling and helps to direct their 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 (if applicable), the presenting rector, and a PDC or vestry member representative.

### Postulancy Interview

A **postulant** (from the Latin *postulare*, to ask) was originally one who makes a request or demand. In the Pittsburgh Diocese, 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 typically take place twice a year on the first Friday and Saturday of March and October. It is the responsibility of the aspirant to assure 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.

During the COM meeting following the interviews, typically the following Wednesday, a recommendation will be made to the Bishop; the discussion will include the entire COM. In the days to follow, he or she will receive written notice of the outcome.

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.

## What are Ember Days? Why Ember Day Letters?

Ember Days are four groups of days, set apart for special prayer and fasting, particularly focused on the ordination of clergy. The Ember Days are the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday following (1) Holy Cross Day (September 14); (2) the Feast of St. Lucy (December 13); (3) the first Sunday in Lent; and (4) Pentecost (Whitsunday).

Because these days are meant to focus on ordination, Ember “weeks” have become a time when those in the ordination 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 keyway 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. Once an individual is granted postulancy, the letters are required.

### 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 you or re-teaching you?
- How have your 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

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 process and development of personal and professional identity and to assist 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 one's 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 one to integrate personal attributes into pastoral functioning.
- Use individual supervision for personal and professional growth and for developing the capacity to evaluate one's ministry.
- Become aware of how one's attitudes, values and assumptions affect one's 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. For more information and an application, individuals should visit the website of The College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy (CPSP), at <http://www.cpsp.org/> and the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE), at [www.acpe.edu](http://www.acpe.edu). Currently the CPSP program is offered in the UPMC (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center) Hospitals and Senior Care Communities, 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 to meet the CPE requirement 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.

## **The Readiness Assessment (Academic Preparation and Canonical Exam Guidelines)**

### **CRITERIA FOR DISCERNING READINESS**

- **Relationship with God:** prayerfulness, submission, Christ-centeredness.
- **Orthodox belief:** joyful embrace of “the faith once delivered to the saints.”
- **Godly character:** clear signs of the Spirit’s fruit (Gal. 5:22 ff.).
- **Ministry capability:** a track record of gift-based ministry and of ability to learn the skills and disciplines required in leading God’s people.

### **TOOLS FOR ASSESSMENT**

- Bible Content Exam
- Integrative Essay re Missio Dei
- Homily - text and audio recording
- Bulletin for a future Sunday Eucharistic liturgy
- Reflection on Anglican Essentials and Distinctives
- Brief telling of the story of the Gospel and the application of the message of the Gospel in three different situations, listed below. Identify the need/problem and what aspect of the Good News speaks to it.
  - 1) A person who comes to confess a "horrible sin" which the person believes puts them beyond the reach of God's forgiveness.
  - 2) A person who has moved around their whole life and never found a real sense of belonging in a community and who is intrigued by the church's sense of being family.
  - 3) A person who is struggling with addiction.
- Transcript from an approved Anglican seminary showing adequate completion of a master's degree. In lieu of such a transcript, a postulant will be expected to take written canonicals in the 9 canonical areas and readiness categories.
- References from Clergy, Academic, Peer, and "Parishioner."

“To be an Anglican, then, is not to embrace a distinct version of Christianity, but a distinct way of being a “Mere Christian,” at the same time evangelical, apostolic, catholic, reformed, and Spirit-filled.”

[ACNA Theological Statement](#)