

DIOCESE OF GEORGIA

Discernment & Ordination Handbook



The Feast of St. Joseph 2021

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Proclaim the good news of God in Christ.
Seek and serve Christ in all persons.
Love your neighbor as yourself.
Strive for justice and peace.
Respect the dignity of every human being.

Preface

You are called by God to be a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No one doubts this call and the church stands ready to support you in that call to ministry. It is a call common to all baptized Christians.

For most of the baptized, this means a life of living out the faith in a vocation outside the church, while also being involved in the life of the congregation. The work of ministry is carried out day and night by nurses, teachers, police officers, fire fighters, real estate agents, bank tellers, soldiers and on and on. Each person living into these vocations and doing their work to the glory of God is involved in a vital part of the work of the Kingdom of God.

Some are called to specific ministries in the Body of Christ, which the church admits by a process of formation for ministry followed by ordination. If you are reading this, then we assume you are a person aspiring to the ordained ministry of the Episcopal Church. This handbook outlines the process by which the call to ordained ministry is supported and endorsed, discerned and formed within the framework of the national canons in the Diocese of Georgia. Discernment refers to the initial stages of self-examination, conversation, and guided reflection by which you and the Church consider whether you are called to ordained or lay ministry. This includes being nominated to the Bishop by your sponsoring congregation and clergy, followed by a period of discernment during which the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry explore with you the call to ordained ministry. Formation refers to the subsequent stages of academic and spiritual preparation for ordained ministry, which begin after the Bishop, with the advice of the Commission on Ministry, grants Postulancy (this and other terms are defined in the glossary in the back of this handbook).

This process of discernment and formation may at times seem arduous, but can also include experiences of excitement and wonder. We welcome you into this journey. Describing any process may imply a rather formidable or inflexible structure. Even though the ordination process has a structure, we are aware that you are an individual with your own experience, needs, and gifts. As you read through these guidelines, know that our prayers are with you — and we ask that your prayers be with us, as well.

As Aspirants for ordination, we seek persons who

1. Have a living, growing, and healthy faith relationship with God, known and experienced through a commitment to and relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. Have leadership ability. This is the ability to get others to move; to listen and respond to one another, to the needs and opportunities, to God; political common sense; to occupy that role in a parish's life in such a way that the parish is moved toward greater health and

faithfulness; capable of exercising leadership and independence while maintaining a healthy sense of accountability to the community and its structures of authority.

3. Have emotional maturity. This includes an awareness of your own emotions; accepting responsibility for how you act on your emotions; an understanding of the impact of your behavior on others; self-confidence; self-control; the ability to stay with something while being flexible; the capacity to negotiate with others; the ability to be part of the group as well as to stand apart from the group.
4. Have spiritual maturity. This means being a person of Apostolic Faith, including maintaining a spiritual discipline that includes a Rule of Life.
5. Have competence in many of the skills related to effective ordained ministry. This includes leading liturgy, preaching, spiritual and pastoral guidance, Christian formation, etc. In each there are skills related to designing as well as implementing.
6. Are loyal to The Episcopal Church while at the same time being able to be reflective and constructively critical.
7. Have a healthy passion for the mission of the Church embracing the whole Gospel in its liturgical, evangelical, social, formational, pastoral, and prophetic dimensions.
8. Ordained persons are called to be “wholesome examples to the flock of Christ.” Applicants for the ordained ministry must exhibit the teachings and virtues of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their personal lives. Family life must be characterized by faithfulness, monogamy, life-long commitment, mutual caring, and affection.

THE PATH OF DISCERNMENT

MEETING WITH A PRIEST

While the process begins with the Holy Spirit speaking to the heart of one called to ministry, the path of discernment begins when one who feels this call speaks to a priest. The priest may be the Vicar or Rector of the church where you worship, or the chaplain at your college or some other priest. The priest should then meet with you over time to discuss and test this call through a period of discernment. For those not yet confirmed in The Episcopal Church, confirmation should take place early during this time, as one must be a confirmed Episcopal communicant for at least a year in order to apply for postulancy. During this time, a Rule of Life is developed (see appendix IV).

Aspirants should be members of the congregation for at least one year, preferably two or more before being presented for discernment toward holy orders. We strongly recommend that the Sponsoring Priest will have known the Aspirant for at least one year and will have been discussing vocational call issues with the Aspirant for at least three months (preferably many more) before sending the Aspirant to the Bishop and then potentially, to the Convocational Discernment Committee (CDC).

During these vocational discussions, the Sponsoring Priest and Aspirant will focus on the Aspirant's depth of awareness of his/her spiritual journey and call to the ordained ministry. He/she will incorporate into the discussion the Bishop's outline of clergy characteristics, gifts, and expectations (see above list of characteristics of aspirants). The Bishop expects each Sponsoring Priest will send to him only those aspirants that she or he believes might have a call to and gifts for ordained ministry. Sometimes the most loving, compassionate word to a person is "no."

MEETING WITH THE BISHOP

If the Sponsoring Priest discerns to send an Aspirant forth, she/he will make sure the Aspirant has a copy of these guidelines and will instruct the Aspirant to begin writing an autobiography, which he or she will distribute to the Bishop (see Appendix II for the autobiographical guidelines). The Sponsoring Priest is required to inform the Vestry that he/she is sending a member of the parish to the Bishop for further discernment.

Before the Bishop meets with an Aspirant, the following should be sent to the Bishop:

1. The Sponsoring Priest's confidential letter endorsing the Aspirant that articulates what he or she knows and believes about the Aspirant's call to ordained ministry and wherein issues for further discernment are identified. This letter will address in some detail the eight-point expectations of clergy found in the preface to this Handbook, stating how the aspirant exemplifies these, and naming any areas for growth with regard these expectations;
2. A letter of introduction from the Aspirant to the Bishop, setting forth the understanding of his or her call to ordination; and
3. The Aspirant's autobiography (see Appendix II for the autobiographical guidelines).

After the Bishop meets with the Aspirant, he will decide if the Aspirant should go forward with the CDC. It is important that the work of the CDC be completed and the report sent to the Bishop promptly.

WHEN THE ANSWER IS "NO"

One brief word is in order at this point on answers other than affirming a call to ordained ministry. This handbook moves through all the steps from the first discussion with a priest through one's ordination as Deacon or Priest. In itself, this could make it seem that if one follows the steps in this book, one will be ordained. True discernment, however, will not always result in the answer first anticipated. As we enter this discernment with you, your Diocese is convinced that all Christians are called to ministry. We are therefore certain that you are so called. In this process, we are looking to discern with you, whether the call is toward ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church. No matter how this process goes for you, the prayer of the Bishop and Canons, the Convocational Discernment Committee and those serving on the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee is that we can use the process outlined in this handbook to help you discover what God has for you. For more than 99 out of 100 Episcopalians, the answer is to serve God as a Lay person. The process is not designed to determine who is the best Christian or who God has called to serve in ministry. The process is the Diocese of Georgia's way of working with you to determine if your

specific call is to ordained ministry. The answer may well be “No,” but this does not mean that those involved in your discernment do not believe that you are called to ministry, rather that they can not affirm a call to ordained ministry, in many cases because you have already found the right niche as a lay persons in ministry and it is that which needs affirmation. So, please continue this process as true discernment and listen to how God is speaking to your heart, knowing that not all called to ministry are called to ordination. And even if God is calling you to ordained ministry, that ministry may be different than you now imagine it. Only by staying open to how the Holy Spirit is speaking can we seek to discern God’s will together.

CONVOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

There are five sessions required for this process. Each CDC is free to work with an aspirant on how these are scheduled. They need not be at separate times. Multiple sessions can be combined into one meeting as seems wise to the CDC.

Session # 1: Introduction & General Exploration

At least one week prior to this meeting, the Sponsoring Priest or Diocesan Registrar of the Ordination Process will have sent the Aspirant’s autobiography (not to exceed 10 typewritten, double-spaced pages) to be read by each Committee member before this meeting.

Present: Aspirant, & Committee Members

The Convener will chair this and all subsequent CDC meetings, and will name the Recorder (preferably the Convener has made this assignment before this first meeting). Confidentiality is defined and emphasized at the beginning.

1. The convener will establish the format for the meeting:
 - a. Members introduce themselves, stating briefly their names and other information such as occupation, years in their parish, family members, and a humorous fact that no one knows about them.
 - b. Going around a second time, all members will talk about their definition of Christian ministry and their thoughts and feelings about the CDC process.
2. Review future meeting schedules, identify the topic for each, and review together the questions that will direct and focus the discussions.
3. Drawing on your reading of the Aspirant’s autobiographical statement, explore the following questions or other questions raised by the information you have gathered.
 - a. What pressures have there been in this person’s life?
 - b. What pressures are currently in this person’s life?
 - c. How does he/she respond to pressure?
 - d. Describe the areas of primary involvement for this person: work, home, church, and community.
 - e. Describe this person’s current ministries in those areas.
 - f. How does he/she tie together the secular and sacred realms of life?

The CDC now begins to explore specific questions. CAUTION: Because of the probing nature of the questions, we recommend that all CDC members share their own views concerning these questions as much as possible to avoid an inquisitorial posture. The CDC is discerning the Aspirant's fitness for ordination, but at the same time much can be learned from shared viewpoints. While opinions are being expressed and discernments are being made, a sense of Christian love and learning is vital if these meetings are to be productive for all concerned.

1. What is the Aspirant's understanding of Christian ministry?
 - a. How does he or she view the ministry of the whole Body of Christ?
 - b. How does he or she differentiate between the ministries of laity and ordained?
 - c. How does he or she understand the ordained person's role in the Church?

2. What further growth is needed? Does the Aspirant have the capacity to achieve such growth?
 - a. What is his or her academic record?
 - b. How open is he or she to questioning, self-exploration, and testing his or her views?
 - c. What evidence do you see of his/her continuing commitment to learning and intellectual growth?
 - d. In what ways do you envision and experience the Aspirant as one who is growing in the Christian faith?

Session # 2: Leadership Ability, Emotional Health, & Emotional Intelligence

Present: Aspirant, Committee

1. Leadership ability – This is the ability to get others to take action. It's the elder role in the community. It's an interdependent sacramental role. It's about building up the Body and nurturing the gifts of the people of God in such a manner that they may be exercised in harmony. It's the ability to engage in a complex set of behaviors, including:
- a. Gathering the community, focusing and shaping its life;
 - b. Facilitate others in listening and responding to one another and to the movement of the Holy Spirit in their common life;
 - c. Having “political” common sense for working with different people; and,
 - d. Having an adequate longer-range perspective, and clarity about the clergy role in a parish's life, so that the parish is moved toward greater health and faithfulness.

Given the above:

- a. What is this person's capacity for leadership?
 - b. Does he or she show initiative, self-confidence, enthusiasm?
 - c. Can he or she motivate others?
 - d. Is he or she aware of and at ease with a variety of leadership styles and able to use them as the situation indicates?
 - e. How does he or she function in interpersonal relationships?
 - f. How comfortable is he or she with being a person in whom authority rests? Is he/she ready to claim and use that authority appropriately?
2. Emotional Maturity -Having an awareness of his/her own emotions and accepting responsibility for how he/she acts on those emotions by:

- a. An understanding of the impact of his/her behavior on others;
- b. Self-confidence;
- c. Self-control;
- d. The ability to stay with something while being flexible;
- e. The capacity to negotiate with others; and
- f. The ability to be part of the group as well as to stand apart from the group.

Given the above:

- a. How aware is he or she of his or her own feelings?
- b. How well does he or she express strong positive and negative feelings?
- c. When dealing with his or her feelings, do physical gestures and movements (body language) match the words spoken?
- d. Are there any indications that he or she aspires to the ordained ministry as a way of solving his/her personal problems?
- e. Does he/she have a level of maturity and ability to adapt to different situations that is commensurate with his/her age level?

Session # 3: Spiritual Maturity, Competence, & Priestliness

Present: Aspirant, Committee

1. **Spiritual Maturity** – Clergy need to be people of Apostolic Faith. That would usually include behaviors such as:
 - a. Maintaining a spiritual discipline that is grounded in Anglican spirituality and accepting responsibility for his/her spiritual life;
 - b. Productive connection with a parish church and the Episcopal Church; and
 - c. “an inquiring and discerning heart, the courage to will and to persevere, a spirit to know and to love you, and the gift of joy and wonder in all your works” and signs of “humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance born of love, eagerness to maintain unity in the bond of peace, truthfulness mediated in love, mutual kindness, tenderheartedness and forgiveness”; “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Given the above:

- a. How does she/he maintain her/his current spiritual practice and Rule of Life?
- b. How does she/he connect theologically the local church with the wider Diocese and The Episcopal Church?
- c. Is there evidence of the “fruit of the Spirit” in her/his life (see #c above)?
- d. Competence (for Aspirants to the Priesthood only) Will she/he seem able to develop competence in presiding at liturgy, preaching, spiritual and pastoral guidance, and Christian formation? Each requires skills in designing and planning as well as implementing.

2. **Priestliness** (*for Aspirants to the Priesthood only*)

“Being with God with the people on your heart” – Archbishop Michael Ramsey

- a. Is this a person of prayer, one who can be with God?

- b. Is this a person who is with people rather than above them or separated from them?
- c. Is this a person who helps others enter into the experience of God?
- d. Does he/she have a sacramental way of being and engaging. That is:
 - the person's spiritual rhythm moves between altar and daily life gracefully;
 - the person sees the "inward and spiritual grace" within the life of individuals and the community;
 - the person's being and doing is grounded in personal and corporate prayer;
 - she/he is accessible and human, involved with people and their concerns; and,
 - she/he is able to be in a liturgical role and also able to pray the liturgy.
- e. Does he/she accept being what the Reverend Urban Holmes called a "God symbol" and also being a person? We seek one who grows into his/her uniqueness and while also accepting that she/he exists as a sacramental being for others.
- f. Is this a person of and for the church. Does he/she love the church. This is best when it is expressed as a critical love with an awareness of the church's faults and problems, but finally is still a lover.
- g. Is this person comfortable living with the required tension found in the Priesthood in our tradition? Being both: (1) person and symbol, (2) minister of word and sacrament (3) sacrificial and pastoral, (4) represents Christ and the Church, (5) baptized and yet set apart, (6) of the local parish and the larger church, (7) able to be fully part of the parish community and able to maintain an engaged detachment.

Session # 4: Exploration of call to and giftedness for ordained ministry

Present: Aspirant, Spouse (if applicable), Committee

1. What evidence do you have that God has called and gifted this person for ordained ministry?
2. Is the Aspirant confusing a calling to ordination with a calling to Christian service?
3. Are his/her primary interests and gifts congruent with the basic function of an ordained minister and the needs of the Diocese of Georgia?
4. Are his/her abilities commensurate with the demands of the ordained ministry?
5. Can you envision this person as an ordained leader in the Church?

During this meeting, at the discretion of the CDC, the committee may wish to meet privately with the spouse (if applicable) of the Aspirant to understand better the Aspirant's call and gifts and the support the spouse for his/her call to ordination.

Session # 5: Recommendation for proceeding/not proceeding in the ordination process

Present: Committee only for the first hour, then including the Aspirant in the second hour

First Hour: The committee reviews its previous work and makes a final decision about whether to recommend that the Aspirant proceed in the ordination process. Using the recorder's documentation and members' input, prepare a written summary for Bishop & Aspirant, using the format provided.

Second Hour: Present verbal feedback of the CDC's work to the Aspirant. If the committee recommends the Aspirant to the Bishop and COM for further formation toward ordination, then a written report will accompany the Sponsoring Priest's letter of endorsement to the Bishop. The report form is found in Appendix III.

If the Aspirant is being redirected, the CDC should assist the Aspirant in recognizing and valuing a challenging, satisfying form of ministry in his/her other areas of primary involvement, i.e., work, family, community, or congregation, rather than in the ordained ministry.

NOMINATION

If the CDC affirms a call to ordained ministry, together with the sponsoring priest and vestry, an aspirant becomes a nominee. Nominees are to request an application packet from the Diocesan Office. This application will include psychological and physical examinations as well as a background check as required by canons, and this information will be seen only by the Bishop, Canon to the Ordinary, Bishop's Executive Assistant, and the members of the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee. In all cases this, and all other information gathered, is treated with the utmost confidentiality.

The nominee sends the completed application packet (absent the above mentioned more confidential reports) to the diocesan office. We will distribute this material to members of the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee, keeping strict controls on the material.

The Canon to the Ordinary and Staff Secretary will work with nominees to get all of the information requested above in place for the three-times a year meeting of the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee. These groups meet in different churches around the diocese, generally in January, May and October. You will be scheduled for a meeting with each group in turn. These meetings usually last 30 minutes with each committee. You should be accompanied by your sponsoring priest and by your spouse (fiancé or fiancée), if you are married or engaged. The members of the two groups will have read your materials, prayed for the nominees by name and will be ready to discern with nominees further based on the input they have received from both the nominee and the CDC. After the nominee meets with each group, the sponsoring priest is asked to remain behind for a brief interview without the nominee present.

Each group will meet with the nominees separately and then will meet together to reach a decision on whether to admit a nominee to postulancy. Following the meeting, the chair of the Commission on Ministry or the Bishop will contact you about the meeting to let you know of the decision.

POSTULANCY, CANDIDACY AND FORMATION

Postulants (and Candidates) for ordination must write an Ember Day Letter to the Bishop, four times a year. This letter will inform the Bishop of your progress in formation for ministry as well as your personal and spiritual development since the last Ember Day Letter. Church calendars list the Ember Days on the appropriate dates. More information on these days is found in the glossary.

It is expected that a postulant for Holy Orders will step away from most previous lay involvements in the parish. This includes, but is not limited to, resigning from the vestry. This does not, however, include serving in the liturgy, which should continue, including the addition of preaching from time to time at the request of the clergy. If you have questions about what lay roles should change and which should remain, be in touch with the Bishop by email or letter for clarification.

Postulancy begins the time of formation for ministry whether through the Deacon's School for Ministry (for those called to that order of ministry) or through seminary or a diocesan formation process for those called to priesthood. This period of postulancy continues the time of testing the call and discernment.

As one is reaching the halfway point of the formation process, a postulant is to contact the diocesan office to apply for candidacy. Then, when the formation process is ending, a candidate contacts the diocesan office to apply for ordination.

DIOCESAN SUPPORT FOR SEMINARIANS

Those who are preparing for the priesthood through a distance learning program of a seminary or through traditional full-time enrollment in a seminary, will receive a small amount financial support from the Diocese, based on your individual need. Each seminarian should annually send the Canon for Administration a letter describing your total cost per year of study, and describing declaring your need for assistance., and the Diocese will fund need according to the formula below based on the annual cost of your program of study:

\$20,000 +	=	\$2,000 support
\$10,000 - \$ 20,000 +	=	\$1,000 support
\$5,000 – \$10,000 +	=	\$ 500 support

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

All studying for ordination to the priesthood must take the Conflict Management Workshop offered each January at Honey Creek before Ordination. This workshop offers special attention to the “use of self” in a conflict. The goal is to increase your awareness of what is happening to you in a conflict, help you identify your blind spots, and increase the range of options you have for effective behavior. There will be opportunities for self-assessment and feedback from other participants and the trainers. In addition to the emphasis on the “use of self” you will learn conflict management skills, methods, and theory. Each Workshop is limited to 24 participants.

Those in the Diaconal tract are encouraged, but not required to attend the Conference. The Staff Secretary will contact you with information about this week-long workshop. It is recommended that seminarians not wait until their Senior year to attend this workshop as it typically falls just after the General Ordination Exams.

GENERAL ORDINATION EXAMINATION

All those studying for the priesthood are expected to take the GOEs given each January by the General Board of Examining Chaplains of The Episcopal Church. The GOE consists of seven three-hour essay questions over five days. Candidates usually answer two questions per day with at least a half-day break usually in the middle.

The exam covers the seven areas of proficiency required by the Canons of The Episcopal Church: 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.

The Diocese will nominate you for the examination the January before you are to be ordained as a transitional deacon. The Diocese will pay the \$500 examination fee.

ORDINATION

As you get ready to plan for the ordination service, be in contact with the diocesan office. The staff will assist you in setting the date on the Bishop's calendar, planning the liturgy, sending out the announcements, and attending to any other details.

It is preferable for the ordinand to make a spiritual retreat prior to the ordination service. In every case, spiritual as well as practical preparation is part of getting ready for your ordination.

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light:
Look favorably on your whole Church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery;
by the effectual working of your providence,
carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation;
let the whole world see and know
that things which were being cast down are being raised up,
and things which had grown old are being made new,
and that all things are being brought to their perfection
by him through whom all things were made,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

GLOSSARY

Aspirant

One who aspires to Holy Orders is called an aspirant. This term then refers to all in a process of discerning whether God is calling him or her to ordained ministry. The time of being an aspirant is a time of prayer and listening to God in community as well as in one's own heart. If an aspirant receives the approval of the Convocation Discernment Committee, sponsoring priest and vestry, the aspirant becomes a nominee and is thus nominated to the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee for their approval as a postulant.

Candidate

Halfway through the process of formation for ministry, a Postulant for Holy Orders meets again with the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee of the Diocese to request admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders. This move signals an end to the initial testing phase of postulancy, but still does not assure one will be ordained.

Canons

As referred to in this document, the word "Canons" refers to the rules of The Episcopal Church and of The Episcopal Diocese of Georgia that have been formally adopted through the conventions of those bodies. The section of the Canons of the Episcopal Church relevant to discernment and ordination are found online here: http://www.episcopalarchives.org/pdf/CnC/CandC_2009pp65-121.pdf

The word Canon is used in other ecclesiastical senses as well. The word is from the Greek meaning "rule" or "measuring rod." From this we get the "Canon of Scripture" which means those texts recognized by the church as scripture. We also derive the term above for the rules of the church. An assistant to a bishop is also a Canon, whose role comes with some canonical authority.

Commission on Ministry

A group of lay persons, deacons and priests who serve at the Bishop's request to assist in, as the Canons state, "the design and oversight of the ongoing process for recruitment, discernment, formation for ministry, and assessment of readiness therefore." Commission members serve long term, often for more than a decade. This provides continuity to the process and balances the Standing Committee whose members rotate of at a rate of one third per year.

Convocational Discernment Committee

The Diocese of Georgia is divided into six regional areas called convocations. These are the Albany, Augusta, Central, Savannah, Southeast, and Southwest Convocations. Each Convocation has a priest in charge of the convocation, known as a Dean. The Deans work with the Bishop to appointment committees made up of clergy and laity who meet with aspirants for Holy Orders using the process outlined in this handbook to assist in discerning whether the person is called to ordained ministry in The Episcopal Church. This Committee makes its report to the Bishop who forwards the report to the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee.

Deacon

These are ordained ministers who have been called to take the church to the world and bringing the needs of the world into the church. The Diaconate is a full and complete order of ministry. Historically, those called to be priests, serve first as deacons for a time of a year before being

ordained to the priesthood. This time as a Transitional Deacon may be shortened to no less than six months by the Bishop with the consent of the Standing Committee.

Ember Day Letters

Postulants and Candidates for ordination must write a four letters each year on the Ember Days to inform the Bishop of progress in formation for ministry as well as personal and spiritual development since the last Ember Day Letter. Church calendars list the Ember Days on the appropriate dates, in the Ember Weeks which follow (1) Holy Cross Day on September 14; (2) the Feast of St. Lucy on December 13; (3) the first Sunday in Lent; and (4) Pentecost. The current practice is to compute the Ember Days directly as the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following the third Sunday of Advent, the first Sunday of Lent, Pentecost Sunday, and the third Sunday of September. The church is to pray for those studying for ordination on these weeks.

Postulant

This is the first formal approval of the Diocese for those seeking ordained ministry and is granted by the Bishop after approval from the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee endorse an aspirant to become a Postulant for Holy Orders. As the canons state, "Postulancy involves continued exploration of and decision about the Postulant's call."

Priest

This is an ordained minister called to serve a pastor with a ministry of Word and Sacrament, assisting the Bishop in overseeing a given congregation or ministry within the church.

Rule of Life

This is a statement concerning the spiritual disciplines one will practice routinely. Since each human experience is different, each Rule will be particular to a person. Every Rule, however, should have as its foundation the three-fold tradition of Sunday Eucharist, Daily Prayer, and Regular Action that reaches out beyond ourselves to a suffering world. Bishop Benhase's thoughts on and expectations for a Rule of Life are found in Appendix II.

Spiritual Director

These are persons trained in assisting another on their spiritual journey. While, if a priest, the person may serve as a confessor, the two roles are not synonymous. A spiritual director is someone you meet with regularly to reflect on how God has been present in your life and where God is leading you. A spiritual director can also help you attend to your rule of life, making changes as needed and can teach you spiritual practices, such as centering prayer. All persons in the discernment process should find a spiritual director and work with this person on creating and maintaining a rule of life.

Standing Committee

This group of lay and ordained persons is elected by the diocesan convention as a check against the authority of the Bishop. The group is required to consent to some actions of the diocese including approving ordinations and authorizing indebtedness.

TIMELINE

Meet with a priest (at least 3 months)

Meet with the Bishop.

Prior to this meeting, the two must be completed:

- Spiritual Autobiography sent to the Bishop
- Confidential letter to the bishop from the sponsoring priest

Meet with the Convocational Discernment Committee

- Recommendation from CDC

Meet with the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee

Prior to this meeting, the following must be completed:

- Complete diocesan application packet sent to diocesan office and committee members
- Psychological evaluation
- Physical Exam by physician
- Background checks complete

Postulancy

Following Postulancy, remember:

- Ember Day letters four times each year (see Glossary)
- Find and begin seeing a Spiritual Director
- Apply for candidacy halfway through studies
- Recommendation from Deacon's School for Ministry (Deacons)
- Recommendation from seminary (Priests)

Approval for Candidacy

This occurs halfway through your studies at a meeting with the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee.

Candidacy

- Ember Day letters continue
- Apply for ordination at the appropriate time

During your studies for ordination, remember you will need:

- Safeguarding God's Children (Deacons and Priest)
- Conflict Management Training (Priests)
- CPE or other comparable approved program (Priests)
- Meet all competency area requirements (Deacons)
- Take General Ordination Examination (Priests)

Approval for Ordination to the Diaconate (Transitional or Vocational Deacons)

- Mentor assigned

Approval for Ordination to the Priesthood (For those so called)

APPENDIX I

Section of the Catechism on The Ministry from the Book of Common Prayer

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

Q. What is the ministry of a bishop?

A. The ministry of a bishop is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the whole Church; to proclaim the Word of God; to act in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and to ordain others to continue Christ's ministry.

Q. What is the ministry of a priest or presbyter?

A. The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

Q. What is the ministry of a deacon?

A. The ministry of a deacon is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Q. What is the duty of all Christians?

A. The duty of all Christians is to follow Christ; to come together week by week for corporate worship; and to work, pray, and give for the spread of the kingdom of God.

APPENDIX II

Autobiography

The autobiography is designed to help Aspirants explore their life histories in the context of their spiritual journeys, their sense of call to ordained ministry and a description of the process of discernment by which he or she has been identified for ordination (*III.6.2(b)(5) and III.8.2(b)(5)*). Aspirants write about their developmental life in the areas of family, personal relationships, school, career, and social and leisure activities. Ideally, They will produce succinct, substantive overviews of their lives, which will aid the CDC, and eventually the COM, to explore their sense of a call in greater depth. **The autobiography should not exceed ten typewritten, double-spaced pages.**

Their challenge is to describe their faith pilgrimages, woven into a developmental history that includes a chronology from early childhood to the present. They might want to break the history into sections, such as early childhood with summary background on parents and siblings and the quality of home life, school years through high school, post high school years and college years, and adult life experiences to the present. In each section, they should note significant life events that influenced both their spiritual and developmental lives. They should be prepared to articulate how these events influenced their sense of a call to the ordained ministry.

Since this is a lot to ask in ten pages, they might want to write as full an autobiography as possible in the first draft, and then edit the draft to the prescribed length, seeking help if desired from a trusted friend for review. Because of the volume of materials that the Diocese collects and reviews for each Aspirant, **succinctness is highly valued.** In-depth interviews will be a part of later phases of the process, so greater details can be presented at those times.

APPENDIX III

REPORT OF THE CONVOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

Use as much space as needed to respond to all eight sections

1. Describe the current ministries of this person.
2. In what ways do you see/experience him/her as one who is growing in the Christian faith?
3. What further growth is needed, and does this person have the capacity to achieve such growth?
4. Evaluate this person's leadership ability.
5. Evaluate this person's emotional health and emotional intelligence.
6. Evaluate this person's spiritual maturity and competence for ordained ministry.
7. How is she/he already exhibiting "Priestliness?" (for those discerning the priesthood only)
8. In what ways does this person envision his/her diaconate/priesthood?

Recommend for continued Lay Ministry? Recommend to COM & Bishop? Recommend other alternatives at this time?

Number of Concurrences

Number of Dissents

Number of Abstentions Additional Comments:

Signatures of all CDC members:

APPENDIX IV

Rule of Life

What are the basic elements to a Rule of Life? It needs to be:

- 1) *Specific*: should be able to say clearly what we are doing;
- 2) *Realistic*: should be something we can really manage;
- 3) *Sacrificial*: should demand something of us;
- 4) *Flexible*: should be appropriate to our life's experience; and,
- 5) *Responsive*: should reflect the claims of Christ and His Church.

What does a Rule of Life need to contain? It should contain:

- 1) *Prayer* – participating in the Sunday Eucharist with my sisters and brother in Christ and praying daily at the same time either alone or with someone else. This daily time must be guarded and defended or we will find excuses why we need not keep it. We can always come up with reasons why something else is more important.
- 2) *Reflection* – participating in a weekly group Bible study and a daily personal Bible study using the many resources available from the Church. This is indispensable because we will not know what we are to pray for unless we are grounded in the Word of God.
- 3) *Action* – giving attention to the people and circumstances in your life through your family, friends, work, community, and neighborhood, and, using the resources of the Church to find appropriate avenues for your action. Every day we must be intentional in doing our acts of discipleship. It may be as simple as a kind word to a co-worker who needs lifting up. But if this not on our mind and heart each day, it will pass us by. At the end of the day, we should ask ourselves: “what action did I take today that reflected the love of Jesus for someone else?”

The first list above should help us form of a Rule of Life that is easily definable and manageable, while being both responsive to the Church and a spiritual challenge to ourselves. The second list above should help us keep our Rule focused on the essentials of the Christian life (prayer, reflection, and action).