

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF GEORGIA

Discernment & Ordination Handbook



Updated February 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	3
Aspirants for Holy Orders.....	5
The Path of Discernment.....	6
Meeting with a Priest.....	6
Meeting with the Bishop.....	6
Diocesan Discernment Committee.....	6
Nomination.....	7
Ember Day Letters.....	7
Postulancy, Candidacy and Formation.....	7
Diocesan Support for Seminarians.....	8
General Ordination Examination.....	9
Ordination.....	9
After Ordination.....	9
Glossary.....	10
Timeline.....	12
Appendix I: Portion of the Catechism on Ministry.....	13
Appendix II: Guidelines for Spiritual Autobiography.....	14
Appendix III: Rule of Life.....	15
Appendix IV: Diocesan Discernment Committees.....	16
Appendix V: Diocesan Discernment Committee Report.....	20
Appendix VI: Formation for the Diaconate.....	21
Appendix VII: Academic Integrity.....	23
Appendix VIII: Ember Day Letters.....	24

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 FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN THE DISCERNMENT

In the New Testament calling or vocation usually refers to the general invitation to faith in Christ given through preaching of the gospel or to the interior work of the Holy Spirit to draw people to Christ in response to the gospel. St. Paul uses it to refer to the extraordinary commission he received immediately from Christ to be the apostle to the gentiles.

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, for this call is shared by 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 their congregation. The work of ministry is carried out day and night by nurses, teachers, police officers, attorneys, real estate agents, bank tellers, soldiers, parents, etc. Those living these vocations and doing their work to the glory of God are involved in a vital part of the work of the Kingdom of God.

While call can be used to describe the commission to Christian ministry generally, it may also refer the commission to ordained ministry in particular. Like the call to faith in Christ, the call to ordained ministry has both an external and internal aspect. Externally, ordination involves the imparting and receiving of a call to serve in holy orders. A call can also refer to the invitation from an ecclesiastical body to take up a particular post or role and to the role itself. Internally, calling refers to the prompting of the Spirit to serve as a Deacon or Priest. Historically, the church has looked for two signs of interior calling, both preserved in the ordination service. First is the absence of an impediment, preserved in the *si quis*: “if any of you know any impediment or crime because of which we should not proceed, come forward now, and make it known” (BCP 1979 p. 539; cf. pp. 514, 527). Second is the aspiration (1 Timothy 3:1) and resolve to serve God and edify his people through ordained ministry, to which the Examination (pp. 517, 531, 543) witnesses. The discernment process aims to hold these two, the external calling by the Church and the interior prompting of the Spirit, together; thus the ordinand is asked, “do you believe that you are truly called by God and his Church” (BCP 1979 p. 543; cf. pp. 517, 531).”

The Church admits those individuals who are called by God and the Church to specific ordained ministries in the Body of Christ through a process of discernment and formation for ministry. If you are reading this, then we assume you are a person aspiring to or considering a vocation in ordained ministry in Christ’s Church or a person involved in assisting in vocational discernment. This Handbook outlines the process by which the Church recognizes this good and holy aspiration and, within the framework provided by the canons of the Diocese of Georgia and the Episcopal Church, explores one’s suitability for such a vocation and helps to equip individuals for that potential path. Discernment refers to the initial stages of self-examination, conversation, and guided reflection. An Aspirant and the Church prayerfully consider whether the vocation is best lived out in ordained or lay ministry. Ordained ministry involves a conversation with one’s parish priest and nomination to the Bishop by one’s sponsoring congregation and clergy. This is followed by a period of discernment during which the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry explore with the Aspirant 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 and input from the Standing Committee, grants Postulancy (this and other terms are defined in the glossary in the back of this Handbook).

This Handbook includes information for all those involved in the discernment process: Aspirants, Postulants, Candidates, and Ordinands, as well as parish priests, vestries, Diocesan Discernment Committees, and many others. It describes all the steps from the first discussion with a priest to ordination as deacon or priest and beyond. This could make it seem that if one follows the steps in this book, one will be ordained. We cannot promise that. God's trajectory may be different from what is first envisioned, and it may not involve ordained ministry. Lay ministry may best align with one's unique gifts and aptitudes. That does not mean one has a less valuable role to play in the Church than the clergy. All who have been baptized into Christ are called to serve in Christ's Church. For the majority of Episcopalians, the call is to serve God in ministry as a lay person.

This process of discernment and formation may at times seem arduous but can also include experiences of excitement and wonder. Describing any process may imply a rather formidable or inflexible structure. Even though the process has a structure, we recognize that those in discernment and formation are individuals with unique experiences, needs, and gifts. Whatever your role in this process, as you read through these guidelines, know that you are being held in prayer.

*****A note about confidentiality: The information discussed throughout all stages of the discernment process is deeply personal. All information shared during each stage of this process is kept strictly confidential by all those involved.*****

ASPIRANTS FOR HOLY ORDERS

An Aspirant for ordination will typically demonstrate

1. a living, active, and healthy faith in the Triune God;
2. potential for leadership, specifically demonstrated through inspiring others by word and action; being a servant leader; collaborating with others toward shared goals; and adapting and growing based on feedback;
3. emotional maturity shown through possessing both an understanding of one's emotions and the emotions of others; having an awareness of how others experience one's words and actions; taking responsibility for one's own mistakes; and demonstrating empathy and vulnerability while maintaining healthy boundaries;
4. spiritual discipline, such as consistency in worshiping, praying, tithing/giving, engaging with Scripture, etc.;
5. loyalty to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of Christ as this Church has received them; and a willingness to, in accordance with the canons of this Church, obey one's bishop and other ministers in authority, while at the same time being able to be reflective and constructively critical;
6. understanding of and comfort with being both person and symbol; congruence between belief and behavior in both the public and private dimensions of life; and behavior that helps them to be a wholesome example of the teachings of Christ to the people with whom they serve.

THE PATH OF DISCERNMENT

Please refer to the Timeline on page 12 for details about some of the processes outlined in the following pages

MEETING WITH A PRIEST

The formal path of discernment begins with a series of conversations between an Aspirant and a priest. The priest may be the Priest in Charge or Rector of the church where one worships, a college chaplain, or another priest. The priest should meet with the Aspirant over time to discuss and test this possible call. The Aspirant shall have been confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church for a year before applying for postulancy.

Normatively, Aspirants shall be members of the congregation for at least one year before being presented for discernment toward holy orders. The sponsoring priest will have been discussing a sense of vocation to ordained ministry with the Aspirant for at least three months before recommending the Aspirant to the Bishop and then potentially, to a Diocesan Discernment Committee. These Committees meet in different geographic areas of the Diocese.

During these vocational discussions, the sponsoring priest and Aspirant will focus on the Aspirant's depth of awareness of their spiritual journey and call to the ordained ministry, including discussing the qualities of an Aspirant listed on page 4. If the Aspirant does not already have a rule of life, the sponsoring priest should assist the Aspirant in crafting one (see Appendix III). The Bishop expects each Sponsoring Priest will send forward only those Aspirants believed to have a calling to and gifts for ordained ministry.

MEETING WITH THE BISHOP

If the Sponsoring Priest discerns a possible call to ordination, they will make sure the Aspirant has a copy of this Discernment Handbook and will instruct the Aspirant to write a spiritual autobiography (see Appendix II for the autobiographical guidelines). The Sponsoring Priest shall inform the Vestry that they are recommending a member of the parish to the Bishop for further discernment.

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

1. The Sponsoring Priest's confidential letter endorsing the Aspirant, which articulates the priest's perception of the aspiration to ordained ministry, how the Aspirant exemplifies the characteristics of ordained ministers described in this Handbook, and any issues relevant to further discernment.
2. A letter of introduction from the Aspirant to the Bishop, describing the aspiration to ordination
3. The Aspirant's spiritual autobiography (see Appendix II for the autobiographical guidelines).

DIOCESAN DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

After receiving the above, the Bishop meets with the Aspirant and will decide if the Aspirant should go forward to meet with a Diocesan Discernment Committee. This will take place over five meetings. Guidelines for Diocesan Discernment Committees can be found in Appendix IV.

NOMINATION

If the Discernment Committee affirms a call to ordained ministry, together with the Sponsoring Priest and Vestry, an Aspirant becomes a Nominee for Postulancy. The nomination is made official by a Vestry vote

Nominees should (if they have not already) begin the spiritual practice of reading through the Bible in its entirety at their own pace. One example of how to do this is the one-year reading plan found here:

<https://gaepiscopal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/OneYearBible-DioGARReadingPlan-booklet.pdf>

Nominees are to request an application packet from Ms. Maggie Lyons, the Diocesan Registrar, by emailing her at mlyons@gaepiscopal.org. This packet includes psychological and physical examinations and a background check, as required by canons. This information will be seen only by the Bishop, Canon to the Ordinary, Registrar, Commission on Ministry, and Standing Committee members. This, and all other information gathered, is treated with the utmost confidentiality. A Nominee for the priesthood cannot interview for Postulancy without at least an Associate's degree.

The Nominee sends the completed application packet to the Diocesan Registrar. **All information will be kept strictly confidential.**

The Canon to the Ordinary and the Registrar will work with Nominees to get all the information requested above in place for the annual Postulancy Retreat at Honey Creek, usually held in mid to late Fall, with members of the Commission on Ministry, Diocesan Examining Chaplains, and Standing Committee. **This retreat happens only once a year and is the only time a Nominee can interview for postulancy.** If Nominees are married or engaged, spouses/fiancés/fiancées may attend, but will only need to be present for one meeting time, which can take place electronically. The Sponsoring Priest will need to provide a letter to the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee at this time, detailing their support for the Nominee. The members of the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee will have read application materials, prayed for Nominees by name, and will be ready to further discern with Nominees based on the input they have received from the Nominees, the Discernment Committees, and the Sponsoring Priest.

The Standing Committee may share their observations with the Commission on Ministry at that stage of the process. The Commission listens to those observations and then decides whether it can recommend to the Bishop that a Nominee be granted postulancy at that time. Following the meeting, the Chair of the Commission on Ministry or the Bishop will contact the Nominees regarding the decision.

EMBER DAY LETTERS

Postulants (and Candidates) for ordination must write an Ember Day Letter to the Bishop four times a year. These letters will inform the Bishop of progress in formation for ministry and personal and spiritual development since the last Ember Day Letter. Ember Day Letters will only be seen by the Bishop. More information on can be found in Appendix VIII.

POSTULANCY, CANDIDACY, AND FORMATION

It is required that a Postulant for Holy Orders step away from most previous lay involvements in their parish. This includes, but is not limited to, resigning from the Vestry. However, this does not include serving in the liturgy, which should continue, including the addition of preaching from time to time at the request of the clergy. Questions about which lay roles should change and which should remain should be directed to the Bishop via email for clarification.

Postulancy begins the time of formation for ministry and continues the time of discerning the call to ordained ministry. The Chair of the Commission on Ministry will assign a Shepherd from the Commission on Ministry to each Postulant. Postulants for the Diaconate will also be assigned a Deacon mentor by the head of the Deacons School for Ministry.

For formation for the Diaconate, the Postulant will attend the Deacons School for Ministry. More information about the Deacons School for Ministry can be found in Appendix VI. For formation for the Priesthood, the Postulant will attend a three-year residential seminary program or equivalent. When an equivalent alternative is needed, the Postulant will work with the Bishop to determine how to provide for that (for example, a distance/online program coupled with formation completed within the Diocese). The formation period takes a minimum of two full years for the Diaconate, a minimum of three full years for the Priesthood at a residential seminary program or equivalent, and a minimum of four full years for alternative training for the Priesthood. During formation, the Postulant will be asked to participate in a ministry internship in a congregation other than their sponsoring congregation. Those training for the Diaconate or in alternative training for the Priesthood will meet with the Diocesan Examining Chaplains before beginning formation for an orientation that will focus on academic writing.

During formation, those attending three-year residential seminary must complete a unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at an accredited Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE) site. Those training for the Diaconate and those in alternative training for the Priesthood must complete a pastoral education experience similar to CPE.

Throughout the formation process for the Priesthood, papers and projects should be sent to the Diocesan Examining Chaplains via an online portal that will be provided by the Diocesan Registrar.

As a Postulant is reaching the halfway point of the formation process, they must contact the Diocesan Registrar to apply for Candidacy. The Postulant will meet with the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee at this stage. If the Commission on Ministry attests to the continuing formation of the Postulant, and the Standing Committee approves of their application for Candidacy, the Bishop may admit them as a Candidate for Holy Orders.

Then, when the formation process is ending, a Candidate contacts the Diocesan Registrar to apply for Ordination to the Diaconate, at which point they will meet with the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee again. If the Commission on Ministry certifies that the Candidate has completed their formation (for those who will be ordained to the Vocational Diaconate) or continued formation (for those who will be ordained to the Transitional Diaconate) and they and the Standing Committee certify the Candidate has met the requirements of the Canons and there are no objections to ordination, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate to the Diaconate.

Those who will be ordained as priests will apply for ordination to the priesthood and have one final interview with the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee. If the Commission on Ministry certifies that the Deacon has completed their formation and is proficient in the canonically required areas of formation, and they and the Standing Committee certify the Deacon has completed all the requirements of the canons, the Bishop may ordain the Deacon as a Priest. Candidacy and Ordination meetings with the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee will occur in late winter and late spring each year.

DIOCESAN SUPPORT FOR SEMINARIANS

Those preparing for the Priesthood through a distance learning program or traditional full-time residency in a seminary will receive a small amount of financial support from the Diocese, with additional support based on individual need.

GENERAL ORDINATION EXAMINATION (GOE)

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 GOEs consist of six three and a half hour essay questions over three days. Candidates usually answer two questions per day with at least a half-day break, usually in the middle. The exam covers the areas of proficiency required by the Canons of The Episcopal Church:

1. The Holy Scriptures
2. History of the Christian Church
3. Christian Theology
4. Christian Ethics and Moral Theology
5. Christian Worship
6. The Practice of Ministry

The Diocese will nominate seminarians for the examination the January before they are to be ordained as a Transitional Deacon and pay the \$500 examination fee.

ORDINATION

As Candidates prepare for the Ordination service, they should communicate with the Diocesan Registrar. The Registrar and other Diocesan Staff will assist in setting the date on the Bishop's calendar, planning the liturgy, distributing announcements, and any other details. It is preferable for the Ordinand to make a spiritual retreat before the ordination service. In every case, spiritual as well as practical preparation is necessary for 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.*

AFTER ORDINATION

As Deacons and Priests begin ordained ministry, they will be assigned a designated clergy mentor to whom they can come with their ministry questions and concerns. Each mentor should be willing, informed, and gifted as a mentor. The Bishop will provide a suggested schedule of meeting times and topics, which will include practical assistance in areas such as transitioning to the life, culture, and traditions of a new parish; church finances; running a Vestry meeting; navigating the Constitution and Canons; relationships with Diocesan Staff (who to contact, when, and how); and building new relationships in the parish and among clergy colleagues.

Newly ordained priests will also be required to participate in a program of ongoing leadership training and formation for ministry approved by the Bishop. This will include participating in Leading with Grace, Conflict Management, and Emotional Intelligence Training, as well as other opportunities for training and continuing education.

GLOSSARY

Aspirant

One who aspires to Holy Orders is called an Aspirant. This term then refers to all in a process of discerning a possible call to ordained ministry.. An Aspirant should engage in intentional prayer both privately and in community regarding the potential vocation. If an Aspirant receives the approval of the Diocesan Discernment Committee, sponsoring priest and vestry, the Aspirant is presented as a Nominee to the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee for consideration as a Postulant.

Candidate

Halfway through the process of formation for ordained 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 phase of postulancy, but still does not guarantee that 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. Title III, the section of the Canons of the Episcopal Church relevant to discernment and ordination, begins on page 94 of this online document: <https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/32134>

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 canonically mandated 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 typically serve long-term. This provides continuity to the process and balances the Standing Committee whose members rotate off at a rate of one third per year.

Diocesan 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 appoint 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 a potential call to ordained ministry. This Committee makes its report to the Bishop, who forwards the report to the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee. Information about and for Diocesan Discernment Committees can be found in Appendix IV.

Deacon

Deacons “assist bishops and priests in all [their] work. It is also a special responsibility of deacons to minister in Christ's name to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the helpless.” From the Greek word for “servant” or “minister,” the Diaconate is a full and complete order of ministry. Historically, those called to be priests serve first as deacons for a time of one year before being ordained to the priesthood. This time 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 letter on each of the four periods of the Ember Days every year to inform the Bishop of progress in formation for ministry as well as personal and spiritual development since the last Ember Day. 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.

Nominee

If an Aspirant receives the approval of the Diocesan Discernment Committee, sponsoring priest and vestry, including an official vote by the Vestry, the Aspirant is presented as a Nominee to the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee for consideration as a Postulant.

Postulant

This is the first formal approval of the Diocese for those seeking ordained ministry and is granted by the Bishop after receiving the recommendation from the Commission on Ministry, who make that recommendation while taking into account advice from Standing Committee. 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 as a pastor with a ministry of Word and Sacrament, assisting the Bishop in overseeing a given congregation or ministry within the church. The English words "priest" and "presbyter" both come from the Greek word meaning "elder."

Rule of Life

This is a statement concerning the spiritual disciplines a person or community commits to regularly observe. Although Rules differ, they typically include a commitment to a form of Daily Prayer, regular participation in the Holy Eucharist, and acts of charity, that is, action that manifests the love Christ to a suffering world. Find more on a Rule of Life in Appendix III.

Spiritual Director

A person trained in assisting others on their spiritual journeys. 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 those in the discernment process should find a spiritual director and work with this person on creating and maintaining a rule of life.

Standing Committee

A canonically mandated group of lay and ordained persons 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

This timeline shows a typical process from beginning discernment through ordination. No step of the process is guaranteed to proceed from the previous step, as we hope for continued discernment throughout.

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 a Diocesan Discernment Committee

Following the series of meetings, the Committee will submit its recommendation to the Bishop

- Recommendation the Discernment Committee (due no later than May 1 to attend Postulancy Retreat)

Take part the Postulancy Retreat

Prior to this retreat, the following must be completed and reports turned into the Diocesan Registrar at least one month prior to Postulancy Retreat:

- Complete diocesan application packet sent to diocesan office and committee members
- Psychological evaluation
- Physical Exam by physician
- Background checks complete
- Letter from Sponsoring Priest sent to Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee

Postulancy

Following Postulancy, remember:

- Ember Day letters four times each year (see Glossary)
- Begin or continue seeing a Spiritual Director
- Apply for Candidacy halfway through studies by contacting the Diocesan Registrar
- Recommendation from Deacons School for Ministry (Deacons)
- Relevant evaluation from seminary (Priests)

Approval for Candidacy

Candidacy

- Ember Day letters continue
- Apply for Ordination at the appropriate time by contacting the Diocesan Registrar

During your studies for ordination, remember you will need:

- Safe Church, Constitution and Canons, and Anti-Racism training (Deacons and Priests)
- Meet all competency area requirements (Deacons)
- CPE or other comparable approved program
- Take General Ordination Examination (Priests)

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

- Mentor assigned
- Priesthood: Apply for Ordination at the appropriate time by contacting Diocesan Registrar

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

APPENDIX I

PORTION 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

GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The spiritual 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 they have 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 their Diocesan Discernment Committee, and eventually the Commission on Ministry, to explore their sense of a call in greater depth. **The autobiography should not exceed ten typewritten, double-spaced pages.**

The Aspirant's 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, the Aspirant may 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

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 the Church.

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

- 1) *Prayer* – participating in the Sunday Eucharist with my siblings 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 is 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 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).

APPENDIX IV

DIOCESAN DISCERNMENT COMMITTEES

The following topics are to be covered between a Diocesan Discernment Committee and the Aspirant in five separate meetings. The meetings should be at least two weeks apart and no more than four weeks apart. The Discernment Committee will work with an Aspirant to schedule these meetings.

The Discernment Committee will explore specific questions with the Aspirant. CAUTION: Because of the probing nature of the questions, we recommend that all Discernment Committee members share their views concerning these questions as much as possible to avoid the perception of interrogating the Aspirant.

The Discernment Committee 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. Therefore, the Discernment Committee will identify the following:

1. What is the Aspirant's understanding of Christian ministry?
 - a. How does the Aspirant view the ministry of the whole Body of Christ?
 - b. How does the Aspirant differentiate between the ministries of laity and ordained?
 - c. How does the Aspirant understand the ordained person's role in the Church?
2. What further growth is needed? Does the Aspirant have the aptitude to achieve such growth?
 - a. What is the Aspirant's academic record?
 - b. How open is the Aspirant to questioning questions, self-exploration, and expressing opinions and views?
 - c. What evidence do you see of the Aspirant's 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 # 1: Introduction & General Exploration

"Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33 NIV)

"Look to the Lord and His strength; seek His face always." (1 Chronicles 16:11 NIV)

"There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under the heavens." (Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV)

"I am going to keep on being glad for I know that as you pray for me, and as the Holy Spirit helps me, this is all going to turn out for my good." (Philippians 1:19 The Living Bible)

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

Involved: Aspirant and Discernment Committee Members

The Convener will chair this and all subsequent Discernment Committee meetings and will identify and assign a Recorder.

Confidentiality will be defined and emphasized at the beginning of the meeting.

1. The Convener will establish the format for the meeting:
 - a. Members will introduce themselves, briefly stating 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 discernment process.
2. The Convener will review future meeting schedules, identify the topic for each meeting, and review together the questions that will direct the discussions.
3. Drawing on the reading of the Aspirant's autobiographical statement, the Discernment Committee will explore the following questions or other questions raised by the information gathered.
 - a. What pressures have there been in the Aspirant's life?
 - b. What pressures are currently in the Aspirant's life?
 - c. How does the Aspirant respond to pressure?
 - d. Describe the areas of primary involvement for the Aspirant: work, home, church, and community.
 - e. Describe the Aspirant's current ministries in those areas.
 - f. How does the Aspirant tie together the secular and sacred realms of life?

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

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5 NIV)

Involved: Aspirant and Discernment Committee Members

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 of Christ and nurturing the gifts of God's people in such a manner that they may be exercised in harmony. It's the ability to engage in various activities that embrace:
 - a. Gathering the community, helping to focus and shape community life;
 - b. Facilitating conversation among the community, encouraging others to listen and respond to one another and to the movement of the Holy Spirit in their everyday life;
 - c. Exhibiting emotional intelligence in working with people of different cultures, races, genders, sexual orientations, ages, etc., and
 - d. Having an adequate longer-range perspective, and clarity about the clergy's role in a parish's life, so that the parish is moved toward greater health and faithfulness.

Discernment Committee Reflection:

- a. What is the Aspirant's potential for spiritual leadership?
 - b. Does the Aspirant show initiative, self-confidence, and enthusiasm towards ordained ministry?
 - c. Can the Aspirant motivate others?
 - d. Is the Aspirant aware of various leadership styles and able to use them as the situation indicates?
 - e. How does the Aspirant function in interpersonal relationships?
 - f. How comfortable is the Aspirant with being a person in whom authority rests and can they use that authority appropriately?
2. Emotional Maturity – Having an awareness of their own emotions and accepting responsibility for how they act on those emotions by:
 - a. Understanding of the impact their behavior can have on others
 - b. Exhibiting self-confidence and self-control;
 - c. The ability to be flexible without compromising their principles
 - d. The capacity to negotiate with others, and
 - e. The ability to work independently or as a team

Discernment Committee Reflection:

- a. How aware is the Aspirant of their own feelings?
- b. How well does the Aspirant express strong positive and negative feelings?

- c. When dealing with the Aspirant's feelings, does their non-verbal body language (physical gestures and movements) match the words spoken?
- d. Are there any indications that the Aspirant aspires to the ordained ministry as a way of solving their personal problems or for personal recognition?
- e. Does the Aspirant have a level of maturity to adjust to different situations?

Session # 3: Spiritual Maturity, Competence, & Priestliness

"So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV).

"Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (James 3:1 NIV).

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (2 Peter 3:15 NIV).

Involved: Aspirant and Discernment Committee Members

1. Spiritual Maturity – Clergy need to be people of Apostolic Faith. This involves:
 - a. Maintaining a spiritual discipline that is grounded in Anglican spirituality and accepting responsibility for their 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" (Prayer after Baptism, BCP 308) 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."

Discernment Committee Reflection:

- a. How does the Aspirant maintain their current spiritual practice and Rule of Life?
- b. How does the Aspirant theologically connect the local church with the Diocese and The Episcopal Church?
- c. Is there evidence of the "fruit of the Spirit" in the Aspirant's life (see #c above)?
- d. Competence (for Aspirants to the Priesthood only) - Does the Aspirant seem able to develop competence in presiding at liturgy, preaching, spiritual and pastoral guidance, and Christian formation? Each requires skills in design and planning as well as implementation.
2. Priestliness (*for Aspirants to the Priesthood only*)

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

 - a. Is the Aspirant a person of prayer?
 - b. Can the Aspirant be with people rather than above them or aloof?
 - c. Is the Aspirant capable of leading others to seek God's purpose for their life?
 - d. Does the Aspirant have a sacramental way of being and engaging? Do they pattern their life in accordance with the teachings of Christ, so that they may be a wholesome example to their people (BCP 532);
 - Can the Aspirant see the "inward and spiritual grace" within individuals and the community?
 - Is the Aspirant grounded in their personal and spiritual prayer life?
 - Is the Aspirant seen as being personable and genuinely interested in others' concerns and spiritual growth?
 - Can the Aspirant be in liturgical role while also praying the liturgy?

- e. Does the Aspirant accept being what the Reverend Urban Holmes called a "God symbol, while also being a person? We seek one who grows into their uniqueness while also accepting that they exist as a sacramental being for others.
- f. Does the Aspirant love God and understand the role of a priest is to "equip [the Church] for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up?" (Ephesians 4:12 NIV)
- g. Is this person comfortable living with the required tension found in the Priesthood in our tradition? Being both:
 - Person and symbol,
 - Minister of God's word and sacrament
 - Sacrificial and pastoral,
 - Represents Christ and the Church,
 - Baptized and yet set apart,
 - Of the local parish and the larger Church,
 - Able to be fully part of the parish community

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

Involved: Aspirant, Spouse (if applicable), and Discernment Committee Members

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 the Aspirant's primary interests and gifts congruent with the essential function of an ordained minister and the needs of the Diocese of Georgia?
4. Are the Aspirant's 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, the Discernment Committee may wish to meet privately with the Aspirant's spouse (if applicable) to understand better the Aspirant's call and gifts and the support of the Aspirant's spouse for this possible call to ordination.

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

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 NIV).

"For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10 NIV).

Involved: Discernment Committee Members only for the first hour, then including the Aspirant in the second hour

1. First Hour: The Discernment Committee reviews its previous work and makes a final decision whether or not to recommend the Aspirant proceeds in the ordination process. Using the recorder's documentation and members' input, the committee prepare a written summary for the Bishop & the Aspirant, using the format provided in Appendix V.
2. Second Hour: Present verbal feedback of the Discernment Committee's work to the Aspirant. If the committee recommends the Aspirant to the Bishop and COM for further formation toward ordination, then the written report will accompany the Sponsoring Priest's Letter of Endorsement to the Bishop.

If the Aspirant is not being referred to proceed with ordained ministry, the Discernment Committee should assist the Aspirant to recognize and value a satisfying form of ministry that may involve areas related to work, family, community, or other lay ministry opportunities within the Church.

APPENDIX V

REPORT OF THE DIOCESAN 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 them 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 are they already exhibiting "Priestliness?" (for those discerning the priesthood only)

8. In what ways does this person envision their 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 Diocesan Discernment Committee members:

APPENDIX VI

FORMATION FOR THE DIACONATE

During Postulancy the individual works toward completion of the requirements of the Deacons School for Ministry (DSM) with the assistance of their Deacon Mentor and the Examining Chaplain for each area. The specifics of this program are listed below.

After completion of at least 5 Areas of Competency the Postulant applies for Candidacy and interviews with the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee. During Candidacy, in addition to continuing the competencies, an internship of 4 months is assigned at a parish by the Bishop in agreement with the candidate and the parish priest. After completion of the internship and all competencies the Candidate may apply for ordination and interview with the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee.

A person in the ordination process needs to be supported with fellowship and prayer by their sponsoring parish and should be included regularly in Prayers of the People. They should regularly meet with the sponsoring priest throughout the ordination process.

A Deacon is ordained into the larger Church by the Bishop and is assigned according to the needs of the community. Sponsoring parishes raise Deacons into ordained servant ministry and at the same time release them to serve the needs of the Church at large.

The Deacon Formation Program: Deacons School for Ministry (DSM)

In the Diocese of Georgia the Deacons School for Ministry uses a small group model. The program is offered with the approval of the Bishop and participants approved by the Commission on Ministry to enter Postulancy. All Postulants who have not taken Education for Ministry are required to enroll in the program or an approved equivalent upon approval for Postulancy.

Outline of the Program

The Deacons School for Ministry, designed to be completed in 2 years, consists of:

- Three Deacons School sessions each year held over a weekend
- Assigned readings and written assignments related to the various areas of study prescribed by the canons of the Episcopal Church and formulated by Examining Chaplains (Competencies)
- An on-going mentoring relationship with one of the Deacons in the Diocese, mutually agreed upon by the Postulant and the DSM Director.
- Each postulant must have a Spiritual Director and provide the name to their Deacon Mentor
- Each participant will “shadow” an active Deacon at a wedding, funeral, Baptism as well as Eucharist during their formation.
- While in formation, the participant will meet monthly with their rector, Spiritual Director and Deacon mentor.
- Each Candidate will serve an internship of 4 months at a parish designated by the Bishop prior to Ordination.

Education for Ministry (University of the South)

Ideally, those beginning the Deacons School for Ministry will have completed at least the first two years of Education for Ministry (EFM) or an equivalent approved by the Bishop. If not already completed or in progress, participants may take EFM concurrently either online or in community while in the Formation Program. If desired,

participants can attend Sewanee for Old and New Testament courses. It is expected that all ordained Deacons would have completed all four years of EFM or equivalent, either as a participant or as a mentor. *Postulants must show completion of or enrollment in a New Testament program, either EFM or equivalent, prior to being approved to meet with the COM/SC for candidacy.*

Focus of the DSM Program

Although there is definitely a challenging intellectual dimension to the DSM Program, it should be understood that (1) the process of forming a Deacon is quite different from that of forming a Priest and, (2) that the DSM Program is not based on a mini-seminary model (which is designed to educate and form people for the Priesthood). Because the Diaconate is focused in the very practical and deeply spiritual challenge of connecting the compassionate and prophetic love of Christ with the concrete needs of people who are poor, sick and on the margins, this program is concerned more with formation. The readings and study are neither abstract nor disconnected from the world, but always related to ministry development. While it is deeply important that a Deacon be familiar with and grounded in the scriptures, history, traditions and theology of the Church, the approach to these subjects for diaconal formation is quite different from the approach of a three-year residential seminary program for priests. The distinction is important. We are focused on a balanced program of prayer, study, daily Bible reading, hands-on ministry and an action/reflection model of learning; our goal is the formation of those called by God to the Diaconate.

Fees

Sponsoring parishes are encouraged and expected to provide up to half of the cost incurred by the participants. Costs that the participant can expect include:

- Books for areas of Competency
- Meals, lodging and mileage for Deacon Formation weekends
- Cost of EFM if needed

Scholarship monies will be available in case of financial need.

APPENDIX VII

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The construction and dissemination of knowledge is essentially collaborative, so ethical engagement with the work of others is vital. As Joseph Harris explains, the “interplay of ideas defines academic writing... intellectuals almost always write *in response* to the work of others” (*Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*, 2006, p. 1). All scholars (at whatever level) should strive to interact with each other’s work fairly, with honor, integrity, & generosity.

All submissions in your studies should reflect your own thinking and work in response to the assignment instructions and sources. When your writing is informed by or incorporates others’ ideas or words, give credit to them, give readers information to locate your sources, & (if applicable) follow specified referencing & citation conventions.

The expectations of academic source documentation may be new to you, they can be tricky, & the boundary between ethical & unethical collaboration & technology use is not always clear. When you have questions about specific kinds of collaboration or use of sources, technology, or AI, please do not hesitate to ask. You will never be penalized for asking questions! It is always to ask *before* you submit an assignment.

- You are encouraged to collaborate with classmates whenever permitted by your instructors, but you should not submit others’ work as your own, pay anyone to complete work on your behalf, or re-submit work you have already submitted elsewhere (except under specific circumstances when you have permission to do so).
- With an instructor’s permission, you *may* use AI to assist in the drafting process, but the work you submit should reflect your own thinking and engagement with instructions & sources. If you use AI to assist you, you should be prepared to explain how you used it.
- To help you document your original work, you should retain multiple drafts of major assignments & be prepared to discuss your revision choices.
- Submitting work that does not represent your own thinking & work hinders your progress towards the course learning outcomes & undermines your education. Instances of “academic dishonesty”(submitting work that is not your own, fabricating information, collaborating without instructor consent, directly quoting the work of others without identifying it as a quotation, incorporating the thoughts of others without identifying the source, submitting work previously submitted without approval of the instructor, or otherwise violating student codes of academic conduct) are a serious offense, and could adversely affect your ordination process.

APPENDIX VIII

EMBER DAY LETTERS

Postulants and Candidates for ordination must write a letter during each of the four periods of the Ember Days that occur every year to inform Bishop Logue of the progress of your formation for ministry as well as personal and spiritual development since the last Ember Day. 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. Church calendars list the Ember Days on the appropriate dates. The church is to pray for those studying for ordination on these weeks.

The way to do this is to create a PDF file of your letter and attach it to an email to bishop@gaepiscopal.org. To assist use in keeping track of those, please use the following filename convention with Ember Letter followed by your name and the date in the file name:

Ember Letter FirstName LastName Date.pdf

An example

Ember Letter Frank Logue 12042024.pdf

This canonically required communication will also serve as an update for the members of the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee as well to keep them current on courses of study, ministries, growth, successes, and challenges. Do know that they will have access to read these letters.

Confidential Communication

There are many times when a more confidential update to your Bishop is helpful. This type of communication should be sent via email to flogue@gaepiscopal.org. The bishop@gaepiscopal.org address above also goes to the Bishop's Executive Assistant, Maggie Lyons, who helps keep up with those in the Holy Orders Process. Emails to flogue@gaepiscopal.org are seen only by Bishop Logue.