



Handbook of Discernment For Ministry

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
CALL TO MINISTRY	3
GENERAL INFORMATION FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION	4
I. NOMINATION	5
II. POSTULANCY	10
III. CANDIDACY AND ORDINATION	12
APPENDIX A: CHECKLISTS & TIMELINES	15
FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD	15
FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION TO THE VOCATIONAL DIACONATE	18
APPENDIX B: SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOR NOMINEES	20
APPENDIX C: THE VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK	21
Composition of the Committee	21
Guidelines for the Vocational Discernment Committee	22
Electronic Meeting Policy	25
Evaluating a Nominee for Holy Orders	25
Meeting Agendas & Homework Assignments	29
Individual Evaluation of the Nominee's Call	40
Evaluation of the Discernment Process	43
Suggested Resource Books	46
APPENDIX D: SCHOLARSHIP SOURCES	50
APPENDIX E: REQUIRED FORMS, HOLY ORDERS	53

INTRODUCTION

This Handbook of Discernment for Ministry has been prepared by the Bishop and Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Tennessee. It is designed to help you explore and discern the call to ministry. It will also help those who evaluate and support you through the process, which may lead to ordination.

Much of the material in this Handbook concerns ordained ministry, but it is a document with a wider purpose, intended to be of help to all who seek to engage in discernment within the Church. It represents an attempt to claim the ministry of the whole People of God. The Diocese of Tennessee strives to embody this vision of ministry. This Handbook attempts to express the teaching of Scripture, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Canons of the Diocese of Tennessee and the Episcopal Church.

Within the canonical framework of The Episcopal Church, the handbook describes the steps in the discernment process. The timetable, the required actions and the responses of all parties are outlined herein. There are five appendices:

- Appendix A: Timeline Checklist
- Appendix B: Spiritual Direction
- Appendix C: The Vocational Discernment Committee: The VDC Handbook
- Appendix D: Scholarship Sources
- Appendix E: Required Forms

Discernment is a community exercise, involving many people. It takes time for the process of discernment to take place. It requires patience and careful listening to what God is saying on the part of all concerned.

CALL TO MINISTRY

We are called to **Christian ministry** by virtue of our baptism. Part of that ministry is to open the way for others to serve Christ and the Church with their particular gifts. To this end, the Canons of The Episcopal Church stipulate that “Each Diocese shall make provision for the development and affirmation of the ministry of all baptized persons” (Canon III.1). This mission is at the heart of the work of the Commission on Ministry. Ministry is the service of God in Christ, in the Church and in the world. All ministry is rooted in Holy Baptism. God is the One who gives the grace for the task. Incorporation into Christ’s Body the Church through the Sacrament of Baptism is sufficient charge for the practice of Christian service, the normative ministry of the baptized People of God.

Some Christians are called to **ordained ministry**, to “holy orders,” and given particular tasks and a particular pattern of life through the grace that comes through prayer and the laying on of hands at

ordination. “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13). Ordination exists within the context of the whole community of the Church, is supported by it and in turn helping to equip it. At the same time, ordained ministry has its own rationale and title deeds. “For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline”(2 Tim. 1:6-7). Those who accept “holy orders” embrace tasks and a pattern of life with unique constraints and responsibilities.

A **Vocational Discernment Committee** is a group of Christians who have come together in a community of faith to join a person in a specific sort of discernment. The outcome of this discernment could lead in numerous directions; you may discover a renewed commitment to a particular ministry in which you are already involved, or you could discern a vocation to a different type of ministry, ordained or not.

If you are involved in discernment for ordained ministry, you should be careful not to think of the various steps as “hurdles” or “hoops” that if successfully navigated, will leave you on a clear track to ordination. Fulfilling the requirements is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for ordination. The process of discernment for ordination is continuous through each of the four stages: *Nomination, Postulancy, Candidacy, and Ordination.*

Understanding the direction of your ministry as a Christian is a matter for prayerful deliberation. The Church is centrally involved in this discernment process. Remember, this is God’s call, in which the community of faith discerns what God is saying. It is not “our call”. Discernment is not something that can be done with integrity solely by the individual. Engaging in this process of intentional discernment for ministry is an ecclesial act, an action of the body of Christwhole Church, with all the proper dignity that this signifies. This is not only true for those whose discernment is to ordained ministry, but for every person who engages in this process and whose present ministry is affirmed, or who receive an unexpected calling that does not involve ordination.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION

The Diocese of Tennessee is sensitive to the placement of graduating seminarians. Frequently, however, there are more Nominees for Postulancy than positions available. Therefore, a careful discernment and screening process is required. It is important to realize at the beginning that the diocese must consider its needs as well as the needs and gifts of each individual Nominee. Becoming a Postulant does not automatically mean that you will be offered a position in the diocese when you leave seminary.

At any stage in the process you may realize that you are not called to the ordained ministry and freely resign. Such a decision might display much wisdom. Conversely, at any stage in the process permission to proceed may be withdrawn. Such a decision may lead to disappointment, but it may also open the door to expanded ministry as a layperson. Whatever the decision, this turning point will require much reflection and prayer as you seek to discern God's will.

The Commission on Ministry oversees the discernment process and makes recommendations to the Bishop at the various stages. The role of the Bishop is central and pivotal. No one proceeds from one stage to the next without his consent. The Bishop's responsibilities include accepting Nominees, Postulants and Candidates, maintaining close contact with the Commission on Ministry (especially the Chair), receiving the confidential results of the medical and mental health evaluations, consulting with Nominees regarding financial resources before granting them admission as Postulants and providing the required documentation and recommendations for ordination to the Standing Committee.

This period of discernment will be a time of learning, maturing and challenge. It is important to understand that ordination is not the only successful outcome. The opportunity to explore your gifts and faith in a confidential group setting will deepen your discipleship and inspire you to consider new avenues of lay ministry.

Self-motivation is essential. *Never assume that others are keeping track of the process for you.* The responsibility rests on you to complete any paperwork and assignments on time. If you have questions at any point, do not hesitate to contact your Liaison or another member of the Commission on Ministry.

I. NOMINATION

The canons of the Church require that a person nominated be a confirmed communicant in good standing in his or her congregation or community of faith. (III.6.2 and III.8.2) In addition, the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry (COM) expects and values active involvement in the life of the local congregation.

Step One: The Nominee Meets With The Rector, Vicar Or Priest-in-charge

The first step in order to be nominated by your congregation for ordination is to talk with your Rector, Vicar or Priest-in Charge, hereafter known as the Sponsoring Priest. The Sponsoring Priest will decide whether to recommend you to the Bishop. If so, he or she contacts the Bishop by letter,

requesting the formation of a Vocational Discernment Committee (VDC), and providing some brief background information about you.

In the meantime, you should complete and forward to the Bishop the following:

- **Form 1:** General Information: *Requests information about your social history: education, employment, marital status, religious background and the like.*
- **Form 2:** Waiver of Information: Allows the diocese to initiate the required background check, which will be conducted by an agency selected for that purpose. The cost of this background check will be billed to your parish or mission.
- **Form 3:** Personal Financial Statement Form: Discloses your level of debt and debt management. Stewardship and fiscal responsibility are important indicators of how you will manage the financial requirements of seminary and as a clergy person, how you might manage a Mission or a Parish.
- Copies of baptismal and confirmation certificates, or copies of church record of baptism and confirmation.
- Copies of official transcripts of degrees earned
- Photograph of yourself

The above forms, copies of baptismal and confirmation certificates or church records, copies of transcripts and all subsequent forms will be placed in a confidential file in the Diocesan office which will allow the Bishop and members of the COM to track the process.

Step Two: The Nominee Begins Meeting With A Spiritual Director

A relationship with a Spiritual Director is required of all Nominees.

If you do not already have one, your Sponsoring Priest will help you find a Spiritual Director. If you and your Sponsoring Priest need help in finding a qualified Spiritual Director, please contact the Diocese and the Commission on Ministry. Spiritual Directors may be priests of the diocese, clergy from other denominations, or lay persons who are certified in Spiritual Direction. (See Appendix B, page 21).

Spiritual Direction is different from pastoral counseling or psychotherapy. A Spiritual Director does not take a directive or teaching role, attempt to solve psychological conflicts or strive to enhance your coping skills. Rather, at each stage of the process she or he will help you reflect upon your spiritual journey, gently guide you in becoming more open to God's signs and leadings and encourage you to make the practice of spiritual disciplines an essential part of your spiritual formation.

Spiritual Direction is a life-long process. One benefit of this intentional discernment process for ministry may be an introduction to the practice of spiritual direction.

You will meet with your Spiritual Director regularly, usually every month to six weeks. At each stage of the process she or he will provide you with feedback regarding your call to ordination or to other forms of ministry. Your relationship will be strictly confidential, and your Spiritual Director will not report back to the Commission.

Step Three: A Vocational Discernment Committee (VDC) Is Formed

When your Sponsoring Priest contacts the Bishop and requests the convening of a VDC, the Bishop contacts the Commission on Ministry and begins the process of formation of the Committee. The COM will assign one of its members to be the COM Parish Liaison, who will serve on the VDC and help to train it for its task. The Parish Liaison also helps to answer your questions and to keep you informed if you are interviewed by the COM.

The task of the Vocational Discernment Committee is to become familiar with you, the person: background, articulation of call to ministry and your present ministry. It is not a support group. Its principal charge is to discern God's call to you and to share that discernment with your Sponsoring Priest, your Vestry and the Commission on Ministry. (Read Appendix C: The Vocational Discernment Committee Handbook beginning on page 22).

The committee is composed of five to seven people. You, your Sponsoring Priest and the COM Parish Liaison will work together to choose the members. At least one member of your Vestry or Council should sit on the committee. Two members must come from other Episcopal congregations. The remaining members include persons who know you as well as those who do not. The overall composition of the committee should reflect diversity in gender and in personal relationships to you.

The VDC gathers six times. All meetings take place at your church.¹ Your Sponsoring Priest and the COM Parish Liaison will attend the first and last meetings only. At the first meeting the COM Parish Liaison will orient you and the committee to the discernment process and present the agenda of the remaining meetings. At the sixth and final meeting the COM Parish Liaison will help the committee sum up its conclusions and evaluate the discernment process.

The Chair's assignment for the final meeting is to prepare a summary of the committee's written evaluations of you (Homework Assignment #5) and give a copy to the COM Parish Liaison and a copy to the Sponsoring Priest. At a subsequent meeting the priest will discuss the summary with you in depth. Shortly thereafter, he or she will inform the Vestry or Council of the VDC's report and its recommendation.

¹ For the Electronic Meeting Policy prompted by the realities of COVID-19, see page 26.

The recommendation may be an affirmation of existing ministry. It may also be the affirmation of a call to a new ministry within the local congregation. These affirmations are ecclesial acts in the name of the Church, signs of encouragement for the continued exercise of service.

The recommendation may also be an affirmation of a call to ordained ministry. If so the Vestry or Council will sign and submit: **Form 4: Letter of Support for Postulancy**

It is imperative that this form be expedited as quickly as possible. *The VDC process is not complete until Form 4 is received in the diocesan office.*

Please note that the Letter commits the congregation to contribute financially to the preparation of the person for ordination. This support includes: the cost of the psychological evaluation (and medical evaluation if the candidates insurance does not provide for coverage of the visit), and the background check, as well as some form of regular support through seminary.

The assignment of the VDC members at the final meeting is to complete and discuss the individual evaluations of the VDC process. **These evaluations, the summary evaluation of the Nominee prepared by the Chair and all the required documents written by the Nominee during the VDC process will be given to the COM Parish Liaison. She or he will deliver them to the diocesan office and make sure they are deposited in your confidential file.²**

There should be consensus among you, your Sponsoring Priest, the VDC and the Vestry before proceeding to the next step.

Step Four: The Nominee Meets With The Bishop

When your Sponsoring Priest advises you that the Vestry has signed Form 4, please make an appointment to meet with the Bishop. This meeting gives the Bishop the opportunity to deepen his relationship with you. He will ask you about your background and personal circumstances. The Bishop is engaged in his own discernment, and so he will be listening carefully to what you have to say. He will also be discerning the needs of the Church. The Bishop will have reviewed the report from the VDC and other documentation provided earlier in the process.

This is an excellent time for you to ask any questions about diocesan policies and the requirements of the Canons, or other questions you may have.

² The Parish Liaison should mail physical copies to Diocesan House to the attention of the Bishop, but it is helpful for electronic versions to be sent to Canon Howard via email at jhoward@edtn.org as the documents become available.

If the Bishop discerns that you may continue in the discernment process for ordained ministry, he will write to invite you to participate in the physical and psychological evaluation required under Canon III.5.5 and Canon III.8.5. Please schedule these evaluations as quickly as possible. The cost is borne by your sponsoring congregation. The evaluations are made available to the Bishop, and will also be a part of his discernment.

Required Items:

Form 5: Required Medical Examination.

You may choose any licensed physician.

Fill out page one before going to the appointment. The physician fills out the rest. Your signature is required on the last page in the presence of the physician.

Form 6: Life History Questionnaire—Preparatory to the Mental Health Evaluation

The Diocesan Office will refer you to a mental health professional.

Deliver the completed document directly to the mental health professional. The purpose of the psychological evaluation is to ascertain whether:

- A. you have appropriate ego strengths and a realistic self-concept
- B. you are capable of compassion and empathy
- C. you are well motivated and inner-directed.

If you are in therapy at the time of the examination, it is critical that you give your therapist written permission to share information with the mental health professional.

Form 7: Behavior Screening Questionnaire (BSQ):

Complete **two** copies of this document.

Submit one to the examining mental health clinician and one to the Diocese.

Both the mental health clinician and the Diocese keep a copy on file.

Form 8: Required Mental Health Evaluation from Psychiatrist or Clinical Psychologist

Deliver this document to the mental health clinician.

The clinician will complete it and send it to the Bishop.

It will be deposited in your permanent confidential file.

If the Bishop discerns that you will not continue further in this process, he will also write you to tell you and to encourage you in the ministry that you are already engaged in.

If the Bishop discerns that you will continue in this process, he will ask the COM to interview you and to make a recommendation to him.

Step Five: Informal Interviews

The COM will invite you and your spouse to an Informal Interview which takes place in August. The purpose of the informal interview is to get to know you better in order to begin their part in the discernment process. The committee will converse with you about your sense of God's call, your relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as aspects of your background and other pertinent topics. COM members will also solicit your opinion of the VDC process. If deemed appropriate, the committee will invite you to proceed to Step Six.

Step Six: In-depth Interviews

The In-Depth Interviews take place in October. It is a continuation and deepening of their work of discernment. The format generally includes small group interviews, worship, and fellowship. The success of the process depends on your willingness to share yourself with the Commission.

Following the interviews, the COM makes its recommendations to the Bishop regarding the Nominees. The Bishop makes a decision based on the information already received and the final recommendation of the COM. He then informs you of this decision.

II. POSTULANCY

Step Seven: Becoming A Postulant

The Bishop may admit you as a Postulant when he is satisfied that you have fulfilled all the requirements. He will record your name and the date in a Register kept for that purpose. (Canon III.6.3d and Canon III.8.3d) The Bishop will then notify you, your Sponsoring Priest, and the Standing Committee of the Diocese of your admission.

Step Eight: Life As A Postulant

“Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and may initiate the formal preparation for ordination.” It involves continued exploration, discernment of and a decision about your call to the Diaconate or the Priesthood (Canon III.6.3 and Canon III.8.3).

It is extremely important to maintain close communication with your Sponsoring Priest and your Vestry or Council as they must recommend you at each remaining step in the process.

Any Postulant may be removed as a Postulant at the sole discretion of the Bishop (Canon III.6.3f and Canon III.8.3f).

A member of the COM will be assigned to you as your **Mentor** in order to help provide pastoral guidance during postulancy and candidacy (Canon III.6.5a and Canon III.8.5a).

Before pursuing a course of theological education, it is normative that you will have obtained an accredited baccalaureate degree. If you lack a degree, however, a course of study will be designed for you and overseen by the Examining Chaplains of the Diocese.

All Postulants seeking ordination to the priesthood will have attended an Episcopal seminary for three years, and/or will have completed an approved course of study that meets all canonical requirements. Anyone in the process should have a conversation with the Bishop before pursuing any program of theological education, and should understand that classes taken or programs undertaken prior to the conversation with the Bishop following approval as a postulant may not satisfy formation requirements. This does not mean they may not be personally edifying, only that the ultimate plan of formation is arrived at through consultation between the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry. This plan will include, in nearly all cases, some study at an approved Episcopal seminary, regardless of prior academic attainment, including an existing Master of Divinity.

Those seeking ordination to the vocational diaconate will be prepared by a process acceptable to the Bishop and the COM. The choice of a seminary is determined by the Bishop in consultation with you. The COM is informed of this decision.

Gaining admission to a specific institution or course of study, approved by the Bishop, is your responsibility, and attendance is at your own expense. The cost is not insignificant. Limited funds are available each semester for books. Beyond that, you must take the initiative in seeking financial aid. Scholarship assistance is best sought through your seminary. (See Appendix D, page 51 for a list of scholarship sources.) Your home church is also required to contribute to your financial support (Canon III.6.2a and Canon III.8.2a).

Every Postulant, including those engaged in alternative formation from the three year MDiv, is expected to engage in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). For those in a three year MDiv program, it is expected that you will take Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) during the summer following your junior (first) year in seminary. **Ask your CPE Supervisor to send a copy of your CPE evaluation to the Bishop.** The Bishop may assign you additional pastoral training in the summer following your middler year. As a Postulant, from time to time you will be invited to participate in diocesan events.

You are expected to communicate regularly with your Mentor and to continue meeting with a Spiritual Director for the duration of the training and formation process. The cultivation of prayerful discernment, regular practice of spiritual disciplines and accountability will remain essential elements of your spiritual growth and development.

From the time you are accepted as a Postulant until ordination to the Diaconate, you are required to communicate with the Bishop four times a year in the Ember Weeks.³ Those preparing for ordination to the vocational diaconate reflect on the Postulant's academic, diaconal, human, spiritual and practical development (Canon III.6.3e); those preparing for the priesthood reflect on the Postulant's academic experience and personal and spiritual development (III.8.3e).

Step Nine: Application And Recommendation For Candidacy

In the middle of your second year, submit

- **Form 9: Postulant's Application for Candidacy.**

Remind your Sponsoring Priest and Vestry/Council to submit

- **Form 10: Letter of Support for Candidacy**

In March of the same year your seminary will send the Bishop a detailed evaluation of you and your work.

At the end of your middler year the Commission on Ministry will interview you again in order to be able to recommend you for Candidacy. **Contact the Chair of the Commission to schedule an appointment for the final interview.** If you are studying under the Examining Chaplains or another program, the interview will occur at the recommendation of the Bishop.

III. CANDIDACY AND ORDINATION

“Candidacy is a time of education and formation in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate, established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee and the congregation or other community of faith” (Canon III.6.4 and Canon III.8.4)

“Any Candidate may be removed as a Candidate at the sole discretion of the Bishop.”
(Canon III.6.4d)

Continue to stay in touch with your COM Liaison, your Spiritual Director, the COM Chair and the Bishop throughout the Candidacy and Ordination stages of the process.

³ See The Book of Common Prayer, page 18 for the times the Ember Days are traditionally observed.

Step Ten: Ordination To The Diaconate

Ordination to the Diaconate is also required for all those called to the Priesthood (Canon III.8.6a). Those being ordained to the diaconate prior to ordination to the priesthood must be at least twenty-four years of age (Canon III.8.6b). For those being ordained as vocational deacons, “A person may be ordained Deacon after at least eighteen months from the time of written acceptance of nomination by the Nominee as provided in III.6.2b, and upon attainment of at least twenty-four years of age” (Canon III.6.6a).

Submit to the diocesan office:

- **Form 11: Candidate’s Application for Ordination to the Diaconate**
- Remind your Vestry/Council and Sponsoring Priest to submit **Form 12: Letter of Support for Ordination to the Diaconate.**
- Medical and psychological examinations must be updated if previous examinations were taken thirty-six (36) months prior to your ordination to the Diaconate (Canon III.6.3.h).
- A certificate from your seminary or other program of preparation detailing your scholastic record, practical training (Canon III.5.3f,g) personal qualifications for ordination and a letter of recommendation must be sent to the Bishop (Canon III.6.6b4).

Diocesan policy requires that the General Ordination Examinations be taken during your final year of seminary. The Bishop will submit your application and pay the registration fee. If it is determined that performance in any given canonical area is deficient, further studies may be required before ordination to the priesthood.

Step Eleven: Ordination To The Priesthood

As an ordinand, you will serve as a deacon in a setting approved by the Bishop. At the appropriate time after ordination as a deacon submit:

- **Form 13: Application for Ordination to the Priesthood.**
Ordination to the Priesthood may take place no sooner than six months following ordination to the Diaconate and eighteen months from the time of acceptance as an Nominee (Canon III.8.7a).
- Have your supervising clergy send a brief note to the Bishop’s office regarding your ministry at your current placement.

Remind your Vestry/Council and Sponsoring Priest to submit:

- **Form 14: Letter of Support for Ordination to the Priesthood**
- A certificate from your seminary or other program of preparation disclosing your scholastic record in the desired areas (III.8.5g,h), and a letter of recommendation from the same are also required.

APPENDIX A: CHECKLISTS & TIMELINES

FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

As a Nominee:

1. **Become familiar with this Handbook of Discernment for Ministry**
 - Confer with your Rector or Priest in charge. If the Priest recommends you for formal discernment, he or she writes a letter to the Bishop to request formation of a Vocational Discernment Committee (VDC).
 - Send to the Bishop: Forms 1, 2 and 3, completed.
 - Copies of baptismal and confirmation certificates, or copies of church record of baptism and confirmation.
 - Copies of transcripts of degrees earned.
 - A photograph of yourself.

2. **Vocational Discernment Committee**
 - February - August: Vocational Discernment Committee is formed, and VDC process begins
 - VDC process typically takes about six months..
 - VDC reports are submitted to sponsoring Vestry or Council. Sponsoring Priest sends VDC summary and recommendation to Bishop.

3. **March 1 following completion of the VDC: Confirm with diocesan office that the following documents have been received:**
 - A letter from your Sponsoring Priest summarizing the VDC report.
 - Copies of VDC members' final evaluations via the Liaison.
 - Form 4: Letter of Support for Postulancy from your Vestry or Council.

4. **March: Meet with the Bishop**
 - The Bishop is a key participant in the discernment process.
 - Use this opportunity to ask questions about diocesan policy or canonical requirements.

5. **March-May: Physical and Psychological Evaluations**
 - Complete and submit Forms 5, 6, 7, 8 to diocesan office.

6. **August: Informal Interview with Commission on Ministry**
 - You (and your spouse/partner, if applicable) will be invited to meet for an introductory get-acquainted interview with the Commission on Ministry.

7. **October: In-Depth Interview with Commission on Ministry**
 - Opportunity for a more in-depth interview.

- The Commission on Ministry submits its report to the Bishop.
8. **Bishop advises you by letter of admission as a Postulant.**
- Postulancy is a time of formation, education, and continued personal discernment.

As a Postulant:

- Discuss your theological education with the Bishop.
- Explore scholarships and other financial sources. Ask your Sponsoring Priest how much the church is contributing to your education.
- Enter the seminary agreed upon or begin the course of study designed by the examining chaplains.
- Maintain contact with your COM Mentor and your sponsoring congregation.
- Continue meeting with a Spiritual Director.
- Communicate with the Bishop four times a year during the Ember Weeks.
- Take Clinical Pastoral Education the summer following your first year of study. Ask your CPE Supervisor to send a copy of your CPE evaluation to the Bishop.
- Make plans to complete the sexual misconduct training, anti-racism training, and Constitution & Canons training required for ordination to the Diaconate.
- Submit **Form 9: Postulants' Application for Candidacy in your middler year or at the recommendation of the Bishop.**
- Remind your Sponsoring Priest and Vestry/council to submit **Form 10: Letter of Support for Candidacy.**
- Contact the Chair of the Commission to schedule an appointment for the final interview.

As a Candidate:

- Make sure you've completed the three required types of training.
- Complete cross-cultural ministry skills training if seeking ordination to the priesthood
- Maintain contact with your COM Mentor.
- Continue meeting with a Spiritual Director.
- Continue Ember Day letters to the Bishop until ordination to the Diaconate. If a seminarian, take the GOEs during your senior year.
- Submit **Form 11: Candidate's Application for Ordination to the Diaconate.**
- Repeat Mental and physical health exams if 36 months have elapsed since the previous evaluations.

- Remind your Sponsoring Priest and Vestry/Council to submit **Form 12: Letter of Support for Ordination to the Diaconate.**

As an Ordinand:

- Serve as a deacon where you are placed.
- If applying for ordination to the priesthood, submit **Form 13: Application for Ordination to the Priesthood.**
- Remind your Sponsoring Priest and Vestry/council to submit **Form 14: Letter of Support for Ordination to the Priesthood.**

FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION TO THE VOCATIONAL DIACONATE

As a Nominee:

9. Become familiar with this Handbook of Discernment for Ministry

- Confer with your Rector or Priest in charge. If the Priest recommends you for formal discernment, he or she writes a letter to the Bishop to request formation of a Vocational Discernment Committee (VDC).
- Send to the Bishop: Forms 1, 2 and 3, completed.
- Copies of baptismal and confirmation certificates, or copies of church record of baptism and confirmation.
- Copies of transcripts of degrees earned.
- A photograph of yourself.

10. July-February: Vocational Discernment Committee

- July-August: Vocational Discernment Committee is formed, and VDC process begins
- August-January: VDC process typically takes about six months, meetings August-January.
- February: VDC report are submitted to sponsoring Vestry or Council in February. Sponsoring Priest sends VDC summary and recommendation to Bishop.

11. March 1: Confirm with diocesan office that the following documents have been received:

- A letter from your Sponsoring Priest summarizing the VDC report.
- Copies of VDC members' final evaluations via the Liaison.
- Form 4: Letter of Support for Postulancy from your Vestry or Council.

12. March: Meet with the Bishop

- The Bishop is a key participant in the discernment process.
- Use this opportunity to ask questions about diocesan policy or canonical requirements.

13. March-May: Physical and Psychological Evaluations

- Complete and submit Forms 5, 6, 7, 8 to diocesan office.

14. June: Informal Interview with Commission on Ministry

- You (and your spouse/partner, if applicable) will be invited to meet for an introductory get-acquainted interview with the Commission on Ministry.

15. October: In-Depth Interview with Commission on Ministry

- Opportunity for a more in-depth interview.
- The Commission on Ministry submits its report to the Bishop.

16. September-November: Bishop advises you by letter of admission as a Postulant.

- Postulancy is a time of formation, education, and continued personal discernment.

As a Postulant:

1. Deacon Formation school begins in January and continues for two years.

- Formation includes distance learning, self-study, online course content, and monthly gatherings for shared community learning, discussion, prayer, guest presenters and practical training.
- There is a tuition cost. Discuss with your Priest possible congregational financial support.
- Continue meeting with your spiritual director.
- Communicate with the Bishop by letter four times per year during Ember Weeks, regarding your spiritual, personal and educational development (Canon III.6.3e)
- Maintain contact with your COM Mentor and your sponsoring congregation.

2. June of Formation Year Two: Application to Candidacy

- Submit to the Bishop the application to change your status from Postulant to Candidate for Holy Orders. Use Form 9: Postulant's Application for Candidacy.
- Also submit Form 10: Vestry's Letter of Support for Candidacy.

As a Candidate:

1. February following Deacon Formation school: Application for Ordination to the Diaconate

- Submit to the Bishop Form 11: Candidate's Application for Ordination to the Diaconate.
- Remind Priest and Vestry or Council to submit Form 12: Letter of Support for Ordination to the Diaconate.
- Repeat mental and physical health exams if 36 months have elapsed since the previous evaluations.

2. Maintain contact with your COM Mentor and a spiritual director.

3. Continue Ember Day letters to the Bishop until ordination.

NOTE:

This overview is a general guideline to the actions, progression, and requirements of the overall discernment and formation process. Specific timings or components may be adjusted as appropriate by the Bishop or the Commission on Ministry. It is your responsibility to assure that requirements are fulfilled; do not assume someone else is managing your process. If you have questions, seek out your COM mentor or other resource person.

APPENDIX B: SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOR NOMINEES

Spiritual Direction is different from pastoral counseling or psychotherapy. A Spiritual Director does not take a directive or teaching role, attempt to solve psychological conflicts or strive to enhance your coping skills. Rather, at each stage of the process she or he will help you reflect upon your spiritual journey, gently guide you in becoming more open to God's signs and leadings and encourage you to make the practice of spiritual disciplines an essential part of your spiritual formation.

You will meet with your Spiritual Director regularly, usually every month to six weeks. At each stage of the process she or he will provide you with feedback regarding your call to ordination or to other forms of ministry. Your relationship will be strictly confidential, and your Spiritual Director will not report back to the Commission.

APPENDIX C: THE VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

Members of the VDC committee should first become familiar with the steps described in the Handbook for Discernment for Ministry. They then proceed at a pace agreed upon with the Nominee and his or her Sponsoring Priest. The time required for this process may vary somewhat, but it generally takes about six months.

Composition of the Committee

The Vocational Discernment Committee is composed of 5-7 Episcopalians, chosen by the nominee, his/her Sponsoring Priest, and COM liaison working together. The committee should be diverse in membership, reflecting a mixture of genders and personal relationships to the nominee. The committee should include at least one member from the Vestry/Mission Council. Please note: At least two members of the VDC must be active at another parish or parishes in the Diocese. Remaining members include persons who do not know the nominee and persons who do.

The Committee's Task

The Vocational Discernment Committee's task is to become familiar with the nominee's background, articulation of call to ordained ministry, and present ministry. The discernment process is an exploration, not an inquisition. Every Christian is called to minister in Christ's name; the VDC helps the nominee discern what type of ministry to which he or she is called.

The VDC is not expected to make a decision about whether or not the nominee should be ordained. The Bishop ultimately does that. The committee is charged solely with the discernment of the nominee's call to ministry.

At the end of the discernment process, each committee member will submit a written opinion of the nature of the nominee's call. These opinions serve as the committee's final report and their recommendation to the Sponsoring Priest and Vestry. This report will also be shared with the Bishop. The Sponsoring Priest and the Vestry or Council then decide whether the nominee should be recommended to the Bishop for postulancy.

For a nominee to be interviewed by the Bishop for postulancy in any year, the final report and the recommendation of the Vestry or Council must be turned in to the Bishop by March 1st, so that the report can be read, the interview held, and additional recommendation sought from the Diocesan Commission on Ministry, and others, as needed. The discernment process may be ended at any time, by decision of the nominee or by the decision of the Sponsoring Priest.

Guidelines for the Vocational Discernment Committee

- A. Experience has shown that persons of keen insight and pastoral sensibilities are essential to this committee. Members should be sensitive to issues of race, gender and culture.
- B. Ordained ministry is but one expression of the ministry of the Church and not the only avenue open to Christians. Using *The Book of Common Prayer* the VDC will study and discuss the various ministries outlined in the rites of baptism and ordination.
- C. Vocation: who calls a person to Holy Orders? The Nominee senses a call from God, and the community affirms the call from its understanding of the Nominee and God's call to that person. The diocese affirms its own evaluation of the call, based on its needs for ordained clergy. These are critical parts of the discernment process in the call to Holy Orders that the VDC should continually keep in mind.
- D. The committee should see itself neither as the sole determinant of the vocation to Holy Orders nor as unimportant to the process.
- E. The discernment committee's task is to become familiar with the Nominee's background, his or her articulation of call to ordained ministry, and present ministry.
- F. The VDC is not a support group. The committee is charged with the discernment of the Nominee's call and also the life and ministry of the Church.
- G. The VDC should be aware of the Nominee's family dynamics, as well as his or her personality typology.
- H. Time for process must be allowed. There is no hurry! A rushed or partial process can be damaging to the Nominee and to the diocese.
- I. The committee and the Nominee need to adopt rules of confidentiality. Discussions are to be kept strictly confidential. Documents may be shared only with appropriate persons and only with the Nominee's consent.
- J. The VCD process can be a focal point of growth for the Nominee, the committee members and even the congregation at large. Success is measured by this growth and not by whether the Nominee proceeds with the process.
- K. At the conclusion of the process, each committee member completes an individual evaluation of the Nominee, and the VDC chair prepares a written report for the Sponsoring Priest. Any reservations should be expressed at this time. The committee has the option of recommending the Nominee for ordination or recommending that the Nominee continue serving in his or her lay ministries or begin a new ministry.
- L. The members of the VDC should maintain a continuous pastoral relationship with the Nominee throughout the process of selection and beyond.

Schedule of Meetings

The VDC begins meeting as soon as possible and gathers six times, generally once a month. The work of discernment cannot be rushed. There are materials to be prepared by the nominee for each meeting. Meetings last from 1-1/2 to 2 hours. All meetings take place at the nominee's church.

Suggested meeting agenda are included in this manual. Individual committees may make adjustments to the agenda, choosing from suggested options, while staying within the basic framework.

Qualifications of Committee Members

Vocational Discernment Committee members must be able to meet with the nominee for each of the six scheduled meetings. Committee members should be able to:

- keep strict confidentiality
- listen without judgment and without inappropriately putting forth their own ideas.
- agree not to sub-group or meet without the nominee present • comfortably ask and answer "probing" questions
- give honest and insightful feedback
- remain open-minded and objective
- say "no" with sensitivity and love
- complete homework assignments on time
- be comfortable with prayer
- be comfortable with silence for reflection and to listen to the leading of the Spirit • submit to the chairperson a final evaluation of the nominee's call

Qualifications of the Committee Chair

The Sponsoring Priest and the nominee will select a chairperson from among the VDC members prior to the first meeting. In addition to the qualifications listed above, the chair should be able to

- Facilitate meetings.
- Keep the meetings focused on listening for indications of the nominee's call to ministry.
- Help both the quiet and the talkative to speak when appropriate.
- Make sure that prayer and silence are parts of each meeting.
- Manage the tasks of collecting and reproducing the homework assignments for distribution before the next meeting.
- Give copies of the evaluation summary to the nominee and the Sponsoring Priest.

- Make sure that the nominee's written work, the individual members' evaluations, and the evaluation summary, are given to the COM liaison at the final meeting for filing in the diocesan office.

Sponsoring Priest

The nominee's Sponsoring Priest will attend only the first and the last meetings of the committee. It is important that the Sponsoring Priest be removed from the major work of the committee, since it serves as an advisory group to the Priest and the Vestry. It is important that there be consensus among the nominee, the Sponsoring Priest, the VDC and the Vestry at the conclusion of the discernment process.

The Sponsoring Priest shall:

- work with the nominee and the COM liaison to choose members for the VDC
- attend the first and last VDC meetings.
- make copies of VDC Handbook and bring to first meeting
- purchase and bring to first meeting copies of resource book for nominee and each committee member
- celebrate the Eucharist at the conclusion of the last meeting
- receive the written evaluation summary
- meet with the nominee to discuss the evaluation summary
- inform Vestry of the committee's conclusion, sharing with the Vestry such information from the evaluation summary as he/she deems appropriate in order to keep the Vestry informed
- sign with the Vestry the Recommendation for Postulancy (Form 4)
- send the Recommendation to the Commission on Ministry.

Commission on Ministry Liaison to the VDC

The COM liaison serves as a resource person to the committee throughout the discernment process available to answer questions as they arise. The liaison will orient the committee to the discernment process at the first meeting, and present the agenda for the remaining meetings. He/she will also:

- Help the committee to sum up its conclusions and evaluate the discernment process at its final meeting.
- Work with the nominee and Sponsoring Priest to choose members for the VDC and to choose resource book.
- Give the Sponsoring Priest or Chair the VDC manual from which to make copies.
- Discuss and model prayer and silence for reflection
- be available to the VDC Chair and the nominee to answer any questions that might arise during the process.

- attend the final meeting of the committee to help members sum up thoughts about the nominee's call
- collect discernment process evaluation forms
- receive all materials from the discernment process and deliver to the diocesan office (materials can be submitted electronically to JHoward@edtn.org and KJones@edtn.org, or mailed to Diocesan House to the attention of the Bishop).

Electronic Meeting Policy

The impact of COVID-19 has been wide ranging, and we understand that there may be times when electronic meetings are safer for participants. Additionally, we know that there may be other considerations that make an electronic meeting attractive and expedient. We want to balance these concerns, however, with the recognition that there is no substitute for in person communication and the ability to observe one another's reactions and demeanor.

With that in mind, we offer the following guidelines for electronic meetings of VDCs.

The following discussions may generally be held electronically:

Meeting One: Orientation

Meeting Three: Leadership Abilities

In extenuating circumstances other meetings may be held electronically with the prior knowledge and approval of the Chair of the Commission on Ministry and the Canon to the Ordinary.

VDCs should plan on having as many in person meetings as possible. It is especially important that Meeting Two: Exploration of a Spiritual Journey, and Meetings Four & Five on Ministerial Discernment happen in person except in rare instances.

Evaluating a Nominee for Holy Orders

The Diocese of Tennessee is looking for men and women with passion, vision, and either the experience or the potential for significant leadership. Holy Scripture sets the standard to help identify such persons.

I. Calling

- A. Internal Calling - the Nominee being personally persuaded that God has called.

Romans 1:1 "*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God*"

- B. External Calling - the testimony of the Church that God has called.

Acts 6:3-6 "Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."

II. Character

- A. 1 Timothy 3: 1 *"Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer, desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be. . .*
1. above reproach
 2. faithful to his/her spouse
 3. Temperate
 4. Self-controlled
 5. respectable
 6. Hospitable
 7. able to teach
 8. not given to drunkenness not violent but gentle
 9. not quarrelsome
 10. not a lover of money
- B. The overseer must
1. *Manage his/ her own family well.*
 2. *see that his/ her children obey him/ her do so in a manner worthy of full respect.*
- C. *The overseer must*
1. *not be a recent convert.*
 2. *have a good reputation with outsiders.*

III. Capacity

- A. *Proven* - I Corinthians 4:2 "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."
- B. *Studios* - 2 Timothy 2: 15 "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth"
- C. *Prayerful* - Philippians 1:3-5 "I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."
- D. *Evangelistic*- 2 Timothy 4:5 ". . . do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry"

- E. *Humble* - 2 Timothy 2:25 "And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."
- F. *Pastoral* - 1 Peter 5:2-4 "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."
- G. *Tenacious* - 2 Timothy 2:3-4 "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs- he wants to please his commanding officer. . . . Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory."

IV. Commitment

- A. For the love of Christ -John 21: 11-17 "*Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you truly love me more than these?' 'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.' Again Jesus said, 'Simon, son of John, do you truly love me?' He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.' The third time he said to him, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'"*
- B. For the love of the Church -Philippians 1:8-11 "*God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God.*"

V. Principles

- A. The Church is called in to being by God's grace and through Jesus Christ's redemptive work.
- B. We are a Church of disciples called to make more disciples in obedience to Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28: 16-18).
- C. In order to fulfill this Commission, we as a Church call forth in Jesus Christ's name successive generations of leadership.
- D. The Church is called to train and equip all Christians for the ministry God gives them, but special care needs to be taken with the identification, calling, training, and equipping of those called to leadership.

- E. The Church is called to support (and mentor) leaders throughout the period in which they are discerning their call, being trained, and undertaking ministry.
- F. The Church is called to make use of all resources available to do the equipping and training of leaders. These resources may include seminaries, online education, January and June Term extension education, internships, on-the-job training, Reading for Orders, mentoring, continuing education, and life-long learning.

Meeting Agendas & Homework Assignments

Meeting One: Orientation

Present: Nominee, Nominee's Spouse, Sponsoring Priest, Commission on Ministry Liaison, Vocational Discernment Committee Members.

The Sponsoring Priest will

- open with prayer
- lead the group in a team building exercise such as has having everyone introduce themselves, what church they attend, who is in their family and one thing no one knows about them.

The COM Liaison will

- Orient the Committee to the discernment process.
- Hand out and discuss the contents of the VDC manual.
- Hand out and stress the importance of the resource book to the process.
- Go over the agendas for the next five meetings.
- Point out the “Individual Evaluation of the Nominee's Call” form given at meeting five for meeting six and make clear what committee members will do at the end of the process (see p. 26).
- Go over the steps leading to ordination and note where the work of the VDC fits into the whole.

The Chair will

- Work with the group to set the dates and times for the next five meetings
- Assign homework
- Make clear when homework is to be completed and given to the Chair in time to be reproduced and distributed to the Nominee and Committee members before the next meeting.
- Make sure that a copy of each of the Nominee's written assignments goes into a folder to be given to the COM at the final meeting.

The COM Liaison will

- Conclude the meeting by leading the group in.
- A brief evaluation of the meeting.
- A time of silence for reflection, to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit

The Sponsoring Priest will close with prayer.

Homework Assignments

Nominee: Write a spiritual autobiography that will be shared with Committee members. This should be a narrative account of your spiritual journey and major turning points in your personal history. It should provide insights into your goals for ministry. The autobiography should be about five typed pages.

Committee Members: Please prepare a brief statement describing your life in relationship to God.

Nominee and Committee Members: Read or continue to read the resource book.

Note: The Nominee should submit assignments to the Chair in advance of the next meeting so that they can be reproduced, distributed, and read by all before the second meeting takes place.

Meeting Two: Exploration of a Spiritual Journey

Present: Nominee and members of the Vocational Discernment Committee

Chair: Open with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so.

Committee: Discuss the Nominee's spiritual autobiography, perhaps using the following as a guide. As an introduction, Committee members may be asked to speak about the elements of the Nominee's spiritual autobiography with which they were able to identify.

- Nature of the Nominee's relationship with God
- Sources of stress and how stress is handled
- Authority issues
- Articulation of the call
- Ministerial involvement, with evidence of service
- Past and present growth in the Nominee's spiritual life
- Family and interpersonal relationships
- Individual's awareness of his or her own weaknesses, and the ability to take direction
- Significant connections with community

Listen for signs of the Nominee's emotional health

- How sure is the Nominee of his/her own feelings?
- How well does the Nominee express strong positive and negative feelings?
- When dealing with feelings, do physical gestures and movements (body language) match the words spoken?
- To what extent is the Nominee aware of and comfortable with his or her own sexuality? How well integrated is his/her sexuality or sexual identity with other aspects of life?
- Are there any indications that the Nominee aspires to the ordained ministry as a way of solving his/her personal problems?
- Does the Nominee have a level of maturity and ability to adapt which is commensurate with his/her age level?

Chair: assign homework

- Make clear when homework is to be completed and given to the Chair in time to be reproduced and distributed to the Nominee and Committee members before the next meeting.
- Make sure that a copy of each of the Nominee's written assignments goes into the Nominee's folder to be given to the COM liaison at the last meeting lead the group in a brief evaluation of the meeting

- Lead the group in a time of silence for reflection, to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit close with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so.

Homework Assignments

Nominee: Please complete the Achievement Survey. It will be helpful if members of the VDC also complete this survey.

Nominee and Committee Members: Read or continue reading the resource book.

Note: Nominee should submit assignments to the Chair in advance of the next meeting so that they can be reproduced, distributed, and read by all before the third meeting takes place.

Achievement Survey

In this exercise, you will focus on past achievements as a means of identifying the skills you have used successfully. These reflections will also serve as a springboard as you begin to imagine your "dream position" -the type of work you would most like to do. It will be most helpful if you take plenty of time to complete this survey. Choose your achievements carefully, and try to remember them in as much detail as possible.

I. Five Greatest Achievements

List the five greatest achievements of your life. The main criterion here is not "biggest," but "best." What were those times when you felt most secure and confident in your skills and talents, and in your ability to use them effectively? A detailed description is not necessary; just one or two lines will suffice.

II. Analysis

Analyze each of the above achievements in detail. Please take your time.

1. List your first achievement.
2. Then list the steps that were necessary to attain this achievement. What did you have to do to gain this success? Number each step. It will be helpful to list them chronologically.
3. Now look over your list of steps. Identify the skills that you exhibited each step of the way.
4. List each skill. (The same skill may be evidenced in more than one step.) Be thorough; don't be bashful!
5. Do this exercise for each of your five greatest achievements.

III. Dream Position

Now it is time to dream. As you consider your calling to ministry, what would be the ideal position for you to carry out that ministry? What is the job you have always dreamed of holding? Please describe this "dream position."

What tasks and/or roles make up this position? What are the responsibilities of a person holding such a position? Please list them below.

List the skills necessary to carry out the above tasks and responsibilities. Review the previous pages and place a star beside those skills you have already demonstrated.

Meeting Three: Leadership Abilities

Present: Nominee and members of the Vocational Discernment Committee

Chair: Open with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so.

Committee: Discuss the Nominee's achievement survey. You may want to use some of the following questions to assist the discussion.

For exploring the nominee's capacity for leadership:

- Does she/he show initiative, self-confidence and enthusiasm?
- Can the nominee motivate others?
- Is she/he aware of and at ease with a variety of leadership styles and able to use them as the situation indicates?
- How does the nominee function in interpersonal relationships?
- How comfortable is she/he with being a person in whom authority rests? To what extent is he or she ready to claim/use that authority appropriately?
- How has the nominee's leadership already been evidenced in prior or current lay ministries in school, work or church settings? discussion.

Look at the aspirant's "Dream Position." Use the following to guide your discussion.

- What will it take to achieve this position?
- What skills are needed? What necessary skills do you lack?
- What will you do about the skills that are lacking?
- What if this position is not attainable?
- What might block you, both inside and outside, from attaining it?
- How will you deal with the blocks?
- What attitudes are necessary to achieve this position?
- What knowledge will you need? How will you get it?

Chair : assign homework

- Make clear when homework is to be completed and given to the Chair in time to be reproduced and distributed to the Nominee and Committee members before the next meeting.
- Make sure that a copy of each of the Nominee's written assignments goes into the Nominee's folder to be given to the liaison at the last meeting
- Lead the group in a brief evaluation of the meeting
- Lead the group in a time of silence for reflection, to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit

- Close with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so.

Homework Assignments

Nominee: Please answer the following questions briefly, in writing. *Please submit your completed Assignment to the Chair in advance of the next meeting so that it can be reproduced, distributed, and read by all before the next meeting takes place.*

Committee Members: Consider the following questions. Think about the nominee and anticipate his/her answers to the questions.

Nominee and Committee Members: Read the Baptismal Covenant carefully (BCP 304).

Questions for the Nominee (adapted from Listening Hearts, pp. 92-94)

- Is seeking discernment something you have thought about doing for a long time? Is now the time? How do you know?
- Are you feeling rushed to make a decision? Do you feel in a hurry to get on with it?
- What people have influenced your thinking on this matter?
- Is a desire to be loved influencing you? Is a desire for approval influencing you?
- What are the needs of the community? What do those needs suggest to you?
- How do you reflect Christ to your community?
- Will ordination help you to reflect Christ better?
- Are you trying to be obedient to God? What if God says no?
- Are any stories from your life related to this issue? What are they?
- As you think about your situation, is there a person in the Bible with whom you identify
- Does any theme or passage from Scripture occur to you as you wrestle with this?

Meeting Four: Ministerial Discernment I

Present: Nominee and members of the Vocational Discernment Committee

Chair: Open with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so. Lead the group in restating their baptismal vows (BCP 304).

Committee: Discuss the nominee's answers to the questions assigned at the last meeting. Let the following guide the discussion (adapted from *Listening Hearts*, p. 94).

- Is the nominee feeling pressured to be ordained?
- Is the nominee look for love or approval? Is the nominee vulnerable to manipulation?
- Are the nominee's abilities commensurate with the needs of the Church?
- What role have the Scriptures played in this person's efforts to discern his/her call?
- Has the person told us everything? Are there gaps or inconsistencies in what the nominee has told us? How can we best elicit the unsaid?
- Is the nominee's perception of a call limited because of social context, role, and stereotype? How can we explore this issue? How can we help expand the horizons?
- Do I see Christ in this person?

Chair: assign homework

- Make clear when homework is to be completed and given to the Chair in time to be reproduced and distributed to the Nominee and Committee members before the next meeting.
- Make sure that a copy of each of the Nominee's written assignments goes in the Nominee's folder to be given to the liaison at the last meeting
- Lead the group in a brief evaluation of the meeting
- Lead the group in a time of silence for reflection, to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit
- Close with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so

Homework Assignments

Nominee: Please answer the following questions briefly, in writing. Submit your completed assignment to the Chair in advance of the next meeting so that it can be reproduced, distributed, and read by all before the next meeting takes place.

Committee Members: Consider the following questions. Think about the Nominee and anticipate his/her answers to the questions.

Nominee and Committee Members: Read the ordination service for a deacon beginning on page 537 of the Book of Common Prayer.

Questions for the Nominee (adapted from Listening Hearts, pp. 94-95)

- Can you perform your ministry without being ordained? Why not?
- Do you see pastoral care as central to your ministry?
- Do you think of yourself as a "servant"?
- Are your abilities commensurate with the demands of ordained ministry? What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- How are you perceived by others?
- Do the people in your congregation experience you as a leader within their community? How do you know?
- To what extent does your sense of call come through your faith community? How strong is your sense of the church as community?
- What debts do you have? Is seminary financially feasible for you? How would you finance your seminary education? Could the debt you might incur affect your ability to carry out God's call once ordained? What if you became ordained and could not find a paid position in the church?
- Are you aware of the criticism and rejection an ordained minister often receives? Could you handle this? How?
- Are you aware of the adulation an ordained minister often receives? How would you handle this?
- How do you feel about the authority of the church hierarchy?
- What weight do you give to the authority of the people of a congregation?
- How does scripture impact your life?
- How does Scripture direct your ministry?

Meeting Five: Ministerial Discernment II

Present: Nominee and Vocational Discernment Committee **Chair:** Open with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so.

Committee: Discuss the nominee's answers to the questions assigned at the last meeting. Let the following guide your discussion.

- Is the nominee confusing a call to Christian service with a call to ordination?
- Are his or her primary interests congruent with the basic function of an ordained minister?
- Are his or her innate abilities commensurate with the demands of the ordained ministry?
- Can you envision the nominee as a priest in the Church?
- Would you want this person to serve and represent you, your parish, and the Episcopal Church as an ordained person?

Chair: assign homework

- Make clear when homework is to be completed and given to the Chair in time to be reproduced and distributed to the Nominee and Committee members before the next meeting.
- Make sure that a copy of each of the Nominee's written assignments goes in the Nominee's folder to be given to the liaison at the last meeting
- Lead the group in a brief evaluation of the meeting
- Lead the group in a time of silence for reflection, to listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit
- Close with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so.

Homework Assignments

Nominee: Please answer the following questions briefly, in writing. Now that your time of formal discernment is nearly at an end, include in your answers any ideas or attitudes that have changed since the beginning of the process. Submit your completed assignment to the Chair in advance of the next meeting so that it can be reproduced, distributed, and read by all before the next meeting takes place.

Questions for the Nominee:

- What is my understanding of the Christian ministry?
- How do I understand my call?
- In what ways do I see/experience myself as one who is growing in Christian faith?
- What further growth do I need, and do I have the capacity to achieve such growth?

- In what ways do I envision my ministry?

Committee Members: Please fill out the following evaluation form as completely as possible. Your answers will help to guide the discussion in Meeting Six. The Chair will prepare a summary of the evaluations to be given to the Sponsoring Priest and the COM Liaison.

Nominee: The individual forms and the summary will go to the Commission on Ministry.

Nominee and Committee Members: Please fill out the following form to evaluate the discernment process. Give your form to the Chair or COM liaison at the last meeting. Your answers will help the Commission on Ministry to continue to monitor the effectiveness of its discernment process and to make changes as necessary.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Does this person have a regular and mature prayer and worship life?

1 2 3 4 5

6. What experience does this person have in lay ministry and service within the Church and outside the Church?

7. You have heard the nominee share his/her spiritual journey and sense of call. Briefly state your understanding of this person's spiritual journey and call.

8. Would you want this person to serve and represent you, your parish and The Episcopal Church as an ordained person? ___ Yes ___ No

9. What do you consider to be at least three positive and three negative character traits of this person? Write on the back or use more paper if necessary.

POSITIVE:

NEGATIVE:

10. Can you in good conscience support this person in his or her journey to ordination?

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

If “no” or “uncertain,” please explain. Feel free to add additional comments/paper as needed.

Evaluation of the Discernment Process

Please help us improve the discernment process by sharing your ideas and concerns with the Commission on Ministry.

Please circle the appropriate rating.

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Neutral 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree

The objectives of the discernment process were clearly stated at the beginning.

1 2 3 4 5

The objectives of the process were met.

1 2 3 4 5

The suggested meeting agendas, reading materials, and questions to be answered were appropriate and easy to follow.

1 2 3 4 5

What was the most useful aspect of the process? _____

What was the least useful aspect of the process? _____

If you rated any item "neutral," "disagree" or "strongly disagree," what suggestions do you have for improvement of the discernment process?

Other suggestions or comments: _____

Meeting Six: Sharing Evaluations & Closure

Present: Nominee, Nominee's Spouse, Sponsoring Priest, Commission on Ministry Liaison, Vocational Discernment Committee Members

Chair: Open with prayer or ask a Committee member to do so.

- Prepare a summary of the evaluations and give it to the Sponsoring Priest, who will discuss it privately with the Nominee.
- Give the individual evaluations and a copy of the summary to the COM Liaison for inclusion in the Nominee's file.
- Give all other written materials resulting from the discernment process to the Liaison for inclusion in the nominee's file in the diocesan office.

Committee and Nominee:

- Open with a discussion of the Meeting Five homework assignment.
- Talk generally about the individual Evaluations of the Nominee's call. Watch for differences in perception among the members of the Committee and between the Committee and the nominee. Discuss questions such as, "What have I learned about myself in this process?" "What have I learned about my ministry?"

Commission on Ministry Liaison:

- Explain the steps necessary for ordination, and the role of the Vocational Discernment Committee in those steps.
- Discuss ways in which the Committee can be of support to the Nominee, whether or not she or he is invited to apply for postulancy.
- Lead the group in discussing the discernment process itself.
- Collect the Evaluation of the Discernment Process forms to share with the entire Commission on Ministry.

Sponsoring Priest:

- Close with the Eucharist, using the Propers for the Ministry of the Church, BCP pp. 256-257.

Suggested Resource Books

***In the Name of Jesus*, Henri Nouwen, Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989.**

In this brief but significant book, the late Catholic priest, professor, and author Henri Nouwen explores how the Christian leader can minister out of deep resources of prayer and compassion. He cites three "images" or movements to guide all who serve and minister (ordained and lay): From Relevance to Prayer, From Popularity to Ministry, and From Leading to Being Led. These movements, each of which forms a section in the book, suggest something common to many of Nouwen's writings: a compelling argument to open ourselves to spiritual realities in whatever ways we serve, work, and live.

Memorable quote: *"Christian leaders cannot simply be persons who have well-informed opinions about the burning issues of our time. Their leadership must be rooted in the permanent, intimate relationship with incarnate Word, Jesus, and they need to find there the source for their words, advice, and guidance."*

***The Call*, Os Guinness, Word Publishing Company, 1998.**

What would life be like if we knew our purpose? Bigger than our jobs, Guinness argues, higher than our ideas of self-fulfillment, deeper than personal accomplishments, lies the possibility of living by a call. Guinness draws from history, literature, Scripture, and Christian tradition to paint a "holistic" view that refuses to limit a sense of vocation to the ordained ministry. The many short chapters of this extensive study arc meant to be read at separate times to allow personal reflection.

Memorable quote: *"Calling is the truth that God calls us to [God's own] self so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion, dynamism, and direction lived out as a response to [God's] summons and service."*

***Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*, Suzanne Farnham, Morehouse, 2011 (20th anniversary edition).**

This little volume contains a rich assortment of quotations, biblical reflections, probing questions, and practical suggestions for discernment. A number of dioceses recommend it for those exploring ordained ministry. The writing style is accessible while remaining thoughtful. Chapter titles include, "Is It God We Are Hearing?" "Why Is Community Important in Discerning God's Call?" and "Accountability for Ministries."

Memorable quote: "*Learning to listen within our hearts may not come easily. We wonder, Does God call ordinary people? And if so, to what? How can we distinguish God's voice from all of the other voices that clamor at us--those of our culture, peer pressure, our egos? Amid our secular lives, where can we find support for our calls? And how can we remain faithful and accountable to them?*"

***Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*, Parker Palmer. Jossey-Bass, 2000.**

This is a deeply personal reflection on finding courage to live out our deepest intuitions about who we are and where we are going. Palmer is a Quaker educator, speaker, and author who avoids clichés and pat answers. He shares his personal struggles as a backdrop for profound and sometimes hard-won insights

about his own calling. He also shares joyous discoveries. He also explores the role of community in discernment.

Memorable quote: "*Vocation does not come from willfulness. It comes from listening. I must listen to my life and try to understand what it is truly about—quite apart from what I would like it to be about--or my life will never represent anything real in the world, no matter how earnest my intentions.*"

Further Reading for the Person Discerning

Introductory Texts

Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Eerdmans, 1994)

William C. Placher, ed. *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Eerdmans, 2005)

Gordon T. Smith, *Consider Your Calling: Six Questions for Discerning Your Vocation* (IVP, 2016)

Discernment for the Priesthood

Rosalind Brown and Christopher Cocksworth, *On Being a Priest Today* (Cowley, 2004)

Michael Ramsey, *The Christian Priest Today* (SPCK, 2009; first published 1972)

George Sumner, *Being Salt: A Theology of an Ordered Church* (Wipf & Stock, 2007)

John Webster, "Ministry and Priesthood," in *The Study of Anglicanism*, Sykes et al, eds. 2nd ed. (SPCK, 1998): 321-333

Discernment for the Diaconate

Rosalind Brown, *Being a Deacon Today: Exploring a Distinctive Ministry in the Church and in the World* (Morehouse, 2005)

The Prayer Book Tradition

TEC BCP 1979: <http://www.bcponline.org/>. Look under "Episcopal Services" in the directory.

PECUSA BCP 1928:

<http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1928/Ordinal.htm>

Church of England BCP 1662:

[https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-](https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/the-form-and-manner-of-making,-ordaining-and-consecrating-of-bishops,-priests-and-deacons.aspx)

[worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/the-form-and-](https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/the-form-and-manner-of-making,-ordaining-and-consecrating-of-bishops,-priests-and-deacons.aspx)

[manner-of-making,-ordaining-and-consecrating-of-bishops,-priests-and-deacons.aspx](https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/worship/book-of-common-prayer/the-form-and-manner-of-making,-ordaining-and-consecrating-of-bishops,-priests-and-deacons.aspx)

Going Deeper

The Diaconate in Anglicanism:

James Barnett, *The Diaconate: A Full and Equal Order*, rev ed. (Trinity, 1995)

John Booty, *The Servant Church: Diaconal Ministry and the Episcopal Church* (Morehouse, 1982)

John Collins, *Deacons and the Church: Making Connections Between Old and New* (Morehouse, 2002)

Ormonde Plater, *Deacons in the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (Church Publishing, 2009)

Ormonde Plater, *Many Servants: An Introduction to Deacons* (Cowley, 2004)

The Priesthood in Anglicanism:

Leander Harding, *To Persevere in Love: Meditations on the Ministerial Priesthood from an Anglican Perspective* (Wipf & Stock, 2013)

Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) Agreed Statement, “Ministry and Ordination”, https://iarccum.org/archive/ARCIC/1973_ministry_and_ordination.pdf.

The Church Fathers on the Priesthood and Ministry:

St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 2, In Defense of His Flight to Pontus

St. Ambrose of Milan, On the Duties of the Clergy (De officiis)

St. John Chrysostom, On the Priesthood (6 treatises)

St. Augustine, On Catechizing the Uninstructed (De catechizandis rudibus)

St. Gregory the Great, The Pastoral Rule

More on the Work of Discernment

JI Packer, *Finding God's Will* (Intervarsity, 1985)

Gordon T. Smith, *The Voice of Jesus: Discernment, Prayer and the Witness of the Spirit* (IVP, 2003)

Andrew Louth, *Discerning the Mystery: An Essay on the Nature of Theology* (Oxford, 1990)

Mark A. McIntosh, *Discernment and Truth: The Spirituality and Theology of Knowledge* (Crossroad, 2004)

Useful Historical Studies:

Matthew Levering, On the Priesthood: Classic and Contemporary Texts (Sheed & Ward, 2003)

William Harmless, Augustine and the Catechumenate, rev. ed. (Pueblo, 2014) Andrew Purvis,

Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition (Westminster John Knox, 2001)

Craig Satterlee, Ambrose of Milan's Method of Mystagogical Preaching (Pueblo, 2002)

Other Christian Traditions

The Priesthood in Roman Catholicism:

Timothy Cardinal Dolan, *Priests for the Third Millennium* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2009)

Avery Cardinal Dulles, *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (Paulist Press, 1997)

Mark O'Keefe, *In Persona Christi: Reflections on Priestly Identity and Holiness* (St. Meinrad, 2008)

Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Priestly Spirituality* (Ignatius Press)

Aidan Nichols, *Holy Order: Apostolic Priesthood from the New Testament to the Second Vatican Council* (Wipf & Stock, 2011)

Karl Rahner, *Servants of the Lord* (Herder & Herder, 1968)

The Priesthood in Eastern Orthodoxy:

Joseph Allen, *Vested in Grace: Marriage and Priesthood in the Christian East* (Holy Cross, 2001)

Joseph Allen, *The Ministry of the Church* (St. Vladimir's, 1986) Aleksandr Elchaninov, *Diary of a Russian Priest* (St. Vladimir's, 1997) *St. John of Kronstadt, Counsels on the Christian Priesthood* (St. Vladimir's, 1967)

John Peck, *Discerning Your Vocation to the Priesthood: A Guide to Discerning Vocation to Holy Orders in the Orthodox Church* (Preacher's Institute, 2016)

Alexander Schmemmann, *Journals of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann* (St. Vladimir's, 2000)

John Shahovsky, *The Orthodox Pastor: A Guide to Pastoral Theology, 2nd ed.* (St. Vladimir's, 2008)

APPENDIX D: SCHOLARSHIP SOURCES

EVANGELICAL EDUCATION SOCIETY- This organization of the Protestant Episcopal Church awards financial grants to assist men and women who are beginning their senior year of Seminary training. Application for financial assistance must be made to the Society by January 15 in order to be considered for the following academic year. Contact: The Evangelical Education Society, 2300 Ninth Street S., Suite 301, Arlington, VA 22204.

WILLIAM A. HEATH SCHOLARSHIP TRUST- Established by the Last Will and Testament of William A. Heath and under the trusteeship of the St. Petersburg Bank and Trust Company, c/o Mrs. Dona L. Mertz, Sr. V.P. and Trust Officer, P.O. Box 11311, St. Petersburg, FL 33733. Limitations: These scholarships are to aid seminarians who come from the southeastern United States. Contact: The Senior Trust Officer of the bank.

The Fund for Theological Education has a number of fellowships.

NORTH AMERICAN MINISTERIAL FELLOWSHIPS are open to citizens of Canada and the United States who are at least graduating seniors from colleges and universities, who are not already attending a theological school, and who are prepared to enroll in a theological school, in the autumn following the awarding of their Fellowships.

THE BENJAMIN E. MAYS FELLOWSHIP FOR BLACK CITIZENS OF NORTH AMERICA OR CANADA who are at least graduating seniors from a college or university, of official candidates for ministerial ordination within their communion, and are either enrolled in a theological school or are prepared to enroll in the autumn following receipt of an award.

FELLOWSHIP FOR HISPANIC AMERICANS PREPARING FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES are for Hispanics who at the time of nomination are citizens of the United States or Canada, at least juniors in an accredited college or university; and are either enrolled in a theological school or are prepared to enroll in the autumn following receipt of an award.

Nominations for these fellowships are to be received no later than November 10.

Address: Fund for Theological Education Suite 832-475 Riverside Drive

New York, NY 10115-0008

JULIE ANN JONES MEMORIAL THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARSHIP TRUST- A permanently endowed trust providing funds for scholarships, educational assistance, and research. Eligibility: Individuals pursuing a theologically related education for endeavors with a theological basis or involvement. Assistance is on a strictly non-denominational basis and based upon merit and need.

Contact: Sally M. Jones, P.O. Box 382, 205 North Market Street, Brenham, Texas 77833. Average Grant: Scholarships are awarded each semester, based upon prior application, and have been in the sum of \$500.00 each.

INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF THE KING'S DAUGHTERS AND SONS- an international and interdenominational organization of Christian men and women dedicated to service in Christ's name. Aid to ministerial students has been a vital part of the international program for more than 10 years. Contact: The Student Ministry Spiritual Director, Mrs. Walter J. Kinkel, RR2, Box 307, Hinesburg, VT 05461. Deadline: application must be requested January through March, and completed application be in the hands of the Spiritual Director by May 11. Include a long, self addressed stamped envelope, college graduation date and college average (at least a B).

MERCER- The George Mercer, Jr., Memorial Scholarship Fund is designed, under the terms of the Last Will and Testament of Helen B. Mercer, to provide scholarships annually to worthy or deserving students pursuing courses of study at Episcopal seminaries in the United States (including the George Mercer, Jr., Memorial School of Theology). Upon nomination by the student's Bishop (and by the Dean of the seminary, as well, in case of renewal application) a scholarship may be granted by the Bishop of Long Island and the Trustees of the George Mercer Scholarship Fund. Limitations: Scholarships are granted only for Middle and Senior Years. Contact: The George Mercer, Jr. Memorial Scholarship Fund, 36 Cathedral Avenue, Garden City, Long Island, New York 11530 (Tel: 516-248-4800). Applications must be returned by May 15 preceding the beginning of the scholastic year for which the application is made.

MERIT FELLOWSHIP- eligibility: Limited to men and women who are preparing for the ministry of the Episcopal Church and who are in their senior year of seminary training. All applicants must be candidates for Holy Orders. Deadline: February 1. Amount of Award: \$500- \$1000. Contact: The Rev. Donald Bitsberger, Episcopal Evangelical Education Society, 2300 Ninth Street South, Suite 301, Arlington, VA 22204.

ORDER OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE KING- For female applicants seeking training in any recognized church-related college, seminary or training school in the United States or abroad. Applicants must be at least 21 years of age and have at least two years of college education or its equivalent. Contact: Mrs. Judy Barber, 435 Peachtree Street, Atlanta, GA 30365.

Deadline: March 1

ROOTHBERT FUND, INC.- Eligibility: Qualified students from high school to post-graduate levels who can satisfy fairly high scholastic requirements and who are considering teaching as their vocation. Interview required with the New York based committee. Deadline: March 1, for all

completed materials. Contact: The Roothbert Fund, Inc., 15th floor, 360 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10010.

SOCIETY FOR THE INCREASE OF THE MINISTRY- Grants-in-aid have been awarded by the Society to needy students certified by their Bishops and the Dean of the Seminary. Apply directly to the Financial Aid Officer at your seminary. Deadline: April 15. Entering Juniors may file as late as October 15, provided seminary has not exhausted its quota.

T. JAMES FERNLEY III MEMORIAL FUND- Deadline: April 15. Applications from the Parish Secretary, St. Thomas Church, P.O. Box 247, Ft. Washington, PA 19034. Telephone 215- 233-3970.

APPENDIX E: REQUIRED FORMS, HOLY ORDERS

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 1: GENERAL INFORMATION

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, Tennessee 37215

(In addition to mailing the form to the above address, you may submit the forms electronically to our Diocesan Administrator Kim Jones at kjones@edtn.org, and the Canon to the Ordinary at jhoward@edtn.org).

This social history form will be used by the Commission on Ministry. It is treated as confidential information.

1. Full name

Last First Middle

2. Mailing Address

Street City State Zip

3. Permanent home address, if different from mailing address:

Street City State Zip

4. E-mail address _____

5. Phone: Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

6. Birth Date: _____ Sex: M _____ F _____

7. Present congregational affiliation _____

How Long? _____

8. When, and by whom, were you baptized? **(Please attach a copy of baptismal certificate, or of the church record of baptism to this form).**

9. When, and by whom, were you confirmed? **(Please attach a copy of confirmation certificate, or of the church record of confirmation to this form).**

10. Length of time in the Diocese of Tennessee _____

11. Present occupation _____

12. Employment history – List last five (5) positions held:

<u>Employer</u>	<u>Work Performed</u>	<u>Dates of Employment</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

13. Education: List schools attended, dates, degrees obtained, and submit academic transcripts.

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Degree</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

14. Marital Status: Please state present status. If married, widowed, separated or divorced give dates. If previous marriage(s), give date(s) (for applicant and/or spouse):

15. Spouse's name: (include maiden name if applicable)

Spouse's occupation: _____

Denomination of baptism: _____

Years of schooling past high school _____ Degrees _____

Give a brief evaluation of spouse's feelings regarding mate's intent to enter the ordained ministry:

16. Children: Give names, age and sex of each child.

Name

Age

Sex

17. If there are children age 10 or over, give a brief account of the children's feelings about your intent to enter the ordained ministry.

18. Parents names and marital status. If separated, divorced or deceased, give dates.

19. Briefly describe each parent's principal occupation and level of education.

20. Religious affiliation of father: _____

Of mother: _____

21. Give a brief description of each parent's feelings regarding your intent to enter the ordained ministry:

22. Siblings: List age, sex, years of education and occupation of each.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

23. Have you ever applied for postulancy before? Y / N

If so, state where and the date:

24. Please describe your intended servanthood ministry. How many hours per week do you give to it, how long have you been engaged in it?

25. How might this ministry change when/if you exercise it as an ordained person?

26. Please provide names, addresses and phone numbers for three references. At least one should be someone able to evaluate your ministry from the perspective of an outsider.

27. Please submit a photograph of yourself.

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 2: WAIVER OF INFORMATION

AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION, RELEASE OF CLAIMS AND INDEMNITY AND HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT (referred to herein as “Authorization and Release”)

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, TN 37215

Name of Applicant: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Permanent Address of Applicant: _____

Current Address of Applicant if different from above: _____

Telephone numbers: _____

Today's date: _____

1. I am voluntarily seeking to become or am presently a candidate for postulancy, ordination, and/or other ministry position (referred to herein as “application”) in the Episcopal Church through a process conducted by the Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee (“Diocese”). I understand that as a part of the Diocese’s decision making process about my application, I am required to submit written materials with supporting documents (“Application”) and to undergo a physical, psychiatric and/or psychological assessment (“Assessment”) by a person or persons selected or approved by the Diocese.
2. I understand that the Assessment is only one part of the Diocese’s decision making process and that information provided to the Diocese about the Assessment may be considered with other information available to the Diocese in deciding whether or not to accept me or to continue considering my application for postulancy, ordination and/or other ministry position in the Diocese. Nonetheless, I understand that information from the Assessment may be determinative of the Diocese’s decision.

_____ Initialed by Applicant

3. I voluntarily consent to participate in the Assessment and I agree to cooperate fully with the Assessment. I understand that the Assessment may include one or more attitude questionnaires, physical tests, psychological tests, psychiatric tests, and/or clinical interviews. I understand that I will be asked to provide various types of information about myself which may include, but not be limited to, information about my family, financial history, medical history, psychological and psychiatric history, criminal history, sexual behavior and attitudes, drug and alcohol use, relationships, education and employment. I agree that all the information I provide for the Application and/or the Assessment will be true, correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that false or misleading statements made by me or significant omissions of any kind in the Application or Assessment process are sufficient cause for dismissal from the application process or denial of my application for a ministry position in the Diocese.
4. I authorize all health professionals involved in the Assessment to disclose to each other, both orally and in writing, all records and information, including opinions, pertaining to the Assessment, including but not limited to, my responses to any questionnaires, tests and interview questions. If deemed necessary by a mental health professional, I agree to document my authorization in a form that satisfies the requirements of applicable law.
5. I understand that at the conclusion of the Assessment, a written report may be prepared which will contain conclusions, opinions, observations, recommendations for follow-up and the like. I authorize the health professionals involved in the Assessment to disclose the written Assessment report to the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese. I authorize the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority to disclose to and discuss the written Assessment report and the Application with those involved in the application process. I authorize the health professionals involved in the Assessment and persons involved with the Application to discuss the written Assessment report or Application with the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority and those involved in the application process.
6. I understand and agree that whether or not I have paid for the Assessment or Application documents or any part thereof, all of the records and document related to the Assessment or Application do not belong to me and I do not have the right to see them, have them reviewed by or sent to anyone else, or to receive a copy of them at any time. I further understand and agree that I am not entitled to discuss the Assessment or Application with the personnel involved in the Assessment or application process nor am I entitled to have anyone else discuss the Assessment or Application with them on my behalf.

_____ Initialed by Applicant

I agree that I will not request or seek to obtain from the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority or Diocese or from any of the persons involved in the Assessment or application process or from any other person or entity the originals or any copies of any records or documents related to the Assessment or Application nor will I authorize anyone to do so on my behalf.

7. I understand that after the Assessment described herein, the Diocese may determine that further assessment or information is necessary before a decision is made on my application. If I elect to participate in such, all the terms of this Authorization and Release shall apply to any further Assessment or Application material.
8. I understand and agree that the Diocese will have the right to control the use and disclosure of information regarding the Assessment and Application both during consideration of my application and after consideration of my application has terminated, regardless of the action taken on my application, and that the Diocese does not have to obtain any further authorization from me to disclose any information regarding the Assessment, the written Assessment report or the Application.
9. I consent to the use of information that I provide or that is developed from the Assessment for research purposes, including but not limited to, publication and presentation to the scientific or religious communities and/or other audiences, provided that if so used, the information will be presented in a disguised format to preclude identification of my individual identity.
10. As consideration for having my application considered by the Diocese, I hereby waive, release, discharge and hold harmless The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee and its Bishop, all Bishops, Canons and staff, the Standing Committee and Commission on Ministry and their members or representatives, the Parish/Mission and Congregational Discernment Committee and Priest, all examining or evaluating physicians and any other person, professional or lay, who represents the Diocese, Parish/Mission or who are involved in this application process (“the Released Parties”) from liability or causes of all kinds including, but not limited to, personal injury, defamation, slander, libel, negligence, invasion of privacy, breach of contract, or process, use or disclosure of information regarding the Assessment or Application or arising in any other way as a result of the Assessment or Application or this process.

_____ Initialed by Applicant

11. I also agree not to sue or make a claim against the Released Parties for injury, damage, or loss of any kind sustained as a result of my participation in the Assessment or application process, the use or disclosure of information regarding the Assessment or Application, or relating in any way to the Assessment or application process. I will indemnify and hold harmless the Released Parties from all claims, judgments, and costs, including attorneys' fees', incurred in connection with any such action.

12. I agree that if any portion of this Authorization and Release is found by a court to be unenforceable for any reason, the remainder of this Authorization and Release shall remain valid and in full force and effect.

13. I have carefully read this authorization and release and fully understand its contents. I sign it of my own free will. I understand that I may consult with an attorney of my choice before signing this document. I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to ask questions concerning the contents of Authorization and Release and any such questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Nonetheless, in agreeing to sign this Authorization and Release I have not relied upon any statements or explanations made by any of the Released Parties or by any attorney of any of the Released Parties. I have initialed each page of this Authorization and Release indicating that I have read and understand each paragraph.

_____ Initialed by Applicant

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Print or type Applicant's Name _____

Witness' Signature _____

TO THE SIGNER:

Please send the original to The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee. Please give copies of this form to:

_____ The physician for your physical examination

_____ The psychiatrist for your psychiatric evaluation

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 3: PERSONAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, Tennessee 37215

Name: _____ Date Prepared: _____

ASSETS

Cash (checking) Accounts	
Cash (savings) Accounts	
Notes (contracts) owed to you	
Certificates of Deposit	
Treasury Bills	
Savings certificates	
Life insurance (cash value)	
Money Market Funds	
Precious Metals	
Securities (stocks, bonds)	
Real estate (market value)	
Vehicles (market value)	
Individual retirement plans	
Other assets (specify)	
Total Assets:	

LIABILITIES

Credit obligations on purchases	
Credit card obligations	
Home mortgage	

Other mortgages	
Auto loans	
Personal loans	
Personal guarantees	
Education loans	
Business loan obligations	
Taxes	
Other debts	
Prior bankruptcies	
Total Liabilities	
NET WORTH	
Total Net Worth:	

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 4: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR POSTULANCY

(In accordance with Title III.Canon 6 Sec. 2(a) and Title III. Canon 8 Sec. 2(a); 2018 Canons)

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard
Nashville, TN 37215

Name of Congregation: _____

Date of Meeting: _____ Place _____

We (the Member of the Clergy and two-thirds majority of the Vestry), whose names are hereunder written, testify to the best of our belief and personal knowledge that _____ has met six times with a Vocational Discernment Committee, two members of that committee not being members of this parish; and that s/he is a communicant of this Parish in good standing. We do furthermore recommend further discernment of the applicant for Holy Orders by the Diocese, and admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders. We base our decision on the attached documentation and recommendations of the Vocational Discernment Committee.**

We pledge to contribute financially to the preparation for ordination of _____ should s/he be admitted as a postulant for the diaconate/priesthood (circle one).

We also pledge to involve this congregation in the preparation for ordination of _____ should s/he be admitted as a postulant for the diaconate/priesthood (circle one).⁴

Signed:

⁴ This financial support includes, but is not limited to: paying for the psych evaluation, medical evaluation, and background check.

Priest: _____ Name: _____

Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretary:

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____ Parish, in _____ duly convened at _____ a.m/p.m. on the _____ day of _____, year _____ and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Signed: _____ (Clerk/Secretary of Vestry)

**Please attach recommendation of Vocational Discernment Committee

Note: No person seeking Holy Orders shall sign any of the certificates prescribed by the Canons (Title III.5.2a; 2012 Canons).

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 5: MEDICAL EXAMINATION

DOCUMENT AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE:

<https://edtn.org/discernment/>

You may choose any licensed physician.

Use the attached form prepared by the Church Pension Fund.

Fill out page one before going to the appointment. The physician fills out the rest. Your signature is required on the last page in the presence of the physician.

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 6: LIFE HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

DOCUMENT AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE:

<https://edtn.org/discernment/>

Deliver the enclosed and completed document prepared by The Church Pension Fund directly to:

Dr. Murphy Thomas
2111 Shannon Dr.
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37129
615-631-5346

The purpose of the psychological evaluation is to ascertain whether:

- A. You have appropriate ego strengths and a realistic self-concept
- B. You are capable of compassion and empathy
- C. You are well motivated and inner-directed

If you are in therapy at the time of the examination, it is critical that you give your therapist written permission to share information with the mental health professional.

**HOLY ORDERS, FORM 7: BEHAVIOR SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE
(BSQ)**

DOCUMENT AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE:

<https://edtn.org/discernment/>

Complete two (2) copies of this document prepared by The Church Pension Fund. Submit one to the examining health clinician* and one to the Diocese**.

Both the mental health clinician and the Diocese will keep a copy on file.

*Dr. Murphy Thomas
2111 Shannon Dr.
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37129
615-631-5346

**The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard
Nashville, Tennessee 37215
615-251-3322

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 8: REQUIRED MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATION

DOCUMENT AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE:

<https://edtn.org/discernment/>

Deliver this document to:

Dr. Murphy Thomas
2111 Shannon Dr.
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37129
615-631-5346

Dr. Thomas will use this document to complete his evaluation which will be sent to the Bishop. It will be kept in your permanent confidential file.

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 9: POSTULANT'S APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY

(In accordance with Title III, Canon 6 Sec. 4(a) and Title III, Canon 8 Sec. 4(a); 2012 Canons)

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, TN 37215

I, _____, a Postulant for Holy Orders, respectfully apply for recommendation to the Bishop of Tennessee for admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders and submit the letters/documents required by the Canons of the Church.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of admission to Postulancy: _____

Address: _____

Telephone numbers:(including area code)

Length of theological study program completed:

Send this application with the following documents to the Diocese with copies to the Standing Committee of the Diocese and the Commission on Ministry.

1. Letter of Postulancy from the Bishop
2. Letter of Support from Sponsoring Priest and Vestry (Form 10)
3. Evaluation and recommendation of theological school or Spiritual Director of the program of preparation with report of Postulant's personal qualifications.

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 10: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR CANDIDACY

(In accordance with Title III, Canon 6 Sec. 4 (a)(2) and Title III, Canon 8 Sec. 4(a)(2); 2012 Canons)

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, TN 37215

Name of Congregation: _____

Date of Meeting _____ Place: _____

We (the Sponsoring Priest and two-thirds majority of the Vestry), whose names are hereunder written, testify to the best of our belief and personal knowledge that

_____ is a communicant of this Parish in good standing. We do believe, based on personal knowledge or on evidence satisfactory to us, that this person is sober, honest and godly. We do furthermore recommend admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders. Signed:

Priest: _____ Name: _____

Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretary:

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____ Parish, in _____ duly convened at _____ am/pm on the _____ day of _____, year _____, and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Signed: _____ Clerk/Secretary of the Vestry

Note: No person seeking Holy Orders shall sign any of the certificates prescribed by the Canons (Title III.5.2a; 2012 Canons).

HOLY ORDERS, FORM 11: CANDIDATE'S APPLICATION FOR ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

(In accordance with Title III. Canon 6 Sec. 6(b)(1) and Title III. Canon 8 Sec. 6(c)(1); 2012 Canons)

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, TN 37215

I, _____, a Candidate for Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church, seeking the: diaconate presbyterate (circle one), respectfully apply for recommendation for ordination to the Diaconate, and submit the necessary documents required by Canon.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of admission to Candidacy: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (including area code): _____

Email: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Please include the following information with this form, and send copies of all material to the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry:

1. A statement of how you intend to exercise the ministry of a Deacon in both the Church and the world.
2. Letters from the Bishop declaring Postulancy and Candidacy.
3. Letter of Recommendation from Sponsoring Priest and Vestry/Council (**Form 12**).

**HOLY ORDERS, FORM 12: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR ORDINATION
TO THE DIACONATE**

(In accordance with Title III. Canon 6 Sec. 6(b)(2) and Title III. Canon 8 Sec. 6(c)(2); 2012 Canons)

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, TN 37215

Name of Congregation: _____

Date of Meeting: _____ Place: _____

We do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that
_____, for the last three years has lived a
sober, honest, and godly life, and is loyal to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of the Church,
and does not hold anything contrary thereto. And, moreover, we think
_____ a person worthy to be admitted to the
Sacred Order of Deacons. Signed:

Priest: _____ Name: _____

Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretary:

I hereby certify that _____ is a member of _____
Parish in _____ and a confirmed adult communicant in good standing; that
the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____
Parish, in _____ duly convened at _____ am/pm on the
_____ day of _____, _____, and the names attached are those of all
(or two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Signed: _____ (Clerk/Secretary of Vestry)

Note: No person seeking Holy Orders shall sign any of the certificates prescribed by the Canons (Title III.5.2a; 2012 Canons).

**HOLY ORDERS, FORM 13: APPLICATION FOR ORDINATION TO THE
PRIESTHOOD**

(In accordance with Title III. Canon 8 Sec. 7(b)(1); 2012 Canons)

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, TN 37215

I, _____ a Deacon and candidate for ordination to the
priesthood in the Episcopal Church, respectfully request ordination to the Priesthood, and submit
the necessary documents required by Canon.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of Admission to Postulancy : _____

Date of Admission to Candidacy: _____

Date of ordination to the diaconate: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (including area code): _____

Email: _____

Please include the following information with this form, and send copies of all material to the
Bishop and the Commission on Ministry:

1. Copies of letters from the Bishop declaring Postulancy and Candidacy, and a copy of the
Certificate of Ordination to the Diaconate.
2. Letter of Support from Member of the Clergy and Vestry/Council (**Form 14**).

**HOLY ORDERS, FORM 14: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR ORDINATION
TO THE PRIESTHOOD**

(In accordance with Title III. Canon 8 Sec. 7(b)(2); 2012 Canons)

To: The Bishop
The Episcopal Diocese of Tennessee
3700 Woodmont Boulevard Nashville, TN 37215

Name of Congregation: _____

Date of Meeting: _____ Place: _____

We do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that The Reverend _____, Deacon since the _____ day of _____ in the year _____, being the date of ordination to the Diaconate (or for at least three years), has lived a sober, honest, and godly life, and has not written, taught, or held anything contrary to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of this Church, and moreover, we think The Reverend _____ a person worthy to be admitted to the Sacred Order of Priests. Signed:

Priest: _____ Name: _____

Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretary:

I hereby certify that The Reverend _____ is a Transitional Deacon on staff at _____ Parish in _____; that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____ Parish, in _____ duly convened at _____ am/pm on the _____ day of _____, and that the names attached are those of all (or two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Signed: _____ (Clerk/Secretary of Vestry)

Note: No person seeking Holy Orders shall sign any of the certificates prescribed by the Canons (Title III.5.2a; 2012 Canons)