

We are all Christian ministers by virtue of our baptism in Jesus Christ. The Bible offers many examples of God's people being called (Isaiah, Priscilla and Paul) to special ministries. Some may be called to special lay ministries, others to life in a monastic community, others to Holy Orders as deacons and priests.

Discerning the ministry to which one is called is a matter for prayerful deliberation. When a person believes he or she has a call to the ordained ministry, prayerful deliberation must extend to local clergy leadership and to the congregation (as represented by the vestry or designated by the Commission on Ministry and the Bishop).

The Canons of the Episcopal Church set forth certain requirements for Ordination. There are, however, special qualities and attributes the Commission on Ministry (COM/COD) looks for in its discernment. We believe clarity about the qualities and attributes we seek is necessary; however, we are also always praying for the Holy Spirit's guidance. In general, we believe that a person called to ordained ministry must:

- firmly believe the vows he or she will take at Ordination regarding the Holy Scriptures and conformity to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the Episcopal Church, and accept the authority of the Bishop, while having an open mind and loving heart for those within and outside our Church who faithfully struggle with their beliefs.
- be able to act in accordance with the Canons of the Episcopal Church while keeping in mind that earthly institutions only imperfectly reflect the glory of God.
- be a faithful steward of God's creation, including his or her own body and health.
- be intellectually competent and able to grow in his or her understanding of theological, ethical and social issues.
- be psychologically sound and have demonstrated insight into his or her own emotional issues.
- strive to pattern his or her ethical life after the example of Jesus.
- have a clear sense of call affirmed by a local faith community.
- be settled and active in the life of a congregation in the Diocese of Vermont.
- accept worship, prayer, and Scripture as an integral part of his or her life.

THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS FOR THE ORDINATION OF DEACONS

This handbook addresses the discernment process for the Ordination of deacons.

(There is separate handbook for those discerning a call to priesthood.)

Provisions for the Ordination and Life and Work of Deacons can be found in Title III, Canons 6 & 7 of *The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church*

http://www.episcopalarchives.org/pdf/CnC/CandC_2012pp67-125.pdf

DISCERNMENT IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION/FAITH GROUP

In this first stage, the person must articulate his or her sense of call. The member of the Clergy helps the person explore this sense of call, ascertains whether the call is genuine, and determines whether the person's call is to the Diaconate or to another expression of ministry.

At the parish level, the process of discerning a call to ordained ministry has two parts: first is the affirmation of the person's inward sense of call by the member of the Clergy; second is the affirmation of the call by members of the parish, including the Vestry.

When a confirmed adult communicant in good standing desires to explore a sense of call to be a deacon, he or she may initiate the discernment process. Nevertheless, members of the congregation, or the member of the Clergy, may also initiate the discernment process through recognition of persons who exhibit "diaconal lives" and engage in "diaconal ministries".

MEMBER OF THE CLERGY'S RESPONSIBILITY IN THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

Because the member of the Clergy has important firsthand knowledge of an applicant's gifts and skills, he/she has a crucial responsibility at this stage of the process. If a decision not to move a person forward in the process is to be made at all, it is best made at this point. It is preferable to deny the applicant permission to continue in the process rather than to allow him or her to proceed with no genuine prospect of Ordination. No one is served well—the person, the parish, or the Church—if the member of the Clergy does not accept the serious responsibility of evaluation and decision.

The Member of the Clergy must meet with the person for a period of no less than six months and for a minimum of five meetings before the congregation's formal discernment process begins."

Accordingly, the member of the Clergy must examine the issues that might give rise to questions about the person's suitability for ordained ministry. These issues include the person's personal history and psychology, goals for ministry, personal faith, and theological understanding. If the applicant has previously been refused admission as a Candidate in any other Diocese, or once admitted, has afterwards ceased to be a Candidate, the circumstances of refusal or cessation should be explored. The member of the Clergy and applicant should be aware that according to Canon III.6.3.c, a letter from the Bishop of the Diocese where refusal or cessation occurred will be required before Postulancy. This letter must declare the cause of refusal or cessation.

If the member of the Clergy has any questions regarding the process or the person's particular circumstances, he or she should confer with the Chair of the Commission on Ministry. The Commission on Ministry/Committee on Discernment (COM/COD) can provide concrete and practical assistance to the member of the Clergy in the discernment process.

DECISION OF THE MEMBER OF THE CLERGY

If the member of the Clergy supports the person's entering the process of discernment within the parish, she/he will inform the person of this decision. The member of the Clergy must notify the Chair of the diocesan Commission On Ministry/Committee On Discernment (COM/COD) of the intention to form a Parish Discernment Committee (PDCOM). The Chair of the COM/COD will appoint a member of the COM/COD as an Advisor to the PDCOM. The Advisor should be invited to attend the first meeting of the PDCOM to assist in clarifying the steps of the discernment process. The role of the Advisor is to support the PDCOM throughout its process.

At any point the member of the Clergy may decide that she/he cannot in good conscience support the person's pursuit of Ordination. The member of the Clergy may make one of two determinations:

1. cannot affirm the persons' perceived sense of call and does not foresee a change of his or her opinion.
2. cannot affirm the person's perceived sense of call *at this time* but is willing to continue to work with the person and to re-evaluate at some future time.

PARISH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE ON ORDAINED MINISTRY FORMED

If the member of the clergy supports the person's perceived sense of call, the member of the Clergy shall appoint a Parish Discernment Committee (PDCOM)). At least one member of a Parish Discernment Committee should be a member of the Vestry, and he or she will serve as a link to the Vestry. It is strongly suggested that one member of the committee be from another congregation. It is expected that the first meeting will include the appointed Advisor from the COM/COD. The COM/COD shall provide the Parish Discernment Committee with information and resources to help with its work. The Parish Discernment Committee must make its decision about the person independently of the member of the Clergy. A separate publication, *The Parish Discernment Handbook for the Diocese of Vermont* provides information needed by this Committee.

"The Committee's decision about the whether the person is suitable for ordination is a crucial part of the discernment process. After a period of no fewer than nine (9) months, and a minimum of five meetings, the parish discernment committee will make a decision about whether to recommend the person to the Member of the Clergy and Vestry as a potential Nominee."

THE PARISH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE'S (PDCOM) RECOMMENDATION

Positive recommendation: If the Parish Discernment Committee affirms the person's call, then they will inform him or her of this Nomination and clearly express the reasons for it. The Parish Discernment Committee then prepares a written report for the member of the Clergy and Vestry. The report will be given to the Bishop, and eventually to the COM/COD. Requirements for this report are outlined in the *Parish Discernment Handbook*.

Negative recommendation: The PDCOM may find that it cannot affirm the person's call to Ordination. The committee may make one of two determinations:

1. The Committee cannot affirm the person's call to Ordination and does not foresee a change of its opinion.
2. The Committee cannot affirm the persons' pursuit of Ordination *at this time* but is willing to continue to work with the person and to re-evaluate at some future time.

If the decision is negative or to postpone, The Parish Discernment Committee must clearly express to the person, in writing, the reasons for its decision. If the Parish Discernment Committee makes the decision to postpone, it must propose a timetable for re-evaluation. The Committee must indicate to the person the conditions under which support would be re-considered and the ways in which further measurement and evaluation will occur. Requirements for this report are outlined in the *Parish Discernment Handbook (Task V, a.- n.)*. The report will be given to the Bishop and eventually to the COM/COD.

NOMINATION AND SUPPORT

Following the discernment process outlined above, the PDCOM recommends Nomination to the vestry which considers the recommendation of the PDCOM and votes to nominate the person whom they believe is called to the Diaconate (see Forms 2 and 3).

The letter of support (Form 2) from the applicant's faith community must also include a statement committing the faith community to continue to involve itself in the Nominee's preparation for Ordination to the Diaconate and a pledge to contribute to the financial support of the person's preparation, per Canon 6.2(a). If it is a congregation, the letter shall be signed by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry and the member of the Clergy.

ONGOING DISCERNMENT

The involvement of the faith community does not end at this point. If the Bishop admits the person as a Postulant for Ordination to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Vermont, further letters of support will be required both at the time of application for Candidacy and at the time of application for Ordination to the Diaconate. Therefore, ongoing discernment on the part of the Nominee's faith community continues to be important to the individual's Ordination process.

ACCEPTANCE OF NOMINATION AND APPLICATION FOR POSTULANCY

The Nominee is responsible for submitting the following documents to the Bishop:

1. Form 1 Acceptance of Nomination and Application for Postulancy
(Applicant must accept Nomination in writing *via* the signature at the bottom of this form)
2. Form 2, Vestry Letter of Support for the Nominee
3. Form 3, Report from the PDCOM of local discernment process and its written assessment.
4. Certificates of baptism and confirmation.
5. A spiritual autobiography of no more than three pages

Note: If the Nominee has previously been refused admission as a Candidate in any other Diocese, or once admitted, has afterwards ceased to be a Candidate, a letter from the Bishop of the Diocese where refusal or cessation occurred will be required before Postulancy. It is the responsibility of the Nominee to request that this letter be sent to the Bishop of Vermont. In accordance with the Canons, this letter must declare the cause of refusal or cessation.

The Bishop has an initial interview with the Nominee. If the Bishop decides to continue the process, he/she will initiate a complete evaluation. The Bishop's office will provide the following forms:

1. Oxford Document Background Check
2. Physical Examination Form
3. Instructions and forms for the Psychological Examination Process
4. Life History Questionnaire
5. Behavior Screening Questionnaire
6. Information Release Form

A series of evaluative interviews must now be completed. The forms above and the evaluations listed below will be sent directly to the Bishop.

After reviewing this information, the Bishop will decide whether the Nominee may proceed with the discernment process. The *Information Release Form* gives members of the Commission on Ministry/Committee on Discernment and the Standing Committee access to the Nominee's file, including all reports and examination results, at the Bishop's discretion.

Evaluations: The Bishop has approved a list of professional evaluators and will designate those whom the Nominee may see. It is the Nominee's responsibility to arrange and pay for the following interviews and to provide the evaluators with the appropriate forms:

1. *Physical Examination:* The Nominee will schedule a physical examination with his or her personal physician and will take the *Physical Examination Form* to this examination. The physician will complete the form and send it directly to the Bishop's office.

2. *Psychological Examination*: The Nominee will schedule a psychological examination with a psychologist designated by the Bishop. The psychologist will complete the *Psychological Testing Form* and send it directly to the Bishop's office along with a written psychological report.
3. *Psychiatric Examination*: The Bishop may also require the Nominee to schedule a psychiatric examination with a psychiatrist designated by the Bishop. Prior to this examination, the Nominee will submit the *Life History Questionnaire*. The psychiatrist will complete the *Psychiatric Examination Form* and send it directly to the Bishop, along with the *Life History Questionnaire*. The psychiatrist will also send a detailed, written psychiatric report to the Bishop.

THE BISHOP DECIDES

When all the above information has been received and reviewed by the Bishop, the Bishop determines whether the Nominee may continue with the discernment process. If the Bishop chooses not to continue the discernment process, the Bishop will inform the Nominee of that decision.

If the Bishop chooses to continue the discernment process, the Chair of the COM/COD will contact the Nominee to schedule an interview for Postulancy

BECOMING A POSTULANT

The Chair of the COM/COD will invite the Nominee to meet with representatives from the COM/COD. The COM/COD explores the sense of call which has been affirmed by the Nominee's community of faith. The COM/COD recommends action to the Bishop. The Bishop alone has the authority to designate a Nominee as a Postulant.

DURING POSTULANCY

For convenience sake, persons in the process of discernment with the Bishop and COM/COD, whether Nominees, Postulants or Candidates, also may be referred to as Persons In Process (PIPs).

Postulants shall pursue a program of preparation for Ordination to the Diaconate developed by the Bishop, the COM/COD and the Deacons' Council.¹ The program shall include theological training, practical experience, emotional development and spiritual formation.

Ministry Placement/Internship: The Bishop shall assign a Postulant to a **weekly** ministry placement and practical internship of approximately six to nine months, usually in a parish setting, supervised by the priest in charge of that congregation.

¹ Currently Education for Ministry (EFM) at a diocesan site or online are deemed to be sufficient theological preparation. A subcommittee of the COM is also working on the development of a Deacons' College with format and content to be determined, which would meet this requirement.

Ember Day Letters: Each Postulant for Ordination to the Diaconate shall communicate with the Bishop by letter, four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Postulant's academic, diaconal, human, spiritual and practical development. The Ember Days occur on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays four times annually, following the Third Sunday of Advent, the First Sunday in Lent, the Day of Pentecost, and the Feast of the Holy Cross.

COM/COD Liaison: When a PIP become a postulant, she/he is assigned a liaison from the COM/COD who will assist her/him and provide support throughout the discernment process. The liaison is the PIPs direct connection to the COM/COD. The liaison will maintain regular contact with the PIP who should feel free to contact him/her whenever necessary.

Deacon's Council: The Postulant also works with the Deacons' Council to establish a formation program in order to meet the requirements as set forth in *Resources for the Formation of Deacons in the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont*.

The Deacon Mentor: The Deacons' Council shall appoint a Deacon Mentor who will assist the PIP in outlining the specifics of her/his plan for discernment and academic, spiritual, and emotional formation. The Deacon Mentor shall meet periodically with the PIP regarding resources and strategies for fulfilling her/his formation plan and periodically report that progress to the Deacons' Council and to the COM/COD liaison. The Deacon Mentor may call upon other church-wide resources to assist in the development of the Portfolio, including seminaries and other educational institutions.

The Portfolio: The Deacon Mentor assists the Postulant in developing a Portfolio which is both a stimulus to reflection and discernment and also serves as on-going documentation of progress in meeting the requirements for Ordination and presents the information in an organized format for review by the COM/COD.

CANDIDACY

After a period of no fewer than six months after admission to Postulancy, and having completed one half of the recommended course of canonical academic studies, and in consultation with her/his Deacon Mentor and the liaison from the COM/COD, a Postulant may apply to the Bishop and COM/COD to become a Candidate for Ordination. The Postulant is responsible for submitting the following documents to the Bishop and COM/COD:

1. Form 4 Application for Candidacy
2. Form 5 Vestry Letter of Support
3. A summary of his/her formation plan
4. Portfolio to date
5. Written assessments from any ministerial placement or program undertaken as a Postulant

After interviewing the Postulant, the Committee on Discernment makes its recommendation:

- 1) affirms the Postulant's call to Ordination and recommends Candidacy.
- 2) does not affirm the Postulant's call to Ordination and does not foresee a change of its opinion.
- 3) does not affirm the Postulant's call to Ordination *at this time* but is willing to re-evaluate at some future time. In this case, the Chair of the Committee on Discernment will indicate to the Bishop, in writing, the conditions under which affirmation might be reconsidered.

THE STANDING COMMITTEE

When a Postulant applies for Candidacy, the Standing Committee becomes involved in the process. If the COM/COD and the Bishop are in agreement regarding the recommendation that the Postulant become a Candidate, the Postulant will be informed. The Chair of the COM/COD

will forward this recommendation and an Executive Summary of the discernment process with the Postulant to the Standing Committee for their discernment and action. The Standing Committee will review the recommendation and the Executive Summary and will interview the Postulant. A positive vote from the Standing Committee is necessary for a Postulant to become a Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate. The Bishop will inform the Postulant as to the decision of the Standing Committee.

CANDIDACY AND FORMATION

The period of Candidacy will include continuing formation and discernment and, when possible, will occur in community with others who are preparing for the Diaconate or for other ministry.

Some elements of ongoing formation for Candidates include, but are not limited to:

Ember Day Letters: Candidates continue to communicate with the Bishop four times a year on the Ember Days.

Liaison: Each Candidate will continue in relationship with a Deacon Mentor and a Liaison from the COM/COD who will assist the Candidate and provide support throughout the ongoing process.

Spiritual Direction: Spiritual growth is aided by intellectual and emotional exploration of and conscious reflection on one's relationship with God. Meeting with a spiritual director, guide or intentional group allows one to strengthen the capacity for such reflection. The Committee on Discernment expects candidates to give serious attention to this dimension of discernment and formation.

Training: During the formation phase the Candidate will receive training and certification in the areas of anti-racism, sexual misconduct and other matters regarding Title IV of the Canons of the Episcopal Church.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE): focuses on the student as pastor. It gives the student the opportunity to reflect on his or her ways of relating interpersonally and to develop his or her pastoral skills in a structured environment. In addition, CPE strengthens the student's identity and self awareness as a pastor. CPE, or another similar preparation program approved by the COM/COD, is required of a Candidate before Ordination occurs.

Ongoing Evaluation: The COM/COD and Deacon's Council shall evaluate each Candidate's progress. In addition, the Committee on Discernment may request written evaluations from those involved in the Candidate's formation.

Termination: *At the Bishop's sole discretion, any Candidate may be removed from the list of Candidates; written notice of the removal will be given to the Candidate, the Standing Committee, the Commission on Ministry/ Committee on Discernment and the member of the Clergy in charge of the nominating congregation.*

MINISTRY PROJECT

The Ministry Project is a major learning and formation experience during Candidacy. The project may take place in a parish, or in a community service agency, for no fewer than six (6) months. While each Candidate's ministry project will be different, the following are requisite components:

Supervision: If the project is in the Candidate's sponsoring parish, the member of the Clergy will usually be the Supervisor. If the project is in another parish of the diocese, the Supervisor will usually be the member of the Clergy serving that parish. If the ministry project is in a community agency, the Supervisor will usually be a staff member of that agency, who will meet with and evaluate the Candidate. This Supervisor must be approved by the Bishop.

Contract: The Candidate and Supervisor must develop a written ministry contract specifying the Candidate's responsibilities and a method for evaluation. The COM/COD can be a resource in developing the contract.

Evaluation: A written evaluation of the Candidate's ministry must be submitted to the Bishop's office by the Supervisor at the end of the project. The Bishop's office will submit the written evaluation to the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment. Using the written evaluation, together with all the data from the parish and diocesan discernment processes, the COM/COD may attest to the Candidate's completion of the ministry project.

CANONICAL EXAMINATION

The Bishop, in consultation with the COM/COD and the Deacons' Council, shall determine the length of time and extent of formation needed to prepare each Candidate for Ordination. It is the responsibility of the Deacons' Council to prepare each Candidate for a written examination to assess proficiency in the canonical subjects below. This examination is to be developed, administered, and evaluated in concert with the COM/COD. While the examination is an important component, it is one of many factors used to evaluate the Candidate's basic proficiency in the general areas defined by *Canon III.6.f.* and in the additional areas specified by the Diocese of Vermont.

1. Academic Studies, including: The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church.
2. Diakonia and the Diaconate.
3. Human Awareness and Understanding.
4. Spiritual Development and Discipline.
5. Practical Training and Experience.

The Episcopal Diocese of Vermont also requires the following additional competencies:

1. Worship
2. Contemporary Social Issues
3. Christian Evangelism and Education
4. Moral Theology and Ethics

Upon successful completion of the written assessment regarding the Candidate's readiness for Ordination, and interview by the COM/COD, the COM/COD shall provide a written report to the Standing Committee. All evaluations, assessments and recommendations shall also be made available to the Standing Committee. Upon certification in writing by the Standing Committee that all canonical requirements have been met and that there is no sufficient objection, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate a Deacon. Upon notification by the Bishop, the Candidate may apply for Ordination to the Diaconate (Form 7).

Time Frames

The Bishop, in consultation with the COM/COD and the Deacons' Council, shall determine the length of time and extent of formation needed to prepare each Candidate for Ordination. Ordination may not occur until at least eighteen months after acceptance of Nomination by the Nominee and no sooner than six months since admission as a Candidate.

Please note: If the medical, psychological, and background evaluations have taken place more than thirty-six (36) months prior to Ordination, they must be updated. Finally, before Ordination each Candidate must have reached age twenty-four and made application for Ordination.

APPENDIX A

FORMS

FOR THE DIACONAL DISCERNMENT PROCESS

***Form 1: Acceptance of Nomination and Application for Postulancy
for Ordination to the Diaconate***

NAME _____ *DATE OF BIRTH* _____
ADDRESS _____

Length of time in the Diocese of Vermont: _____
Sponsoring congregation/faith community: _____

Date of Baptism: _____ Denomination _____
Place _____
Date of Confirmation: _____ Denomination _____
Place _____

Have you ever applied for postulancy, in this diocese or another diocese? Yes No

- If yes, explain circumstances and outcome, and attach to this form.

Have you ever been nominated for ordination to the diaconate in another diocese? Yes No

- If yes, explain circumstances and outcome, and attach to this form.

Please check the levels of post-secondary education you have attained:

- Baccalaureate degree
Name of the institution and date of completion: _____
- Master's degree
Name of the institution and date of completion: _____
- Professional degree/certification:
Name of the institution and date of completion: _____
- Doctoral degree
Name of the institution and date of completion: _____
- Other certificate or degree programs:
Name of the institution and date of completion: _____

Please attach to this form the following:

- certificates of baptism and confirmation
- a narrative description of the discernment process exercised by you and your sponsoring congregation or faith community.
- a spiritual autobiography of no more than three pages
- the signed Letter of Congregation/Faith Community support (Form 2)
- a copy of the written report from the PDCOM (Form 3)

I accept Nomination for Ordination to the Diaconate and hereby, respectfully, apply for Postulancy.

Signature _____ *Date* _____

Full Name of Nominee: _____

Form 2: Vestry Letter of Support for Nomination to Postulancy:
(First letter of support)

NAME _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____
ADDRESS _____

Dear Bishop Ely:

*We, the undersigned, communicants of _____
in the town of _____
pledge our support of the aforementioned person who is hereby nominated for Postulancy for
Ordination to the Diaconate. Furthermore, we pledge our commitment to continue our
discernment ministry, including financial support, during this Nominee's process of formation.
We will endeavor to involve our entire faith community in our responsibility to help this person
prepare for Ordination to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Vermont.*

*[The letter must be signed and dated by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry of the parish, and
signed and dated by the Member of the Clergy exercising oversight. If the discernment
community is not a parish, the letter must be signed by a two-thirds majority of an equivalent
governing body and the community's leader or executive.]*

Vestry members

Clergy member or executive _____ *Date* _____

Form 3: Report from Parish Discernment Committee

Full Name of Nominee _____

Sponsoring congregation/faith community _____

Please provide a description of the process of discernment by which the nominee has been identified for ordination to the diaconate. Refer to the Parish Discernment Committee on Ministry Handbook. (Use additional sheets as needed)

PDCOM Members:

PDCOM Member from another congregation _____

(signed) PDCOM Chair: _____ Date: _____

***Form 4: Application for Candidacy for
Ordination to the Diaconate***

NAME _____ *DATE OF BIRTH* _____
ADDRESS _____

Sponsoring congregation/faith community: _____
Date Admitted to Postulancy _____

Required documents:

- a reflection paper of no more than 500 words describing why you feel ready to apply for Candidacy.
- transcripts of any academic courses and grades received since you applied for Postulancy
- a summary of your formation plan
- an assessment of portfolio progress to date from mentor
- Form 5: Letter of support from vestry (Second Letter of Support) for Postulant seeking Candidacy

Send the originals to the Bishop's office and copies to the Chair of the COM/COD

Signed _____

Full name _____

Date _____

***Form 5: Vestry Letter of Support for Candidacy:
(Second letter of support)***

NAME _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____
ADDRESS _____

Dear Bishop Ely:

*We, the undersigned, communicants of _____
in the town of _____
pledge our support of the aforementioned person who is hereby recommended for Candidacy for
Ordination to the Diaconate. Furthermore, we pledge our commitment to continue our
discernment ministry, including financial support, during this Person in Process's formation.
We will endeavor to involve our entire faith community in our responsibility to help this person
prepare for Ordination to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Vermont.*

*[The letter must be signed and dated by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry of the parish, and
signed and dated by the Member of the Clergy exercising oversight. If the discernment
community is not a parish, the letter must be signed by a two-thirds majority of an equivalent
governing body and the community's leader or executive.]*

Vestry members

Clergy member or executive _____ Date _____

***Form 6: Recommendation from the Committee on Discernment:
Certificate of Readiness***

NAME _____ *DATE OF BIRTH* _____

ADDRESS _____

The Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment affirms the readiness of this Postulant to be admitted as a Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Vermont.

Chair _____ *Date* _____

Form 7: Application for Ordination to the Diaconate

NAME _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

ADDRESS _____

Admitted as a Postulant on _____

Admitted as a Candidate on _____

Have you ever applied for ordination, in this diocese or another diocese? Yes No

- If yes, explain circumstances and outcome, and attach explanation to this form.

Please attach the following documents to this application:

- third letter of support from Vestry (Form 8)
- a 500-word reflection paper from the Candidate describing why he/she feels ready to be ordained
- transcripts of all academic courses and grades received during the time of formation (if not previously submitted at time of application for Candidacy)
- letters from the director of a local study program (if applicable) recommending ordination of the Candidate
- CPE supervisor's and student's evaluations, or supervisor's and student's evaluation of approved alternative training
- evaluation of supervisor from field work/parish placement assignment;
- written evaluation from the supervisor of the candidate's Ministry Project
- documentation of sexual misconduct prevention training
- documentation of anti-racism training
- Ministry Project evaluation from the supervisor
- Canonical Examination evaluation
- Certificate of Readiness for ordination from Deacons' Council
- any other reports, records, or evaluations that have been requested

I respectfully request consideration to be ordained a Deacon in the Diocese of Vermont.

Signature _____

Full Name of Candidate: _____

Date _____

Form 8: Vestry Letter of Support for Ordination to the Diaconate:
(Third letter of support)

NAME _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____
ADDRESS _____

Dear Bishop Ely:

*We, the undersigned, communicants of _____
in the town of _____
affirm our support of the aforementioned person who is applying for Ordination to the
Diaconate.*

*[The letter must be signed and dated by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry of the parish, and
signed and dated by the Member of the Clergy exercising oversight. If the discernment
community is not a parish, the letter must be signed by a two-thirds majority of an equivalent
governing body and the community's leader or executive.]*

Vestry members

Clergy member or executive _____ Date _____

***Form 9: Deacons' Council Letter of Support for Ordination to the
Diaconate: Certificate of Readiness***

NAME _____ *DATE OF BIRTH* _____

ADDRESS _____

We, the members of the Deacons' Council, affirm the readiness of this Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate in the Diocese of Vermont.

Deacons:

Deacon Mentor: _____

Date _____

***Form 10: Recommendation from Committee on Discernment
for Ordination to the Diaconate:
Certificate of Readiness***

NAME _____ *DATE OF BIRTH* _____

ADDRESS _____

We attest to readiness of this Candidate and we recommend this person for ordination to the Diaconate.

Chair _____

Date _____

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF STEPS IN THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS FOR ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

APPENDIX B

SUMMARY OF STEPS IN THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS FOR ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

THE STEPS AT THE PARISH OR COMMUNITY OF FAITH LEVEL

1. Applicant meets with the Member of the Clergy in local parish/faith group
2. Member of the Clergy affirms the sense of call
3. Chair of the COD/COM notified and assigns advisor to PDCOM
4. Parish Discernment Committee (PDCOM) is formed and meets with COM/COD advisor
5. The PDCOM meets several times with applicant following steps of Parish Discernment Handbook
6. The PDCOM makes a decision
7. PDCOM recommends to Vestry and Clergy
8. The Vestry nominates person
9. Form 1 Nominee signs Acceptance and Application for Postulancy sent to the Bishop
10. Form 2 Letter of Support from Vestry sent to the Bishop
11. Form 3 Detailed Description of Parish Discernment Process sent to the Bishop

STEPS FROM NOMINEE TO POSTULANCY

1. Bishop has initial meeting with Nominee. If makes decision to proceed with process, requires the evaluations and documents below to be completed.
Nominee receives the following forms from the Bishop's office:
 - *Oxford Document Background Check*
 - *Physical Examination Form*
 - *Instructions and forms for the Psychological Examination Process*
 - *Life History Questionnaire*
 - *Behavior Screening Questionnaire*
 - *Information Release Form*
2. It is the responsibility of the Nominee to schedule the appropriate appointments and return all completed forms to the Bishop's office:
3. Bishop meets with Nominee following examinations
4. Bishop decides
5. Nominee recommended to meet with COM/COD for Postulancy
6. Nominee interviews with the COM/COD
7. The COM/COD makes a decision with recommendations to the Bishop
8. The Bishop makes the Nominee a Postulant
9. The COM/COD appoints a liaison for the new Postulant
10. The Postulant continues with the discernment process within the parish, and proceeds with formation as guided by the Deacons' Council, a Deacon Mentor and COM/COD liaison.

APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY

1. Readiness for Candidacy determined with Deacon Mentor and liaison from COM/COD
2. Form 4 Application for Candidacy submitted to Bishop and Chair of COM/COD
3. Form 5 Vestry Letter of Support (Second Letter)
4. Postulant meets with COM/COD
5. Form 6 The COM/COD makes a decision with recommendations to the Bishop and Standing Committee
6. The Standing Committee interviews the Postulant
7. The Standing Committee makes its recommendation to the Bishop
8. The Bishop admits Postulant to Candidacy

APPLICATION FOR ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

1. Form 7 Application for Ordination with specified documentation submitted to the Bishop
2. Form 8 Vestry Letter of Support (Third Letter) submitted to the Bishop
3. Candidate documents satisfactory completion of Portfolio, Ministry Project and Academic Preparation.
4. Candidate passes Canonical Examination prepared by Deacon's Council and COM/COD.
5. Form 9 Certificate of Readiness from Deacons' Council
6. Candidate meets with the COM/COD
7. Form 10 COM/COD makes its recommendation to the Bishop
8. Following a positive decision by the Bishop, recommendations will be made to the Standing Committee of the Diocese which may or may not meet with the Candidate
9. The Standing Committee authorizes the Bishop to proceed with the ordination
10. The Bishop ordains the candidate to the diaconate

If the medical, psychological, and background evaluations have taken place more than thirty-six (36) months prior to ordination, they must be updated.

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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Advisor to Parish Discernment Committee: When the chair of the COM/COD is notified by a local clergyperson that s/he is calling for the formation of a Parish Discernment Committee, a member of the COM/COD shall be appointed to meet with and advise the local discernment committee on processes and protocols.

Candidacy: The continued period of discernment following Postulancy, during which a Ministry Project is undertaken and also during which continued discernment and preparation for ordination to the diaconate continues, including completion of the Portfolio and continued academic studies culminating in demonstration of proficiency in the canonical areas by means of a canonical examination.

Canonical Exam: A written examination, developed, administered, and evaluated by the Deacons' Council in concert with the COM/COD used to evaluate a Candidate's basic proficiency in the general subject areas defined by *Canon III.6.f*, as well as additional subjects specified by the Diocese of Vermont.

Canons: Church laws passed by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. Canon III, of *The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church* addresses "Ministry".

Commission on Ministry/Committee on Discernment (COM/COD): The group of six clergy and six laypersons tasked with overseeing the discernment process of persons for ordination and who make recommendations to the Bishop and Standing Committee

Deacons: In all that they do, deacons center on fulfilling the role as an image of Christ by being called and sent to serve in the world, modeling service to mobilize the baptized for service.

Deacon Mentor: The Deacons' Council shall appoint a Deacon Mentor who will assist the PIP (Postulant and Candidate) in outlining the specifics of her/his plan for discernment and academic, spiritual and emotional formation.

Diaconate: The full and equal order of ordained ministry for service to God's world and its people as a life-long commitment.

Diaconate, Transitional: Diaconal ordination for persons who subsequently will be ordained to the priesthood, usually in six months to a year after being made deacons.

Discernment for Ordination as a Deacon: Some persons may sense that God is calling them to exercise their gifts in service to God's world as a deacon. The Diocese of Vermont sets out a process of discernment which begins with the local priest and congregation.

Discernment for Baptismal Ministry: Each baptized Christian is encouraged through prayer, individual reflection, and conversation with others in community, to seek in what ways her/his

particular spiritual gifts may be deployed for Christ's mission in the world either as a lay or ordained person.

Parish Discernment Committee (PDCOM): Three to five members of a congregation/faith community appointed by the clergyperson in charge to engage in a discernment process with a person identified by the clergyperson as someone who may have a vocation as an ordained person.

Ministry Project: A major learning and formation experience during Candidacy. The project may take place in a parish, or in a community service agency, for no fewer than six (6) months.

Nomination: A person whose sense of calling to ordination has been affirmed through a formal discernment process with the clergy and Parish Discernment Committee (PDCOM) of a local parish/faith community is nominated to proceed to further discernment with the Bishop, COM/COD and Standing Committee of the Diocese.

Nominee: A person so nominated.

Portfolio: The Deacon Mentor assists the Postulant in developing a Portfolio which is both a stimulus to reflection and discernment and also serves as on-going documentation of progress in meeting the requirements for ordination and presents the information in an organized format for review by the COM/COM/COD.

Postulant: A Nominee who has who has applied to and met with the bishop and who has completed physical and psychological examinations and various informational forms. The Nominee next meets with the COM/COD and if recommended to the Bishop is made a Postulant by the Bishop.

Postulancy: The period of continued discernment between Nomination and Candidacy during which the Postulant meets with the Deacons' Council, is assigned a Deacon Mentor and a liaison from the COM/COD, serves a pastoral internship in a ministry placement and begins development of a Portfolio.

Standing Committee: A committee of advice and counsel to the Bishop consisting of four laypersons and four clergy, elected by the Diocesan Convention. On recommendation by the COM/COD and Bishop, the Standing Committee interviews applicants for Candidacy and Ordination and makes recommendations to the Bishop.