

INTRODUCTION

The Commission on Ministry recognizes that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name. This ministry takes place in the normal setting of each person's daily life, as each of us lives out the Baptismal promise to seek and serve Christ in all people. Thus, ministry takes place in our homes and schools; in offices, and retail stores and auto repair shops; in hospitals, nursing homes, law courts and prisons; in playgrounds and fast food restaurants. It is through our everyday activity – through the ordinary and mundane as well as through the extraordinary – that we all, as baptized Christians, follow the Risen Christ.

It is the responsibility of leaders within our congregations, especially those who preach and teach, to bring this awareness of ministry to life. We must remember that ministry takes place in the world, in ways that may not even be obvious to others as a religious moment, and that only a relatively small part of Christian ministry takes place in churches or religious settings, or is even identifiable as religious in nature.

The Commission on Ministry will assist congregations in recognizing the ministry of the baptized. However, no entity alone can bring to life the amazing realization that each of us, joined to Christ in baptism, is already given the gifts for ministry, and ordained to minister in his name.

While the Commission on Ministry affirms the call of the baptized, it also recognizes that some are called to exercise their baptism through service in Holy Orders. Therefore, the Commission on Ministry has established guidelines for identifying and evaluating those who perceive a call to ordination. In addition to these guidelines for those who feel called to Holy Orders, the Diocese has a process for congregational strategies for supporting baptismal ministry, which the Commission commends to the diocesan community.

COMMISSIONS ON MINISTRY & BAPTISMAL MINISTRY

The Canons of the Episcopal Church mandate that each diocese makes provision for the affirmation and development of the ministry of all baptized persons, including:

- (a) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to minister in Christ's name, to identify their gifts with the help of the Church and to serve Christ's mission at all times and in all places.
- (b) Assistance in understanding that all baptized persons are called to sustain their ministries through commitment to life-long Christian formation.

OF DISCERNMENT

Furthermore, no person shall be denied access to the discernment process for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by the Canons. No right to licensing, ordination, or election is hereby established.

The Commission on Ministry is composed of priests, deacons, and lay persons. According to the National Canons: "The Commission shall advise and assist the Bishop in the determination of present and future opportunities and needs for the ministry of all baptized persons, and in the

design and oversight of the ongoing process for recruitment, discernment, and formation for ministry and assessment of readiness thereof.”

The Bishop and Commission shall provide encouragement, training and necessary resources to assist each congregation or other communities of faith in developing an ongoing process of community discernment appropriate to the cultural background, age and life experiences of all persons seeking direction in their call to ministry.

The Bishop and Commission shall actively solicit from congregations, schools and other youth organizations, college and university campus ministry centers, seminaries, and other communities of faith, names of persons whose demonstrated qualities of Christian commitment and potential for leadership and vision mark them as desirable candidates for positions of leadership in the Church. Furthermore, the Bishop, Commission, and the discernment community shall assist persons engaged in a process of ministry discernment to determine appropriate avenues for the expression and support of their ministries, either lay or ordained.

In the Diocese of Vermont, the Commission on Ministry comprises two interdependent bodies. The first, the Committee on Christian Formation, addresses “the opportunities and needs for the ministry of all the baptized” while the second, the Committee on Discernment, addresses “the ongoing process of oversight, recruitment, and discernment” of those who feel called to Holy Orders. The Handbook has been prepared by the latter Committee and by the Bishop.

THE LAYOUT OF THIS HANDBOOK

The Handbook addresses the discernment and ordination process for priest; it is divided into four parts:

- The discernment process (pp. 4-14)
- An index of forms and a summary of the steps, including a summarizing checklist (pp.15-17)
- A glossary of terms pertaining to the priesthood (pp. 18-19)
- The forms which must be submitted (pp. 20-33)

Any questions about the Handbook, or about the discernment process may be directed to the Bishop’s office, or to the Chair of the Commission on Ministry’s Committee on Discernment.

We are all Christian ministers by virtue of our baptism in Jesus Christ. Many are called 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 the Member of the Clergy and the faith community in which the person is an active member.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church set forth certain requirements for ordination. In addition, however, there are special qualities and attributes the Commission on Ministry 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 be 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.

GENERAL PROVISIONS
RESPECTING
ORDINATION

Title III, Canon 5, Sections 1, 2, and 3 address general provisions respecting ordination.

OF THE LIFE AND
WORK OF PRIESTS

A detailed description of continuing education, mentoring programs, appointments and deployment, Letters Dimissory, the duties of priests and rectors, licenses to officiate, and retirement of priests is contained in Title III, Canon 9 of The Constitution and Canons.

THE ORDINATION OF
PRIESTS

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.¹

When a confirmed adult communicant in good standing feels called to be a priest, 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 its recognition of people who exhibit priestly lives, and engage in presbyteral ministries. In this first stage, the person must articulate his or her sense of call; whereas, the Member of the Clergy helps the person explore this sense of call and ascertains whether he or she can support the call.

THE MEMBER OF THE
CLERGY'S
DISCERNMENT PROCESS

The Member of the Clergy has a crucial responsibility at this stage of the process. If a decision against the ordained ministry 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 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.

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 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's Committee on Discernment. However, the entire Commission on Ministry, including both of the subcommittees, can provide concrete and practical assistance to the Member of the Clergy in the discernment process.

¹ The term Member of the Clergy throughout this document may be taken by the Vicar, Priest-in-Charge, Interim Rector of a parish, or any other leader who exercises oversight in a faith community, or, subject to the permission of the Bishop, by a Priest of the Diocese. Likewise, the term "parish" throughout this document may also refer to any congregation or faith community.

THE DECISION OF THE
MEMBER OF THE
CLERGY

At any point during the period of meetings, the Member of the Clergy may decide that he or she 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 person's perceived sense of call and does not foresee a change of his or her opinion.²
- 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.

If the Member of the Clergy makes the second determination, he or she must propose a timetable for re-evaluation. The Member of the Clergy should clearly indicate to the person the conditions under which support would be considered.

If the Member of the Clergy decides that he or she supports the person's call to be a priest, then the Member of the Clergy will inform the person of this decision and clearly express the reasons for it. 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.

NOTIFICATION

When the Member of the Clergy has made a positive decision and has informed the person, and the Chair of the Committee on Discernment, the second stage of the parish discernment process begins. The Member of the Clergy must notify the Chair of the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment of his or her decision.

APPOINTMENT OF
ADVISOR

The Chair of the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment will appoint an advisor to provide guidance to the Member of the Clergy, and also, eventually, to the parish discernment committee

MINISTRY CONTRACT

The Member of the Clergy, with the person who feels called to ordination, must create a written contract for a specific ministry in the congregation. The contract should cover the approximate nine-month period during which the person will meet with the parish discernment committee. At the Member of the Clergy's discretion, the contract may begin before the parish discernment committee convenes. The contract should state the goals and responsibilities and specify a method of evaluating this ministry. The Committee on Discernment may have a part in this aspect of the discernment process.

² If the Member of the Clergy cannot support the person because of her or his attitudes relating to gender, or sexual orientation, or other issues of theological or political difference, the clergy person shall consult with the Bishop. The Bishop will arrange for another Member of the Clergy in another congregation to help shepherd the person through the discernment process.

THE PARISH
DISCERNMENT
COMMITTEE

The Member of the Clergy shall appoint a parish discernment committee³. 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.⁴ It is expected that the first meeting will include the Advisor from the Committee on Discernment, who can provide a parish discernment committee with information and resources to help with their process. The parish discernment committee must make its decision about the person independently of the Member of the Clergy's decision. The Committee's decision about 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 committee may find that it cannot affirm the person's call to ordination.

- 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 person's pursuit of ordination at this time but is willing to continue to work with the person, and to re-evaluate at some future time.

In either case, the parish discernment committee must clearly express to the person, in writing, the reasons for its decision. If the parish discernment committee makes the second determination, it must propose a timetable for re-evaluation; the Committee must indicate to the person the conditions under which support would be considered, and the ways in which measurement and evaluation will occur.

If the parish discernment committee affirms the person's call, then they will inform him or her of this affirmation, and clearly express the reasons for it. The parish discernment committee then prepares a written report for the Member of the Clergy and Vestry.

LETTER OF SUPPORT

Following the aforementioned discernment process, the parish discernment committee must nominate the person whom they believe is called to the priesthood. The congregation or other faith community must provide a letter of support, including a statement committing the congregation to involve itself in the Nominee's preparation for ordination to the priesthood. Conversations and decisions related to the congregation's financial support should occur at this time, especially if they have not yet occurred. The Letter of Support must be signed by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry and by the Member of the Clergy. The Vestry may if it wishes, ask to interview the person. The Letter of Support must be submitted to the Bishop and can be included as part of Form 2 on page 21 of this Handbook.

³ A separate handbook addresses the responsibilities and work of a parish discernment committee.

⁴ If the faith community is a congregation; Otherwise an equivalent body and its leader will suffice.

ONGOING
DISCERNMENT
AT THE PARISH

The discernment process does not end with the submission of the Letter of Support. If the Bishop admits the person as a Postulant for Holy Orders in the Diocese of Vermont, a second letter of support (called endorsement) will be required before ordination to the [transitional] Diaconate can occur. Therefore, ongoing discernment on the part of the Postulant, the faith community who sponsored the Nominee, the Bishop, and Committee on Discernment continues to be critical.

APPLICATION FOR
POSTULANCY

After the Letter of Support has been signed, the Nominee is responsible for making certain that the following documents are submitted to the Bishop:

- Application for Holy Orders (Form 1, p. 20)
- Letter of Support (Form 2, p. 21)
- Narrative description of the discernment process (Form 3, p. 22)
- A spiritual autobiography of no more than 3 pages
- Transcripts from all post-secondary institutions
- The ministry contract, and its evaluation
- The Church Pension Group's internet tool, PlanAhead
- Evidence of sexual misconduct prevention training within Province 1
- Evidence of anti-racism training

THE BISHOP'S
DECISION

Meeting with the Bishop: Once these forms have been received, the Bishop's office will contact the Nominee to schedule a meeting. This meeting gives the Nominee the opportunity to meet face to face with the Bishop, discuss his or her sense of call to ordained ministry, consult about financial resources, and clarify any remaining issues about the diocesan discernment process.

Following this meeting, the Bishop will decide whether the Nominee should proceed with the diocesan discernment process and will notify both the Nominee and the Chair of the Committee on Discernment of her decision.

The Bishop may make one of the following decisions:

- 1) The Bishop cannot affirm the person's call to ordination and does not foresee a change of her opinion.
- 2) The Bishop cannot affirm the person's call to ordination at this time but is willing to re-evaluate at some future time. The Bishop will indicate the conditions under which he will allow the Nominee to proceed with the diocesan discernment process.

If the Bishop decides that he supports the person's pursuit of ordination, then the next stage of the diocesan process begins.

FORMS SENT TO THE
NOMINEE FROM THE
BISHOP'S OFFICE

The Bishop's office will send the Nominee a set of forms. At the same time, the Bishop's office will initiate the Oxford Document Background and Public Records check. Forms for the Oxford process will be mailed directly to the Nominee from Oxford Document Management. The cost for this process will be reimbursed by the Nominee to the Diocese.

After reviewing these documents, the Bishop will decide whether the Nominee may proceed with the discernment process.

The Bishop has approved a list of professional evaluators and will designate those whom the Nominee may see. In general, the Nominee, the parish, and the diocese share equally in the expenses associated with these professional evaluations; each entity paying for 1/3 of the total cost. The Canon to the Ordinary can clarify questions about the psychological assessments and the financing of same. The Nominee is responsible for providing the evaluators with the forms.

EVALUATIONS

These forms, and the reports from the evaluative interviews, will be sent directly to the Bishop by the evaluators. At this stage of the process, only the Bishop will see this information. At the same time, the Bishop's office will initiate the Oxford Document Background and Public Records check. Forms for this process will be mailed directly to the Nominee from Oxford Document Management.

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 to the psychiatrist, which will be seen only by the psychiatrist and will remain in the psychiatrist's files. The psychiatrist will complete the Psychiatric Examination Form and send it directly to the Bishop, along with a detailed, written psychiatric report to the Bishop.

THE BISHOP DECIDES

When all the above information has been received and reviewed by the Bishop, and the Bishop has decided that the Nominee may continue with the discernment process, the Chair of the Committee on Discernment will contact the Nominee, and invite him or her to attend a regularly scheduled Discernment Conference. [Canon 8, Section 3 b and c]

THE COMMITTEE ON DISCERNMENT'S PROCESS

The Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment explores the sense of call which heretofore has been affirmed by the Member of the Clergy, the parish discernment committee, and has been attested to by the Vestry in the Letter of Support. The Commission on Ministry, in consultation with the Bishop, recommends action to the Bishop. However, the Bishop alone has the authority to designate a Nominee as a Postulant. At the end of the conference, the Nominee will be informed of a meeting time at which the chair of the Committee on Discernment and the Bishop will discuss the Commission's recommendation and the Bishop's decision. The Nominee will not be notified at the end of the conference of any recommendation or decision.

COMMITTEE ON DISCERNMENT RECOMMENDS

The Committee on Discernment may recommend one of the following:

- 1) The Committee on Discernment does not affirm the Nominee's call to ordination and does not foresee a change of its opinion.
- 2) The Committee on Discernment cannot affirm the Nominee's call to ordination at this time but is willing to re-evaluate at some future time. In this case, the Commission will indicate to the Bishop, in writing, the conditions under which affirmation might be reconsidered.

The Committee on Discernment may recommend the Nominee be admitted a Postulant for ordination to the priesthood.

THE BISHOP DECIDES; CHAIR OF COMMITTEE ON DISCERNMENT AND THE BISHOP MEET WITH NOMINEE

Regardless of the decision, both the Bishop and the Chair of the Committee on Discernment will meet with the Nominee at a previously arranged post-conference meeting to communicate the decision. The Nominee will not be notified of any decision at the conference itself. If the Bishop's decision is positive, the Nominee will become a Postulant for Holy Orders in the Diocese of Vermont, and his or her name will be duly recorded in the Book of Official Acts of the Diocese of Vermont. If the Bishop's decision is negative, the Bishop and the Chair of the Committee on Discernment will either suggest termination of the ordination process, or conditions for its continuation.

BISHOP NOTIFIES

Following the meeting with the new Postulant, the Bishop shall inform the Member of the Clergy, the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the head of any education institution which the Postulant may be attending or proposes to attend of the fact and date of the admission to Postulancy. [Canon 8, Section 3e]

TERMINATION

Any Postulant may be removed as a Postulant at the sole discretion of the Bishop. The Bishop shall give written notice of the removal to the Postulant and the Member of the Clergy, the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the head of any education institution the Postulant may be attending. [Canon 8, Section 3f]

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

No Bishop shall consider accepting as a Postulant any person who has been refused admission as a Candidate for ordination to the Priesthood in any other Diocese, or who, having been admitted, has afterwards ceased to be a Candidate, until receipt of a letter from the Bishop of the Diocese refusing admission, or in which the person has been a Candidate, declaring the cause of refusal or of cessation. If the Bishop decides to proceed the Bishop shall send the letter to the Commission on Ministry. [Canon 8, Section 3g]

FORMATION AND TRAINING [Canon 8, Section 4]

Postulants shall pursue the program of preparation for ordination to the Priesthood developed by the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry. The program shall include theological training, practical experience, emotional development, and spiritual formation. Whenever possible, formation for the priesthood shall take place in community, including other persons in preparation for the priesthood, a ministry team, or others preparing for ministry. In addition, formation shall take into account the local culture and each Postulant's background, age, occupation, and ministry.

If the Postulant has not previously obtained a baccalaureate degree, the Commission on Ministry, Bishop, and Postulant shall design a program of such additional academic work as may be necessary to prepare the Postulant to undertake a program of theological education. Prior education and learning from life experience may be considered as part of the formation required for the priesthood. Subject areas for study during this program of preparation shall include:

- 1) The Holy Scriptures;
- 2) Church History, including the Ecumenical Movement;
- 3) Christian Theology, including Missionary Theology and Missiology;
- 4) Christian Ethics and Moral Theology;
- 5) Studies in contemporary society, including racial and minority groups;
- 6) Liturgics and Church Music; Christian Worship and Music according to the contents and use of the Book of Common Prayer and the Hymnal, and authorized supplemental texts; and
- 7) Theory and practice of ministry.

LIAISON

Each Postulant will be assigned a liaison from the Committee on Discernment to assist the Postulant and to provide support throughout the process. The responsibility for maintaining contact between the Liaison and the Postulant is mutual.

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.

EMBER DAY LETTERS

Every Postulant shall communicate with the Bishop four times each year, on the Ember Days, about his or her formation. 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.

CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION (CPE)

Clinical Pastoral Education focuses on the development of pastoral skills. Participants reflect on their ways of relating interpersonally and develop their pastoral skills in a structured environment. At its best, CPE strengthens the student's identity and self-awareness. At least one unit (400 hours) of CPE at an accredited center (hospital or parish-based) must be completed. Either a full-time or part-time program is acceptable.

APPLICATION FOR CANDIDACY

After a period of no fewer than six months after admission to Postulancy and having completed at least one half of the recommended course of theology study, a Postulant may apply for admission to Candidacy. The Postulant is responsible for submitting the following documents:

- Application for Candidacy, sent to the Bishop, with a copy to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 4 p. 23).
- Letter of Support from the Postulant's congregation, with signatures, sent to the Bishop, with a copy to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 5 p. 24).
- A reflection paper of no more than 500 words must be submitted, describing why the Postulant feels ready to apply for Candidacy.
- Transcripts: records of all academic courses and grades received from seminary, or other curriculum approved by the Commission on Ministry.
- Recommendation from the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment attesting to the continuing formation of the Postulant (Form 6 p. 25).
- The final written Clinical Pastoral Education evaluations from the Postulant and the supervisor.
- Any other reports, records, or evaluations requested by the Bishop, or the Committee on Discernment.

THE COMMITTEE ON
DISCERNMENT MEETS
WITH THE POSTULANT

The Postulant will be invited to meet with the Committee on Discernment. This meeting may occur at one of the regularly scheduled discernment conferences, or at some other scheduled meeting. The Chair of the Committee on Discernment or the Postulant's Liaison shall communicate with the Postulant about the meeting's time and place. The purpose of the meeting is to determine the Postulant's readiness for Candidacy. The Committee makes a recommendation to the Bishop.

THE BISHOP'S
DECISION

Following a recommendation from the Committee on Discernment, the Bishop takes action on the Postulant's application, and may choose to meet with the Postulant. The Bishop shall inform the Candidate, the Member of the Clergy of the Candidate's congregation, the Committee on Discernment, the Standing Committee, and the Dean of the seminary.

CANDIDACY

Candidacy is a time of formation in preparation for ordination to the Priesthood. The period of Candidacy shall be no less than six months. During Candidacy the discernment process on the parish and diocesan levels continues. It is recommended that readers of this Handbook refer to the Constitution and Canons to learn more about Candidacy. At his sole discretion, the Bishop may remove a Candidate. [see pages 123-124 in the 2018 edition]

ANNUAL RETREAT

Once annually, Postulants and Candidates are required to attend a weekend-long retreat with the Bishop, the Committee on Discernment, and the Standing Committee.

APPLICATION FOR
ORDINATION TO THE
TRANSITIONAL
DIACONATE

After a period of no fewer than six (6) months since admission to Candidacy, a Candidate may apply for ordination to the transitional Diaconate. The Postulant is responsible for seeing that the following documents are submitted:

- Application for ordination to the transitional Diaconate, sent to the Bishop with copies to the President of the Standing Committee, and to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 7 p. 26).
- Letter of Support from the Candidate's parish or faith community, sent to the Bishop, with copies to the President of the Standing Committee, and to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 8 p. 27).
- Certificate from the seminary or other program of preparation showing the Candidate's scholastic record and giving an evaluation with a recommendation (this does not need to conform to the format in this Handbook). This is sent to the Bishop, the President of the Standing Committee, and the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 9 p. 28).
- Certificate from the Committee on Discernment giving a recommendation regarding ordination; this is for the Standing Committee (Form 10, p. 29).

THE STANDING
COMMITTEE

The Standing Committee considers the required papers (listed on page 12) and two additional certificates. The first certificate is given to them by the Bishop, on which he has listed the dates of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy. The second certificate is given to them by the Committee on Discernment, and it contains a recommendation regarding ordination to the transitional Diaconate. Upon receipt of these papers, the Standing Committee certifies that the canonical requirements for ordination have been met; they recommend ordination, by a testimonial addressed to the Bishop in the form specified on p. 127 of the Constitutions and Canons.

BISHOP ACTS

Once the testimonial from the Standing Committee is given to the Bishop, and there being no sufficient objection, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate a transitional Deacon.

APPLICATION FOR
ORDINATION TO THE
PRIESTHOOD

After a period of no fewer than six (6) months since ordination, the transitional Deacon may apply for ordination to the Priesthood. The transitional Deacon is responsible for seeing that the following documents are submitted:

- Application for ordination to the priesthood, sent to the Bishop with copies to the President of the Standing Committee, and to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 11, p. 30).
- Letter of Support from the Candidate's parish or faith community, sent to the Bishop, with copies to the President of the Standing Committee, and to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 12, p. 31).
- Certificate from the seminary or other program of preparation showing the transitional Deacon's scholastic record and giving an evaluation with a recommendation regarding ordination to the Priesthood. This must be sent to the Bishop, with copies to the President of the Standing Committee, and to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 13, p. 32).
- Statement from the Committee on Discernment attesting to the successful completion of the program of formation and recommending the transitional deacon for ordination to the Priesthood. The Chair of the Committee on Discernment will submit this to the Bishop, and the Bishop's office will furnish a copy for the President of the Standing Committee (Form 14, p. 33).

THE STANDING
COMMITTEE

The Standing Committee reviews the information listed above (Forms 7-14). A majority of the members consenting, the Standing Committee shall certify that the canonical requirements for ordination to the Priesthood have been met and there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, doctrinal, or spiritual grounds and that they recommend ordination. This certification shall be by a testimonial addressed to the Bishop in the form specified on p. 129 of the Constitution and Canons.

BISHOP ACTS

Once the testimonial is presented to the Bishop, the Bishop may ordain the transitional Deacon to the Priesthood.

EVIDENCE OF
APPOINTMENT

A transitional Deacon shall not be ordained to the Priesthood until having been appointed to serve in a Parochial Cure within the jurisdiction of this Church, or as a Missionary under the Ecclesiastical Authority. [Canon 8, section 7 e]

INDEX OF FORMS

FOR POSTULANCY;
SUBMITTED TO THE
BISHOP

- Application for Holy Orders (Form 1 p. 20)
- Letter of Support (Form 2 p. 21)
- Report from parish discernment committee (Form 3 p.22)
- Spiritual autobiography
- Transcripts from all post-secondary educational institutions attended
- Ministry contract and its evaluation
- Church Pension Group's internet tool, PlanAhead
- Evidence of sexual misconduct prevention training within Province 1
- Evidence of anti-racism training

The following two documents are sent to the Bishop from the Member of the Clergy:

FORMS SENT TO THE
APPLICANT FROM THE
BISHOP'S OFFICE,
COMPLETED BY THE
APPLICANT, AND THEN
RETURNED TO THE
BISHOP'S OFFICE

- Confidential report from the parish discernment committee to Member of the Clergy and the Vestry
- Recommendation for Postulancy from the Member of the Clergy

- Physical Examination Form
- Life History Questionnaire
- Behavior Screening Questionnaire
- Information Release Form

FOR CANDIDACY;
SUBMITTED TO THE
BISHOP

- Application for Candidacy (two copies) sent to the Bishop and to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 4 p. 23)
- Letter of Support (two copies) from sponsoring parish sent to the Bishop and to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 5 p. 24)
- A reflection paper (two copies) of no more than 3 pages must be submitted to the Bishop and to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment, describing why the Postulant feels ready to apply for Candidacy.
- Transcripts of all academic courses and grades received.
- Statement from the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment attesting to the continuing formation of the Postulant, submitted by the Chair of the Committee on Discernment (Form 6, p. 25).
- The final written CPE evaluations of both the Postulant and the supervisor.

INDEX OF FORMS continued

FOR ORDINATION:

CANDIDATE SUBMITS TO THE BISHOP, THE CHAIR OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE, AND THE CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON DISCERNMENT

- Application for ordination to the transitional Diaconate (Form 7 p. 26)
- Letter of Support from the Candidate's congregation (Form 8 p. 27)
- Certificate from the seminary or other program of preparation showing the Candidate's scholastic record, and giving an evaluation and recommendation (Form 9 p. 28).

BISHOP SUBMITS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE

- Certificates giving the dates of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy
- Certificate from the Committee on Discernment giving a recommendation regarding ordination to the transitional Diaconate (Form 10 p. 29).

THE STANDING COMMITTEE SUBMITS TO THE BISHOP

- Testimonial in the form specified [Canon 8, Section 6f]

FOR ORDINATION:

At least six months since ordination as a transitional Deacon, and so long as the person is 24 years of age, and insofar as the medical, psychological, and background check have occurred within the last 36 months, the person may be ordained a priest. The Transitional Deacon submits the following to the Bishop:

TRANSITIONAL DEACON SUBMITS TO THE BISHOP

- Application for Ordination to Priesthood (Form 11 p. 30)
- Letter of Support from the congregation (Form 12 p. 31)

BISHOP SUBMITS TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE

- Evidence of admission to Postulancy, Candidacy, and ordination as a Deacon
- Certificate of Scholastic Record from the seminary or other program of preparation (Form 13, p. 32).
- Statement from the Committee on Discernment attesting to the successful completion of the program of formation, and recommending the transitional Deacon for ordination to the priesthood (Form 14, p. 33).

SUMMARY OF THE STEPS

MEMBER OF THE CLERGY AND COMMUNITY OF FAITH PROCESSES

- Applicant meets with the Member of the Clergy for 6 months
- Member of the Clergy affirms the applicant's sense of call; continues parish process:
- Ministry contract developed
- Applicant meets with a parish discernment committee for 9 months
- The parish discernment committee recommends action to the Vestry
- Member of the Clergy and the Vestry submit Letter of Support

THE BISHOP'S AND THE DIOCESE'S PROCESSES

FOR POSTULANCY

- Required documents are submitted to Bishop
- Bishop meets with Nominee
- Bishop gives approval for Nominee to continue diocesan process
- Nominee has physical/ psychiatric/ psychological evaluations
- Bishop gives approval for Nominee to continue process
- The Nominee attends a discernment conference to meet with the Committee on Discernment
- The Committee on Discernment makes a recommendation to the Bishop
- The Bishop admits the Nominee to Postulancy

FOR CANDIDACY

- Required documents are submitted to Bishop
- Postulant meets with the Committee on Discernment no fewer than six (6) months since becoming a Postulant.
- The Committee on Discernment makes a recommendation to the Bishop
- The Bishop admits the Postulant to Candidacy

FOR ORDINATION TO THE TRANSITIONAL DIACONATE

- Required documents are submitted to the Bishop
- The Bishop provides the Standing Committee with required documents
- The Standing Committee grants approval to the Bishop to proceed
- The Bishop ordains Candidate to the transitional Diaconate.

FOR ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

- Required documents are submitted to the Bishop
- The Bishop provides the Standing Committee with required documents.
- The Standing Committee grants approval to the Bishop to proceed
- The Bishop ordains transitional Deacon to the priesthood.

A Glossary

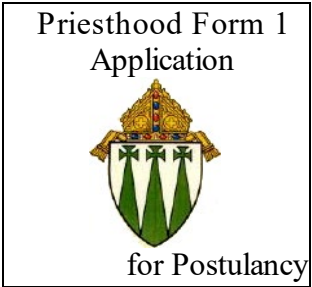
ADVISOR	The advisor is a person who serves on the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment who can assist a faith community, a Postulant, and a Member of the Clergy throughout the parish and diocesan discernment phases. If the Bishop admits a person as a Postulant, a Liaison is appointed. Advisors and Liaisons can work in conjunction.
FIELD EDUCATION	Parish-based field education is required for Postulants attending seminary. Normally this is done during the first or second academic year of study. The student is expected to consult with the Bishop to determine a site for this training.
CANDIDACY	A person desiring to be considered as a Candidate for ordination to the Priesthood shall apply to the Bishop. Such application shall utilize form 4 on p. 23 of this Handbook. At the Bishop's sole discretion, the Candidate may be removed from the list of Candidates. Written notice shall be given to the Candidate and to the Member of the Clergy, and to the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment.
COMMISSION ON MINISTRY	24 persons, composing laypersons and clergypersons, responsible for advising the Bishop in the areas of Christian formation and vocational discernment. The Commission on Ministry is led by two co-chairs, one of which leads the Committee on Discernment; the other leads the Committee on Christian Formation.
COMMITTEE ON DISCERNMENT	A sub-committee of the entire Commission on Ministry whose chief task is to advise the Bishop in identifying and selecting suitable persons for ordination to holy orders.
GENERAL ORDINATION EXAMINATION	The GOE evaluates academic competence in seven (7) areas, outlined in the Constitution and Canons (p.69), and listed on page 10 of this Handbook. The General Board of Examining Chaplains provides a written evaluation of the examination. While the GOE is important, the Diocese of Vermont uses the GOE as a diagnostic instrument; passage of the examination is not a prerequisite for ordination. However, the Bishop will make the final decision about whether competence has been demonstrated. Some additional study and testing may be required in those areas where the academic competency may be insufficient.
LIAISON	A Liaison is appointed by the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment after the Nominee becomes a Postulant. The Liaison is the Postulant's direct connection to the Committee on Discernment. The responsibility for communication between the Postulant and the Liaison is mutual.
MINISTRY CONTRACT	A document describing the learning program and its evaluation. The member of the clergy and the nominee collaborate in creating the ministry contract.
NOMINATION [Canon 6, Section 1a]	In the time following a discernment process in a congregation or other community of faith, a person may be nominated for ordination to the priesthood by his or her congregation. The nomination shall be made in writing (Form 1, p. 20), and must also include a spiritual autobiography of no more than three pages. In addition to Form 1 and the autobiography, the nomination shall include a letter of support by the Nominee's discernment community, (Form 2, p. 21), including a commitment on their part to involve themselves in the applicant's preparation for ordination to the priesthood. If the discernment community is within a congregation, the letter shall be signed by a 2/3 majority of the Vestry, as well as by the Member of the Clergy. Finally, the person must accept, in writing, the nomination.

POSTULANCY
[Canon 8, Section 2-3]

Is a time, no less than six months in length, for the exploration of a decision on the Postulant's call to the Priesthood. The responsibilities for the formation and preparation of Postulants (and Candidates) shall include: communication with the Bishop (Ember Day letters); the congregation's or other faith community's nomination of appropriate persons for the ordination process, and provision for their nurture and continuing support throughout the process; development and monitoring of a program of preparation in accordance with Canon III.8.4 to ensure that pastoral guidance is provided, this will be accomplished in collaboration among the Bishop, the Committee on Discernment, and the Postulant/ Candidate; certification of the Standing Committee that the canonical requirements have been met, and the Standing Committee's recommendation regarding ordination; at least yearly communication from the seminary or other formation program about the academic and personal qualifications of the Postulant or Candidate for the priesthood. For a complete description of Postulancy and other aspects of the ordination process refer to pp. 66-79 of the Constitution and Canons.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

In most cases, the Postulant is expected to complete the Master of Divinity. This usually requires a college degree and three years of full-time seminary education. The Bishop will discuss with the Postulant his preferences for theological education. The actual institution and the parameters of the academic program are finally the Bishop's decision to make. For example, if the applicant has not attended seminary but has a graduate degree in a field closely related to theological study, the Bishop may determine that less seminary work is required. In most cases, however, the Postulant will take a minimum of two (2) semesters of residential study at a seminary. It is the responsibility of the Postulant to complete the steps necessary for admission to a seminary. Financial arrangements are to be made by the Postulant in consultation with the Bishop and the financial aid officers of the seminaries. Any evaluations from the seminary discussing the Postulant's academic progress, will be filed at the Bishop's office and be made available for the Committee on Discernment and the Standing Committee. Possessing a graduate degree in theology, or having pursued a formation program is not a prerequisite to the discernment process. In other words, having a degree in theology does not negate the critical discernment of the local congregation, or of the diocese.



Full Name of Nominee _____
 [Include any other names you have used or have been known by]
 Length of time in the Diocese of Vermont _____
 Sponsoring congregation/ faith community _____

Date of Baptism _____

Date of Confirmation _____
 [attach certificates of baptism and confirmation to this form]

PREVIOUS APPLICATION

Have you ever applied for Postulancy, in this diocese or another diocese?
 Yes No
 If yes, explain circumstances and outcome, using the reverse side.

PREVIOUS NOMINATION

Have you ever been nominated for ordination to the priesthood in another diocese?
 Yes No
 If yes, explain circumstances and outcome, using the reverse side.

DEGREES AWARDED

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

baccalaureate degree
 Name of the institution and date of completion: _____

master degree
 Name of the institution and date of completion: _____

professional degree
 Name of the institution and date of completion: _____

doctoral degree
 Name of the institution and date of completion: _____

other certificate or degree program
 Name of the institution and date of completion: _____

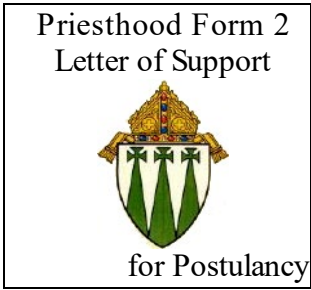
ADDITIONAL FORMS

Please attach to this form the following

- Letter of Support (Form 2 on p. 21) [See Canon 8, Section 3]
- A narrative description (Form 3, p. 22) of the discernment process exercised by you and your sponsoring congregation or faith community
- A spiritual autobiography of no more than three pages
- Transcripts from all post-secondary educational institutions
- Copy of the ministry contract, together with the written evaluation
- The Church Pension Group's internet financial planning tool, PlanAhead
- Evidence of sexual misconduct prevention training
- Evidence of anti-racism training

SIGNATURE

The Member of the Clergy should send, under separate cover, her or his recommendation and the confidential report to her or him from the parish discernment committee.
 Please consider this request for admission to Postulancy.
 Signature _____
 Date _____



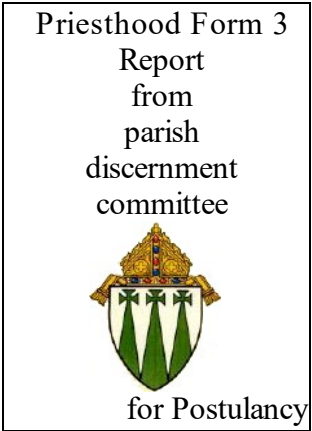
Full Name of
Nominee _____

Sponsoring congregation/ faith
community _____

Dear Bishop MacVean-Brown:

We, the undersigned, communicants of _____
in the town of _____
pledge our support of the aforementioned person who is hereby nominated
for Postulancy for Priesthood. Furthermore, we pledge our commitment to
continue our discernment ministry with this Nominee, and we will endeavor
to involve our entire faith community in our responsibility to help this
person prepare for ordination.

[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.]



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 Priesthood. Refer to the Parish Discernment Committee on Ministry Handbook (available from the diocesan website or by calling the diocesan office).

Forms 1-3, together with the spiritual autobiography, all transcripts, the copy of the ministry contract and its evaluation, the *PlanAhead* document (www.cpg.org), and evidence of sexual misconduct and anti-racism training should be submitted to the Bishop in one large envelope. The Member of the Clergy must send, under separate cover, her or his recommendation and the confidential report for the parish discernment committee.



Full Name of Postulant _____

Date Admitted to Postulancy _____

Please attach the following documents to this application:

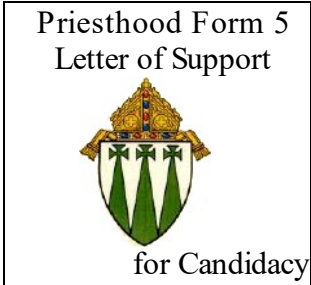
- Letter of Support (Form 5, p. 24).
- Reflection paper of no more than 500 words describing why you feel ready to apply for Candidacy. Make two copies and send one to the Bishop and one to the Chair of the Committee on Discernment.
- Transcripts of any academic courses and grades received since you applied for Postulancy.
- CPE evaluations from both the Postulant and the supervisor

Two complete sets: original to Bishop's office, copy to Chair of Committee on Discernment

Please make two complete sets of the:
Application (Form 4 p. 23)
Letter of Support (Form 5 p. 24)
reflection paper
transcripts
CPE evaluations

Send the original to the Bishop's office, and a set of copies to the Chair of the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment.

The Chair of the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment is responsible for submitting a statement to the Bishop's office attesting to the continuing formation of the Postulant (Form 6, p. 25).



Full Name of
Postulant _____

Sponsoring congregation/ faith
community _____

Dear Bishop MacVean-Brown:

We, the undersigned, communicants of _____
in the town of _____
pledge our support of the aforementioned person who is a Postulant for
Priesthood. Furthermore, we pledge our commitment to continue our
discernment, and we will endeavor to involve our entire faith community in
our responsibility to help this person prepare for ordination.

[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.]

Priesthood Form 6
Recommendation
from
Committee on
Discernment



for Candidacy

The Chair of the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment will furnish this to the Bishop.

TO: The Right Reverend Shannon MacVean-Brown
Bishop of Vermont

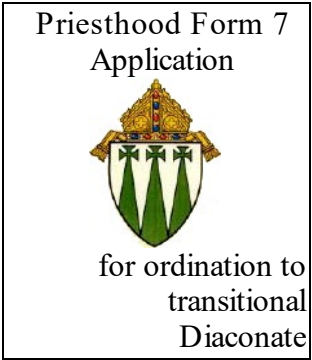
FROM: Committee on Discernment

RE: Candidacy Application for _____

We recommend this Postulant to be admitted to Candidacy, and we attest to the continuing formation of this person's discernment.

Signed _____

Date _____



Dear Bishop MacVean-Brown:

The following is my application for ordination to the transitional Diaconate, according to Canon 8, Section 6, a-d.

Full Name of Candidate _____

Sponsoring congregation/ faith community _____

AT LEAST AGE 21

Date of Birth _____

WITHIN ONE YEAR SINCE
ADMISSION TO
POSTULANCY

Date of Admission to Postulancy _____

SIX MONTHS SINCE
ADMISSION TO
CANDIDACY

Date of Admission to Candidacy _____

ADDITIONAL FORMS

Please attach the following to this application:

- Letter of Support (Form 8, p. 27)
- Certificate from the seminary or other program of preparation with evaluation and recommendation (Form 9, p. 28)

Send these documents to the Bishop's office and notify your Liaison that you have done so. The Committee on Discernment must provide the Bishop with its own recommendation about your readiness for ordination. After the Bishop has reviewed this application, he will send the necessary documents to the Standing Committee, who must give consent before ordination can occur.

Thank you for considering this request for ordination to the transitional Diaconate.

SIGNATURE & DATE

Signature _____

Date _____

Priesthood Form 8
Letter of Support



for ordination to
transitional
Diaconate

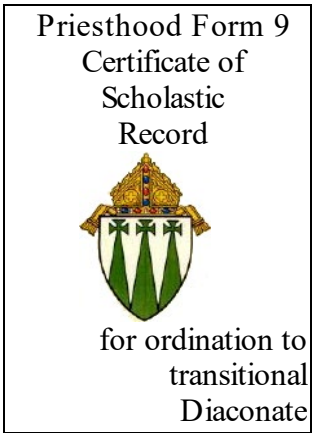
Full Name of
Candidate _____

Sponsoring congregation/ faith
community _____

Dear Bishop MacVean-Brown:

We, the undersigned, communicants of _____
in the town of _____
pledge our support of the aforementioned person's application for ordination
as a transitional Deacon in the Episcopal Church. Furthermore, we pledge
our commitment to continue our discernment, and we will endeavor to
involve our entire faith community in our responsibility to help this person
prepare for ordination.

[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.]



It is not necessary to use this particular form. What is necessary is that the application include certification from the seminary addressing the Candidate's scholastic record and that it include an evaluation and recommendation.

The Right Reverend Shannon MacVean-Brown
Bishop of Vermont
5 Rock Point Road
Burlington, Vermont 05408


Dear Bishop MacVean-Brown:

The faculty has considered the application of _____,
for Candidacy/ Ordination in the Diocese of Vermont.

[evaluation of student's academic and spiritual formation]

[provide recommendation, signature, and date. Return to the Bishop of Vermont's office, or give to the Candidate for inclusion in her or his application for Candidacy/ Ordination]

Priesthood Form 10
Recommendation
from
Committee on
Discernment



for ordination to
transitional
Diaconate

The Chair of the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment will furnish this to the Bishop and to the President of the Standing Committee

TO: The Bishop of Vermont
The President of the Standing Committee

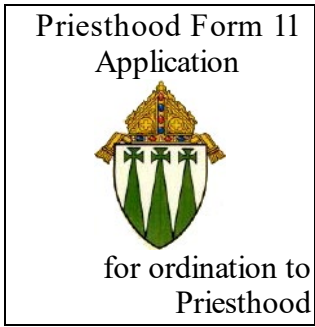
FROM: Committee on Discernment

RE: (Name of Candidate) _____
Application for ordination to transitional diaconate

The Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment has considered the application of the aforementioned Candidate. Please accept this certificate as our recommendation that this Candidate be ordained a transitional deacon under Canon III.8.6 (e)(3).

Signed _____

Date _____



Dear Bishop MacVean-Brown:

The following is my application for ordination to the priesthood, according to Canon 8, Section 7a.

Full Name of transitional
Deacon _____

Sponsoring congregation/ faith
community _____

AT LEAST AGE 24

Date of Birth _____

POSTULANCY

Date admitted as Postulant _____

CANDIDACY

Date admitted as a Candidate _____

WITHIN SIX MONTHS SINCE
ORDINATION TO
DIACONATE

Date of ordination to
Diaconate _____

EXAMINATIONS AND
BACKGROUND CHECKS UP
TO DATE

Medical examinations, psychological examinations, and background checks must be updated if they occurred more than 36 months prior to ordination.

ADDITIONAL FORMS

Please attach the following to this application:

- Letter of Support for ordination to Priesthood (Form 12, p. 31)

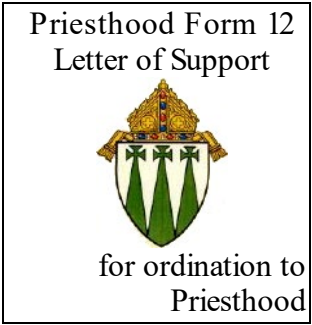
Send these documents to the Bishop's office and notify your Liaison that you have done so. The Committee on Discernment must provide the Bishop with its own recommendation about your readiness for ordination. After the Bishop has reviewed this application, he will send the necessary documents to the Standing Committee, who must give consent before ordination can occur.

Thank you for considering this request for ordination to the priesthood.

SIGNATURE & DATE

Signature _____

Date _____



Full Name of transitional
Deacon _____

Sponsoring congregation/ faith
community _____

Dear Bishop MacVean-Brown:

We, the undersigned, communicants of _____
in the town of _____
pledge our support of the aforementioned person’s application for ordination
as a priest in the Episcopal Church. Furthermore, we pledge our
commitment to continue our discernment, and we will endeavor to involve
our entire faith community in our responsibility to help this person prepare
for ordination.

[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]

Priesthood Form 13
Certificate of
Scholastic
Record



for ordination to
Priesthood

It is not necessary to use this particular form. What is necessary is that the application include certification from the seminary addressing the Candidate's scholastic record and that it include an evaluation and recommendation.

Attach evidence from the seminary or other program of formation showing the transitional Deacon's scholastic record and giving an evaluation with a recommendation regarding ordination to the Priesthood. It is not necessary for this evidence to conform to this particular form, but the transitional Deacon is responsible for furnishing a copy to:

- 1) The Bishop
- 2) The President of the Standing Committee
- 3) The Chair of the Committee on Discernment

Priesthood Form 14
Statement from the
Committee on
Discernment



for ordination to
Priesthood

The Chair of the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Discernment will furnish this to the Bishop. The Bishop's office will supply a copy to the President of the Standing Committee.

TO: The Right Reverend Shannon MacVean-Brown
Bishop of Vermont

FROM: Committee on Discernment

RE: Ordination to the Priesthood of _____

We attest to the successful completion of the program of formation designed during Postulancy and Candidacy and we recommend this person, who is a transitional Deacon, be ordained to the Priesthood.

Signed _____

Date _____