

# COMMISSION ON MINISTRY EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ALASKA DISCERNING HOLY ORDERS: A STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

- 1. Lay → Discernment Committee
  - a. See Exploring Calls to Ministry (2)
- 2. Discernment Committee → Postulancy
  - a. Discernment Process (3)
  - b. Discernment Committee Report to the Rector/Priest-in-Charge or Bishop (4)
  - c. Checklist for Ordination Process (5)
  - d. Nomination and Pledge of Support for Postulancy (from Church Committee/Vestry) (6)
  - e. Application for Postulancy (7)
- 3. Postulancy  $\rightarrow$  Candidacy
  - a. Commission on Ministry will arrange to meet with Postulants and Candidates at least once/year.
  - b. Mentor Recruited/Assigned
    - i. Role of a Mentor (8)
  - c. Create Formation Plan/Submit to COM (done with Mentor)
    - i. Formation Plan Template with Introduction and Instructions (9)
  - d. Begin working through Formation Plan
  - e. Apply to become Candidate. To move from Postulant to Candidate, these things are required (see Canon III.6.4 for details):
    - i. Application to the Bishop
    - ii. Nomination for Candidacy) (10)
    - iii. written statement from the Commission attesting to the continuing formation of the Postulant, and
    - iv. written approval from Standing Committee,
- 4. Candidacy → Ordination
  - a. Work through the Formation Plan;
  - b. Follow the Checklist for Ordination Process
  - c. Continue to meet with Mentor regularly, and with COM once/year
  - d. Nomination for Ordination (11)



## Exploring Calls to Ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska

#### Commission on Ministry

#### Who are the ministers of the Church?

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

-Book of Common Prayer, page 855

- Read *Outline of the Faith* ("Catechism") in Book of Common Prayer, pages 845-862, especially "The Ministry," pages 855-856
- Contact a clergy person in your congregation, asking to meet with them to discuss exploring your call to ministry. The appropriate person to contact, in order is
  - o Rector, where there is one
  - o Priest in charge, where there is one
  - o Deacon assigned to the congregation, where there is one
  - o Bishop or Chair of Committee of Ministry
- What to expect in this conversation
  - A time of prayerful listening and thinking together
  - Discussion of your current ministries
  - o Discussion of what calls to ministry you are experiencing
  - Discussion of orders of ministries in The Episcopal Church (lay, deacon, priest, bishop)
  - Discussion of what a discernment process in the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska may look like
  - Expect that the clergy person you speak with will NOT have an immediate response during this meeting, but that they will spend time in prayer and discernment, and will arrange for another meeting to discuss ways to proceed
- Questions to begin thinking about
  - What are the needs of the Church, as you experience it?
  - Where have you found joy in ministry?
  - Where has your congregation encouraged you toward specific kinds of ministry?

- What are realistic expectations for you in terms of time to spend in formation? (Studying, meeting, leading, etc.)
- The clergy person that you talked with should contact you for another meeting within one month. At this meeting, there MAY BE a plan made to form a discernment committee.
  - The role of discernment committees is to help individuals determine, define, assist, and clarify their ministries within the church and the world.
  - The time that this part of the discernment process takes varies, but normally takes *at least* six (6) months, and includes at least six meetings.
- If you do not hear back from the clergy person, contact them to find out when they will have a response for you.

#### Some Suggested Resources for Use During this Time

- The Episcopal Way: Church's Teachings for a Changing World Series: Volume 1 (Church's Teachings for a Changing World, by Stephanie Spellers and Eric Law
- <u>Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All,</u> William Countryman
- <u>Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community</u>, by Farnham, Gill, McLean, and Ward
- <u>Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church</u>, by Danny E. Morris and Charles M. Olsen
- <u>Before Theological Study: A Thoughtful, Engaged, and Generous Approach</u>, edited by Harry O. Maier, Ashley John Moyse, Richard R. Topping



## DISCERNMENT PROCESS Commission on Ministry Episcopal Diocese of Alaska

#### DISCERNMENT PROCESS

In accordance with the Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Alaska, each person desiring ordination or Holy Orders shall consult with a member of the Commission on Ministry. "The Bishop and the Commission on Ministry (COM) shall provide encouragement, training and necessary resources to assist each congregation 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 following process will be used:

- 1. The applicant must be a communicant in good standing\* and an active member of the host congregation for at least one year before beginning the Discernment Process.
- 2. At this point in the call process, it is appropriate for the applicant to discuss a sense of call only with the Rector or Clergy-in-Charge of the host congregation and the members of the Discernment Committee, so as not to influence the process in later steps. A period of discernment between the Rector/Clergy in Charge, if available, or COM mentor and the applicant shall precede the calling forth of a Discernment Committee.
- 3. Each new applicant shall have a Discernment Committee.
- 4. The applicant shall meet with a Discernment Committee at regular intervals for 6 to 12 months.
- 5. The Discernment Committee should be comprised of no less than 4 lay persons from various walks of life representing a cross-section of the congregation. It is suggested that at least one member come from another congregation.
- 6. During the discernment process, the applicant shall engage in spiritual direction with a spiritual advisor who is not a member of the Discernment Committee. The Rector/Clergy in Charge or COM mentor must be consulted in selecting the appropriate advisor. The name of the advisor shall be made known to the Bishop.

- 7. The applicant may plan and execute a "ministry/service project" as called by engaging the Gospel with the Discernment Committee.
- 8. The Discernment Committee would meet at least once per month with the applicant. The primary focus should be:
  - a. To engage the Gospel in a circle of love and prayer.
  - b. Explore the applicant's spiritual journey and life story.
  - c. An intensive and sustained reflection on the nature of ministry and the services of ordination in the Book of Common Prayer is suggested. Other study sources are available from the COM.
  - d. The applicant's spirituality, relationship to authority, ego needs, leadership style, personality type, gifts and skills should considered.
  - e. It is further recommended that the applicant experience the breadth of the Episcopal Church. Therefore, Sunday visits to other congregations, Deanery meetings or the Diocesan Convention are suggested.
  - f. The applicant's knowledge of the faith and practice of the Episcopal Church.
  - g. The applicant's description of their call to ministry.
  - h. Practical matters the applicant's support network including income, family, and other resources.
- 9. When discernment has been completed, the chair of the Discernment Committee will complete the <u>Discernment Committee Report to the Rector/Priest-in-Charge or Bishop</u> obtained from the COM, or on the diocesan website. This is a confidential document that is submitted to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, if there is one. If not, it is submitted to the Bishop. The rector, priest-in-charge, or bishop will then make a report with recommendation to the Church Committee/Vestry.
- 10. If the Vestry or Church Committee chooses to nominate the person for continuing discernment for ordination, they complete the *Nomination for Postulancy from Church Committee/Vestry* and submit it to the Bishop and the Chair of Commission on Ministry. The Chair of the COM and Bishop will then determine if an interview with the applicant is needed and arrange for that to occur. This interview may be conducted by the whole COM or by a designated interview committee.
- 11. The Bishop may then accept or not accept the applicant for Postulancy with or without the consent of the COM.

### DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE REPORT TO THE RECTOR/PRIEST-IN-CHARGE OR BISHOP

(This form is to be completed once a Discernment Committee has completed a process of discernment with a person in discernment for Holy Orders.

This is a confidential document that is submitted to the Rector or Priest-in-Charge, if there is one. If not, it is submitted to the Bishop. The rector, priest-in-charge, or bishop will then make a report with recommendation to the Church Committee/Vestry.

#### If additional room is needed, please attach pages as needed.

Name of Applicant:
Name(s) of Discernment Committee members who recommend that the applicant pursue ordination to the diaconate/priesthood.
Name(s) of Discernment Committee members who do <i>not</i> recommend that the applicant pursue ordination to the diaconate/priesthood.
1. Describe the applicant's strengths and weaknesses.
2. Assess the applicant's intellectual ability to pursue graduate studies in theology.

3.	Describe the applicant's family situation, including how spouse, children, and parents (as applicable) feel about her/his pursuit of ordination.
4.	Describe the applicant's religious history before entering the congregation.
5.	Describe the applicant's life and ministry in this congregation.
6.	Assess the applicant's potential for leadership in the church.
7.	Assess the effectiveness of the applicant in pastoral and interpersonal relationships in the congregation.
8.	Summarize your understanding of the applicant's call to ordained ministry.

	Summarize the major strengths/attributes of the a in the Church.	pplicant as possible future clergy (deacon/priest)
10.	Summarize the major weaknesses, problems of the (deacon/priest) in the Church.	e applicant as a possible future clergy
	Add any other comments you feel the Bishop, R know.	ector, and Church Committee/Vestry should
D : N		
	Name of person making this report:	
Signed:	:	Date:



## CHECKLIST FOR ORDINATION PROCESS IN THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ALASKA

In the Episcopal Church the canons provide two distinct but parallel ordination 'tracks.' It is common to understand the first track (Title III Canon 6) to be for individuals who will not be considered for ordination to the Priesthood. This is often called the track for the "Vocational Diaconate." The other track (Title III Canon 8) is for individuals who, after serving as a Deacon in this Church, may be considered for ordination to the Priesthood. This is often called the track for the "Transitional Diaconate/Priesthood." Regardless of an individual's sense of a "personal call" to a specific order, the community of the faithful, the Church, ultimately must test and affirm an individual's vocation. The process of vocational discernment is fluid and may develop or change as an individual engages the steps and requirements of ordination, and as the Church experiences the exercise of an individual's ministry. Therefore, there are no guarantees of ordination to any office regardless of which 'track' an individual follows.

In the Diocese of Alaska, Nomination should be to Holy Orders. All nominees will begin the process identified in Title III Canon 6. Once ordained a Deacon, Canon 8 allows for Priestly ordination after further academic preparation.

#### CHECKLIST FOR ORDINATION PROCESS

Use this checklist to track progress in the Ordination Process.

Any relevant forms that are available to use are noted. Forms are available on the Diocesan website, by contacting the Diocesan Office, and from the Commission on Ministry.

The titles of each stage in the process are printed in **Bold**. The required steps are numbered. Enter the Date completed in each numbered step.

#### DISCERNMENT 1. Completion of an intentional process of discernment for ordained ministry with a Discernment Committee. The COM can offer a process for this work. 2. Written report from the Discernment Committee submitted to Rector, Priest-in-Charge, or Bishop. NOMINATION 1. Nomination letter and pledge of support by community of faith/congregation. Must be signed by two-thirds of the Vestry/Church Committee. Must be signed by Rector or Priest-in-charge. 2. Acceptance letter by Nominee using Application for Postulancy, and including elements required by Title III. Canon 6. 2(b) for Deacons and Title III Canon 8.2 (b) for Deacons remaining in Discernment. Full name and date of birth Contact information including: address, phone number, email address, etc. Length of time resident in the Diocese Evidence of Baptism and Confirmation/Reception Whether an application has been made previously for Postulancy or the person has been nominated in any Diocese A description of the process of discernment by which the Nominee was identified for ordination Description of the level of education obtained, degrees earned, areas of specialization, copies of transcripts (if applicable) 3. Initial review by Commission on Ministry and report on Nominee's qualifications to pursue program of preparation for ordination. 4. Evidence that Postulant is a Confirmed Communicant in Good Standing.

5. Personal Consultation with the Bishop.

#### **POSTULANT**

\_\_\_\_\_\_6. Official Admission to Postulancy by the Bishop. Completed when you have received a formal letter of Admission to Postulancy from the Bishop.

Begin/continue working on Formation Plan and exercising ministry.

Each Postulant for ordination shall communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter (email), four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the postulant's work on Formation Plan, personal and spiritual development, and ministry development.

There is no set length of time one must serve as a Postulant.

#### **CANDIDATE**

#### ORDINATION AS A DEACON

15. Application, in writing, after at least 18 months from the time of written acceptance as Postulant [see #6, above], requesting ordination to specific order.
16. Letter of support from Candidate's congregation or community of faith signed and dated by two-thirds vestry/council and member of clergy or other leader exercising oversight.
17. Written evidence of admission of Postulancy and Candidacy giving dates.
18. Report from COM attesting to progress and competence in the required areas of study.
19. Recommendation from the Commission on Ministry.
20. Consent of the Standing Committee.
Set a Date for Ordination Service in consultation with the Bishop
FOR ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD
Steps 1-20 must be accomplished. The Formation requirements are different for individuals preparing for the Priesthood. The COM must approve and monitor a Formation Plan (see Title III Canon 8.5(g)).
All Candidates MUST read carefully the current edition of the "The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church" (available online). Candidates for the Priesthood shall be knowledgeable of the provisions, requirements, and regulations of Title III Canons 8 through 10.
21. Served faithfully as a Deacon for at least six months.
Title III Canon 8.7 (e): "No Deacon shall be ordained to the Priesthood until having been appointed to serve in a Parochial Cure within the jurisdiction of the this Church, or as a Missionary under the Ecclesial Authority of a Diocese, or as an officer of a Missionary Society recognized by General Convention, or as a Chaplain of the Armed Services of the United States, or as a Chaplain in a recognized hospital or other welfare institution, or as a Chaplain or instructor in a school, college, or other seminary, or with the opportunity for the exercise of the office of Priest within the Church judged appropriate by the Bishop."
<ul> <li>22. Written application from the Deacon requesting ordination as a Priest.</li></ul>

	_23. Medical and Psychological evaluations are within thirty-six months prior to
ordinat	ion as a Priest.
	94. A letter of support from congression or companity of faith, signed by two
	_24. A letter of support from congregation or community of faith, signed by two-
	of the Vestry/Committee/Council and the member of the Clergy or other leader
exercisi	ing oversight.
	26. A certificate from the Commission attesting to the successful completion of the
	m of formation and study, proficiency in the required areas of study designated in (Title
III Can	on 8.5 (g), understanding of the provisions, requirements and regulations of Title III
Canons	s 8-10 and Title IV, and recommending the Deacon for ordination to the Priesthood.
	27. Consent of the Standing Committee received by the Bishop.

Set a date for Ordination Service with the Bishop



## NOMINATION AND PLEDGE OF SUPPORT FOR POSTULANCY FROM CHURCH COMMITTEE/VESTRY

The Episcopal Diocese of Alaska 1205 Denali Way Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 907-452-3040

Recommendation for Postu	lancy	
To: The Bishop		
Name of Congregation		
Date of meeting:	Place	
	hirds majority of the Vestry/ of the best of our belief and	Church Committee, and Priest), whose names are d personal knowledge that
	me of Person)	has been duly discerned by a
	d leadership of the church; ar	which may, with suitable formation, be such as are nd that she/he is a communicant of this Parish in
admission as a Postulan		applicant for Holy Orders by the Diocese, and our decision on the attached documentation and ommittee.
Furthermore, we comm	nit to remain involved with su	ch preparation as deemed necessary to
(Name of	in	formation and preparation for ordination, and we
pledge to contribute fin	ancial support for this ordina	tion in this way:
Church Committee/Vestry S	Signed:	

Priest		_ Print Name	
Attestation of Clerk or Re	3		
I hereby certify that the fo	regoing certificate was sign	ed at a meeting of the	Vestry/ Church Committee of
		Church, in	
			, and that nbers of the Vestry/Church
Signed:			
	(Clerk/Secretary)		



#### APPLICATION FOR POSTULANCY Episcopal Diocese of Alaska

The Episcopal Diocese of Alaska 1205 Denali Way Fairbanks, AK 99701 1-907-452-3040

(This form is to be completed once a congregation or community of faith has nominated a person for Postulancy, and should be accompanied by a letter of acceptance from the applicant.)

To: The Bishop  Name:	Date of Birth
Place of Birth	
Address	
Telephones (including area code):	
	_ (w)
Email	
What is the best way to contact you?	
Congregation	
Priest	
Former denomination (if applicable)	
Date of Baptism (approximate if necessary	Denomination
Baptized by:(Please attach copy of certificate, if available)	
Date of confirmation/reception into the Episcopal Church	
Place of confirmation/reception(Please attach copy of	of certificate, if available)
How long have you lived in the Episcopal Diocese of Alas	ka?

Education History			
High School:	Graduation date		
College:	Graduation date		
Major:	Degree		
Graduate work	Degree(s)		
Date(s)			
	ripts of your most recent degree with this form.		
Are you a previous applicant for Postulan	ncy?NoYes. If yes please give details:		
Are you ordained in another denomination	on?NoYes. If yes, please give details including years		
of service:			
Please provide the following:  • A description of the process of d • A letter accepting your nomination	discernment by which you have been identified for formation.		
Date of Application			
Date Application received by the Bishop			



## COMMISSION ON MINISTRY EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ALASKA ROLE OF A MENTOR

The mentor assigned by the Commission on Ministry (COM) to a postulant or candidate shall assist with and monitor progress in the following areas. The mentor is encouraged to use the COM, diocesan clergy, and the Bishop as resources throughout this process.

#### • Creating a formation plan which covers the required areas of practice

- Holy Scriptures
- o History of the Christian Church
- Christian Theology
- o Christian Ethics and Moral Theology
- o Christian Worship
- Practice of Ministry
  - Leadership in worship (including sermon writing)
  - Evangelism
  - Stewardship
  - Ecumenisms
  - Interfaith relationships
  - Experience outside one's own familiar culture
  - Environmental stewardship and care of creation
  - The historical and contemporary experience of racial and minority groups
  - Pastoral care (including working with youth and elders)
  - Congregational development
- o Other training
  - Prevention of sexual misconduct
  - Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse
  - The Constitution and Canons of the TEC, particularly Titles III and IV
  - The Church's teaching on racism (including racism/bias training)

#### Meeting regularly with the postulant/candidate. Meetings shall include the following components

- o Prayer
- Pastoral care
- Check on formation plan progress
- o Planning next steps

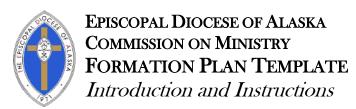
### Assisting the postulant/candidate in locating resources, to include the following

- Required trainings such as Safe Church and race/bias training
- Academic opportunities required for formation process

- Clergy and lay people with specialized knowledge who can work with postulant/candidate on specific issues
- Opportunities to participate in worship outside the postulant/candidate's sponsoring parish
- o A spiritual advisor to work with postulant/candidate

#### • Assisting in navigating the ordination process and the diocesan requirements.

- Where necessary the mentor shall work with the COM to answer any questions the postulant/candidate might have about the process.
- Providing regular updates to the COM on the progress of the postulant/candidate.
  - o When possible, providing reports before the COM's monthly meeting is ideal.
- Modeling the life of a minister, ordained or lay, by
  - o Representing Christ and the Church
  - o Bearing witness to Christ according to their gifts
  - o Carrying on Christ's work of reconciliation in the world
  - o Taking their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.



This template is intended to help postulants, their mentors, and the COM to create formation plans that are thorough, individualized, and appropriate for the context and life situation of each postulant.

The categories listed here are based upon those found in The Episcopal Church Canons (2018), particularly Canon III.8. (Attention should be given to the *Errata Sheet*, available at TEC website.) These are not, of course, the *only* important areas of competence. Each community may have other areas that are important to them, and these categories may be added. In each area, please indicate what training or experience the postulant has completed or is currently doing, and an assessment of their current readiness, growth potential, and any recommendations of paths toward growth.

Each formation plan should seriously consider the advice of Canon III.8.5(e): "Whenever possible, formation...shall take place in community, including other persons in preparation for the Priesthood, or others preparing for ministry." To that end, please include specific areas that could be accomplished in reflection and conversation with others who are preparing for ordained ministry, clergy, or other community members. Where possible, please suggest individuals who might be a part of such a group; the Commission on Ministry can also help identify potential conversation partners.

It is also useful to notice Canon III.8.5(f): "Formation shall include theological training, practical experience, emotional development and spiritual formation." While nearly every postulant will have some areas that will require formal study of some sort, every postulant also brings a wealth of lived experience. This lived experience can be thought of as formation that began before a call was even felt. There may also be areas of emotional or spiritual development that should be addressed in the formation process. Any notes or suggestions from the mentor in these areas may be added.

Again - please understand that this template (and all of the formation process) is intended as a help along the way, rather than as a barrier. If filling out the form creates a barrier, the COM member assigned as liaison to the postulant and their mentor can initiate a conversation with the mentor and postulant to "fill out the form" orally, rather than in written form. The COM member will then submit a written form to COM which will, upon acceptance by COM, be returned to the postulant and their mentor.



### FORMATION PLAN TEMPLATE

Name of Postulant	Best Contact
Name of Mentor	Best Contact
Name of COM Liaison	Best Contact
Date Plan Presented to COM	Date Plan Accepted by COM

- Holy Scriptures
  - Activities/Methods
  - o Assessment
    - Current
    - Growth potential
    - Path toward growth
- History of the Christian Church
  - o Activities/Methods
  - o Assessment
    - Current
    - Growth potential
    - Path toward growth

#### • Christian Theology

- o Activities/Methods
- Assessment
  - Current
  - Growth potential
  - Path toward growth
- Christian Ethics and Moral Theology
  - o Activities/Methods
  - o Assessment
    - Current
    - Growth potential
    - Path toward growth
- Christian Worship according to the use of the Book of Common Prayer, the Hymnal, and authorized supplemental texts.
  - o Activities/Methods
  - Assessment
    - Current
    - Growth potential
    - Path toward growth

- The Practice of Ministry in contemporary society, including leadership, evangelism, stewardship, ecumenism, interfaith relations, mission theology, and the historical and contemporary experience of racial and minority groups.
  - o Activities/Methods
  - Assessment
    - Current
    - Growth potential
    - Path toward growth
- Other Category: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
  - Activities/Methods
  - Assessment
    - Current
    - Growth potential
    - Path toward growth
- Any additional notes:

## NOMINATION FOR CANDIDACY FORM FROM CHURCH COMMITTEE/VESTRY

The Episcopal Diocese of Alaska 1205 Denali Way Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 907-452-3040 To: The Bishop Name of Congregation:\_\_\_\_\_ Date of meeting \_\_\_\_\_\_ Place \_\_\_\_\_ We (minimum of two-thirds majority of the Vestry/ Church Committee, and Priest), whose names are hereunder written, support the Candidacy of \_\_\_\_\_\_, to the Holy (name of person) Order of\_\_\_\_\_ (Deacons or Priests) Church Committee/Vestry Signed:

#### Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretary

Priest \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that the	foregoing certificate was	s signed at a meeting	g of the Vestry/ Church Committee
of	Par	rish/ Congregation, i	n,
<u> </u>	<u>=</u>	•	, and that the names rs of the Vestry/ Church Committee.

Signed _	
J	(Clerk/Secretary)

Print name \_\_\_\_\_

#### NOMINATION FOR ORDINATION

The Episcopal Diocese of Alaska 1205 Denali Way Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 907-452-3040

(Clerk/Secretary)

Name of Congregation:		
Date of meeting	Place	
	of the Vestry/ Church Committee, and Priest), ration of	
Order of	who was admitted to postulancy on	
(Deacon or Priest)		(date)
and was admitted to candidacy on	<del>-</del>	
4 1.0 1	(date)	
And, if application is for ordination as	s priest, was ordained as a deacon on (date)	•
Church Committee/Vestry Signed:	(Uate)	
D.i	Dint	
Priest	Print name	
Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretar	у	
I hereby certify that the foregoing cert	tificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry/ Ch	urch Committee
of	Parish/ Congregation, in	,
	n the, and tha ds majority of all) the members of the Vestry/ C	