

2024
Discernment for Ministry

A Handbook for
The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts
Compiled by the Commission on Ministry



The call to ordained ministry in The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts

If Jesus Christ is the source of hope and joy for you,
If you see a world hungry for Christ's healing love,
If you are able to gather, teach, and inspire other people,
If you can make peace between people in conflict,
If you meet the living God in Anglican worship,
If you are nourished by prayer and the sacraments,
If you are devoted to God's Word in Holy Scripture,
If you help others find God in times of grief or anguish,
If you are willing to sacrifice many comforts to do Christ's work,
If you are able to seek and serve Christ in all people,
If you seek opportunities to create, build and transform,
If your church community has identified these qualities in you,
 you may be called to serve as a deacon or priest in the Diocese of Massachusetts.

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February 3, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome to this year's Ministry Discernment Conference, which we hope will give you an opportunity to ponder more deeply how God is calling each of us into ministry and to learn more about our discernment process in the Diocese of Massachusetts. This time is for you to listen to the stories of others who have gone through this process, to ask questions about what discernment may be like for you, and to meet others who will share in the work of discernment with you.

Each year members of the Commission on Ministry share the blessing and privilege of working alongside our bishops as they select and guide the formation of postulants and candidates in preparation for ordination to both the diaconate and priesthood. We serve as liaisons to parish discernment committees, advisors to postulants and candidates, and work in collaboration with the Standing Committee to make the ordination process in this diocese as accessible as possible to everyone who feels called to explore a vocation to ordained ministry.

As we enter this new season of discernment, we ask you to pray for us, as we pray for you.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

The Members of the Commission on Ministry

The Rev. Dr. Maggie Arnold, Co-chair
The Rev. Edwin Johnson, Co-chair
Mr. Graeme Mills, Co-chair
The Rev. Dr. Richard Burden, Chaplain for Academic Formation
The Rev. Lynn Campbell
Dr. Laura Crain
The Rev. Virgilio Fortuna, BSG
The Rev. Clifford Goodridge
Dr. Melva James
The Rev. Dr. Kapya Kaoma
The Rev. Sarah Mato
The Rev. Diane Wong
The Rev. Dr. James Weiss
The Ven. Patricia Zifcak

The Chaplains to Postulants and Candidates

The Rev. Anoma Abeyaratne
The Rev. Marilee Comerford
The Rev. Dr. David Killian
The Rev. Marilyn McMillan
The Rev. Leslie Sterling

To Inquirers

We are grateful that you are responding to a call to serve God. Your committed service is needed more than ever in our diocese as we discern and carry out our Mission Strategy.

This handbook describes what happens in the process that leads from initial inquiry to ordination. It is a long process with several stages involving many people. Many questions, some of them very difficult questions, have to be raised and answered fully and honestly. The shape of this process reflects the seriousness with which we take Christian ministry, and the great importance of the discernment needed to provide the Church with able and well-trained ministers, both lay and ordained.

No handbook can tell you everything. We urge you to find and consult the persons who can support you as you begin to discover more clearly where God may be leading you.

Wherever you are led, you have our blessings.

The Commission on Ministry

I. LEADERS FOR THE CHURCH

Equipping the Saints

Our mission goals call for us to turn every Episcopal congregation into a center of preparation for active discipleship. Ordained leaders must be able to build spiritually healthy and energetic Christian communities, whether in traditional parishes or in other institutional settings, and to equip the saints for participation in Christ's mission. They must understand that worship, witness, and pastoral care do not stop at the church door, and must be ready to do God's reconciling work in the world.

We have matched our diocese's vision for mission with some particular traits of leaders who could fulfill that vision. We hope that these descriptions will help inquirers, sponsoring priests, and discernment committees to recognize someone who is especially suited for ordained leadership—as a deacon or priest—in the Diocese of Massachusetts or to guide someone toward a renewed understanding of lay ministry.

As you begin your discernment, please bear in mind:

- Everyone is called by God. Our Baptismal Covenant makes that clear. In baptism we promise to “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.”
- Lay leadership and lay ministry are essential to the Church and require many of the same qualities as ordained leadership
- The mission priorities of this diocese at this time are specific ways to turn our vision into reality. They call for enterprising leaders who can see possibilities, overcome obstacles, and draw many others with them to bring in the Kingdom (*Addendum A*)

The Deacons and Priests We Need

We need deacons and priests who:

- **will be strong leaders.** Whatever their style of leadership, they must be able to bring a community to life in Christ.
- **are committed to following Jesus Christ** and are growing toward spiritual maturity. In a culture where many people do not understand what it means to be a Christian, they must live as witnesses to our faith.
- **are willing to take risks for the sake of the Gospel.** They are adventurous self-starters who can seed new communities or revitalize dying congregations. They are flexible and willing to go where the Church needs them.
- **reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural and theological diversity of our diocese.** They will be willing to learn another language, and have cross-cultural and cross-class experience.
- **communicate Christian hope.** In the face of loss they are able to hold on to the hope of new life and to awaken that hope in others.
- **are in love with the faith.** They can articulate the gospel of God revealed in Christ Jesus clearly and passionately to all kinds of people, inside and outside the Church.
- **can build up the body of Christ.** They recognize the importance of lay people in the Church and are able to identify, recruit and encourage strong lay leaders. Their spirit of warmth and hospitality invites people into community.

- **are reconcilers.** They address conflict and work for understanding and healing.
- **have a sense of inner authority and a center in God.** They have a prayerful, vital relationship with God. They are emotionally stable, able to tolerate stress, aware of their limitations, and willing, when necessary, to seek appropriate help and support. They understand and accept the costs of becoming a public figure.
- **act as God’s instruments in bringing in a realm of justice and mercy.** Like the ancient prophets, they love their communities enough to call them to account.

Within these broad guidelines, we intend to ordain deacons and priests with a wide variety of gifts, while actively seeking those who can fill particular needs at this time. We are especially interested in finding applicants for ordination who:

- are skilled in working with youth or attracting young people to the Christian faith
- can empower the poor and outcast to work for change
- are willing to go where the church needs them
- are bi-vocational—able to serve small congregations on a part-time basis

The bishops and the Commission do not impose a limit on the age at which a person may enter the discernment process or how many applicants may be considered for ordination at any one time. Practically speaking, however, the bishops and Commission take into account the number of postulants and candidates they can guide effectively during their formation and how long those who are ordained will be able to serve the Church.

The role of the congregation or other faith community

The Episcopal tradition understands that a call to ordination comes in the context of Christian community. Sometimes it is the community which first discovers a potential deacon or priest among its members and asks that person to begin discernment. Sometimes it is the person who first feels a call and looks to the community to test it.

The Commission on Ministry works with both aspects of call. We help individuals use the resources of their faith and diocesan communities in clarifying a call. We also strongly encourage local congregations to recruit potential leaders who have the particular gifts needed in the Church in this diocese.

We depend primarily on congregations for recruitment. The local congregation can recognize those with gifts of spiritual leadership, prophetic voices, and the ability to build Christian community. Congregations can discover promising young people with gifts for ordained leadership that are just becoming visible.

If you are discerning a call, consider carefully:

- Do you recognize in yourself the qualities the Church today needs?
- **Does your community see these qualities in you?**
- Why is ordination essential to your sense of call?
- Do your gifts and aspirations match the work of deacons or of priests?
- What work remains before you are ready to apply?

If you are a potential sponsoring priest, or a member of a Discernment Committee working with inquirers for Holy Orders, consider these questions:

- Is the inquirer the sort of person who springs to mind as you read this profile?
- Is there someone else in your congregation who does and who might be encouraged to think about this path?
- What other means would be appropriate for testing this vocation?

II. DEACON OR PRIEST?

Discerning whether you are called to be a deacon or a priest is a central question for everyone involved in testing a call.

The Role of a Deacon

This is a very exciting time for deacons in the Diocese of Massachusetts. We encourage deacons to think creatively about the ways in which their ministries can draw the Church into the life of the community in which it resides. Deacons serve a particular congregation taking a full role in the liturgy and life of the congregation but their charge is to use their specific skills in service to the needs of the community and to lead and equip the Church to bring the ministry of Christ to those outside their doors. We are looking for deacons who are ready to challenge the Church to understand and address needs in places where the Church may not have gone before. Deacons are called:

- to be bold community agents who make their Christian faith visible where they live and work
- to interpret “the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world” to the Church (*BCP, p. 543*)
- to serve as catalysts and guides for people engaged in the outreach work of the Church
- to assist bishops and priests in proclaiming the Gospel and administering the sacraments (*BCP, p. 856*)
- to “equip the saints,” and to inspire and challenge them to fulfill their Baptismal Covenant through their work in the world

The Role of a Priest

The priest exercises the ministry of Christ on behalf of the local community, “particularly as pastor to the people” (*BCP, p. 856*). Priests are called:

- to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to life by word and deed
- to teach the faith, administer the sacraments, and bless and declare pardon in the name of God
- to share with the bishops in building up the Church
- to “equip the saints,” and to inspire and challenge them to fulfill their Baptismal Covenant through their work in the world

While many priests serve local congregations, we also seek those with particular gifts for ministries in non-parish settings including academic institutions, hospitals, nursing homes, public advocacy organizations, storefront churches and overseas missions. Priests with entrepreneurial skills may create new and vital ministries for a congregation or our diocese and those with satisfying careers may consider becoming bi-vocational priests.

III. INTRODUCTION TO THE ORDINATION PROCESS

The Design of the Ordination Process

The ordination process in this diocese has three components: discernment, decision and formation.

Discernment is the work of prayerful attention to God's will for the Church and the people within it. All of us are called to service as members of the body of Christ. Our life together in congregations includes the responsibility to discern who is being called by God to serve as an ordained leader in the Church. The call to ordination is not a private matter, any more than Christian faith is purely individual. In the Episcopal Church, there will always be a local congregation that explores and assesses a person's own sense of being called. The local congregation is usually the parish or mission where the inquirer is a member. Sometimes, discernment will take place more appropriately in a different sort of faith community such as a college chaplaincy. Chaplains should talk to the Canon for Ordained Vocations before beginning a discernment process for an inquirer.

Decision refers to the Diocesan Bishop's decision to invite a person to become a postulant for Holy Orders. The Commission on Ministry helps the bishops to select from among those nominated by their congregations the people whose gifts are most needed in this diocese at this time.

Formation is the ongoing preparation to do God's work—in this case, the work of ordained leadership—authentically and responsibly. It happens before and during the time of discernment as the inquirer learns habits of openness, self-awareness, prayer, discipline and trust that will keep this time centered in God. It happens with particular intensity during the time of postulancy and candidacy, as both the bishops and members of the Commission on Ministry provide guidance and resources for further learning and experience in leadership.

Stages in the Ordination Process

An inquirer is beginning to consider and discuss the possibility of ordination or has taken some formal steps under the guidance of the sponsoring priest and Discernment Committee to explore an ordained vocation. Formal parish discernment is initiated by submitting a commitment form to the Office of Ordained Vocations by **February 28**.

A nominee has completed work with the Discernment Committee and, on the basis of the Committee's report, has received the Vestry's endorsement as well as that of the sponsoring priest. The nominee submits these and other required materials to the bishops and Commission on Ministry for evaluation. Application materials are due in the Office of Ordained Vocations by **August 1**.

A postulant has been accepted formally into the process for Holy Orders by the decision of the Diocesan Bishop, with the advice of the Commission on Ministry. The Canon for Ordained Vocations and an advisor provided by the Commission on Ministry work with the postulant to make sure that the postulant knows what is expected. Postulancy officially begins the following **June 1**.

A candidate has shown enough clear evidence of a call that ordination is expected unless significant issues arise. Members of the Standing Committee and Commission on Ministry interview postulants and then make recommendations to the Diocesan Bishop who decides whether to grant candidacy. Candidacy is usually granted in the middle of the second full year of formation.

The Role of the Commission on Ministry

The Commission on Ministry helps the bishops to find and evaluate people with a possible vocation to ordained ministry. In carrying out this task, it considers the assessments of many people who have known the applicant in diverse situations. Admission to postulancy recognizes that many have observed what seems to be a strong call to ordination in the nominee as well as specific skills and gifts that are especially needed in this diocese at this time. Postulancy begins a period of intensified formation, during which the bishops and Commission on Ministry (COM) give support and clear direction.

Attending Seminary

The bishops and Commission on Ministry believe firmly that inquirers should not attend seminary before beginning the discernment process. Those who have attended or graduated from seminary before admission to postulancy for the diaconate will be required to participate fully in the three-year diaconate formation program.

For nominees to the priesthood, the Diocesan Bishop chooses the seminary that will offer the best setting for that postulant's formation, taking into account all circumstances that need to be considered. Those who have attended or graduated from seminary before admission to postulancy for the priesthood may be required to take additional courses and will be expected to supplement academic formation with field education internships during the three-year formation period. In particular, graduates of non-Episcopal seminaries may be asked to complete a program in Anglican studies at a seminary of the Diocesan Bishop's choosing.

Inquirers already Ordained in other Denominations

Clergy from other denominations and from Anglican Churches that are not in full communion with the Episcopal Church are required to be confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church, become active members of a congregation, and seek discernment and nomination in that congregation in the same manner as any other inquirer. When such a previously-ordained person is admitted as a postulant in the Episcopal Church, the length of time before ordination may be shortened, depending on how much additional formation is required. For further information about these canonical requirements, please speak to the Canon for Ordained Vocations.

Spouses, Partners, and Families

The work of ordained ministry can be exhilarating and joyful. It can also be a source of strain, confusion and sometimes anger for deacons and priests and their immediate families. The bishops and the Commission on Ministry urge everyone who considers ordination to include spouses, partners and families in the discernment process from the very first. We strongly recommend conversation with professional counselors and with experienced members of the clergy.

IV. THE CONGREGATION'S WORK OF DISCERNMENT

To Support these Persons

As members of congregations, we all promise one another at the time of baptism to do everything we can to support each other in our lives in Christ. From time to time, a member of a congregation experiences a change in their understanding of baptismal call. The community then has the opportunity, indeed the sacred responsibility, prayerfully to assist such a person in discerning the nature of this seemingly new call. This is most effectively done by a small group, the discernment committee, working on behalf of the Vestry and the whole congregation.

The inquirer meets with a discernment committee assisted by a liaison from the Commission on Ministry. Their conversations should be prayerful, truthful and confidential. Both the time and the situation are extraordinary and they call for courage and honesty. The committee should help the inquirer examine their whole self – heart, soul, and mind. Their report to the Vestry must be succinct, direct and candid about their sense of the inquirer's call and that person's strengths and challenges.

The process of discernment is neither an employment interview nor an exercise in packaging an image. The Vestry, the congregation and the diocese as a whole need to know that the committee has explored and recognized the authenticity of the inquirer's baptismal call and how it can best be fulfilled.

Our ordained and lay church leadership must reflect the entire spectrum of the human condition. In order for this to happen, our ordinands must reflect the diversity of humanity. We warmly welcome into the process applicants from diverse backgrounds.

In addition to the bishops' role in recruiting candidates for ordination, ethnically and culturally diverse congregations have a very important and specific role to play in the mission to broaden the Church and its leadership. These congregations may see a young person who demonstrates leadership but has not thought of ordained ministry as a possibility. They may then encourage such a person to "come and see," and in doing so have a significant impact upon the Church as a whole.

Inquirers from diverse backgrounds must meet the expectations set by the Diocesan Bishop and the Commission on Ministry for all inquirers, but also will bring additional talents to the community and thus enrich us all. Any inquirer's life and experiences are assets to the church; inquirers from diverse backgrounds can bring significant assets to a church in mission.

Inquirers whose primary language is English will be expected to have or develop proficiency in a second language that will be useful in this diocese; inquirers for whom English is a second language will be expected to develop proficiency in English.

Once an inquirer has become a postulant, the congregation will continue to nurture and support them. Although postulants no longer worship regularly with the sponsoring congregation and are expected to find field placements in other congregations, the sponsoring congregation is still a postulant's first home and is expected to remember them in their hearts and prayers and offer practical and financial assistance.

The Role of the Sponsoring Priest

The sponsoring priest is an advisor, mentor and guide in deciding when it is time for a next step. The sponsoring priest should maintain a strong pastoral role with the inquirer throughout their journey of discernment, whatever direction it may take. In the early stages of conversation with an inquirer, there are three broad questions that the sponsoring priest should focus on:

- What is the evidence that the inquirer is called not to a committed and disciplined lay ministry but to Holy Orders?
- What particular gifts does the inquirer bring to ordained leadership in today's Church? How have these gifts been demonstrated already within and beyond the congregation?
- What work needs to be done to make the inquirer better known to the congregation, to address limitations and to develop gifts before they are ready to meet with a Discernment Committee and be nominated to the Diocesan Bishop and the Commission on Ministry?

As discernment moves forward, it becomes the responsibility of the sponsoring priest:

- to help the inquirer decide if and when it is appropriate to enter the formal diocesan process
- to discuss how the required education and training might be managed
- to begin pastoral conversations with the inquirer's family members, helping them to consider the implications of this possible change in their lives
- to identify any personal or family-related problems which may be part of this person's history and should be addressed
- to recognize that there may come a point when the best answer is neither "yes" nor "no" but simply "Not now—wait"
- to follow through on the whole process, whatever the formal outcome, by providing support for the inquirer and assuring that the gifts for ministry that have been discerned are recognized and put to use
- to write a one to two-page letter to the Vestry recommending nomination, if applicable

Special cases:

If a congregation is without a member of the clergy, the Canon for Ordained Vocations will appoint another clergy sponsor, such as the dean of their deanery or a priest in a neighboring congregation.

If an inquirer is a spouse, partner or child of a priest in the sponsoring congregation, is employed by the congregation or holds a key lay position (such as Senior Warden), the sponsoring priest must contact the Canon for Ordained Vocations before forming a Discernment Committee.

Beginning the Formal Process toward Ordination

If the inquirer and sponsoring priest agree to go forward with the exploration of a potential call to ordained ministry, the priest accompanies the inquirer and at least one or more potential Discernment Committee members to the diocesan Ministry Discernment Conference held once a year in February.

If, after prayerful consideration, they decide to proceed, the inquirer and sponsoring priest notify the Office for Ordained Vocations by the specified date, using the Ordination Process Commitment Form (*Addendum B*). The congregation's work of formal discernment begins at this time.

The inquirer writes two statements that will form a basis for initial conversations with the Discernment Committee. The first is a spiritual autobiography and the second is a ministry statement that describes the inquirer's understanding of the Church's ministry and their call (*Addendum C*). Both statements are to be given to the Discernment Committee prior to its first meeting. These documents will help to guide the conversations about who the inquirer is, the nature of the inquirer's personal relationships, how they are being called to ordained ministry, and whether there is a clear commitment in the inquirer's life to serving Jesus Christ and working for justice and peace. Members of the Discernment Committee must feel able to address these issues in some form in the report they will submit to the Vestry along with the inquirer's ministry statement. The spiritual autobiography *does not* need to be attached to the Committee's report to the Vestry but *will* be included in the application for Holy Orders if the Vestry endorses the inquirer's admission as a postulant.

The Discernment Committee

Composition, Qualifications and Work of the Committee

- The Discernment Committee is composed of four to six members of the congregation. It is appointed by the sponsoring priest with the Vestry's consent and one person must be a Vestry member.
- The Committee's charge is to explore and challenge the inquirer's call to ministry.
- Those appointed to the Committee should reflect diverse backgrounds and have differing perspectives but demonstrate the ability to listen and to learn from others.
- They must have room in their schedules for at least eight regular meetings (about ninety minutes each) between late February and early June. The Commission on Ministry will not accept the application of an inquirer whose Committee cannot commit the time that is necessary for this phase of the discernment process.
- It is the policy of the diocese that employees of the inquirer's congregation may not be members of the inquirer's Discernment Committee. No one who is currently a postulant or candidate for Holy Orders may be a member. Close friends and relatives of the inquirer should not be asked to serve on a Discernment Committee.

Training and Guidance of the Discernment Committee

After the Ordination Process Commitment Form has been received, a Commission on Ministry liaison is appointed and must meet with the Discernment Committee early in its process for orientation. **Without this orientation meeting the completed application will not be considered.** Guidelines for meeting with the liaison are found in *Addendum D*.

The liaison is available to the Discernment Committee for consultation during its entire process and should be kept informed about progress. The liaison supports the Discernment Committee, not the individual inquirer. Ordinarily, consultations happen through the Discernment Committee's chairperson though the inquirer may ask for help if major problems arise. Before the Discernment Committee submits its report to the Vestry, it must give a copy to the liaison for review to make sure it is complete. The Discernment Committee is required to meet with the liaison at the end of the parish discernment process to review its experience.

If a congregation or other faith community has had little experience with discernment or seems uncertain of its task, an experienced person from another congregation may be assigned as a trainer or consultant.

The Discernment Committee's Responsibilities

Discernment Committees are asked to make a recommendation to the Vestry as to whether an inquirer should be nominated. The Committee does this by presenting a careful, thorough report of its work and its observations following the format found in *Addendum D*. **The report must not be more than ten pages in length, in 12-point type and double-spaced.**

A Committee should beware of turning into an advocacy group. Withholding information perceived as negative for fear of “hurting someone’s chances” is damaging to the integrity of this process and prevents both a sound evaluation and important guidance for growth. The bishops and Commission on Ministry are not looking for a portrait of a perfect person.

During the months and years that follow, and whatever the final outcome may be, the Discernment Committee has a particular responsibility for making sure that those who have raised up the inquirer continue to hold that person in prayer and in pastoral care.

Organizing the Committee's Work

Like other aspects of discernment, the work of the Discernment Committee is grounded in the baptismal covenant and our promise to support each other in our life in Christ. Because different congregations have different ways of doing things, each committee needs to make some of its own decisions about how to proceed.

Here are some important guidelines:

- Make sure to schedule the first meeting at a time when the liaison can be present.
- Before the first meeting, distribute the following documents and ask all members to read this material thoroughly and note questions.
 - (a) the inquirer’s autobiographical statement
 - (b) the inquirer’s ministry statement
 - (c) Pages 11 through 13 of this Handbook
 - (d) Addendum D at the back of this Handbook
- Devote some time at the first meeting to the purpose of getting to know one another and clarifying rules of confidentiality.
- Also, at the initial meeting plan, all meeting dates so as to keep attendance high and complete all work within the three month period shown on the Timeline. Allow sufficient time for meetings and identify any members who may have to withdraw because they cannot commit to the full schedule of meetings.
- Acknowledge from the start that the committee may not affirm the inquirer’s call to ordained ministry and discuss what will happen then.
- Open and close each meeting with prayer.

Here are some suggestions that others have found helpful:

- Identify a scribe who will keep a record of discussions and draft the final report.
- Structure each meeting around the specific topics that will need to be addressed in the report (*Addendum D*).
- End each meeting by giving the inquirer questions to consider or work to do either before the next meeting or before the final report.

The Role of the Vestry

The final step in the congregation's work of discernment is taken by the Vestry.

As the elected representative body of the congregation, the Vestry has canonical responsibility for discernment and nomination for ordination. In the Diocese of Massachusetts, the Vestry ordinarily delegates the work of discernment to a Discernment Committee comprising four to six members of the congregation who show gifts for this ministry.

In deciding whether to nominate the inquirer, the Vestry will consider:

- the Discernment Committee report addressing the questions listed in *Addendum D*
- a recommendation from the sponsoring priest to nominate the inquirer, *either* in oral form *or* a written recommendation of one to two pages that will be submitted with the inquirer's application for Holy Orders (see below)
- the inquirer's ministry statement
- interviews with the inquirer, with representatives of the Discernment Committee, or with both together

After careful consideration of the above, the Vestry makes one or the other of these determinations:

- to nominate the inquirer for admission to postulancy for Holy Orders. In this case, the Endorsement for Admission as Postulant (*Addendum E*) is to be signed and sent to the Office for Ordained Vocations together with the Discernment Committee's report, the written recommendation of the sponsoring priest and, if the Vestry so desires, a further letter of its own.
- not to recommend the inquirer at present. In this case the application process ceases and the Chair of the Discernment Committee notifies the liaison of this decision. The inquirer may ask that discernment begin again at a later time or under new circumstances.

A Vestry nomination also includes:

- a pledge to contribute financially to the applicant's preparation, as required by Canon III.8.2 (See section VII. Financial Costs). Although the amount of financial support will vary according to the circumstances of the congregation, about *one percent* of the parish's annual budget is a good working guideline for determining a budget for financial support for postulants and candidates.
- a commitment to remain involved in the inquirer's formation for ordained ministry, as appropriate.

Responsibility of the Nominee

If the sponsoring priest and Vestry agree to nominate the inquirer, it is then the nominee's responsibility to make certain all materials required for the application are sent to the Office for Ordained Vocations by **August 1**. These include:

Autobiographical Statement

Ministry Statement

Discernment Committee Report

Sponsoring Priest Letter of Recommendation (maximum 1 to 2 pages in length)

Vestry Recommendation (*Addendum E*)

Financial Statement/Disclosure (*Addendum F.1 or F.2*)

Three Additional Letters of Recommendation (*Addendum H*, maximum 1 to 2 pages in length)

- one from a clergy person who is **not the sponsoring priest**
- one from a lay person
- one from either clergy or laity

Application for Holy Orders (*Addendum I*)

Copies of confirmation and baptism certificates

High-quality headshot photograph (sent by e-mail attachment to edie@diomass.org if possible)

Resume

Transcripts from all colleges/universities/seminaries

V. THE ROLE OF THE DIOCESAN BISHOP AND COMMISSION ON MINISTRY

The final discernment in accepting a nominee as a postulant for Holy Orders rests with the Diocesan Bishop. There are two stages between the nominee sending in all the necessary written materials and being accepted into postulancy.

- (1) A committee, including members of the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee, reviews all the written materials and, on that basis, agrees that the nominee will or will not be invited to an interview. Any nominee who at this stage is not invited to interview may apply again for consideration at a later time.
- (2) Nominees who are invited for interviews meet with the bishops and members of the Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee in late November or early December.

After consulting with those members of the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee who have interviewed each nominee, the Diocesan Bishop decides whether or not to invite the nominee to become a postulant. The Canon for Ordained Vocations notifies the sponsoring priest of the Bishop's decision. The decision is confirmed in a letter sent by the Canon for Ordained Vocations to the nominee and sponsoring priest. The sponsoring priest meets with the nominee to discuss the decision as quickly as possible. In the case of a nominee who is not accepted into postulancy, the Canon for Ordained Vocations will also name a member of the Commission on Ministry who may be contacted if further discussion is needed.

Except in rare circumstances, and with explicit permission from the Diocesan Bishop, a nominee who has been interviewed but not accepted into postulancy is not eligible to apply for postulancy again in the Diocese of Massachusetts.

VI. FORMATION DURING POSTULANCY AND CANDIDACY

Formation in this Diocese

All new postulants will receive a separate Formation Handbook outlining the various steps for each stage of the process, postulancy through candidacy and ordination.

Postulancy and candidacy usually last for eighteen months each, making a three-year period of formation before ordination to the diaconate or transitional diaconate. The fact that a postulant has already earned a seminary degree does not necessarily shorten the process.

The period of postulancy and candidacy is a time to develop habits and disciplines that will sustain deacons and priests in their work. During this time, postulants and candidates are directed by the bishops both directly and through the Commission on Ministry and the Canon for Ordained Vocations so that their formation provides the best possible opportunities to prepare for ordination.

An advisor is assigned to each postulant and maintains regular contact until the time of ordination. The advisor also communicates with the Commission on Ministry so that its members are kept up to date with the progress of each postulant and candidate.

Discernment continues throughout this time of formation.

Spiritual Formation

Postulancy and candidacy are intended to be a period of great spiritual openness in which those who are preparing for ordination are aware of a deep desire to relate and to respond wholeheartedly to God.

It is essential that postulants and candidates learn to ground themselves in the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life that offer rhythm and structure for responding to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Postulants and candidates are expected to participate fully in a worshipping community and to carve out a regular, daily time for solitary prayer. They are asked to make one or more retreats each year and to meet regularly with a spiritual director.

Preparation for the Diaconate

Postulants and candidates for the diaconate are enrolled in a three-year program of formation built on the foundation of weekend colloquiums, one each month from September through June. Formation includes five general areas:

- academic studies
- worship
- community building
- spiritual development and discipline
- practical training and experience

Evaluation of the academic component of formation is supervised by the Archdeacon as an ongoing part of formation and through written and oral examinations in six areas of theological study: Holy Scriptures, Christian Theology, Church History, Ethics and Moral Theology, Christian Worship, and the Practice of Ministry. Postulants and candidates for the diaconate are also required to complete two internships, one secular and one in parish ministry, as well as individual learning projects.

Preparation for the Priesthood

The traditional and still preferred way of acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary for ordained leadership is the standard three-year course of study in one of the Episcopal Church's seminaries.

The Episcopal Church, through its General Board of Examining Chaplains (GBEC), has identified six areas of knowledge in which candidates for ordination should be proficient. In this diocese, candidates for ordination are expected to take the General Ordination Examination to demonstrate their proficiency. If there are special circumstances (such as documented learning disabilities) that make the General Ordination Examination, as usually administered, inappropriate for a particular candidate, accommodations can usually be made. The six areas of theological study are Holy Scriptures, Christian Theology, Church History, Ethics and Moral Theology, Christian Worship, and the Practice of Ministry.

Postulants and candidates for the priesthood are required to complete one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education prior to application for candidacy and two years of field education.

The bishops and Commission on Ministry expect people in the ordination process for priesthood to observe the following guidelines.

- *Wait until postulancy to begin formal education.* The choice of seminary, like other aspects of formation, is not a matter of individual preference but is directed by the Diocesan Bishop in consultation with the Commission on Ministry and the postulant.
- *Attend an Episcopal seminary.* Seminaries accredited by the Episcopal Church provide a unique experience of Anglican community and offer the full range of academic studies required for effective preparation for ordained ministry with an emphasis on the traditions and charisms that identify our church. Experience has proven to us that, in general, graduates of Episcopal seminaries are far better prepared for ministry in Episcopal congregations. Those who have attended other seminaries may be asked to enroll in a year-long certificate program in a seminary chosen by the Diocesan Bishop.

Other Requirements for Diaconate and Priesthood

All new postulants are required to attend an orientation meeting with the bishops.

During the formation period all postulants and candidates are required to be involved in work which continues to prepare them for ordained leadership. In this diocese, they are required to:

- complete a thorough background check arranged by the Office of Ordained Vocations
- complete psychological evaluations and testing, as well as a medical exam in accordance with the requirements of the Church Pension Group
- attend annual retreat for postulants and candidates in March
- attend the annual Diocesan Convention in November
- keep in touch with the bishops through quarterly Ember Day Letters written every March, June, September and December
- complete anti-racism training
- complete safe church training
- receive education in the disciplinary sections of the canons as required by canon law (Title IV training)

VII. FINANCIAL COSTS

Those who are preparing for ordained leadership must be keenly aware of where the spiritual life intersects with the created order. They need to pay close attention to the choices they make in their personal lives that have to do with sustaining themselves and their families in a vocation that often requires sacrifice. We trust that “God will provide,” but without careful planning for one’s financial future, significant debt may cripple one’s freedom to minister where she or he is needed.

Financial disclosure is therefore required of all prospective ordinands. The financial information will be held confidentially and disclosed only to the Diocesan Bishop and his designees.

We know that the financial costs of formation for ordained ministry are considerable. The bishops and Commission on Ministry want to ensure that financial costs do not deter anyone who is called to serve as an ordained leader in this diocese and will work with postulants to find creative means of financing their education.

Costs for Postulants

Immediately following acceptance, a postulant is required to:

- have a medical examination in accordance with the requirements of the Church Pension Fund. For most postulants, the fee is covered by health insurance. If not, the cost is to be paid by the postulant.
- complete psychological evaluations and testing. The combined fees are approximately \$2,000 and are to be shared among the postulant, the sponsoring congregation or other faith community and the diocese. Both the new postulant and the sponsoring parish will be asked to contribute \$500 for a total of \$1,000.
- complete an Oxford Documents background and criminal check, the cost of which will be covered by the Diocese of Massachusetts.

Postulants for ordination to the priesthood should budget \$1,500 to \$2,500 for Clinical Pastoral Education. Other costs may include language training, if needed, and books.

If paying these fees presents a hardship for a postulant or a congregation, financial assistance is available from the diocese. The postulant or sponsoring priest should contact the Canon for Ordained Vocations.

Seminary Education for the Priesthood

The traditional three years of full-time study at an Episcopal seminary for the Master of Divinity degree is expensive and it can prove a major obstacle for some postulants. The bishops and Commission on Ministry may approve alternative means of preparation for some postulants when appropriate. However, in most cases, postulants will attend seminary full time.

Title III.8.2.(a).(1) of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church requires congregations nominating one of its members for Holy Orders to contribute financially to that person's preparation for ordination. By passing General Convention Resolution 2006-D008, The Episcopal Church has set one percent as the standard for parishes for supporting theological education. Therefore, every sponsoring congregation is required to provide some financial support during each year of postulancy and candidacy. The amount of financial support will vary according to the circumstances of the congregation **but should not be less than one per cent of the congregation's operating budget.**

In addition, postulants are expected to apply for financial aid as widely as possible. Seminary financial aid offices can provide postulants with information on sources of financial support. Postulants should also contact the Canon for Ordained Vocations for information about scholarships and grants.

When making parish visitations, the bishops ask that the collection be designated for theological education. These offerings, together with some reserved diocesan funds, allow the diocese to make some grants each year. Grants are awarded based on need as determined by the Financial Aid Subcommittee of the Commission on Ministry. For more information, please contact the Canon for Ordained Vocations.

Financial planning and disclosure for the Priesthood

The Church's canons require regular consultation about financial resources before and during postulancy and candidacy. In this diocese, every nominee for the priesthood is required to submit a financial disclosure form that shows what resources will be available to support that person throughout preparation for ordination (*Addendum F.1*). ***Nominees must research and complete section III. Future Planning and not leave this section blank.***

Financial planning and disclosure for the Diaconate

Although the diocese covers the cost of the weekend training for the diaconate program, there are other costs in time, talent and treasure that are required of nominees. In this diocese, every nominee for the diaconate is required to submit a disclosure form relating directly to these three areas. (*Addendum F.2*)

[Notes]

Addenda

2021 Mission Strategy Statement [A]

Ordination Process Commitment Form [B]

Autobiographical and Ministry Statements [C]

Guidelines for Discernment Committee Meetings and Report to the Vestry [D]

Vestry Endorsement for Admission as Postulant [E]

Financial Assessment and Planning Guide for Priesthood [F.1]

Disclosure and Planning Guide for Diaconate [F.2]

Timeline and Requirement Checklists [G]

Letters of Recommendation [H]

Application for Holy Orders [I]

STATEMENT OF OUR MISSION STRATEGY

As Proposed to the 236th Annual Diocesan Convention (November 2021)

The People We Long To Be

In tumultuous times, the center can be hard to find. We continue to be shaken by a global pandemic, a climate emergency, and a new reckoning with racial and economic inequalities. These challenges add to the experiences many of us already have of disruption and decline in our church communities. As people of hope, we come together to find a way forward. Renewing our diocesan Mission Strategy at this crucial moment is one small part of a larger movement of individual Christians and congregations to reclaim our identities and our purpose.

From our own hearts to our shared altars and outward into our diocesan community, we are called to place God's love at the center of our lives. Because Jesus first loves us, we are able to love ourselves, our neighbors, and all of creation. Through this transforming grace, we are becoming the people God created us to be:

Disciples of Jesus.

We gather to break bread in Jesus' name, praying to become the Body of Christ in the world. We come together across all ages—children, youth, adults, and elders—to teach one another about Jesus' redemptive way. We invite our neighbors to know Jesus, proclaiming the Good News by what we say and how we live.

Seekers of justice.

We recognize the dignity and inherent worth of every person, and we work to build communities where all people find fairness, compassion, and the freedom to live fully. We persevere in resisting evil, not just our own sins but the deep, structural sins of racism and oppression perpetuated in our name. We turn to the Lord for the grace to create honest dialogue, lasting transformation, and true reconciliation.

Protectors of creation.

We cherish the wondrous works of God and strive to protect the beauty and integrity of all living beings. We recognize that our greed and thoughtless consumption has placed us at odds with the needs of our created world. We respond to the crisis of our climate, using resources rightly and advocating for the restoration of a healthy planet.

When we follow Jesus intentionally, creating justice in our communities and living wisely on our earth, then we find joy and meaning in our lives. Our churches grow strong, with deep and mutual relationships among our members and our neighbors near and far. Our shared mission comes alive, as a bold witness to God's love for this broken and beautiful world.

Our Mission

Our yearnings to be disciples of Jesus, seekers of justice, and protectors of creation provide the foundation for us to do our shared work together. We will only reach these goals by becoming more completely the people Jesus calls us to be through the power of the Spirit.

First, last, and always, we pray. We ask for God's abiding presence with us and we allow the love of Jesus to transform us. From this place of unconditional grace, mercy, and love, we can trust in God's abundance, knowing we will have everything we need. We receive the courage to be agents of reconciliation and justice.

Devotion to the way of love demands vigilance, as the evil powers working to destroy the creatures of God remain unyielding in their attempts to distract us from our relationship to the Almighty. We must address the history and persistent reality of injustice in our church with honesty and humility. We must pray, learn, act, and advocate for the world we want to create.

We must be bold. We must be hopeful. We are committed to the tasks being given us by the Spirit. We trust that God is with us in the joys and challenges of this moment. We dedicate ourselves once again as the Body of Christ in this place and time to work for the glorious reign of Jesus.

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS
Ordination Process Commitment Form**

This form serves as notification to the Bishop's Office and the Commission on Ministry that the following person will be entering the formal time of inquiry and discernment for Holy Orders **(please print clearly)**.

Inquirer's Name (including preferred pronouns) _____

Inquiring about (*circle one*): Diaconate Priesthood

Address: _____

Telephone: (home) _____ (work) _____ (cell) _____

Email address: _____

Sponsoring Parish: _____

Sponsoring Priest: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Chair of Parish Discernment Committee: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Signatures

Inquirer _____ Date: _____

Sponsoring Priest _____ Date: _____

**Please send by February 28 to: The Office of Ordained Vocations,
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, 138 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02111**

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AND MINISTRY STATEMENTS**

The autobiographical and ministry statements combined must not be more than six pages total, 12 pt. type, double spaced.

- The **autobiographical statement** is a brief summary of the inquirer's life, including important formative experiences. Since some of this information may be highly personal, this document should be written separately, and not made available to the Vestry unless the inquirer so chooses. It is to be shared with your Discernment Committee and it will also be read by the bishops, the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the Canon for Ordained Vocations.

- The **ministry statement** should describe the inquirer's decision to seek ordained ministry, with specific references to the following, and is to be shared with the Vestry:
 - ❖ When did you first decide to seek ordination, and why?
 - ❖ Under what circumstance(s) was your decision tested?
 - ❖ Who are the individuals who influenced you?
 - ❖ What are the needs of the Church as you see them?
 - ❖ What do you hope to contribute?
 - ❖ What alternative callings have you considered?
 - ❖ Why do you seek the priesthood or diaconate rather than another vocation?

Parish Discernment Checklist for Sponsoring Clergy and Inquirers

We hope this checklist will help you form a strong discernment committee for any member of your congregation who wants to discern a call to ordained ministry. A member of the Commission on Ministry will review the composition of your discernment committee before scheduling its first meeting with you to make sure that your discernment process is off to a good start. Please be in touch with Canon Edie Dolnikowski (edie@diomass.org) if you have questions or concerns about any of the recommendations on this checklist.

Any exceptions to these recommendations must be approved by the Commission on Ministry *before* you submit the Commitment Form that initiates the formal discernment process.

The inquirer should be

- a baptized communicant in good standingⁱ in the sponsoring congregation for at least one year prior to requesting formal discernment
- confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church
- a legal resident in the United Statesⁱⁱ

The inquirer should NOT be

- a staff member of the sponsoring congregationⁱⁱⁱ
- a close friend or family member of the sponsoring priest

Members of the discernment committee should be

- committed Christians who are active members of the sponsoring congregation
- familiar with the orders of ministry (lay and ordained) in the Episcopal Church
- able to schedule at least eight regular meetings (ninety minutes each) between early March and early June

A well-formed discernment committee will

- comprise four to six members appointed by the priest in charge of the sponsoring congregation
- have ***no more than*** one vestry member, who serves as a liaison between the discernment committee and the vestry

- be as diverse as possible in terms of how well and how long its members know the inquirer
- be as demographically diverse as possible: if the inquirer is a person of color, it is *especially* important to invite persons of color to serve on the discernment committee
- be able to converse in the inquirer's first language

People who should NOT be invited to serve on a discernment committee are

- family members of the inquirer
- close personal friends of the inquirer
- postulants or candidates for Holy Orders
- clergy

The sponsoring priest should be

- the rector or priest in charge of the sponsoring congregation^{iv}

ⁱ “All communicants of this Church who for the previous year have been faithful in corporate worship, unless for good cause prevented, and have been faithful in working, praying and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, are to be considered communicants in good standing.” Canon I.17.3

ⁱⁱ Although the Canons of the Episcopal Church do not require legal residence of applicants to the ordination process, ordinands cannot be employed in the church without documentation attesting that they can legally reside and work in the United States. The Commission on Ministry strongly encourages inquirers with questions about their immigration status to consult with our Canon for Immigrant and Multicultural Ministry, the Rev. Dr. Jean Baptiste Ntagengwa (jbntagengwa@diomass.org), before submitting an application for Holy Orders.

ⁱⁱⁱ A lay staff member wishing to enter discernment for ordained ministry and the priest of that congregation must contact the Office of Ordained Vocations before submitting a Commitment form to allow time to identify an appropriate sponsoring priest. An inquirer *may not* be sponsored by a priest who is the inquirer's direct supervisor.

^{iv} If the congregation is being served by an interim priest, the Commission on Ministry will appoint another priest to serve as the inquirer's sponsoring priest until the inquirer is nominated for and admitted to postulancy.

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS

GUIDELINES FOR MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY LIAISON WITH THE DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

The liaison's **initial** meeting with a Discernment Committee is partly to underline information that is already in the Ministry Discernment Handbook; but, just as important, it is intended to give the Commission on Ministry a human face. These points should be covered:

- Coming to the parish and meeting with your Discernment Committee helps the Commission on Ministry to see the applicant in context and to understand their written material more fully.
- According to our Baptismal Covenant, God calls everybody to ministry. It also seems that God is now calling this individual in some special way. Your responsibility is to help them figure out what God has in mind, whether ordained ministry or something else.
- Our Church's understanding is that vocation has two parts. Often it is the individual who first senses a call to new ministry but sometimes God first issues a call to them through other people, the body of Christ, the Church. Together they may confirm a call.
- In the Episcopal Church, the Church is represented both by the local congregation or other faith community where the applicant has been known and tested for some time, and also by designated folks at the diocesan level who see the individual's gifts against the background of the diocese's needs. Each group has an essential perspective; neither is complete without the other.
- The Discernment Committee's task is to come to know the applicant well, especially in terms of qualities needed for leadership in ministry within and beyond the Church, and then to pass on its findings to the Vestry, which must then decide whether to nominate the applicant for ordination. You cannot carry out this task on tiptoes. You will have to ask hard, challenging questions and seek answers in areas that are sometimes considered private. People who are used to being polite may find this work uncomfortable at first but failing to probe deeply will leave the applicant unprepared for the even tougher challenges that come later. Honest, open, even painful discussion often produces wonderful surprises: a deeper, richer sense of God's activity not only in the life of the applicant, but also in the Discernment Committee members' lives as well. Appropriate confidentiality, therefore, is required of everyone engaged in these conversations. Discerning what insights to share in the report to the Vestry, while respecting matters that should remain confidential is an important responsibility of the Discernment Committee.
- Every parish wants to support its members but, in this case, support may mean a faithful refusal to affirm a call for which the applicant is unsuited. Every Discernment Committee must talk with the applicant early on about what would happen if you were to find yourselves unable to encourage them to proceed, as well as what would happen if the Bishops and Commission on Ministry were not to discern a call to ordained ministry in this diocese.

A **second** consultation with the liaison is required as the Discernment Committee ends its work to help shape the report to the Vestry so that its content provides adequate context for reading the applicant's materials.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING THE DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

Thank you for your willingness to serve on a Discernment Committee for an inquirer in your congregation or faith community who has begun exploring a vocation to ordained ministry in the Diocese of Massachusetts. Discernment is the formal process of discovering where the Holy Spirit is at work in an inquirer's life. Your voices are among many that will provide information about this person, but what you say is critically important. You are the people who have first-hand experience of the inquirer. Others who read your report will discern the inquirer's call to ordained ministry without ever meeting the person you have come to know so well. Be both honest and thorough. We expect you to offer a frank appraisal of this person's gifts for ordained ministry as well as a thoughtful assessment of how the inquirer needs to change and grow. No one comes to ordained ministry fully formed.

Guidance for Meetings with the Inquirer

To engage the work of discernment effectively, your Discernment Committee must be able to meet with the inquirer **at least eight times for ninety minutes each** before beginning to draft your report. The Commission on Ministry will not accept the application of an inquirer whose Discernment Committee cannot commit the time that is necessary for this phase of the discernment process. Pages 11 through 13 of the Ministry Discernment Handbook outline the requirements for forming an effective Discernment Committee and offer useful suggestions for organizing its work. The inquirer should also give each member of the Discernment Committee a copy of his or her autobiography and ministry statements very early in the process. These documents will help to guide your conversations about who the inquirer is, the nature of the inquirer's personal relationships, how they are being called to ordained ministry, and whether there is a clear commitment in the inquirer's life to serving Jesus Christ and working for justice and peace. Members of the Discernment Committee must feel able to address these issues in some form in the report you will submit to your Vestry.

The Commission on Ministry also depends on this report to help us to understand how the Holy Spirit is already moving in the life of the inquirer and where the Holy Spirit is now leading them. Therefore, questions that address the inquirer's regular engagement in the disciplines of prayer and worship, service in the Church, leadership, pastoral care and community-building are particularly important.

See below a list of topics that should be addressed explicitly in the body of your written report.

Your conversations with the inquirer should probe the question of the inquirer's call to *ordained* ministry rather than to a disciplined and committed *lay* ministry. The members of the Discernment Committee should be able to express in its written report the ways in which ordination will serve the inquirer's sense of call and address the inquirer's future needs as you perceive them.

What areas do you see in which the inquirer needs particular care and guidance for further growth? If there are serious considerations that might prevent the inquirer from serving well as an ordained leader, be sure to discuss them with the inquirer and address them in the report. In addition to supporting a recommendation to your vestry to endorse the inquirer for postulancy, your written report gives the Commission on Ministry important information about the inquirer's formation if they are admitted to the ordination process.

Format for the Written Report

Your report should be written in the following format and can be signed by the Chair on behalf of the Discernment Committee or by all its members. The report must not be more than ten pages in length, 12-point type and double-spaced.

Name of Parish/Faith Community
Address of Parish/Faith Community
Contact telephone numbers and e-mail address

TO: The Vestry of *(Name of Parish/Faith Community)*
FROM: Discernment Committee for *(Name of Inquirer)*
(Name, telephone number and e-mail address of Chair; Names of Committee Members)
DATE: *(Final date of report)*
RE: Discernment Committee Report

Introduction

*In this Introduction, describe the process undertaken by the Discernment Committee. In this section please include the number of meetings held, the name of the Commission on Ministry liaison, whether the report is endorsed by all members of the Discernment Committee and, if not, why. **Remember: The Discernment Committee must meet with the Commission on Ministry liaison early in the process and must review the final report with the liaison before it is submitted to the Vestry.** Failure to meet with the liaison to your Discernment Committee may result in a delay or in a report that will not be accepted by the Commission on Ministry.*

Body of the Report

The Discernment Committee Report may be written as an essay or as discrete responses to questions that arise in your conversations with the inquirer. The questions provided here are meant to serve as a guide to the kind of topics that the Discernment Committee should explore with the inquirer.

1. Who is the inquirer? How do members of the Discernment Committee know them?
2. How is the inquirer experiencing **now** their call to ordained ministry as a deacon or priest? In what ways is the inquirer currently engaged in service to the church through leadership, pastoral care, community service or other specific involvement? What new ministries do they imagine undertaking in the future? Why is this the right time to pursue a call to ordained ministry?
3. How does the inquirer demonstrate a clear commitment to serving Jesus Christ and to working for justice and peace?
4. What is the nature of the inquirer's significant relationships? Has the inquirer tested this call with family and friends?
5. How has the inquirer experienced and integrated loss, change or adversity?
6. How might the inquirer respond to the stresses and expectations of formation for ordained ministry?
7. Does the inquirer have a history of substance abuse or any other situation that might be revealed in a background check that needs to be addressed before entering into formation for ordained ministry? If so, how has the inquirer attended to it?
8. Where is the Holy Spirit at work in the inquirer's life?

9. In what discernible ways is the inquirer already engaged in the disciplines of prayer and worship?
10. In what specific ways does the inquirer believe that ordination would serve their sense of call? Does the inquirer understand that ordained ministry requires leaving the sponsoring congregation to serve the wider Church under the direction of bishops?
11. What unusual gifts, skills, experiences does the inquirer have that would serve the rapidly changing, increasingly diverse and missionary church?
12. What evidence do you see of the inquirer's skills in crossing barriers of class, race, culture, education and age?
13. In what areas does the inquirer need particular care and guidance for further growth?
14. Do members of the **Discernment Committee** feel the inquirer needs to be ordained to pursue this call to ministry? Why ordination rather than a disciplined and committed lay ministry?
15. If the inquirer is *not* invited into the ordination process, where might they be called to serve? What steps might they take to discern and prepare for these lay ministries?

Conclusion

The Discernment Committee must reach a conclusion as to whether the inquirer should be nominated for postulancy for Holy Orders as a deacon or priest. Your endorsement of the inquirer must be part of your report to your Vestry, Commission on Ministry and the bishops.

Optional Attachment of Addendum D

Remember this report is for the Vestry of your parish or faith community and its members may not be familiar with the guidelines for discernment as outlined in this addendum. If this is the case, you may want to attach Addendum D to your report when you submit it to your Vestry.

Certificate Required
Under TITLE III, Canon 5, Sec. 2(c) and TITLE III, Canon 8, Sec. 2(a)

**ENDORSEMENT for ADMISSION as POSTULANT
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Place _____ Date: _____

TO: The Commission on Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts:

We, whose names are hereunder written, testify to our belief (based on personal knowledge or on evidence satisfactory to us) that:

is sober, honest, and godly, and a confirmed communicant of this Church in good standing. We do further declare that, in our opinion, the applicant possesses the qualifications as to be admitted as a POSTULANT FOR HOLY ORDERS; and we pledge to contribute financially to and involve ourselves in this person's preparation for ordination.

Signed _____

Minister of _____

VESTRY OF THE PARISH

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

ATTESTATION OF THE FOREGOING CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____ Parish duly convened at _____ on the _____ day of _____, 20____ and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Signed _____ Clerk/Secretary of Vestry

Should there be no Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the letter shall be signed by a Priest of the Diocese acquainted with the nominee and the Parish, the reason for the substitution being stated in the attesting clause.

Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts
Financial Assessment and Planning Guide for
Nominees to Holy Orders for the Priesthood
(please print)

Confidential information for the Bishop and his designees

If information requested is not applicable, enter N/A.

Name (including preferred pronouns): _____

Date: _____

Number of dependents: _____ Number of incomes in family: _____

Names and ages of other members of the household: _____

I. Current Income and Assets

Current Income:

Your salary	\$ _____
Benefits	\$ _____
Family salary (<i>not including yours</i>)	\$ _____
Benefits (<i>not including yours</i>)	\$ _____
Other (<i>e.g. investments, military pension, etc.</i>)	\$ _____
Total Income	\$ _____

Current assets:

Market value of real estate	\$ _____
Market value of automobile(s)	\$ _____
Value of stock/bonds	\$ _____
Value of trust fund	\$ _____
Value of savings account	\$ _____
Investments/Retirement	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
Total Assets	\$ _____

Financial Assessment and Planning Guide for Nominees to Holy Orders for the Priesthood
(Continued)

II. Current Indebtedness and Expenses

Indebtedness:

Balance on mortgages [yearly mortgage payment: \$ _____]	\$ _____
Balance on automobile loans	\$ _____
Balance on educational loans	\$ _____
Balance on charge accounts	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
Total Indebtedness	\$ _____

Expenses (per year):

Total rent and/or utilities	\$ _____
Other household expenses	\$ _____

Itemize: _____

Charitable contributions	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____

Total Annual Expenses \$ _____

III. Future Planning

Research the cost of a theological education and sources for funding:

1. What will each year of seminary cost (tuition, books, CPE, etc)? \$ _____
2. How much will the seminary pay for each year (scholarships, etc)? \$ _____
3. What amount can you expect from other scholarships or assistance? \$ _____
3. How much of your own savings will you use for the first year? \$ _____
 For each additional year? \$ _____
4. How much of your own income will you use for the first year? \$ _____
 For each additional year? \$ _____
5. How much debt will you incur for the first year? \$ _____
 For each additional year? \$ _____

Other considerations (please respond on separate page):

Discuss what concerns you have about repaying any debt incurred.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Addendum F.2

Confidential information for the Bishop and his designees

As baptized Christians, we are called to give our time, talent, and treasure to God in thanksgiving for all that God has done for us. As you consider a call to ordination as a deacon, please use the following worksheet as a means of understanding the practical issues of such a call.

TIME:

The formation process for the diaconate in the Diocese of Massachusetts requires postulants and candidates to give one weekend a month for three years to training, education, and community. The weekend begins at Evening Prayer on Friday and ends at noon on Sunday. Retreats usually take place at St. Anne's Convent in Arlington, Massachusetts. Exceptions to this commitment are made for unusual circumstances only.

How many hours per week do you work? _____

How many vacation days do you receive? _____

How long is your commute from work or home to Arlington? _____

How much weekend time is dedicated to regular activities and family? _____

Diaconate formation requires two internships during your three years in the process of formation, as well as learning projects.

Will your work and family commitments allow you to work 8 to 12 hours a week in addition to your retreat weekends? _____

Are you prepared to leave your home parish to serve an internship in the parish of your bishop's choosing? This may occur in any one of your three years of formation. _____

Disclosure and Planning Guide for Nominees to Holy Orders for the Diaconate (Continued)

TALENT:

Deacons are ordained for the whole church and not for one congregation. You will be required to share your gifts with many in the Diocese at the direction of the bishop. Although location and special gifts are certainly considered in your placement, you must be willing to serve many congregations and may be asked to accept a wide range of ministries.

Are you prepared to leave any position you hold in your home parish when you begin your formation?

Are you prepared to leave your home parish once you become a candidate? _____

What skills have you acquired in your education, work and church that you feel competent to share?

TREASURE:

Although your formal education is paid for by the Diocese, there are costs which must be considered.

A Deacon in our Diocese holds non-stipendiary status. You will be expected to serve 12 to 15 hours a week in a parish without compensation. Will your work schedule and your salary allow this?

You must make a decision about pledging. Will you continue to support your sponsoring parish, pledge to the parish you are serving, or both? _____

Because you will serve many parishes in the years of your ministry, you must consider the cost of vestments. At the very least, you will need an alb, a set of stoles, a clerical shirt, and a clerical collar. Costs certainly vary, but the following is an approximate cost for each. Will your discretionary money allow purchases of clericals as you need them? _____

- Alb - \$150.00
- Stole - \$150.00
- Clerical shirt - \$50.00
- Clerical collar - \$25.00

In your ministry, books may become a valuable resource. Building your personal library may be an ongoing expense. Are you prepared to purchase materials as they are necessary? _____

Continuing education is a cost that some churches pay to deacons as well as to priests. If the parish you are serving does not offer a stipend for education, you must be prepared to absorb the cost.

If you are asked or wish to take a course or attend a workshop, will your budget allow it?

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts General Timeline for the Process of Ordination for Holy Orders

INQUIRER

NOMINEE

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
	Ministry Discernment Conference	Commitment form due February 28			Vestry Completes Nomination Form		Postulancy Application Due August 1		Notification Invitation to Postulancy Interviews	Postulancy Interviews	
Discernment Committee Meetings											

Year One

POSTULANT											
January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Notification of Postulancy					Postulancy Effective June 1st			Begin Seminary or Diaconate Training		Diocesan Convention	
					Ember Letter			Ember Letter			Ember Letter
Complete One Unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (Priesthood) or Directed Internships (Diaconate)											

Year Two

POSTULANT											
January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
		Postulant/Candidate Retreat						Application for Candidacy Due Sept. 30		Diocesan Convention	Notification of Invitation to Candidacy Interviews
		Ember Letter			Ember Letter			Ember Letter			Ember Letter
Complete One Unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (Priesthood) or Directed Internships (Diaconate)											

Year Three

CANDIDATE											
January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Candidacy Interviews	Notification of Candidacy (Effective Dec. 1)	Postulant/Candidate Retreat								Diocesan Convention	
		Ember Letter			Ember Letter			Ember Letter			Ember Letter
Two Years of Field Education (Priesthood) or Directed Internships (Diaconate)											

Year Four

DEACON											
January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
General Ordination or Diaconate Exams	Application for Ordination to Diaconate Due Feb 28	Postulant/Candidate Retreat	Notification of Ordination to the Diaconate	Complete Seminary or Diaconate Training	Ordination to the Diaconate			Application for Ordination to the Priesthood Due Sept. 15		Diocesan Convention & Notification of Ordination	
		Ember Letter			Ember Letter			Ember Letter			Ember Letter
Two Years of Field Education (Priesthood) or Directed Internships (Diaconate)											

January: Ordination to the Priesthood

Application Checklists

Application for Postulancy: Due August 1

[†]In your *Ministry Discernment Handbook*

- Application Form [Addendum I[†]]
- Vestry Endorsement Form [Addendum E[†]]
- Sponsoring Priest's Letter of Recommendation
- Discernment Committee Report
- Autobiographical Statement
- Ministry Statement
- Copy of Baptism Certificate
- Copy of Confirmation Certificate
- Financial Statement/Disclosure Form [Addendum F1/F2[†]]
- Letter of Recommendation (Clergy—*not* Sponsoring Priest)
- Letter of Recommendation (Lay Person—*not* a member of discernment committee or sponsoring parish's vestry)
- Letter of Recommendation (either Clergy or Lay Person)
- High-Quality Headshot Photo (sent by e-mail attachment to edie@diomass.org if possible)
- Resume
- Transcripts

First Year of Postulancy

^{*}In your *Formation Handbook*

- Release Form [Addendum A^{*}]
- Complete and Submit Background Check Paperwork
- Medical Exam [Addendum B^{*}]
- Initial and Follow-up Psychiatric Examinations
- Psychological Testing
- One Unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (Priesthood)

Application for Candidacy: Due September 30

- Updated Autobiographical Statement
- CPE Evaluation (Priesthood)
- Vestry Endorsement for Candidacy Form [Addendum E^{*}]
- Seminary Evaluation (Priesthood) or Diaconal Training Program Evaluation (Diaconate)
- Updated Seminary Transcripts (Priesthood)
- Field Education/Internship Evaluations
- Letter to Bishop

Application for Ordination to the Diaconate: Due February 28

- Letter to Standing Committee [Addendum F^{*}]
- Updated Autobiographical Statement
- Vestry Endorsement for Ordination to the Diaconate Form [Addendum G^{*}]
- Updated Medical Exam (if older than 36 months)
- Updated Psychological Exam (if older than 36 months)
- Updated Background Check (if older than 36 months)
- Certificate of Recommendation from Seminary or Diaconal Training Coordinator
- Safe Church Training Certificate
- Anti-Racism Training Certificate
- Title IV Training Certificate
- Field Education/Internship Evaluations
- General Information Sheet [Addendum H^{*}]

Application for Ordination to the Priesthood: Due September 15

- Letter to Standing Committee [Addendum I^{*}]
- Updated Autobiographical Statement
- Vestry Endorsement from Curacy Parish [Addendum J^{*}]
- Seminary Recommendation for Ordination to the Priesthood (if necessary)

Required Every Year

- Ember Day Letters [Addendum C^{*}] to the Bishop in March, June, September and December
- Attend Postulants and Candidates Retreat
- Attend Diocesan Convention
- Meet with Commission on Ministry Advisor *twice per year*
- Meet with your Spiritual Director *regularly*
- Serve as Chaplain to Bishops making Parish Visitations as assigned

As Needed

- Check in with the Canon for Ordained Vocations
- Meet with one of four Chaplains to Postulants and Candidates

Addendum H

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION**

To Those Writing Letters of Recommendation for Ordained Leadership

Thank you for your willingness to write to the Commission on Ministry on behalf of _____, who has begun a formal exploration of vocation to ordained ministry in the Diocese of Massachusetts. Many others will provide information about this person, but what you say may be critically important. You bring a unique point of view that may complete and confirm a picture of a priest or deacon in the making. We ask you to be honest and thorough. We need a frank appraisal of this person's present gifts and skills, and of needed growth as well, with specific examples to help us understand. The following questions should be addressed. Please attach your answers to this form and limit your response to one to two pages total.

1. How long have you known the applicant, and under what circumstances?
2. What evidence have you seen that the applicant is called to ordained ministry, rather than to disciplined and committed lay ministry?
3. Has the applicant shown evidence of strong leadership? How, and in what circumstances? How would you describe this person's style of leadership? Please be specific.
4. What unusual gifts, skills, and experience does the applicant bring that might be useful in a rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, missionary Church? (Examples: proficiency in a second language, time spent in a culture or class different from one's own.)
5. What areas do you see in which this person needs particular care and guidance for further development during the postulancy/candidacy period? Are there any serious considerations, which might prevent the applicant from serving well as an ordained leader? Have you discussed these matters with the applicant?

Name _____

Address _____

Signature _____ (date) _____

Telephone (home) _____ (work) _____

Please send to: Office of Ordained Vocations
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts
138 Tremont Street
Boston, MA 02111

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS
APPLICATION FOR HOLY ORDERS
(please print)**

Confidential information for the Bishop and designees

To: The Rt. Rev. _____, Bishop of Massachusetts

I, _____, wish to apply for admission as a
(full name and pronouns)

Postulant for the: Diaconate Priesthood (circle one)

1. Date of birth: _____ Place of birth: _____

Are you a US Citizen? Yes / No (circle one)

If no, state status and attach copy of all applicable documentation: _____

Marital status: _____ Name of partner/spouse: _____

Names and ages of children: _____

2. Length of time resident in the Diocese: _____

3. Baptized by _____ on _____ (date)

At _____

(name and address of church)

4. Confirmed in the Episcopal Church by Bishop _____ on

_____ at _____

(date)

(name and address of church)

5. I have / have not previously applied for admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders.

If previously applied, state name of Diocese and date. Explain circumstances on separate page and attached to this document _____

6. Grounds for seeking Holy Orders: to be included in Ministry Statement.

7. Present occupation and name and address of employer:

8. Level of education attained _____

Degree(s) conferred:

Institution	Degree Conferred	Date Conferred	Area(s) of Specialization

9. Have you ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony? _____

If yes, explain on separate page and attach to this document.

Signed _____ Date _____

Address _____

Telephone: (home) _____ (work) _____ (cell) _____

Email address _____

Sponsoring parish (*name/address*) _____

Sponsoring priest _____

Chair of Parish Discernment Committee (*name/address/telephone/email*): _____

Include the following with your application:

1. Copy of Certificate of Confirmation
2. Copy of Certificate of Baptism
3. High-Quality Headshot Photo (sent by e-mail attachment, if possible, to edie@diomass.org)
4. Resume
5. Transcripts from all colleges, universities and/or seminaries attended

Send application and materials by August 1 to:

The Canon for Ordained Vocations
The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts
138 Tremont Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02111

