A Guide for Discernment
THE ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD

The Episcopal Diocese of Arizona
114 West Roosevelt Street, Phoenix, Arizona 85003-1406
Telephone: 602-254-0976 or 800-420-1500 [Arizona Only]
Fax: 602-495-6603    Website: www.azdiocese.org

March 2011    Revision
The Ordination of a Priest

The Examination

My brother/sister, the Church is the family of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. All baptized people are called to make Christ known as Savior and Lord, and to share in the renewing of his world. Now you are called to work as a pastor, priest, and teacher, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.

As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God's forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God's blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.

In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.

My brother/sister, do you believe that you are truly called by God and his Church to this priesthood?

The Book of Common Prayer
Page 531
# Table of Contents

Pastoral Letter .................................................................................................................................4

A Note on Process and Terms ...........................................................................................................5

A Theological Statement on Ordained Ministry and the Discernment Process

  Theology of Ministry .......................................................................................................................6

  Introduction to the Discernment Process ......................................................................................7

Step 1 – Invitation to Discernment .................................................................................................8

Step 2 – Attend *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information* .............................................9

Step 3 – Discernment at the Parish Level ......................................................................................10

Step 4 – Nomination and Application for Postulancy ..................................................................11

Step 5 – Health Related Process ..................................................................................................11

Step 6 – Nominee Interviews with the Bishop and the COM ......................................................12

Step 7 – Postulancy .......................................................................................................................12

Step 8 – Candidacy ........................................................................................................................14

Step 9 – Ordination to the Diaconate (Transitional) .................................................................14

Step 10 – Ordination to the Priesthood .......................................................................................15

Step 11 – Post-Ordination Formation ...........................................................................................16

Appendix A

  Parish Discernment Committee Organization, Preparation and Report Content... 18
Dear Friends in Christ:

As part of the Bishop’s charge to oversee “the life and work of the Church” (BCP, 521), the Bishop is “to ordain priests” (BCP, 517) “to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” (BCP, 531) The Commission on Ministry (COM) exists to serve the Bishop’s ministry and, among other duties, to help the Bishop raise up those with a Godly call to ordained ministry. Charged with the Spirit of mission, the COM hopes to encourage and nurture priestly vocations so that the Church’s clergy, full of the Holy Spirit, can “empower the saints for the work of ministry.” (Ephesians 4:12)

Listening to God’s call and the discernment of a priestly vocation always takes place within the context of community. Priests are often called to be leaders of Christian congregations and therefore the community must recognize not only an authentic voice that resonates with a Godly call, but also a person who has the possibility of having a gift for leading others into a deeper life in Christ, a more holy communion with one another, and a greater love for the world. This process always involves some vulnerability for the Aspirants (the one discerning the call) because it involves sharing the deepest things in their lives — who they are at the core of their being and who they believe God is calling them to be. Moreover, the possibility of being judged by others on these levels is the source of great anxiety for some. With this in mind, the COM hopes to work with a compassionate heart and a tenderly firm hand to help guide Aspirants through a discernment process so that, regardless of outcome, one will feel held in love, and affirmed as a brother or sister in Christ who is being called into some form of deeper service for the Lord.

It is the purpose of this document to lay out the discernment process for ordination to the priesthood so that Aspirants, clergy, their congregations, the COM, the Standing Committee, and Bishop can have a clear understanding of the way forward. Clarity and transparency in the process sets everyone free to listen to the mystery of God and to each other in a healthy way.

The COM is aware of the weighty nature of this undertaking and we enter into it with humility of heart, knowing that “it is by God’s mercy that we are engaged in this ministry.” (2 Cor 4:1) We encourage feedback from all in the process so that we may ever improve upon the art of creating structures that catch the wind of the Spirit. For “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.” (2 Cor 4:7)

May God bless you,

The Commission on Ministry
A Note on Process and Terms

The Bishop and the Commission on Ministry (COM) have outlined the following steps in the hope of bringing clarity, transparency, and encouragement to those involved in the discernment process. The steps outline the process from beginning to end for a lay Episcopalian who feels called. Since the Bishop is the one who ordains, some parts of the process may be modified at the Bishop’s discretion.

The process is different for clergy from another denomination who feel called to Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church. The COM does play an examining and reporting role with clergy coming from another denomination. If you were previously ordained in another denomination, the process described in this book does not entirely apply to you. Please call the Bishop’s office at 602-254-0976 and ask to be contacted by a member of the COM.

The steps in the ordination process have their own ecclesiastical terminology. One begins as an *Aspirant* – someone who is aspiring to be a priest. *Nomination (Nominee)* is the formal sponsorship by the worship community of an adult communicant in good standing to seek ordination. *Postulancy (Postulant)* is granted by the Bishop. It is a time for exploration and decision on a call. To be eligible for admission as a Postulant, the Nominee must complete the Application for Postulancy, interview with the COM, and the Diocese must receive reports from medical and psychological evaluations. After admission as a Postulant, a background check is completed. *Candidacy (Candidate)* is the second stage of approval in the ordination process. It is a time of deeper formation in preparation for ordination to the Transitional Diaconate and eventually to the Priesthood. Most Postulants are approved for Candidacy during the winter of their middler (second) year of seminary. The combined period for Postulancy, Candidacy and Diaconate must be at least 18 months and is usually longer. The Diocesan goal is to ordain Candidates who follow a traditional seminary program to the Diaconate in the summer after their second (middler) year of seminary. *Ordination (Ordinand)* to the Priesthood follows the successful completion of the Candidate’s education/formation and successfully passing a requisite examination. *Post-Ordination* formation is provided to each newly-ordained priest by a mentor Priest assigned by the Bishop for a period of at least one year. Ordination, however, does not guarantee an immediate position in the Diocese of Arizona.

A special thank you to the Diocese of Chicago, to the Diocese of Ohio and to Grace-St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, Tucson, AZ for sharing some of their insights.
A Theological Statement on
Ordained Ministry and the Discernment Process
in the Diocese of Arizona

Theology of Ministry

Through Holy Baptism the people of God are filled with the Holy Spirit and given the power to share in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Through Baptism, we are called to servant ministry and to give our lives in service to others. In Baptism, we are joined to others who share this vocation, and as members of the Body of Christ, we are servants to one another and to the world. Therefore, everyone baptized into the body of Christ is a minister of the Gospel.

The ordained priesthood is primarily a vocation of servant leadership within a spiritual community (parish, hospital, campus ministry, etc.). The vocation of priest is not an “elevation of the super holy” or “advancement for those who have done every other ministry.” The catechism states: The ministry of the priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God. (BCP, p. 856)

During the examination at the ordination of a priest, the bishop says: As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God’s forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God’s blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ’s Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.

In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ’s people from the riches of his grace, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come. (BCP, p. 531)

While all baptized members of the Church are ministers who care, teach, and support one another, priests are especially called to preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments on behalf of the community and pastorally serve those entrusted to their care. Therefore, the process of discernment is intended to facilitate identifying those whom God is calling to this particular ministry.

Scripturally, our model for the priesthood is rooted in texts such as these:

- **Shared leadership** – Numbers 11:16-17, 24-45a. Priests work as part of a leadership team with the bishop, other priests, deacons and lay leaders.

- **Call of Jeremiah** – Jeremiah 1:4-10. It is God who works and speaks through the one whom God calls.

Introduction to the Discernment Process for the Diocese of Arizona

The whole Church is responsible for raising up ordained leaders of the highest quality with the particular gifts necessary for leading faith communities into the future. Both the individual and the community are simultaneously participating in a process of discernment and affirmation. To that end, the COM, with the direction of the Bishop, is being proactive in its efforts to invite individuals into further discernment about the call to Holy Orders as a priest. The COM is prayerful about its active steps to seek out entrepreneurial and holy leaders. Relying on the Holy Spirit and healthy congregations to identify potential priests, deacons or lay ministers, members of the COM systematically visit congregations in order to hear the people—interviewing parishioners, members of the vestry and priests—to encourage them to discern who within their midst exhibits the characteristics or potential associated with these ministries. The Bishop and members of the COM hope this process will present occasions when parishioners lead the visitation team to encounter the unexpected.

The Episcopal Diocese of Arizona is searching for priestly candidates who embody the attributes that are important for success in serving a new generation of congregants and growing the church at large. Through surveys, interviews and dialogue, the COM has observed that some of the attributes and/or potential skills needed to serve the Church of tomorrow include:

- A builder’s heart;
- Enjoyment in leading others to be leaders;
- A committed Christian and Episcopalian who is in a growing relationship with One Triune God and can comfortably and effectively communicate that personal relationship to others rather than simply preaching a relationship with Christ from an intellectual standpoint;
- The ability to inspire others—a good storyteller—a good preacher who has the ability to connect the Scriptures to life in a relevant manner;
- Passion for radical inclusivity;
- Ability to reach to another culture: superb multicultural and multigenerational competencies;
- One who empowers and is able to recognize and cultivate spiritual giftedness in others, enabling them to shine and lead; and
- The synthesis of a pastoral presence to nurture the Church of today as well as the passion and vision to work for the Church of tomorrow.

At the beginning of each calendar year, the Bishop will notify clergy within the Diocese of the plan for two-person COM visitation teams to visit designated congregations between February 1 and April 30. Any congregations not on the designated schedule who have identified individuals they believe to be potential ordained leaders may request a special visitation from a COM team as a part of this process.

It is the intention of the Bishop and the COM to then invite individuals into a time of discernment in order to hear if God is truly calling them into the process as an Aspirant. Following the visitation, the COM team members follow up with individuals identified during the visitation to discuss their interest in entering into the discernment process. Individuals interested in exploring a call to ordained ministry
will be invited to enter into the discernment process by attending the *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information*.

**Step 1 – Invitation to Discernment**

The *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information* is held annually in May. Individuals interested in exploring a call to ordained ministry are invited to attend along with their spouses/partners and the Chair and/or a member of her/his Parish Discernment Committee, if a committee has been appointed by this date. Participation in this *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information* is by invitation only.

It is important to note that according to the Canons of the Episcopal Church, in order for a person to enter the ordination process, he or she must be a communicant in good standing in a parish or affiliate ministry of the Diocese of Arizona for at least one year before beginning the ordination process. Any individual who has been refused Candidacy or dismissed from formation by other dioceses will not generally be eligible for consideration in this diocese without receipt of a letter from the Bishop of that diocese declaring cause of refusal or dismissal. A decision in this matter will be made on a case-by-case basis.

The Bishop and other representatives of the Church strive to exercise prayerful spiritual discernment and pastoral sensitivity with those who believe they might be called to ordained ministry. Any person considering applying for ordination and any clergyperson participating in an applicant’s discernment should be aware of the following Episcopal Church Canon:

> No one shall be denied access to the selection process for ordination in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by these canons. No right to ordination is hereby established.
> Title III, Canon 1, Section 2.

The discernment process is multifaceted. First, it includes an individual’s assessment of his/her own gifts and potential call. But other individuals who know the person participate in the discernment process by providing a safe, intimate environment in which one’s gifts, vulnerabilities, suitability and readiness for ordained ministry can be discussed openly. The community, both at the parish level and at the diocesan level, assists the individual by discerning and evaluating his/her gifts and call. The community should be proactive in identifying those they believe might be called to ordained ministry. As the process moves forward, the community’s role becomes increasingly evaluative. Scripturally, our model for discernment is shaped by texts such as these:

- **Moses’ Call** – Exodus 4:10-17. Understanding a call to leadership begins with an honest self-discernment of gifts, vulnerabilities and prayer with God.
- **Elizabeth and Mary** – Luke 1:39-45. Others, including friends and family, also assist in affirming one’s call.
- **Matthias’ Call** – Acts 2:21-26. The Community establishes criteria for selection and is guided by prayer and the Holy Spirit.
Saul’s Call – Acts 9:1-30. God’s call is followed by a time of discernment of the call of the community, healing, and spiritual formation.

It is recommended that individuals interested in exploring a call to ordained ministry seek a qualified spiritual director. If you need some guidance in finding a spiritual director, please call Archdeacon Veronica Ritson at 602-254-7126 x312 (for those in the Greater Phoenix Metropolitan Area and Northern Arizona) or Dr. Jeanette Renouf at 520-419-1039 (for those south of Phoenix).

**Step 2 - Attend Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information**

Invitees in contact with the COM will be invited to attend the *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information* along with their spouses/partners (and the Chair and/or a member of her/his Parish Discernment Committee, if a committee has been appointed). The purpose of this day is to orient individuals interested in exploring a call, along with their spouses/partners, to the ordination process and to help them with further discernment. The hope is to clarify the differences between lay, diaconal, priestly ministries and religious orders and to explore the nature of discernment and formation in the ordination process.

After the *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information*, the invitee who wishes to proceed must complete and submit the “Declaration of Intent to Seek Postulancy” (*FORM 1*). The Declaration of Intent should be addressed to the Bishop and the COM. Note: *FORM 1* must be submitted by the Declaration Deadline of June 15. Once the Declaration of Intent has been submitted, the individual exploring a call is now considered an Aspirant.

The *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information* is held each May and is coordinated with the remainder of the discernment process. If a discernment committee has been established prior to the *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information*, the invitee is encouraged to bring the chair or another member of the discernment committee to the *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information*. Participation in the *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information* is by invitation only.

After the *Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information*, in preparation for Discernment at the Parish Level, the Priest-in-Charge works with the Aspirant to appoint a Parish Discernment Committee of not less than five and not more than seven mature Christians to discuss the call with the Aspirant. Initial appointment of five members is a wise practice, as circumstances sometimes require a group member to withdraw before the process is completed. Appointment of a Parish Discernment Committee Chair from outside the Aspirant’s parish and trained by the Diocese is highly recommended. The COM will have a list of trained discernment leaders from various geographic locations in the Diocese available to act as PDC Chairs or to provide training to a PDC. In addition, ideally one member of the discernment group is also a member of the Vestry. Sponsoring Priests have also reported in their experience that an Aspirant is better prepared to meet with the COM if the PDC includes members who did not know the Aspirant before the PDC was convened. The COM does not recommend that the Priest-in-Charge be a member of the PDC; although it is helpful if the Priest-in-Charge attends the first meeting of the PDC along with the COM Shepherd, if assigned prior to the first meeting of the PDC to accompany the Aspirant through the process. The COM Shepherd and/or a Discernment Committee Chair trained by the COM will provide training for the PDC at its first meeting.

The primary tasks of the PDC are to help discern God’s call, to refine the individual’s ability to articulate the reason/s he/she believes he/she is called to the priesthood, and to be a support for the Aspirant whether or not the ordination process continues. It is important to remember that this PDC does
not function as a gatekeeper to pass final judgment on the Aspirant’s sense of call, nor is it an advocacy group whose mission is to push the Aspirant toward ordination. The COM finds the book *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* by Suzanne Farnham et al, to be a valuable resource to understanding effective dynamics in a PDC. The COM also recommends *Let Your Life Speak* by Parker Palmer as a succinct articulation of the experience of discernment. We urge all Aspirants and PDC members to utilize these texts.

**Step 3 – Discernment at the Parish Level**

The Aspirant will meet with the Bishop and COM members in September. At this meeting, the Aspirant will be provided with a schedule, a list of deadlines and information about the role of the assigned COM Shepherd to be appointed following the September meeting. The COM Shepherd will help the Aspirant through the discernment process and will be the Aspirant’s primary contact with the COM. The hope is to put a personal connection at the heart of the group process. The COM Shepherd will come to know the Aspirant in a deeper way than the rest of the members of the COM. As a dedicated facilitator, the COM Shepherd will help the COM with its deliberations about a particular Aspirant and the COM Shepherd will help inform the Aspirant about the process. The Shepherd will be available to meet with the Aspirant’s spouse or partner to answer questions, if requested.

By November 1, the PDC will provide their report to the Priest-in-Charge about their review of the Aspirant’s call to priestly ministry (*FORM 2, PAGE 2*). The PDC should meet a minimum of four times about two weeks apart prior to preparing this report. Their report is based on the observation by the COM that Aspirants who have this depth in discernment are generally better prepared to articulate their sense of call than others who have been in conversation with a PDC for a briefer period. (Please see the guidelines for the organization of the PDC and the content of the PDC report in Appendix A of this Guidebook.)

During the discernment process, the Priest-in-Charge provides support and feedback, discerns for him/herself whether individuals presenting themselves for discernment are called and enters into conversation with the COM about the potential for a call to the priesthood. Pastoral guidance and possible redirection in the discernment process may occur at this point. As difficult as it is to say and hear that one is not called to the priesthood, it is almost always easier to have this conversation earlier rather than later.

During the final meeting of the PDC, the COM Shepherd and/or the Discernment Committee Chair will provide guidance in writing the PDC report. The report of the PDC is shared with the Priest-in-Charge and the Vestry, although it is recommended that the Priest-in-Charge delete any portions of the report that are inappropriate for dissemination. If the Aspirant, the Discernment Committee, Priest-in-Charge and Vestry agree, the person enters the Application/Formation Process. The authority to move an Aspirant forward in the ordination process rests fully with the Priest-in-Charge. After Vestry review of the PDC report and Nomination of the Aspirant, *FORM 2* is signed and submitted to the Bishop no later than November 15. If the Aspirant is nominated by the Vestry and makes an application to the Bishop for admission to Postulancy, the Priest-in-Charge will send the Bishop a confidential letter of recommendation by December 15 that includes a copy of the report of the Parish Discernment Committee. Once *FORM 2* has been submitted, the Aspirant exploring a call is now considered a Nominee. It is the hope of the COM that the PDC will continue to meet with the Nominee regularly for as long as he or she continues in the Application/Formation Process.
The COM wishes to remind all those participating in the discernment process as well as members of a Vestry/Bishop’s Committee that confidentiality is to be strictly adhered to by all who will be involved with an Aspirant’s journey in seeking ordained ministry. The COM Shepherd will be emphasizing this important effort frequently to everyone participating in the discernment of a potential call by an Aspirant.

Step 4 – Nomination and Application for Postulancy

If the Sponsoring Priest, the Bishop, the COM Shepherd and the Nominee feel that there is sufficient reason to continue in the discernment process, the Nominee should formally initiate the process to become a Postulant in the Diocese of Arizona. Deadlines for each milestone in the application process will be announced at the Holy Orders Day of Discernment and Information and published on the Diocesan Calendar.

- The “Nomination of the Sponsoring Priest and Congregation and Pledge of Financial Support and the Recommendation from the Parish Discernment Committee” (FORM 2, PP. 1-2) must be completed and sent to the Bishop and the COM by November 15. The Sponsoring Priest must also send a confidential letter of personal recommendation for the Nominee addressed to the Bishop and the COM by December 15. A copy of the written Report from the Parish Discernment Committee should be included with this letter.
- The Nominee must complete and submit the “Application for Postulancy” (FORM 5 WHICH HAS 2 PAGES). Answers to Essay Questions 1 – 8 should be attached to FORM 5. The application should be addressed to the Bishop and the COM.
- The Nominee will submit the $650.00 “Application Fee” with the “Application for Postulancy.” Canon Law requires sponsoring congregations to provide financial support to applicants, and a contribution toward the application fee is an appropriate beginning in this regard. The Vestry is responsible for determining the amount of the Parish’s contribution. If financial assistance is required by a parish, a letter to the Bishop requesting waiver of the Application Fee should accompany the Application in lieu of a check.

Step 5– Health Related Process

Nominees will schedule all health-related evaluations to be completed in time for reports to reach the Bishop prior to the interviews scheduled for the January/February meetings of the COM, as appropriate. These evaluations and physicals can be scheduled anytime after submission of FORM 2. The following actions must occur:

- The Nominee must send a copy of the “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) by November 15 to be kept on record at the Diocese. The Nominee should keep two copies, one for the medical doctor and one for the psychologist.
- The Nominee must have a medical exam by his or her physician. The doctor must complete the Medical Examination Form and send it to the Bishop by January 1. The Nominee must take a “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) to the physician.
- A psychological exam must be completed by a professional named by the Diocese. It is important to note that the Diocese is the client and the Diocese must receive the confidential report by January 1. The Nominee must take a “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) to the interview with the psychologist.
- The Nominee must fill out the “HIPAA Compliant Authorization for Release of Medical, Psychological Records” (FORM 4) and send it to the Bishop by November 15.
Step 6 - Nominee Interviews with the Bishop and the COM

The COM will direct the Nominee to schedule a pre-interview meeting with the Bishop and notify the Nominee of the specific day and time of the COM interview. The COM will review the written application prior to the meeting with the Nominee.

The COM will notify the Nominee of the day and time of the interview. (Note: The interview may be rescheduled if the Bishop has not received reports from the physical examination and psychological evaluation.)

At the end of the day of COM interviews and upon the recommendation from the COM, the Bishop will make a decision if the Nominee should be named a Postulant based on the reports of the COM, the physician and the psychologist.

As soon as possible following the interview, the COM Shepherd will be in touch with the Nominee and the Sponsoring Priest with a decision about whether or not the COM, in conversation with the Bishop, deems it appropriate for the Nominee to continue in the priestly discernment process. An official letter from the Bishop will be sent to the Nominee about the decision.

If the Nominee is not recommended to continue in the priestly discernment process, the COM Shepherd will be in touch with the Nominee and the clergy (or faith community) exercising oversight. The COM Shepherd will remain in relationship with the Nominee long enough for the Nominee to be able to process the information he or she has received. For some this will be a time of deep disappointment and it is important that the COM Shepherd remain in communication with the Nominee long enough to explore what this decision might mean for his or her vocation and Baptismal calling to serve the Lord. The COM Shepherd should also bring back to the COM any issues the Nominee might have about the discernment process.

Step 7 – Postulancy

After the Nominee is named a Postulant, his or her name and the date of admission are recorded in the Diocesan Register. The Bishop then informs the Postulant, the member of the clergy (or faith community) exercising oversight, the COM, and the Standing Committee. After the Nominee is named a Postulant, he/she will receive a letter notification of the requirement for a background check. The Postulant will be asked to submit a fee of $160.00 to cover these costs. As with the psychological examination, the Diocese is the client.

The Bishop meets with the Postulant to recommend a course of study and preparation. The Bishop will consult with the Postulant regarding financial resources which will be available for the support of the Postulant throughout preparation for ordination. The Episcopal Church Canons note that a Postulant may be removed at the sole discretion of the Bishop who, at that point, would give written notification.

Priestly formation officially begins with Postulancy. The Postulant is to pursue a program of preparation developed by the Bishop and COM which includes theological training, practical experience, emotional development, and spiritual formation. If no baccalaureate degree has been obtained by the Postulant, additional academic work must be done, as deemed necessary. Prior education and life experience may be considered as part of formation. Formation should take place in community if possible and shall take into account local culture and the Postulant's background, age, occupation, and ministry. This may or
may not include going to seminary. Subject areas of study set forth in the Episcopal Church Canons shall include:

**g) Subject areas for study during this program of preparation shall include:**

1. The Holy Scriptures.
2. Church History, including the Ecumenical Movement.
3. Christian Theology, including Missionary Theology and Missiology.
5. Studies in contemporary society, including the historical and contemporary experience of racial and minority groups, and cross-cultural ministry skills. Cross-cultural ministry skills may include the ability to communicate in a contemporary language other than one’s first language.
6. Liturgics and Church Music; Christian Worship and Music according to the contents and use of the Book of Common Prayer and the Hymnal, and authorized supplemental texts.
7. Theory and practice of ministry, including leadership, and the ministries of evangelism and stewardship.

**h) Preparation for ordination shall include training regarding**

1. Prevention of sexual misconduct.
2. Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse.
3. Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, particularly Title IV thereof.
4. The Church’s teaching on racism.

(Title III, Canon 8, Section 5)

It is customary that one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) be completed before ordination to the Transitional Diaconate.

The Postulant must send, until ordination, a quarterly report to the Bishop stating academic, personal, and spiritual status and outlining any important changes in these areas since the preceding letter. The Bishop prefers that these letters be sent by E-mail. “Ember Days” have been specified by Canon law as the dates to send these letters. Ember Days are traditionally the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following: the First Sunday in Lent, Pentecost, Holy Cross Day (September 17), and December 13.

If the Postulant goes to seminary, the Bishop will notify the seminary Dean (or director of the formation program) of the Postulant’s date of admission to Postulancy. The seminary or other program should provide for, monitor, and report on academic performance and the Postulant’s personal qualifications for ordained ministry. These reports should be made at the request of the Bishop or COM at least once a year. The congregation or faith community that nominated the Postulant is to continue to offer faithful nurture and support to the best of its abilities. The COM Shepherd is to stay in touch with the Postulant to ensure that pastoral guidance continues to be provided. The Postulant should continue with the spiritual disciplines and to test his or her vocation with the Lord. The Postulant should continue to be in conversation with discerning people about the movement of the Spirit.
Step 8 – Candidacy

Candidacy is the second stage of approval in the ordination process and is a period of deepening formation for ordained ministry. It is particularly appropriate for the Candidate to explore different areas of ministry within priesthood in order to listen for the urging of God’s Spirit.

Most Postulants are approved for Candidacy during the middler (second) year of seminary.
- The Postulant must make application to the Standing Committee to become a Candidate (FORM 6).
- The application must include a letter of support from the sponsoring congregation (or faith community) and be signed by 2/3 of Vestry and the member of Clergy exercising oversight (FORM 7).
- The Bishop is to receive a statement from the COM or the Dean of the Seminary attesting to continuing formation of the Postulant.
- The Bishop is to receive approval in writing of the Standing Committee who shall have interviewed the Postulant and who shall have had an opportunity to review the documentation relating to the application of the Postulant.

If the Bishop admits the applicant as a Candidate, the Bishop records the Candidate's name and date of admission in the Diocesan Register. The Bishop then informs the Candidate, the member of Clergy exercising oversight of the congregation (or other faith community), the COM, the Standing Committee, and the Dean of the seminary (if the Candidate is doing his/her studies at a Seminary).

If the Postulant is not named a Candidate, he or she will receive notification from the Bishop. The COM Shepherd should remain in relationship with the Postulant long enough for the Postulant to be able to process the information he or she has received. For some this will be a time of deep disappointment and it is important that the COM Shepherd remain in communication with the Postulant long enough for the Postulant to explore what this decision might mean for his or her vocation and Baptismal calling to serve the Lord. The COM Shepherd should also bring back to the COM any issues the Postulant might have about the advancement process.

Prior to ordination as a Deacon, there must have been a thorough medical and psychological examination. If the medical and psychological evaluations or background check have taken place more than 36 months prior, they must be updated. The Candidate must continue until ordination to report quarterly to the Bishop, either in person or by letter, stating academic, personal, and spiritual development and outlining any important changes in these areas since the preceding letter. The Bishop prefers that these letters be sent by E-mail. “Ember Days” have been specified by Canon law as the dates to make the quarterly reports. Ember Days are traditionally the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following: the First Sunday in Lent, Pentecost, Holy Cross Day (September 17) and December 13.

The Candidate must remain in canonical relationship with the Diocese in which admission has been granted until ordination to the Diaconate. Combined period for Postulancy, Candidacy and Diaconate shall be no less than 18 months.

Step 9 – Ordination to the Diaconate (Transitional)

All priests are first ordained as deacons in order to have a period of focused servant ministry and for continuing formation for priestly ministry. The Candidate must be at least 24 years old.
The Bishop must obtain in writing and provide the Standing Committee:

- An application from the Candidate requesting ordination, including dates of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy. (FORM 8)
- Written evidence of admission to Candidacy.
- A letter of support from the sponsoring congregation (or other faith community) signed and dated by 2/3 of the Vestry and the member of Clergy exercising oversight. (FORM 9) When applicable, the Candidate must provide a certificate from seminary or from the COM or other program of preparation showing his/her scholastic record and a recommendation as to the Candidate's personal qualifications for ordination.
- If the Candidate has not filed the Report of Medical Examination within the past 36 months, he/she must have another medical exam by his or her physician. If the Candidate attends seminary outside Arizona, it is permissible to use a physician local to the seminary. The doctor must complete the Medical Examination Form. A summary of the results are to be sent to the Bishop. The Candidate must send a copy of the “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) to be kept on record at the Diocese and also must take a “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) to the physician.
- If the Candidate has not had a Psychological Examination within 36 months, Canon law requires that she/he must be re-evaluated by a Psychologist contracted by the Diocese. The Secretary to the COM will assist the Candidate in making arrangements for the re-evaluation and will notify the Candidate of the amount of reimbursement owed the Diocese for the cost of the re-evaluation. It is important to note that the Diocese is the client and the Diocese receives the written feedback. The Candidate must provide a “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) to the psychologist. The Candidate must also fill out the “HIPAA Compliant Authorization for Release of Medical, Psychological Records” (FORM 4) and send it to the Bishop.
- If the Candidate has not had a background check within 36 months, the Diocese must order a background check. The Secretary to the COM will assist the Candidate in making arrangements with the Diocese and will notify him/her of the amount of reimbursement owed the Diocese for the cost of the background check. It is important to note that the Diocese is the client and the Diocese receives the report.

The Standing Committee, with a majority of members consenting, must certify that all Canonical requirements have been met and there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds. The Standing Committee will then recommend ordination using the form specified in the Canons. This testimonial is presented to the Bishop, and there being no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate a Deacon.

### Step 10 - Ordination to the Priesthood

To be ordained a priest, one must be at least 24 years old and a minimum of 18 months must have elapsed from acceptance of Nomination.

The Bishop must obtain in writing and provide to the Standing Committee:

- An application from the Transitional Deacon requesting ordination, including dates of admission to Postulancy, Candidacy and ordination to the Transitional Diaconate (FORM 10).
- A letter of support from the sponsoring congregation (or other community of faith), signed by 2/3 of vestry and member of Clergy exercising oversight (FORM 11).
- Evidence of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy, including dates of admission, and ordination to the Transitional Diaconate.
- A certificate from seminary (or other program of preparation), showing the scholastic record in subjects required by the Canons along with an evaluation of the personal qualifications for ordination.
- A statement from the COM attesting to the successful completion of the program of formation, proficiency in the required areas of study, and recommending ordination.
- If the Transitional Deacon has not filed the Report of Medical Examination within 36 months, he/she must have a medical exam by his/her physician. If the Transitional Deacon attends seminary outside Arizona, it is permissible to use a physician local to the seminary. The doctor must complete the Medical Examination Form. A summary of the results are to be sent to the Bishop. The Transitional Deacon must send a copy of the “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) to be kept on record at the Diocese and also must provide a “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) to the physician.
- If the Transitional Deacon has not had a Psychological Examination within 36 months, Canon law requires that she/he must be re-evaluated by a psychologist contracted by the Diocese. The Secretary to the COM will assist the Transitional Deacon in making arrangements for the Re-evaluation and will notify the Candidate of the amount of reimbursement owed the Diocese for the cost of the Re-evaluation. It is important to note that the Diocese is the client and the Diocese receives the written feedback. The Transitional Deacon must provide a “Waiver of Confidentiality and Permission to Share Information” (FORM 3) to the psychologist. The Transitional Deacon must also fill out the “HIPAA Compliant Authorization for Release of Medical, Psychological Records” (FORM 4) and send it to the Bishop.
- If the Transitional Deacon has not had a background check within 36 months, the Diocese must order a background check. The Secretary to the COM will assist the Transitional Deacon in making arrangements with the Diocese and will notify her/him of the amount of reimbursement owed the Diocese for the cost of the background check. It is important to note that the Diocese is the client and the Diocese receives the report.

The Standing Committee, with a majority of members consenting, shall certify that Canonical requirements have been met and if there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds, the Standing Committee shall recommend ordination using the form specified in the canons.

A person ordained to the Vocational Diaconate who is subsequently called to the Priesthood, shall fulfill the Postulancy and Candidacy requirements set forth in Canon III.8.

The Bishop may ordain the Vocational Deacon to the Priesthood, with the proviso that the Vocational Deacon has been appointed to a parochial associate, e.g., as missionary, a chaplain, or some particular calling as specified in the Canons.

**Step 11 – Post-Ordination Formation**

Each newly ordained Priest in the Diocese, whether employed or not, shall be assigned a mentor Priest by the Bishop in consultation with the COM. The mentor and new Priest shall meet regularly for at least a year to provide guidance, information, and a sustained dialogue about priestly ministry.
Appendix A

Parish Discernment Committee Organization, Preparation and Report Content Guidelines
Discernment Committee Organization

Composition of the Committee

The COM Shepherd/trained PDC Chair will contact the Priest-in-Charge. The COM representative will provide the Priest-in-Charge with this document. This discussion should include the composition of the PDC and potential dates for the first meeting.

The Priest-in-Charge will meet with the Aspirant to select the PDC. Working together the two should form a PDC that includes people who know the Aspirant at some level and those who do not know the Aspirant.

The PDC should consist of five to seven members; one person should be a member of the Vestry/Bishop’s committee. One of the PDC members will be designated as the convener or chairperson. Another member of the PDC should be appointed scribe so as to keep highlights (not copious notes) and be prepared to construct the first draft of the letter of response to the Priest-in-Charge. The Priest-in-Charge should not serve on the PDC so as to avail herself/himself to be available as consultant/priest for the PDC or Aspirant.

Meeting Organization

The PDC will meet a minimum of four times. Additional meetings could be called if needed, but only in consultation with the Priest-in-Charge and the COM Shepherd. The meetings should be held about two weeks apart and should last no longer than 90 minutes.

Meeting Construction

First meeting – This is an organizational meeting only. The COM Shepherd/trained PDC Chair will meet with the PDC to provide instruction and guidance for the structure of the meetings. The convener and scribe should be appointed. The COM representative will outline the meeting organization and construction, provide information regarding discernment and answer any question from the PDC or the Aspirant.

It is recommended that the Aspirant, Priest-in-Charge and PDC use the priestly examination as the baseline, foundation and touchtone for discernment. All parties should answer the question, how does this charge resonate with the Aspirant’s sense of call?

Second meeting – Each member of the PDC, excluding the Aspirant, will be prepared to share his or her personal spiritual journey and/or autobiography (no more than eight minutes). The convener must keep everyone to the time constraints. It will be helpful to the aspirant if the PDC members focus their autobiography on their personal spirituality and journey.

Third meeting – This meeting is dedicated to the Aspirant telling her/his spiritual autobiography to the PDC. The spiritual autobiography should be written but not read. After the telling of the story, then copies are distributed. These can be used as reference for later questioning and reflection. The Aspirant, if he/she moves forward, will have to submit several essay questions, and the spiritual autobiography will be helpful in preparing written responses for presentation to the COM.
At the fourth or final meeting of the PDC, the Shepherd from the COM will attend. This meeting should be a time for the PDC members to ask open-ended questions allowing the Aspirant to experience self-discovery regarding their “call.” Some examples of questions to be asked include:

1. Are you well acquainted with the Aspirant’s experience in the Episcopal Church?
2. Does the Aspirant have a sense of the Holy present in her/his life? How does she/he listen and attend the presence of God? What do you know about the person’s prayer life? What are the person’s spiritual resources?
3. What emotional responses do you have when you meet and talk with this person?
4. How is the Aspirant viewed by others in the congregation?
5. How does the Aspirant understand ministry; the different functions of the laity, deacons, priests, and bishops?
6. Does the Aspirant listen? Take initiative? Is the Aspirant open, honest, giving?
7. Does the Aspirant have a sense of clear boundaries?
8. How has the Aspirant demonstrated leadership?
9. Is the Aspirant eager to learn and excited about new ideas? Is she/he able to reflect, to ponder, and to be challenged?
10. Does the Aspirant have a balance of life interests? Does the aspirant have hobbies? Does this person exercise, and take time for rest?
11. When the Aspirant has been in trouble, how did she/he seek help?
12. How does the Aspirant relate to those in authority? How does the Aspirant respond to conflict?
13. Does the Aspirant have a sense of the world beyond her/his particular location? Is there a sense of connectedness with the wider world, community and diocese?
14. Is the Aspirant aware of the potential financial demands of seminary education, if required?
15. Is the PDC aware of anything that would significantly enhance or impede the Aspirant’s ministry?

Subsequent questioning and self-discovery meetings will be held as needed.

Next to the last meeting – At some point the PDC will want to meet without the Aspirant to arrive at a decision about their findings to be included in their report. Several options are available to the PDC:

1. The PDC believes the Aspirant is called to the priesthood/diaconate and is ready to write their report to the Priest-in-Charge. The report needs to be written, approved by all members and signed by all members of the PDC
2. The PDC is unsure or divided about the Aspirant’s call to the priesthood. A report should be constructed to portray the full spectrum of the PDC’s observations, concerns, unanswered questions and conclusions. A subsequent meeting of the PDC with the Priest-in-Charge, and in absence of the Aspirant, needs to be held. How the results of the PDC’s conclusions will be dispersed to the Aspirant is at the Priest-in-Charge’s discretion.
3. The PDC does not believe the Aspirant is prepared to move forward for a variety of reasons. A subsequent meeting of the PDC and the Priest-in-Charge needs to be held to discuss next steps and how this information will be given to the Aspirant.

Subsequent meetings could be held with or without the Aspirant depending upon the discretion of the Priest-in-Charge. The PDC could be called upon to continue to meet with the Aspirant for support as the person moves through the process. That decision must be made in consultation with the Priest-in-Charge and may be directed by the COM, the Shepherd and/or the Bishop. The final report may or may not be shared with the Aspirant at the discretion of the Priest-in-Charge.
The PDC’s report will be shared with the Priest-in-Charge on or before November 1 by the facilitator of the PDC. Only the portions of the PDC report selected by the Priest-in-Charge to omit inappropriate information for dissemination, if any, will be shared with the Vestry, and after Nomination by the Vestry, FORM 2 will be signed and submitted to the Bishop and the COM by November 15. If the Vestry approves the Aspirant, the discernment report will be sent forward with the Priest-in-Charge’s letter of recommendation to the COM by December 15.

Discernment: The Unspoken Questions
Soul Vulnerability

Committee Preparation

The COM recommends that each member of the PDC review the following questions prior to the first meeting in preparation for deliberations.

Discernment is an act of the community, which is manifested in a slice of that community through a discernment committee. Together this committee listens to the Holy Spirit speak into the soul of one in their midst not only for the sake of one person but for the entire community. While the members of the PDC often find themselves focused on the vocational call of one individual, the concomitant results of such work manifest as the personal discernment of each participant within the committee.

Following is a list of questions that are unavoidable for consideration of personal discernment. Obviously, this is not the definitive or complete list of questions:

1. What do I really want to do with the remainder of my life?
2. Who is God to me?
3. How do I experience each facet of God in the Trinity?
4. How would I describe my prayer life?
5. How best do I relate to people? How would I describe my best/worst relationships?
6. How do I feel about the authority placed over me?
7. How do I reflect? Do I journal? Do I have a spiritual director? Do I seek counseling? What impact have these had on my life and being?
8. What do I read and why would someone care what I am reading?

Individual as well as group dynamics always will factor into the “success” of a PDC. Here are some items to consider as we journey through the discernment process:

Silence — How long can any individual hold the group in silence? How much reflection is offered before any particular committee member responds?

Who is in the room that is not physically present?

What is not being said?

What is being communicated through body language?

What is being communicated through voice inflection, tone and volume?

What is behind the story? What is underneath the story?
Report Content

Use of these prompts in preparing The Report of the Parish Discernment Committee is optional but recommended. The Discernment Committee may find it helpful to selectively use only some of the prompts, disregarding those that do not seem to fit the Aspirant they serve. The Report should be in memo form, addressed to the Priest in Charge (PIC). Only the portions of the PDC report selected by the Priest-in-Charge to omit inappropriate information for dissemination, if any, will be shared with the Vestry. If the Aspirant is nominated for Postulancy, the Report will be read by the Bishop and the Diocesan Commission on Ministry (COM). Recommended length is 500 to 800 words. Generally the report is compiled by one committee member based on input from all committee members. In writing the report, it is helpful to bear in mind that the Bishop and the COM understand the characteristics of the priestly call to be as described in the Examination from the liturgy for the Ordination of a Priest which begins on page 531 in the Book of Common Prayer (BCP). The report shall include the following:

1. A statement indicating how often the committee met, a list of the committee members, and a line or two describing what each member does (inside/outside the church) and how long they’ve known (or not known) the potential nominee.
2. Describe the process of coming together as a Discernment Committee. Were there aspects of group-bonding with which the group struggled? Was the material in the book *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* by Suzanne Farnham et al helpful? Are there positive aspects of this group-bonding experience which the group wishes to share?
3. In the view of this group, how important are the Sacraments to this Aspirant? How has the group observed the Aspirant relating to the Sacraments?
4. Can the group give a specific example of a way in which this Aspirant has drawn others closer into community or into closer relationship to Christ?
5. Does the group agree that this Aspirant fashions her/his life in accordance with the Good News of Jesus Christ? If so, please give an example to illustrate.
6. If the Parish Discernment Committee was a Parish Search Committee, would the group vote unanimously to call this Aspirant as their Rector? Why or why not? *(NOTE: this question is most applicable to an Aspirant who is previously ordained in another denomination and/or who has experienced formation in a Seminary.)*
7. Would each member of the group feel comfortable turning to this Aspirant in a time of personal crisis? *(NOTE: It is suggested that each group member share their own answer to this question. The COM recognizes that some people may have discomfort for reasons not specific to the Aspirant; e.g. if someone older than the Aspirant has difficulty turning to a younger adult for support or counsel. Each voice shall be reported individually, but anonymously.)*
8. Does the group experience the Aspirant as someone ‘reclaiming the Great Commission’ *(Matthew 28:16-20)*? If so, please give a specific example.
9. Does the group believe that this Aspirant is open to formation as a Priest in this Church?
10. Do you feel this Aspirant has the necessary qualities to be a pastoral leader in the Episcopal Church for the twenty-first century? If ”yes,” please provide examples.
11. The liturgy for The Ordination of a Priest includes a vow of obedience to the Bishop *(p. 532 BCP)*. Does your Committee believe that this Aspirant can balance dynamic leadership with obedience? Why or why not?
12. What does the PDC hear from the Aspirant related to his/her call?