Commission on Ministry Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina

Guidelines for Supervisors of Interns for the Vocational Diaconate

Purpose of Internship

The internship offers the opportunity for continued discernment of the sense of call to ordination as a vocational Deacon. The role of the supervisor is to expose the intern to aspects of ordained ministry with an emphasis on theological reflection as it relates to their call to ministry.

The ten-month part-time internship incorporates dual ministry experiences, both within the parish and in the congregation’s outreach/social concern ministries. The internship should offer exposure to administrative, liturgical, pastoral, and educational areas of ministry with the caveat that though acquiring skills is important, it is secondary to the testing of the call. Accordingly, the reflection process during the internship should be seen as primary.

There are times when flexibility will be necessary. Variations in the guidelines may be necessary based on the specific intern. However, any significant deviations from the process must be made in consultation with the Chair of the Commission on Ministry-Deacon Committee and, if necessary, with the Bishop Suffragan.

At the end of the internship, the supervisor writes a report on their sense of the intern’s call to ministry as a vocational deacon. It is to be sent to the Bishop Suffragan’s office no later than Oct. 15 of the internship’s calendar year (date may vary year to year).

Below are guidelines for this process.

The Internship Process

The intern involves himself/herself in a variety of ways at the internship site, both within the parish and in its outreach/social concern ministries. The emphasis of their internship is to reflect on how his/her call to ordained ministry is or is not confirmed by the experiences. The intern prepares a written Agreement with the assistance of, and in consultation with, the clergy supervisor as to specific goals and activities during the internship. The intern will send copies of the Agreement (signed by the intern and the supervisor) to the Bishop Suffragan’s office and the Chair of the COM-D by January 15.

The supervisor is normally the rector/vicar, but this need not always be the case, for example, it could be a vocational deacon assigned to your church. If the supervisor is not the rector/vicar, the rector/vicar must remain aware of the activities of the intern and be available to the supervisor for guidance. The COM-D has assigned one of its members as a contact person for the intern. The contact person is available to the intern supervisor for questions and guidance.

It is also recommended that the supervisor assist the intern in forming a group of up to five members of the congregation who can meet with the intern from time to time to provide feedback on the internship experience and to serve as a lay guidance and support committee for the intern.

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Activities

- Typical activities in a parish/mission setting include:
  - Social concern and outreach (the primary task of an intern in the process to be a Deacon)
  - Assisting in worship (e.g., chalice, lector)
  - Teaching
  - Preaching (one or at most two times during internship)
  - Attending/participating in meetings (parish organization) – as needed
  - Visitation/calling of a variety of types

- LITURGICAL RESPONSIBILITIES NOT APPROPRIATE DURING INTERNSHIP
  - Reading the Gospel
  - Giving the dismissal
  - Setting the table independently

The intern and supervisor, with, if necessary, the input of the Bishop Suffragan and Commission on Ministry, negotiate decisions as to which activities are incorporated into the internship. Interns should not attempt everything, and no particular item is required in all cases. Experimentation is to be encouraged, so that the intern might try some things not previously experienced. (Note to the supervisor: although training is not the primary concern, some training may be necessary, such as for preaching, teaching, visiting, counseling, etc.).

The Agreement

- It is important that the intern prepare a written Agreement (with the assistance of, and in consultation with, the supervisor) as to specific goals and activities during the internship. Goals/activities may be related to learning, oriented toward personal growth, and/or may focus on the intern’s relationship with God and his/her Church. Again, a breadth of experiences is desirable, without trying to do everything. In addition to the goals, the Agreement should also include the estimated hours per week in various activities (Sunday activities, other weekday activities and committees, preparation time, staff time, supervision, travel time, miscellaneous). However, the primary focus is on diaconal ministry and the intern’s chosen social ministry.

- The intern will send copies of the Agreement (signed by the intern and the supervisor) to the Bishop Suffragan and the Chair of the Commission on Ministry by January 15th. Again, it is to be remembered that the principal task is to reflect on the call to ordained ministry rather than to train. Training will come later.

The Reflection Process with the Supervisor

- The intern and the supervisor are to meet every other week. The purpose of the meeting is to reflect on the call to ordained ministry, based on the experiences of ministry at the internship site. Each meeting should not take more than an hour. The intern and supervisor are encouraged to take notes during or after these meetings. These notes will help each of them when they write their final report on the internship.

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Rapport and trust are essential, as is regularity of the meetings. This time should NOT be used for other matters (teaching and going over the weekly bulletin are not reflection). Other time should be set aside, when planning, teaching, or discussion is needed.

Below are some suggested questions, some/all of which may be used during the meetings throughout the internship. Other questions pertinent to the specific experiences are encouraged.

- How did things go since last meeting? What activities were performed? What has been learned?
- What role has prayer played?
- How did it feel to be involved within the congregation? With the outreach/social concern ministry?
- What is the relationship between the congregational experience and the outreach/social concern ministry? How does each one support, enhance, and/or detract from the other?
- Where is God in this? (What is the theological dimension?)
- How is it (or is not) consistent with an ordained vocation as the intern understands it?
- What is vocation as an ordained person? How is it different than the vocation of the laity?
- When there are negative experiences, reflect on them critically. What happened? Why? What could have been done differently? What approach can be taken next time?
- What prayers and spiritual practices have been meaningful during this process?
- How did (or did not) the experiences confirm the intern’s call to ordained ministry?

**Final Report from Supervisor**

*Form to complete report is on the diocesan website:*
http://www.dionc.org/Forms%20%20Resources/ordination-process-required-forms-vocational-diaco

Intern supervisors write a one-to-two page evaluation, discussing the intern's activities in that setting with emphasis on their perceptions of the Intern’s discernment of call to – and fitness for – diaconal ministry. Use any notes taken during bi-weekly meetings. Solicit comments from the members of the lay committee to incorporate into the report.

The final report should be discussed with the intern at the end of the internship.

**Supportive Resources for Supervisors of Interns**

From time to time supervisors may have questions or need consultation regarding how the intern process is progressing. Each intern is assigned a contact person from the COM-D. Either that person or The Rev. Miriam Saxon, chair of the Commission on Ministry is the liaison/resource person(s). The intern will have contact information for their contact person. Miriam can be reached at 919-656-6288, or miriamsaxon@gmail.com

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