Jesus Calls You

We are called to offer ourselves into the love and service of Jesus. Not just the bishops. Not just the priests. Not just the deacons. I’m talking to you. Yes, you. I’m going to pause a little bit so you can squirm a little bit, and start putting together your defense that God might be calling you to do something: “I’m too old. I’m not old enough. I’m set in my ways.” Lord, Lord, we’re all set in our ways…. But I want you to know that Jesus sees through all of that, and calls you. He doesn’t care whether you’re old or young or near or far or white or black or anything else. It’s time for us to stop being scared, and start being sacred. It’s time for us to love each other in the name of Jesus Christ and share that love with everybody who comes close. It’s time for us to celebrate with joy and hope so that we shine the light of Christ as a beacon to the world.

Excerpt from sermon offered at Installation of the Rt. Rev. Santosh Marray as Bishop of the Diocese of Easton

“I am the vine and you are the branches. Apart from me you can do nothing.”
John 15:1

On the cover: Holy Baptism at Canterbury Chapel, Tuscaloosa
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Discerning a call to a developed lay ministry, the sacred order of deacons or the holy order of priests is one that will most likely bring about significant life changes. This process is to be nurturing, encouraging, challenging and one that reflects the grace and mercy we have received through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Diocese of Alabama engages in this work with a nominee under the pastoral direction of the Diocesan Bishop and various departments.

“Every Christian is called by God.”
The reality of this statement is reflected in the ministry of Jesus Christ and the Baptismal Covenant. The examination at Baptism (BCP 304-305) asks the family and candidate for Baptism, “Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?” This same truth is reflected in the Catechism (BCP 855) “Who are the ministers of the Church? The Ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests and deacons.” As a nominee begins the discernment process, he or she should recognize that God has given every individual particular gifts for service to Christ in the Kingdom of God.

Serving as a lay person, a deacon or a priest is an individual's response to this call from God. The Diocese of Alabama supports an individual's response to the call of Christ by providing a process of listening, testing, serving and encouraging as the nominee discerns a particular call to a more developed lay ministry, a call to bridge the gap between church and congregation as an ordained deacon or to serve Christ as an ordained priest. All who begin the discernment process begin by understanding the reality that the most significant order in the church is the laity. The efficacy of the process hinges on the nominee’s ability to accept the reality that the process will result in a direction that serves God with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and not necessarily the individual. Those who submit themselves to the process understand the possibility that their discernment may lead them to a whole new understanding of their call and responsibility to the Kingdom of God.
General Parameters & Expectations

The discernment process moves slowly and at the pace of the nominee. The process should be a time of excitement, challenge and reflection. It is a process that some move through quickly and others wander through. The minimum expectation of any individual is approximately twelve months at the parish level and another six to twelve months at the diocesan level. Formation of a servant heart will be the emphasis for the nominee, the sponsoring parish and the diocese.

The nominee is discerning his or her personal call to serve Christ as a lay person, a deacon or a priest. **While all who begin this process will not be ordained or attend a seminary, all are called to continue to serve Christ in the ways stated in the Baptismal Covenant.** Many who enter the process will continue to serve God as lay leaders with a more developed ministry and the support of the diocese.

The process requires commitment, leadership, humility and a willingness to serve. It is a journey between the head and the heart. Enrolling in seminary is never understood as a goal. Some will enter a residential seminary program or attend Alabama Integrative Ministry School (AIMS) (Appendix B) in preparation to serve as a priest or deacon, others will continue to serve Christ as a lay leader. The nominee and his or her family (spouse and children) are a part of this process. The nominee’s response to a call will impact the life of the family.

Questions concerning the potential of relocation, financial issues, conflict and possibly disappointment, as the Holy Spirit leads one into and through the “wilderness,” are discussed and reflected upon.

The nominee, the sponsoring parish, the Commission on Ministry (COM) and the Diocesan Bishop, all work as a team in this process to achieve the best vocational response to the call of Christ. The hope of all those involved is to deepen service to Christ in the Kingdom of God.
If seminary is a requirement in the individual’s vocation, most seminaries require completed applications for the fall semester by March 1 of the year enrollment will begin. This date may be important but will not drive the process, discussions, or influence the timeline of a candidate.

What to anticipate and prepare for as you begin:

- A nominee should have been an active, involved and confirmed member (Episcopalian) of a parish or mission for at least two years.
- Should a nominee be approved for seminary in this process, the nominee should have a Bachelor’s Degree. This is an assumption of most accredited seminaries.
- The nominee should be viewed as a leader by the broad congregation and not a small group within the congregation.
- The individual must be involved in service, practice proportional giving and respect the authority of the Bishop, the Diocese of Alabama and the Episcopal Church.
- The nominee should prepare to incur costs of approximately $500 - $800 as the process is undertaken. These funds are non-refundable as an individual moves through the process or should a nominee withdraw from the process. These funds will be used for costs associated with the process.
- Psychological testing and a medical exam are typical tests administered at the direction of the Diocesan Bishop. When possible, a parish may provide a portion of these expenses, but this is not an expectation.
- A background check will also be required at the expense of the diocese (Appendix G).
- It is highly unlikely a person will serve in a parish where a vocation is tested or discerned. Relocating is a fact for those discerning a call to ordained ministry and for some lay leaders. A nominee should not resign a job until vocational direction is clear, and with the advice and support of the Bishop of Alabama.
- The nominee must be proactive in the discernment process and be their own advocate, following up with paperwork and assignments as prescribed by this document, the bishop’s office, COM groups, and Title III: Ministry of the Constitutions and Canons of the Episcopal Church. The nominee is expected to ask questions to clarify the complexities of the process.

What are the typical steps?

1. A meeting to discuss the process is scheduled with the rector, or a person appointed by the rector. In the absence of a rector, the diocesan office will assist the nominee to begin the process with a rector.

2. The individual should spend a minimum of three days reflecting on the process and his or her personal call. These three days should be used for prayer, reflection (write a spiritual autobiography) and planning (anticipate a financial plan) for the process. If the individual desires to enter the process, a letter of intention and a spiritual autobiography are submitted to the rector.

3. The rector, a person appointed by the rector, or a parish level discernment committee is formed to begin in-depth discussions with and support of the individual. The meetings between these parties will extend over a minimum of six months and will meet a minimum of twelve hours. The book *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*, Susan G. Farnham, Joseph P. Gill, R. Taylor McLean, and
Susan M. Ward (Morehouse Publishing 1991) is an excellent resource for these meetings. In addition to this resource, the Diocese of Alabama and the COM strongly suggest an exploration of the questions attached to this document. These questions/topics (see, Appendix D) will be presented to most nominees as they move through the process. All are worthy of reflection and discussion. If an individual becomes a nominee, the COM will assume the nominee has explored the questions posed in Appendix D with the rector and/or the parish discernment committee.

4. The Gospel of John, one of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark or Luke), one Epistle and one prophetic work from one of the Old Testament prophets should be studied and explored by a nominee. The nominee may consider offering a Bible study in the parish as a means to explore these sacred texts. Reflecting on the experience of a group study may be important to the individual in the discernment process.

5. Engage a Spiritual Director who functions beyond the sponsoring parish.

6. In addition to the spiritual autobiography, the nominee will be asked to submit a sample of his or her writing. This paper should be based upon personal reading related to the process.

7. If the rector, appointed person(s), parish level discernment committee and individual are in mutual agreement, then the nominee should proceed with further discernment. The rector of the sponsoring parish will request in writing an initial meeting with the Diocesan Bishop. Along with this letter, the nominee must submit the formal application into discernment which includes a statement of support signed by at least two-thirds of the Vestry (Appendix A). At this meeting the work of the individual, the conversations between the nominee, rector and parish level discernment committee will be discussed and reviewed. The documentation of these conversations will be submitted to the Diocesan Bishop with the letter requesting an appointment. These documents will be placed the nominee’s discernment file. This meeting between the Bishop (or appointed representative), a rector and nominee DOES NOT does not mean the person will be admitted into the next phase of the discernment process.

8. Prior to the meeting with the Bishop, the individual must sign a Background Screen and Consent form (Appendix G) and return to Carpenter House. The screening is done at the expense of the diocese.

The Meeting with the Bishop

• Pray individually and with your family for understanding. You and the discernment of your call will be encouraged as the Diocese of Alabama, the local parish, the Diocesan Bishop, the laity and the clergy seek to understand how your call will support the ministry of Christ. It will be important to include your family in your discernment process. A spouse will be expected to participate in this initial meeting with the Bishop and to be involved in the conversation regarding discernment.

• You should study and reflect on the call of Moses, the role of prophets and the manner in which Jesus sent his followers out into the world. An understanding of these Biblical personalities and their calls will influence your personal discernment. You may not be asked about these particular Biblical stories at this time but you should be intentional about your exposure to the people who have been called and their response.

• After the meeting with the Bishop, the nominee will receive a letter from the Bishop notifying him or her of the Bishop’s decision about admittance into the next phase in the process of discernment.
GENERAL
All that has transpired in your parish and with your rector to this point is a foundation for what happens next. If invited to move along in this discernment process, you will attend an orientation meeting with the Diocesan Bishop and the Commission on Ministry (COM).

ORIENTATION MEETING
This meeting will present the process before you and will last approximately four to six hours. This is an opportunity for both the nominee and spouse to ask questions and explore expectations. In general, the orientation will lay out the next two phases of the process. The first phase is a four-month time of study, assessment, experience and reflection. The second phase is the Bishop’s Advisory Commission on Ministry (BACOM) retreat.

At the orientation meeting you will:
- Meet other nominees from around the diocese.
- There will be time for group discussions and you will be appointed a shepherd or shepherds from the COM. Your shepherd/s will be your primary point of contact during the next phase of discernment.
- There will be a panel presentation/discussion about various options for ministry in the church and the possible paths before you.
- In consultation with your shepherds, you will be assigned a location in which you will be required to perform a twelve-week parish internship.
• The nominee will be instructed to complete a physical exam and psychological assessment. Psychological assessments are conducted by a licensed professional approved by the Bishop. Additionally, the nominee will be asked to submit educational transcripts to the Bishop’s office. These materials are due in the Bishop’s office by August 1.

Parish Internship
This experience exposes the nominee to the larger church. It requires leaving and letting go. Also, such an experience is meant to broaden and deepen the understanding of church and models for ministry. Finally, it is meant as a way to deepen the nominee’s personal discernment. The nominee will complete a twelve-week internship in a parish setting different from the sponsoring parish. Spouse and family are encouraged to join the nominee. Following certain expectations from the COM, specific details of the internship will be established between the nominee and the rector of the parish where the internship will be served.

In general, the COM expects that the nominee’s work will include the following:

• Six hours per week in the parish or ministry of the parish. This includes time spent in worship and meetings with the parish rector.
• Attendance at Sunday morning services and weekday services [if offered] as agreed.
• Attend at least two vestry meetings.
• Involvement in the ministry of the parish as set by the parish rector and the COM. This might include pastoral visits with the rector, teaching a class, attending meetings, or becoming involved in an outreach ministry of the parish. The specific work should be something that will expand and enrich the nominee’s understanding of ministry. Thus, it is preferable that the work done be something that the nominee has not previously done in his or her sponsoring parish.
• Meeting regularly with the parish rector (or designee) for reflection and conversation about the experiences of the internship. It will be the nominee’s responsibility to set and lead the agenda of these meetings.
• Preparing and presenting to a group within the parish a sermon, meditation, reflection or teaching.

Individual Study
During this phase of your discernment, you are expected to select two books from Appendix C, A Resource for Reading, and write a two-page, double spaced reflection on how the ideas of the author conflict, confirm or confuse your own ideas about ministry. The reflection should not read as a book report but should express your thoughts and feelings about your personal discernment with the book being your frame of reference. You will lead a conversation with your COM shepherds about the books you have chosen. Written reports will be submitted to your shepherds prior to the conversation.

Meeting with Your COM Shepherds
During the four-month discernment process, the nominee will meet a minimum of three times with the COM shepherds. The topics and agenda for these meetings will be directed by the nominees and shall include the nominee’s internship experience and individual study. In addition, nominee’s should explore ways to discuss his or her spiritual journey, leadership style, approach to conflict management, financial sacrifices, and personal stewardship practices.
**Internship Rector (or Designee) Report and Reflection**
The internship parish rector will fill out a checklist (Appendix F) and write a report to the COM as to his or her perceptions of the nominee’s ministry. The following questions should be addressed in the report: How do you perceive this person’s sense of call to ministry in the church? Regarding ministry, what is this person’s passion? Do you sense a call to a particular ministry in the church? If you sense a call to ordained ministry, please specify what order.

**Intern’s Final Reflection Paper**
Following the completion of your internship, you will write a two-page, double spaced reflection discussing your own discernment and the direction it has taken. Describe and discuss the scope of your internship. What surprised you about this experience? How did this experience inform your understanding of the church? What made you uncomfortable and why? How did this experience inform your own call to ministry? If you sense a call to ordained ministry, please specify what order. This paper will be sent to the COM and the Bishop prior to the Spiritual Retreat. Following the Spiritual Retreat (see below), COM will meet to discuss invitations to the BACOM retreat. This paper, as well as your efforts during the Vocational Discernment Process will be a part of the deliberations.

**Spiritual Retreat**
Nominees will be included in a one-day spiritual retreat. This retreat will be offered by the diocese and will give the nominee an opportunity to reflect on the vocational life. The fundamental focus will involve a deeper appreciation of what it means to be part of the "priesthood of all believers" (I Peter 2: 9ff). During this retreat, the nominee will reflect on the distinctions between lay ministry, diaconal ministry, and priestly ministry.
Bishop’s Advisory Commission on Ministry (BACOM)

Sometimes referred to as BACOM – a weekend retreat

General
At the conclusion of the vocational discernment process, the COM will meet and prayerfully consider invitations to the BACOM retreat. An invitation to attend the BACOM retreat is not the Commission’s final recommendation about the nominee's ministry. However, the invitation may specify the COM’s inclination as to which ministry the nominee is being called. The BACOM retreat will include those pursuing discernment towards lay ministry, the diaconate and priesthood. The BACOM retreat is an overnight gathering held annually in November at Camp McDowell. During this retreat, the nominee continues discernment with the Commission on Ministry.

The Invitation to BACOM
Following the Spiritual Retreat, the Bishop will receive the COM’s recommendations on who they believe should be invited to BACOM. Based on the COM’s recommendations and the Bishop’s own personal discernment, a formal invitation would then be issued to the nominee and spouse.

The invitation to BACOM will include the date for a meeting with the Bishop and a member of the COM after BACOM to discuss nominee’s leadership as laity, deacon or priest.

What to Expect at the Retreat
The retreat begins with introductions, ice breakers and the Holy Eucharist. Following worship, each nominee will meet individually with members of the COM. Nominee’s should be prepared to reflect on worship, scripture and theology, practical life, and the mission of the church. The retreat is structured to give the nominee plenty of time for reflection and informal conversations. The two-day retreat begins at approximately 11:00 a.m. on a Thursday and ends with lunch on Friday. The cost of the retreat is a diocesan expense.

Accommodations are and meetings occur at Camp McDowell. Before the retreat, the nominee will be mailed a few brief articles to read in preparation for the small group conversations with the COM. During BACOM each nominee will have an opportunity to consider the question, “Where do you see yourself serving?”

After BACOM
After the BACOM retreat, the nominee will meet with the Bishop, sponsoring rector or clergy, and a member of COM to discuss the decisions regarding discernment. The nominee may want to be familiar with the various needs of parishes around the diocese and possibly plan to meet with the Diocesan Deployment officer following the meeting with the bishop. Appendix B may be helpful to understand jobs which may be available in the Diocese of Alabama. If the Nominee is approved for Postulancy, the diocesan office will issue an additional letter of support that needs to be signed by at least two-thirds of the Vestry (Canon III.6.2a & III.8.2a).
Appendix A: Nomination Application

Nomination Application for Persons Considering Vocational Discernment in the Diocese of Alabama

This application form is designed to jointly assist both the nominee and their Rector/Priest-in-charge in making application to the Diocesan Bishop of Alabama for consideration for discernment. The Priest who is counseling the nominee is responsible for completing this form, except for the essay question on page five. This application should be forwarded to the bishop at least one week prior to the interview with the bishop. The envelope in which it is returned to the bishop should be marked, "Discernment – Confidential" The nominee’s spiritual autobiography should accompany this application.

The word "nominee" and "applicant" are used interchangeably - there is no connection to a canonical status in the use of these words.

Name (last, first, middle):__________________________________________________________

Current Address (street, city, state, zip code):__________________________________________

Work Phone: ( ) Home Phone: ( ) Cell Phone: ( )

E-Mail Address:__________________________________________________________ Male ( ) Female ( )

Birth Date: __________/________/________ SSN: __________________________

(month) (day) (year)

Baptism: __________/________/________

(city, state) (name of clergy person)

(month) (year) (denomination) (name of parish church)

Confirmation: __________/________/________

(city, state) (name of bishop confirming)

(month) (year) (denomination) (name of parish church)

Length of residency as a member of the Diocese of AL: _____ Year(s)/Episcopal Church: _____ Year(s)

What average percent of income has the applicant given to the work of the Church through their parish and to community charities during the past five years?

Church % Community Charities %
Name/location of current parish in which the applicant is listed as a communicant:

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Has the applicant ever before applied for admission to vocational discernment in the Diocese of Alabama or in any other diocese? Yes__________ No__________

If yes, briefly describe the resulting action:

Is the applicant currently enrolled in an educational institution? Yes___ No___ If yes, part-time/fulltime

Does the applicant have a speaking level proficiency in any language other than English? Yes/No

If yes, what is the language(s):________________________________________________________________

Give the following information on each school (high school or beyond) attended (including present course of studies, if currently enrolled):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>Years enrolled</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Major Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1. _________________</td>
<td>_______________</td>
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<td>2. _________________</td>
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<td>3. _________________</td>
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<td>____________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other courses of study (Technical or Academic): _____________________________________________________

Has the applicant completed any years of Education For Ministry (EFM) program? Yes____ No__________

If yes, how many? __________ Served as a Mentor? Yes__ No.

In which of the following ministries has the applicant served in parish setting within the past five years?

Lector ( ) Vestry Member ( )
LEM ( ) Outreach Ministry ( )
Choir ( ) Cursillo ( )
Ch. Education Teacher Mission Work ( )
Kairos ( ) Other ( )___________

How has the applicant been involved in servant ministry within the church and the community in which the person lives or works (use separate sheet to say more)? __________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________
Applicant’s Work History: Give a brief account of last three employments and include the following information (1) name of employer; (2) primary responsibilities; (3) position; and (4) years employed:

1. __________________________________________________________
   Employer: ____________________________
   Position: ____________________________
   Years Employed: ____________________________

2. __________________________________________________________
   Employer: ____________________________
   Position: ____________________________
   Years Employed: ____________________________

3. __________________________________________________________
   Employer: ____________________________
   Position: ____________________________
   Years Employed: ____________________________

Marital Status (circle one): Single Married Divorced Separated Widowed

Have there been previous marriages? Yes No

If yes, how many

Dates: ___ to ___ (year) (year)

Dates: ___ to ___ (year) (year)

Name of Spouse: ____________________________ Date of Birth: ___ / ___ / ___

(first) (middle) (last) (month) (day) (year)

Occupation of Spouse: ____________________________ Religious denomination: ____________________________

Baptized? Yes No

Confirmed? Yes No

Children: Name: ____________________________ Date of Birth: ___ Gender: ____________

Name: ____________________________ Date of Birth: ___ Gender: ____________

(Use additional sheet for more children)

Are there other dependents living in the home of the applicant? Yes No

How many?

Are there special needs required by the dependents?

Name of Parents: Father: ____________________________

If living, current address: ____________________________

Mother: ____________________________

If living, current address: ____________________________

October 2019
Does the applicant have a significant amount of debt? Yes_____ No_____ If yes, how might this debt hinder the applicant as the process unfolds?

Should the nominee attend AIMS or Seminary, what portion of the expenses (to the best of your knowledge) would be addressed by the sponsoring parish? What plan is in place to cover the expenses associated with this additional study?

**ATTACHED STATEMENTS FOR ALL APPLICANTS:**

*(To be written by the APPLICANT on a separate sheet)*

Please tell us a story of your ministry as a baptized person. Describe your sense of the direction of your call into deeper ministry in the church. We are interested in the people, experiences and ideas that have helped shape your sense of call. Please include ways that this discernment process has helped you clarify issues regarding your call to ministry that were previously unclear to you. Also attach your spiritual autobiography.

*(To be written by the SPONSORING PRIEST on a separate sheet)*

Briefly describe the grounds upon which the applicant is moved to seek discernment.

In your opinion, do you believe that the nominee fully understands the sacrifices of submitting one’s self to the church for vocational discernment? Does the nominee understand that by entering the diocesan discernment there are several possible outcomes (lay ministry, deacon, priest) of this process? Please explain your answer.

FORM COMPLETED BY:

Nominee’s Signature:

________________________________________

Rector’s Signature:

________________________________________

Parish:________________________________________

City:________________________________________

Date:________________________________________

October 2019
STATEMENT AND SUPPORT FOR DISCERNMENT
Diocese of Alabama
(Nominees)

To the Right Reverend John McKee Sloan, Bishop of Alabama

Parish ___________________________________________ Date____________________

In accordance with Title III, 8.2 of the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, we whose names are below, testify to our belief (based on personal knowledge or on evidence satisfactory to us) that

_________________________________________

is a communicant of this Parish. We support this person as he or she continues to discern a call to ministry.

Signed _______________________________
Rector or Priest-in-Charge of Parish

VESTRY SIGNATURES
(At Least Two Thirds Required)

_________________________________________    _____________________________
_________________________________________    _____________________________
_________________________________________    _____________________________
_________________________________________    _____________________________
_________________________________________    _____________________________
_________________________________________    _____________________________

Attestation of the Foregoing Certificate

I certify that this statement of support 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 the Rector or
Priest-in-Charge and of at least two thirds of the members of the Vestry.

Signed ___________________________________
Clerk or Secretary of Vestry

Note: Should the Parish be without a Rector, it shall suffice that the certificate from the Vestry be signed by some
Presbyter of the Diocese or Missionary District in good standing to whom the nominee is personally known, the reason
for the substitution being stated in the attesting clause.

October 2019
Please include with this form a recent photograph of the applicant only and send to:

The Rt. Rev. Kee Sloan
Carpenter House
521 North 20th Street
Birmingham, AL 35203

Be Sure to Mark Outside of Envelope “Discernment-Confidential”
A Few Facts about The Diocese of Alabama
(Revised March 2018)

A few general facts about The Diocese of Alabama, Seminaries and Canons

- Number of parishes, campus centers and worshipping communities
  - 3 campus centers owned by Diocese of Alabama
  - 25 suburban parishes
  - 37 rural parishes
  - 23 urban parishes
- One parish (St. Columba in the Cove) and one worshipping community (La Gracia) were closed in 2014
- Three worshipping communities currently recognized: The Abbey, Christ the Redeemer and St. Martin’s in the Pines
- Minimum salary (full-time) $49,945 (this is a high minimum compared to national church)
  - Additional costs to a parish:
    - Pension (18% of salary and housing)
    - Annual costs of family medical is $16,116.00 (2017)
    - Typical costs to a parish for one full-time clergy person are about $73,000.00 annually.
- There are 14 parishes that have more than 1 clergy person on staff.
- Parishes with full-time clergy 48 Parishes with part-time clergy 19
- Parishes that function with supply due to finances 21 – was 18 in 2013
- National Stats: Avg. Sunday attendance is 65 people and avg. membership is 155
- Cost to move family is typically around $7,500.00
- Number of parishes in Diocese of Alabama currently seeking clergy leadership = 13
  - Full time – 9 Seeking part-time priest in charge 4
- Deacons assigned to parishes 28
- 60% of the current openings will most likely be for part-time clergy leadership

Duties performed by most clergy include but not limited to:

- Prepare a sermon on weekly basis
- Teach a weekly Bible study
- Teach or facilitate weekly Christian Formation classes
- Visit the sick and shut-in frequently (train lay leaders in pastoral visitation)
- Preside over Vestry meetings and other committee work (sharing ownership with laity)
- Invite, Welcome, Connect newcomers (working with lay leadership)
- Year-round Stewardship education (working with lay leadership)
- A typical clergy performs two weddings and five funerals per year
- Engage with other religious and civic leaders in the community
- Serve on diocesan committees and/or departments
- Clergy in smaller churches may:
  - Answer the phone
  - Clean facilities
  - Yard work
  - Prepare and print bulletin/newsletter

Nominees and those interested in specifics should contact the Diocesan Deployment officer or an Administrator at the Diocesan offices to discuss questions or concerns.
Residential Seminary/AIMS:
Individuals are responsible for the costs of seminary/AIMS and personal financial planning. Planning for education of dependents, long-term care, medical needs and monthly insurance costs should be anticipated.

Residential Seminary
Total annual costs for living are estimated to be:
- Single student $39,000.00
- Married Student/Children $58,000.00
Seminary annual costs (tuition, room/board)
- On campus $22,150.00
- Off-campus $14,750.00
Costs of books on annual basis are about $1,600.00
Factors that are considered – medical insurance, number of dependents, childcare needs.
Existing debt (consumer or auto) are not considered in the overall annual costs for most seminaries.

AIMS
$1,800.00 and costs associated with travel, overnights, books

The Alabama Integrative Ministry School (AIMS) is a three-year course that prepares priest and deacons in the Diocese of Alabama. The program is non-residential, that integrates spiritual, theological, pastoral and practical aspects of the lives of those preparing for public ministry.

Postulants from both orders are trained together and the school meets for ten weekends in a year. Between these sessions, students engage in individual areas of study. More information about this ministry can be found at aims.dioala.org. Entrance into the program is based upon recommendation of the Bishop, specific life situations and academic ability.

In both programs, there are regular evaluations which focus on academic progress, leadership skills and participation within the community. These evaluations are submitted to the Diocesan Bishop and made available to the COM and Standing Committee.

Regarding Ordination (Title III, Canons 1-15)
For Ordination the canons of the church state that before ordination the individual will have adequate knowledge on Scripture, Church History and the Church’s teaching as set forth in the Creeds and in the Catechism. The person will also be able to read Holy Scripture and conduct the service of the church in an intelligible and reverent fashion.

General Ordination Exams cover Holy Scripture, Church History, Christian Theology, Christian Ethics, Christian Moral Theology, Liturgics, Contemporary Society, and an evaluation of leadership. These topics are considered a measure of an individual’s preparation for ordination.
A Resource for Reading

The following list of books is a suggestion for reading and reflection. These books are offered by the Commission on Ministry and with the support of the Diocesan Bishop.

- Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion*
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship; Life Together*
- Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*
- Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*
- Harvey Cox, *The Future of Faith*
- Nora Gallagher, *Practicing Resurrection*
- Denise George, *What Pastors Wish Church Members Knew* (good reality check by spouse of an ordained minister and dean of seminary, national leader)
- Stanley Hauerwas, *Resident Aliens*
- William Law, *Serious Call to a Holy and Devout Life*
- C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (good series of CDs for the car-is helpful)
- Eric Metaxas, biography on William Wilberforce or Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Henri Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*
- Elizabeth O'Connor, *Call to Commitment; Journey Inward, Journey Outward*
- Flannery O'Connor, *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (a collection of short stories)
- Eugene Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir, Reversed Thunder*
- Ormonde Plater, *Many Servants*
- Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World*
- Phyllis Tickle, *The Great Emergence*
- W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of Christ*
- Robert Wicks, *Availability: The Spiritual Joy of Helping Others*
- N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian, Simply Jesus, Surprised by Hope*
- Dwight Zscheile, *People of the Way*

- General knowledge of Holy Scripture—many scholars suggest a complete understanding of approximately 20 Biblical texts from various types of writing in Holy Scripture.
Appendix D: Questions & Topics for Nominees to Consider

Questions & Topics for Nominees to Consider

These questions and topics are strongly recommended for nominees to consider in the process of discernment and members of the COM will assume you have explored them:

• Nominee's belief in the person of Jesus Christ as Messiah and Son of God.

• Nominee's belief in the ancient creedal statements contained in the Book of Common Prayer.

• Nominee's understanding of the purpose and place of scripture in the church.

• Nominee should be prepared to discuss the testing of his or her personal call and how he or she is prepared to serve and support the church. How will the nominee address serving a parish that is different from the congregation of origin? How will the nominee prepare for the intellectual, emotional and financial rigors of responding to a call? (parish, family and possibly seminary)

• How does the nominee state "the Gospel" and how has his or her understanding of the Gospel changed over their life? How open to change is the nominee?

• What skills does the nominee have that are associated with service to God?

• Nominee should be encouraged in the areas of service, teaching and pastoral visits. These commitments should be documented for the Bishop and COM.

• Why has the nominee sought a more defined ministry? Does nominee need ordination to pursue more defined call?

• What event has led to the person beginning this process?

• Does the nominee have events in his or her life experience that will challenge others? Could this life experience be viewed as negative or self-destructive by a congregation?

• How has the faith of the nominee affected political views held by the individual?

• The nominee, the rector, or a parish level discernment committee should discuss the differences between a vocation and a job.

• How will the nominee serve a congregation, what gifts of leadership are currently offered into the life of a parish?

• What weaknesses of the nominee have been described and how will these weaknesses present challenges to the individual and to those whom he or she serves?

• How does the nominee live among problems that can’t be fixed?

• How does one live with uncertainty and ambiguity?

• What is the biggest issue facing the church today? How is/can nominee called to meet needs?
• How does the nominee distinguish between a call to serve as a lay leader, a deacon or a priest?

• How are conflict, disappointment and differing opinions addressed by the nominee?

• The nominee should share their “money” story with a group of non-family members. How was money viewed, valued and used in nominee’s household growing up? How has the nominee’s relationship with money changed over the years? What caused that change? Is the nominee a first-fruits, proportional giver? Why? Why not? What passages from scripture have helped nominee understand the theology of money?

• Does the discernment involve some dissatisfaction with current employment, a relationship, a parenting issue or a recent spiritual event?

• What financial plan does the nominee have to support his or her vocation? Is debt an obstacle?

• Providing medical insurance for family, a retirement plan, access to education for a spouse or children and the reality of relocation to serve are aspects that an individual must anticipate and discuss at all levels of discernment. The Diocesan minimum salary is typically around $50,000.00 for a full ordained clergy person.

• **If an individual is unwilling to relocate, his or her leadership should be developed at the parish level as a lay leader.**

These questions and topics are offered as starting points for reflection and personal discernment. The consideration of all these topics will be important to the nominee and his or her family.
**Applicable Terms**

**Aspirant:** This title is no longer used or referenced in documents.

**BACOM:** Is typically an overnight at Camp McDowell with nominees who have been invited by the Bishop to engage in conversation around their personal calls to lay leadership, the diaconate and order of priest. The Diocesan Bishop will have members of the Commission of Ministry (COM) who will represent the Diocese and advise the Bishop regarding nominees and their unique calls.

**Candidate:** an individual who has completed a specified amount of study and is pursuing ordination. This is a title that is associated with the Canons of the church.

**Canon to the Ordinary:** An office associated with Diocese. Typically, this individual serves at the direction of the Diocesan Bishop and is involved in deployment and discernment. In the Diocese of Alabama we currently employ a Deployment Officer.

**Deacon:** the diaconate is a full and equal order of ordained ministry. Deacons have a special ministry of servanthood that is reflected in liturgy and ministry, and are called to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely. A person may discern a call to this particular ministry, and not seek ordination to the priesthood. These deacons are important and vital in the life of a parish, and some do not receive any form of compensation for their work as a deacon. All candidates seeking ordination as a priest are required to serve a minimum of six months as a deacon. (See below, *Transitional Deacon*)

**Diocesan Bishop:** Is the canonically elected Bishop of a Diocese, who is serving as the leader and spiritual head of the Diocese. This title does not reference an Assisting Bishop, or retired Bishop.

**Ember Day:** These are days within a calendar year that seminarians are expected to write letters to the sponsoring Bishop. There are typically four of these days in a calendar year.

**Lay Leader:** This is the first order of the church and most important demographic in all congregations.

**Master of Divinity:** A three- or four-year degree awarded to a student who has completed an undergraduate degree as well as completed studies at an accredited seminary.

**Nominee:** Is a person who is involved in the discernment process of the Diocese (formally called aspirant).

**Postulant:** this title is associated with a nominee who has entered a seminary or formation program and has the support of the Commission on Ministry and the Diocesan Bishop.

**Transitional Deacon:** Description that is often associated with a seminarian who has completed studies, passed GOEs, has approval of a Bishop, Standing Committee, to be ordained as a priest.

**Vocational Discernment Process:** This document describes the expectations that are asked of those seeking a more defined role among the laity, diaconate or priesthood.

**Other Resources that may be helpful:**
- The Canons of the Episcopal Church, Title III regarding ordination
- The Canons of the Diocese of Alabama

These documents are readily available on various webpages and can be located through searches of the web. A timeline is available and offered by the COM as a tool for planning. A nominee’s movement through the “process” may follow this course or it may be unique as the nominee discerns a call. The Diocesan Bishop, COM and nominee work as a team to make prayerful decisions regarding a call and the needs of the Church. If a copy of the timeline is requested, please understand that an individual’s progress will be unique to his or her personal call.

October 2019
Parish Internship Checklist

Parish Internship Checklist: (to be completed by internship rector or designee with the typed report)

Name of Nominee:

Name of Internship Parish and Rector or Designee:

The nominee completed a twelve-week internship in a parish setting different from the sponsoring parish: yes___ no___ Comments:

Spouse and other family joined the nominee: yes___ no___ Comments:

The nominee completed at least six (6) hours per week in the parish or ministry of the parish. This includes, but is not limited to time spent in worship and meetings with the parish rector or designee: yes___ no___ Comments:

The nominee attended Sunday morning services and weekday services [if offered] as agreed: yes___ no___ Comments:

The nominee attended at least two vestry meetings: yes___ no___ Comments:

The nominee participated in or was included in the following:

___ pastoral visits with the rector or other pastor
___ teaching a class
___ attending meetings
___ officiating at weekday services/Daily Office services
___ an outreach ministry of the parish. If so, please be specific about the ministry/-ies
___ other. If so, please be specific about the ministry/-ies

The nominee meet regularly with the internship rector (or designee) for reflection and conversation about the experiences of the internship: yes___ no___ Comments:

The nominee prepared and presented to a group within the parish a sermon, meditation, reflection or teaching: yes___ no___ Comments:

Qualify the overall performance of the nominee in the parish internship: satisfactory___ unsatisfactory___ incomplete___ Comments:
Appendix G: Background Screening & Consent

The Episcopal Diocese of Alabama
Sarah Sartain
Staff Officer for Clergy Transitions & Ministry Development

BACKGROUND SCREENING AND CONSENT FORM FOR THE DIOCESE OF ALABAMA

I, ________________________________, hereby authorize the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama and __________________________ (Parish) ____________________________ (City) and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, credit history, adult criminal or police records and motor vehicle records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my Application and/or obtaining other information which may be material to my qualifications for service now and, if applicable, during the tenure of my employment or service.

I release the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama and ____________________________ (Parish) ____________________________ (City), and its agents and any person or entity, which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims or law suits in regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

The following is true and is my complete legal name and all information is true and correct to the best of my knowledge: (Please Print):

Full Legal Name: _______________________________________________________________

Maiden Name or other Names used: ________________________________________________

Personal Information

Social Security Number: ____________________________ Date of Birth _____ / ____ / ______

Driver's License Number ____________________________ State of License: ______________

Present mailing address: __________________________________________________________

City: ______________________ State: ___________ Zip:___________ Phone: ______________

# of years at present address: ___________ (if less than 7 years complete Former Address)

Former Address: _______________________________________________________________

City: ______________________ State: ___________ Zip:___________ Phone: ______________
Please List All states and counties of residence since turning age 18:

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Identification of Schools, Employers, Congregations and Bishops

Instructions: Please use additional pages if necessary.

A. All educational institutions you have attended for at least a quarter or semester
B. All those who employed you or congregations you have served in the past 5 years. If you have been at your current position for more than 5 years, please provide two most recent employers/congregations. You should consider yourself to have been employed by any entity for which you provided substantial services, whether you were paid for those services.
C. List all bishops, past and present, who have had canonical authority over you.

Educational Institutions

Name of Education Institution:_____________________________________________________
Your name while attending:________________________________________________________
Contact Person (if known):________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates of Attendance: ______/_______ to _____/_____

Name of Education Institution:_____________________________________________________
Your name while attending:________________________________________________________
Contact Person (if known):________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates of Attendance: ______/_______ to _____/_____

Name of Education Institution:_____________________________________________________
Your name while attending:________________________________________________________
Contact Person (if known):________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates of Attendance: ______/_______ to _____/_____

October 2019
Employers/Congregations

Current Employer/Congregation:___________________________________________________
Contact Person: _______________________________________________________________
Address:_____________________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates employed: _______/_______ to present

Former Employer/Congregation:___________________________________________________
Contact Person:  _______________________________________________________________
Address:_____________________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates employed: _______/_______ to _______/_______

Former Employer/Congregation:___________________________________________________
Contact Person:  _______________________________________________________________
Address:_____________________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates employed: _______/_______ to _______/_______

Bishops

Name of Bishop:______________________________________  Diocese:__________________
Address:_____________________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates of canonical residence: from __________________ to _________________

Name of Bishop:______________________________________  Diocese:__________________
Address:_____________________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates of canonical residence: from __________________ to _________________

Name of Bishop:______________________________________  Diocese:__________________
Address:_____________________________________________________________________
City:___________________________ State:_________________  Zip:____________________
Dates of canonical residence: from __________________ to _________________

Mail to:
Sarah Sartain
Episcopal Diocese of Alabama
521 North 20th Street
Birmingham, AL 35203
ssartain@dioala.org
O God of unchangeable power and eternal light:
Look favorably on your whole Church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery;
by the effectual working of your providence,
carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation;
let the whole world see and know that things
which were cast down are being raised up,
and things which had grown old are being made new,
and that all things are being brought to their perfection
by him through whom all things were made,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord;
who lives and reigns with you,
in the Unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

—Book of Common Prayer