

Section 3

The Ordination Process – General Considerations

Is it your will that N. be ordained a priest? BCP p. 257

This central question in the Ordination service is in keeping with Anglican tradition whereby all ordained clergy have their call to this vocation within the life of a congregation, and the bishop ordains with the consent of the congregation. All ordained ministry comes out of the corporate life of the church.

Every call begins with a period of discernment in the local congregation. In the Diocese of Rochester, this period of discernment is done with a Local Team of members of who are from the congregation and the district. Following a period of discernment and if a call is recognized, the Local Team reports this to the Vestry and the Priest who then engage in further discernment and if satisfied that there is a call, the Vestry and Priest will write a letter of Nomination to the bishop nominating the Aspirant to become a Postulant for holy orders.

A Note to Rectors and Priests-in-Charge

Please be sure to review Appendix D, p. 88 when you begin to speak with a member of your congregation about discerning a call to an ordained ministry.

The bishop then has two councils who advise and consent to the call of persons to the ordained ministry:

The Commission on Ministry:

The Commission on Ministry is charged with the task of evaluating and supporting persons who have been nominated to the bishop for holy orders as described in Title III of the Canons of the Episcopal Church. In summary this involves assuring the bishop that:

- Educational requirements have been met.
- All applications are completed.
- All evaluations (medical, psychological, and background) are completed.
- The Postulant/Candidate has been in an ongoing program of formation.
- The Postulant/Candidate has satisfied the training requirements concerning:
 - Prevention of sexual misconduct
 - Civil requirements and pastoral opportunities concerning abuse.
 - Title IV of Canons of the Episcopal Church having to do with clergy misconduct.
 - Anti-Racism.

To assist the Postulant/Candidate in the ordination process, the Commission will appoint a mentor. The Postulant/Candidate agrees to stay in regular contact with their mentor.

As a person moves from Aspirant, to being nominated for postulancy, to Candidate, to ordinand, the Commission interviews persons in the process and functions as a council of advice for the bishop and the Standing Committee by reporting to the bishop on whether or not it concurs that a person is ready to move to the next step in the process toward ordination.

In cases where the Commission declines to give its consent to a Nominee or a Postulant, the Commission will appoint one of their members to help create, with the Nominee's or Postulant's priest, a local discernment team who will help the person to discern just what God's "yes" is for their sense of calling.

The Standing Committee

The Standing Committee is charged with advising and certifying all matters having to do with canonical procedures. In the ordination process, when a person is admitted to postulancy, the bishop informs the Standing Committee of this action.

In the course of the process toward ordination, a person will meet with the Standing Committee on at least one occasion as they move from postulancy to candidacy. It is the Standing Committee who will certify to the bishop that all of the canonical requirements for ordination have been met.

The Canons *(A collection of laws or rules by which the Church is governed.)*

Before applying for postulancy, the Aspirant should be fully aware of the contents of this *Handbook* and of the process for ordination outlined in it. Aspirants should also familiarize themselves with the **Canons of the Episcopal Church** that govern the ordination process. A copy of the canons can be found at https://www.churchpublishing.org/general_convention/ Once you have downloaded this file, go to **Title III MINISTRY**.

Equal Access

The Diocese of Rochester affirms that the ordination process is open to all persons as established by Canon III.1.2. "No person may be denied access to the discernment process for any ministry, lay or ordained, in this Church because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons."

Before entering the process toward ordination

Requirements of this stage:

- A baptized Christian
- A confirmed communicant in good standing
- Resident in a congregation or faith community for one year
- Consultation with clergy person in residence
- Exploratory meeting with Missioner for Vocational Development
- Group Discernment process

In keeping with Anglican practice, all who seek to be ordained must have their call validated by the congregation in which they are living out their faithful discipleship. The Diocese of Rochester requires that a person exploring a call to ordination (an Aspirant) must be resident in a congregation as a communicant in good standing for at least one year (12 months) before making an application for ordination. If the Aspirant is new to the community, the year may be spent in the ministry discernment process.

Persons involved in the discernment process, including the Aspirant, will share what they have learned about the Aspirant's vocation to ordained ministry with the resident clergy person and the vestry. The vestry will then consider nominating the Aspirant for postulancy. Once both the resident clergy person and vestry have nominated the Aspirant, this material will be shared with the bishop and the Commission. The bishop and the Commission will then make arrangements for continuing discernment with the Nominee at the diocesan level.

Mutual Responsibility in the Process

The ordination process is one of mutual discernment wherein the Aspirant/Nominee and the wider church (congregation and diocese) seek together to perceive that person's call to ordained ministry. The Commission on Ministry recognizes that the decision to test a call to ordained ministry represents a significant risk for the person in the process. We commit to taking each person's journey seriously and treating it with utmost respect. The steps leading to ordination, although they may seem arduous and complicated, are intended to affirm the importance of this journey. Since various bodies must make decisions at several points in the process, we cannot promise there will be affirmative recommendation at each point. Whatever the decision, we will seek to affirm the unique calling of every Christian to ministry, be that ministry lay or ordained.

Movement through this process is the shared responsibility of the person in the process, the clergy person and vestry of his or her congregation, the Commission on Ministry, and the bishop and Standing Committee. It is important for the parties to

be clear in their communications with one another. The applications required for each stage (nomination to postulancy, candidacy, etc.) are the responsibility of the Nominee/Postulant/Candidate. He/she is also responsible for scheduling the required interviews with the COM and Standing Committee in a timely fashion and for making arrangements for transportation, lodging, etc. Experience has shown that advance notice and ample lead-time help avoid anxiety-provoking scheduling problems. An annual calendar projecting application deadlines and Commission interview days can be found on the diocesan web site.

<http://www.episcopalrochester.org/>

Confidentiality and Informed Consent in the Ordination Process

Aspirants/Nominees should be aware that they are expected to be open and vulnerable during the ordination process. Persons in the process are asked to offer personal information and to respond to questions about their beliefs. This personal information is shared in the discussions within the Commission on Ministry as decisions are made regarding the person's vocational call. The bishop and Standing Committee will also have access to this information. In general, the information developed within the ordination process is not considered a matter for public discussion. All files are kept in a secure location in the bishop's office.

In addition, Nominees are required to participate in medical, psychological or psychiatric evaluations and background checks. Any information developed through a medical, psychological or psychiatric evaluation will first be shared with the Nominee. The Nominee will be asked to sign releases of information from these evaluations to the bishop. The written information developed in medical, psychological or psychiatric examinations and by background checks is for the bishop's eyes only and will be kept in a confidential file in the bishop's office. The bishop may share his or her concerns as required in the discernment process after the release is signed.

Should a Nominee decide not to sign any release, for whatever reason, this action will cause the ordination process to stop. The process may resume only at the discretion of the bishop.