

Revised Ordination Process Outline

Diocese of Central Pennsylvania

The Rt. Rev. Audrey C. Scanlan, Bishop and Chair of the Commission on Ministry

The Rev. Dr. Herbert Sprouse, Vice-Chair, Commission on Ministry

The Rev. Barbara Hutchinson, President, Standing Committee

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FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

(This document is in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church 2015 and includes local variances particular to the Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania.)

Pre-Nomination Discernment

1. A call to explore the idea of ordained ministry is perceived by a parish member.
2. The parish member initiates a conversation with their Presenting Priest.
3. If the Presenting Priest affirms the call of the parish member s/he writes to the Bishop expressing support for the parish member to begin the discernment process for ordained ministry.
4. The parish member meets with the Dean of the Stevenson School for conversation about their call and to learn about opportunities for ministry exploration through SSFM. A course of action is selected that may include registering for one or more SSFM classes. Other comparable exploration options (not SSFM) may also be considered in conversation with the Bishop.

(Note: an extensive parish internship is not contemplated for most people in discernment at this time.)

5. The parish member meets with their Presenting Priest after completion of an SSFM or comparable program and they discuss the options of :
 - (a) continued lay ministry, possibly with more SSFM or other training, or
 - (b) further exploration of their perceived call to ordination.
6. If the Presenting Priest concurs with further exploration of ordained ministry, the Presenting Priest contacts the Bishop. The Parish Member makes written application to enter the discernment process formally providing the following

information: Full name and DOB, length of time in the diocese, evidence of baptism and confirmation, [notice of any other applications for ordination in other dioceses, a description of the discernment processes completed official transcripts from all attended post-secondary educational institutions.]

(Note: the Parish Member becomes a “Nominee” only at this point. Using this term earlier may be prematurely misunderstood as “being in the process.” Nomination is also the event that triggers the 18-month minimum time frame to ordination under the national canons.)

Nomination

7. The Nominee meets with the Bishop.

(a) Upon the Bishop’s invitation, the nominee meets with COM for an introductory meeting

(b) The Nominee begins work with a Discernment Committee as instructed by the COM.

[Note: changes to the structure and duration of discernment committees are underway.]

8. Based on the outcomes of all of the above, the next steps are determined by the Bishop with COM recommendations. Possibilities include:

- Additional SSFM classes
- An internship, if required to address a significant “gap” in experience that might influence fitness for postulancy or to assess maturity
- Other ecclesiastical explorations as needed to support discernment

At this time, the Nominee will enter Spiritual Direction, if not already engaged in direction. A time-certain to meet again with the Bishop and COM will be set.

9. At the completion of their work, the Discernment Committee issues its report to the Bishop, COM, the Standing Committee and the individual’s rector and parish vestry. All paperwork and pre-postulancy examinations are completed, including psychological evaluation and medical exam.

10. The parish writes a letter of support to the Bishop nominating the individual for postulancy including a pledge to contribute financially to the Nominee’s preparation and a commitment for the parish to be involved in the preparation of the individual for ordination. This letter must be signed by two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body and by the Member of the Clergy leader exercising oversight. The nominee writes a letter to the Bishop accepting the nomination.

11. At the time-certain previously established:

- (a) Nominee and Presenting Priest meet together with Bishop to reflect. The topic of financial resources to complete formation is discussed with the Nominee at this point and in other follow-up instances in the process.
- (b) Nominee meets with COM (including representation of the Standing Committee) to reflect on experiences. The COM shares its evaluation of the nominee with the Bishop.

12. The Bishop decides if the Nominee is to continue forward with the ordination process.

- (a) If not, Bishop meets with Nominee to discern next steps for ministry, or
- (b) The Nominee is made a Postulant
 - Presenting Priest, sponsoring parish, COM, Standing Committee, Dean of the SSFM or other formation program and Postulant all receive letters testifying to postulancy
 - The nominee writes a letter to the Bishop accepting postulancy.
 - The new Postulant is invited to the next (midwinter) COM retreat
 - The Postulant begins to write ember day letters to the Bishop
 - The Bishop records the Postulant's name and date of admission in the register.

Postulancy

13. Following the next COM (midwinter) retreat, the COM reviews findings and assigns a Companion for the Postulant. The Companion is trained by the COM and begins the Companion-Postulant relationship.

(Note: The timing on this may be adjusted to provide a Companion if postulancy is granted long before the next midwinter retreat.)

14. If not yet matriculated in the SSFM program or another ministry formation program, the postulant is given direction from Bishop to begin.

15. After at least one year of postulancy, including academic preparation and formation (with transcripts and evaluations submitted) the Postulant requests meetings with:

- The Bishop
- The COM (with Standing Committee representation.)

The Bishop and COM confer.

16. The Bishop gives the Postulant direction to:

- (a) Continue towards candidacy
- (b) Redirect toward lay ministry
- (c) Continue studies and formation as a postulant (thereby extending the postulancy period.)

(d) The Bishop may give additional instructions for further individual formation.

17. If the direction is to continue towards candidacy, (16a) then the Postulant files his/her Candidacy Application which shall include:

- Formal application paperwork (including the Postulant's date of admission to Postulancy)
- Continuing Presenting Priest support
- Continuing Vestry endorsement
- Transcripts from education/formation program
- Physical exam (if elapsed time requires)
- Psychological exam update (if elapsed time requires)
- Clinical Pastoral Education evaluation and credentials
- Seminary evaluation (or comparable program evaluation)

It is expected that each person in the ordination process will complete at least:

- (a) One academic year of an internship in a parish or ministerial setting approved by the Bishop and COM with evaluations submitted at the conclusion thereof.
- (b) One unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) with evaluations submitted at the conclusion thereof.

18. The Postulant attends the (midwinter) COM retreat again. The now "senior postulant" attends with all other postulants and candidates.

19. When Candidacy paperwork is complete, at the Bishop's invitation the Postulant attends:

- (a) Interview with the Bishop
- (b) Interview with COM
- (c) Interview with the Standing Committee

The COM issues a statement to the Bishop attesting to the continuing formation of the Postulant.

The Standing Committee reviews documentation relating to the application of the Postulant and issues a report on their findings to the Bishop.

20. At the Bishop's discretion, the "Senior Postulant" is made a Candidate for Ordination.

- The Bishop informs in writing the (new) Candidate, Presenting Priest, COM, Dean of the SSFM or other formation program, and Standing Committee of the move to Candidacy.

- The nominee writes a letter to the Bishop accepting Candidacy.
- The Bishop records the name and date of admission to Candidacy in the register.

Candidacy

21. The Candidate continues formation and education through completion of seminary or other formation program(s).

22. The Candidate takes the Diocesan Canonical Exam for Ordination to the Diaconate.

(a) The Bishop, COM and Standing Committee review results of the Canonical Exam ascertaining basic competence in the areas of study outlined in Canon III.6.5.f

(b) If remediation in any field of study is recommended by the Bishop, the Examining Chaplains are notified and a plan for increased competency and the metrics for desirable outcomes is designed.

(c) Examining Chaplains certify successful completion of remediation to the Bishop and the COM.

23. The following training is also certified as required by the national canons:

(a) Prevention of sexual misconduct.

(b) Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse.

(c) The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, “particularly Title IV thereof.”

(d) The Church's teaching on racism.

24. At the invitation of the Bishop, final interviews and certifications prior to ordination are conducted:

(a) Final interview with the Bishop

(b) Final COM Interview

(c) Final Standing Committee interview

(d) The required certifications received:

- Application for ordination
- COM Certification
- Standing Committee Certification
- Certificate of studies completion from the SSFM or other formation program

(e) The Candidate meets the canonical requirements:

- At least 18 months from acceptance as Nominee to ordination
- At least 24 years of age
- Continuing endorsements by sponsoring clergy and two-thirds of the sponsoring vestry

- A criminal background check, psychological examination and medical examination completed within the last 36 months

25. The Bishop meets with Candidate to schedule ordination to the diaconate.

- The Bishop informs the Candidate, Presenting Priest and Vestry, COM, Dean of SSFM or other formation program, and Standing Committee.