

## **Revised Ordination Process Outline**

### **Diocese of Central Pennsylvania**

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June 2016

# **FOR THOSE SEEKING ORDINATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD 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 in younger persons
- Other ecclesiastical explorations as needed to support discernment
- Enrollment in seminary or similar education at the Bishop’s discretion  
*(Note: if distance learning and/or part-time seminary is planned the education can take 5+ years)*

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, Seminary Dean 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 a seminary program, an 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 Vestry endorsement
- Transcripts from education/formation program
- Physical exam
- 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 (as in a typical seminary field education placement) 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 Seminary or SSFM, and Standing Committee of the move to Candidacy.
- The nominee writes a letter to the Bishop accepting postulancy.
- 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 General Ordination Examinations (GOEs) and the Diocesan Canonicals.

(a) The Bishop, COM and Standing Committee review results of GOEs and/or Canonicals

(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 Seminary, SSFM or comparable program as approved by the Bishop

(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 Seminary, SSFM or comparable program, and Standing Committee.

### ***From Deacon to Priest***

26. The (transitional) Deacon serves in a ministerial placement approved by the Bishop.

27. After a minimum of six (6) months (and at least 18 months from the time of Nomination) the (transitional) Deacon applies for ordination to the priesthood. (The Deacon must be at least 24 years of age, medical and psychological exams must have taken place or been updated within 36 months prior to ordination as a priest.)

The application shall include:

- a letter from the (transitional) Deacon requesting ordination and including the Deacon's dates of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy and ordination as a Deacon
- a letter of support from the Deacon's original sponsoring congregation signed by at least two-thirds of the Vestry and Member of the Clergy
- evidence of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy
- a certificate from the seminary, SSFM or other formation program showing the Deacon's academic fulfillment of coursework in the subjects required by the Canons including an evaluation that includes personal qualifications and affirmation and recommendation for ordination to the Priesthood
- a statement from the COM attesting to the successful completion of the program of formation, proficiency in the required areas of study and a recommendation for ordination to the Priesthood

28. The Standing Committee reviews the application and, with a majority consenting, certifies in a testimonial addressed to the Bishop that the canonical requirements for ordination to the Priesthood have been met, that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral or spiritual grounds and that they recommend ordination.

29. The Bishop, having received the certification from the Standing Committee may ordain the (transitional) Deacon to the Priesthood. At the time of ordination, the

(transitional) Deacon shall subscribe publicly, and make, in the presence of the Bishop, the declaration required in Article VIII of the Constitution. (I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation; and I do solemnly engage to conform to the Doctrine, Discipline and Worship of the Episcopal Church.)

Note: Canon III 8.7e states, “No Deacon shall be ordained to the Priesthood until having been appointed to serve in a Parochial Cure within the jurisdiction of this Church, or as a Missionary under the Ecclesiastical Authority of a Diocese, or as an officer of a Missionary Society recognized by the General Convention, or as a Chaplain of the Armed Services of the United States, or as a Chaplain in a recognized hospital or other welfare institution, or as a Chaplain or instructor in a school, college, or other seminary, or with other opportunity for the exercise of the office of Priest within the Church judged appropriate by the Bishop.”