



DISCERNMENT PROGRAM FOR HOLY ORDERS

INQUIRER AND SPONSORING PRIESTS DISCERNMENT

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

INQUIRY PERIOD

The sponsoring priest of a person entering into vocational discernment is the first official contact the inquirer will have. It is, therefore, incumbent upon each of you to be intimately familiar with the manner in which the Diocese of Upper South Carolina expects this process to be handled and with the specific steps that are outlined in these documents. Because of the primary relationship of the inquirer and sponsoring priest will always be pastoral, failure to understand the process can result in confusion, hurt feelings and potential problems within the parish. In addition, uniformity of process across all churches in the diocese will ensure that expectations are clear and individuals are all treated equally.

It is important that the inquirer understand that what we have traditionally referred to as “the process,” is actually two distinct and very different periods of time. The first is the **inquiry period**, in which the person, in concert with the Church, discerns his or her call. The second is the **ordination process** that begins with the granting of postulancy to the individual.

To the Sponsoring Priest:

As both sponsoring priest and pastor, remember that it is often a kindness to stop a person before they become too invested in the journey if you believe strongly that they are not suited for ordained ministry. If you have questions or doubts, please call the Canon for Christian Formation, Congregational Vitality, and Missional Communities to discuss the situation. Again, this is a kindness that you, as pastor, are called to perform.

The time with inquirer and sponsoring priest is to explore and discern a vocational call. Areas to be included in this discernment discussion are:

- Vocation and spirituality
- Leadership skills and ability
- Personal background information
- Physical and mental health
- Financial health
- Family
- Biblical competency assessment provided by the Commission on Ministry

The included section, “Clergy: Core Values, Fundamental Competencies and Norms,” should serve as the metric against which all your conversations with the inquirer are based. As it says in the introduction, “While it is not expected that individuals possess all of the qualities that are listed in this document, it is important for those in discernment to exemplify a majority of the traits listed below.”

The following is a list of resources to be used in this conversation, and for ensuring that the individual meets the baseline requirements for application to the diocesan process for Vocational and Ministry Discernment. All reports should be carefully reviewed and any irregularities thoroughly discussed.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If the inquirer moves forward in the process, there will be more thorough checks performed in the areas of Personal Background Information. If you know of anything that has not been disclosed and may show up as a result of more extensive checking, you should disclose it now.

Vocation and Spirituality

In addition to “Clergy: Core Values, Competencies and Norms,” a guided reading of a particular book on vocation and spirituality can be helpful to the inquirer. Recommendations of such books include:

Parker Palmer’s “Let Your Life Speak”

Joan Chittister’s “The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century”

Urban T. Holmes’ “Spirituality for Ministry”

Urban T. Holmes’ “Ministry and Imagination” (specifically for the priest to read in preparation to serve as a sponsor)

Personal Background Information

The inquirer should prepare for the sponsoring priest **a brief biography concentrating especially on individual spiritual development and ministries** of the church in which the person has been engaged.

The inquirer must perform a baseline South Carolina background check using the following website tool and discuss the results with the sponsoring priest:

http://www.sled.state.sc.us/sled/default.asp?Category=CATCH_SSN&Service=crc

If the inquirer has resided in more than one state during the past decade he or she will need to use the following website for a baseline criminal check:

<https://www.criminalcbs.com/>

If the inquirer has lived in another state within the past decade a baseline background check will need to be conducted from that state as well. Please contact The Canon for Christian Formation, Congregational Vitality, and Missional Communities for assistance if needed.

Physical and Mental Health

Before moving on to the next steps in this program, the inquirer must discuss with the sponsoring priest the results of a medical physical. The medical form may be found on the diocesan website at:

https://www.edusc.org/uploads/files/required-medical-exam_192.pdf



A psychological assessment must also be completed as a piece of the initial inquirer's application to the discernment process. Dr. Rhea Merck is the administrator of this assessment. Please contact her directly to schedule the assessment. Once the results are available, Dr. Merck will send a copy directly to the Diocesan House upon the inquirer's permission. She may be reach at:

Dr. Rhea Merck: 803-771-6684

Financial Health

Successful completion of the inquiry period and ordination process will result in financial burdens associated with seminary or other formation, possible relocation and change in income. It is vitally important and pastorally crucial that we do not put the inquirer in an untenable financial position. Therefore, the inquirer is expected to obtain a baseline financial snapshot and discuss it with the sponsoring priest. This can be done at the following website:

www.annualcreditreport.com

Financial Commitment

If accepted into the Diocesan Discernment Program the approximate cost to fulfill the canonical requirements related to discernment of holy orders ranges between \$2000 and \$3000. Funding for a background check, psychiatric testing, medical exam, mileage related to internships, and retreats will need to be provided by the inquirer and sponsoring congregation. (It is a canonical requirement that all sponsoring congregations pledge to contribute financially to discernment and formation expenses related to holy orders.)

Vocational and Ministry Discernment Time Requirement

It is realistic to allow approximately two years in discerning your vocation and call to ministry. This will allow time for discernment with your sponsoring priest and, if accepted, participation in the Diocesan Vocational and Ministry Discernment Program.

Family

The impact on the family of an inquirer can be profound. The sponsoring priest must, therefore, ensure that the inquirer has the full support of family and loved ones. It is strongly suggested that in the case of partnered inquirers, at least one session with the sponsoring priest include both the inquirer and partner. If the sponsoring priest deems it necessary, a private meeting with the inquirer's partner is not an unreasonable request and should be done. This, too, goes directly to the pastoral role of the sponsoring priest, as the care for not only the inquirer but the inquirer's family and loved ones is the priest's charge.

Included in the biography noted above, the inquirer should outline both family of origin and current family dynamics.



Final Steps

At the end of this portion of the inquiry period, the sponsoring priest will need to make a determination as to whether they can in good conscience write a letter of recommendation indicating that the inquirer should continue discernment. If so, the inquirer will complete the application process for Vocational and Ministry Discernment. If not, the sponsoring priest should be prepared to assist the inquirer in discerning to which other ministries in the church the inquirer might be called. This is not a binary process of “yes/no.” Rather, the inquiry period is one in which we can lift up leaders of other ministries beyond that of the ordained.

Additionally, this is a conversation the sponsoring priest must be prepared to have with the inquirer should they continue into the next step but not be recommended to move into the ordination process.

If any part of the role of sponsoring priest, or any potentially difficult conversations with the inquirer seem daunting, please remember that both diocesan staff and members of the Commission on Ministry are available to advise, guide, and, if necessary, take part in such conversations.



CORE VALUES, COMPETENCIES AND NORMS FOR CLERGY

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

INQUIRY PERIOD

In the Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina we are seeking individuals for ordained leadership who are pastorally gifted, strong teachers, leadership trainers, developers of ministry, and savvy administrators.

When identifying, discerning, forming, and certifying those who are called by Christ and his church for holy orders the following core values, competencies and norms are to be considered. While it is not expected that individuals possess all of the qualities that are listed in this document, it is important for those in discernment to exemplify a majority of the traits listed below.

Core Values and Fundamental Competencies

Deep Faith in God

- individual has a passion for God,
- is rooted and confident in his or her relationship with God, as revealed through Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit,
- is able to articulate an understanding of the world in terms of a relationship between a Creator God and responsive creatures,
- has a grasp of scripture, history, tradition, and theology, and can apply theological concepts to personal and contemporary issues,
- demonstrates spiritual vitality and attends to the need for spiritual disciplines to nourish this vitality, e.g. regular prayer, worship and scripture reading, and
- reflects the hope, joy, strength, and peace of the gospel message.

Capacity for Leadership

- individual is able to articulate the nature of the priestly or diaconal vocation and identity as it has been received within the Anglican tradition,
- can give an account of how her or his own vocation to ministry relates to this understanding,
- demonstrates a readiness to receive and exercise this ministry as a deacon/priest within the Church of God,
- engages in pastoral leadership,
- demonstrates the basic skills necessary to preach effectively in public contexts,
- demonstrates the gifts and capacity to offer pastoral care,
- demonstrates the capacity for effective collaborative leadership and an ability to work in teams in a range of settings,
- demonstrates having reflected on the different types of ministry and understands the particular ministries to which he or she is called,



- is aware of a variety of ministry settings, e.g., urban, small town, rural ministries, and has been exposed to at least one context other than their present one,
- is aware of the public character of theology and able to communicate theologically in the contexts of worship, personal interaction, group-study, and the media,
- discerns God's presence and activity in the lives of others,
- discerns the gifts of others and equips them to lead and to serve,
- demonstrates an awareness of the church's role and opportunities in public life, and a capacity to collaborate in a well-informed way with ecumenical partners, other faith communities and secular agencies,
- understands basic administration including stewardship of resources, prioritization, collaborative working, finance and accountability,
- demonstrates a growing capacity to assist a congregation in the process of visioning,
- demonstrates a growing understanding of the theory and practice of mission and evangelism, changing expressions of church life, and their relation to the local context.

Skills for Teaching and Learning

- demonstrates a growing ability to nurture the faith of others and to draw out their capacities for baptismal ministry and leadership,
- demonstrates a growing ability to teach the Christian tradition,
- shows the capacity to gather, critically assess, integrate, and use insights, information, and ideas in support of the teaching ministry,
- shows a growing awareness of the resources that are available to support ongoing lifelong learning in support of the teaching ministry,
- possesses communication skills, both oral and written, and the ability to communicate with a wide variety of people using various media formats (email, Facebook, phone, written letter) that are clear, engaging and effective,
- shows a developing understanding of how children and adults learn in order to nurture others in faith development,
- demonstrates faith by word and deed and teaches others to proclaim their faith by word and deed.

Sense of Call to Ordained Ministry

- displays a maturing understanding of her or his call to ministry, service and study,
- demonstrates a commitment to loving service in the church rooted in a sustained and growing love of God in Christ,
- shows evidence of personal and spiritual growth and self-awareness,
- expresses the need and desire to serve God as a disciple of Jesus Christ, already reflected in his or her exercise of baptismal ministry,
- appreciates that the power inherent in the ministry of Word and Sacrament is a sacred trust,
- demonstrates humility in the exercise of leadership, and understands the differences, as well as the relationship, between lay and ordained ministries, and
- recognizes and accepts that vocation is affirmed and authenticated by members of the Body of Christ.

Love of Church

- is committed to the church as the Body of Christ in the world,
- loves the church in its Anglican/Episcopal expression, yet recognizes its constant need for renewal,
- desires to use his or her particular gifts to enable the church to be all the more faithful,
- understands, affirms, and is willing to minister within the diversity encompassed by the Anglican Church,



- is open to, and aware of, other faith and denominational expressions, while maintaining a confident and unapologetic commitment to the Anglican tradition, and
- appreciates that the priest/deacon is a public figure, who is seen to represent the church to the local and broader community.

Vision

- shows leadership potential, and understands this gift as a response to the guidance and will of God,
- can articulate a sense of prophetic vision and direction for the church,
- generates enthusiasm, motivates and inspires others to think strategically and to plan for the future,
- appreciates the challenges facing the church, and takes initiative to share the Good News effectively,
- can diagnose and develop strategies for church growth, especially for congregations that are in decline,
- has the courage to face and name evil and darkness, without losing the abiding sense of God's presence, and
- can analyze and synthesize disparate elements so that, enabled by the Holy Spirit, something new and productive can happen.

Mission

- recognizes and exhibits concern for the scope of human need both within and beyond the congregation and sees the related possibilities for ministry,
- desires, and takes initiative, to proclaim the Good News through social justice and evangelism,
- is willing to take the risks associated with making a difference in the church and the world,
- is sensitive to the cultural diversity of ethnic groups to which the congregation will attempt to minister, and
- deals with all people equitably regardless of race, class, culture, handicap, age, sex, or sexual orientation.

Life-long Learner

- is curious, interested and engaged in life, and is open to personal growth and new ideas,
- is educationally prepared and intellectually capable of ministry,
- is well-read, culturally alert and participates in workshops, conferences and courses for continuing growth and skill development, and
- has a broad range of interests and is involved in activities outside the church.

Steward of Resources

- understands the priest/deacon as the steward of a sacred trust which carries obligations to God and the People of God,
- attends to own emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being; self-care is theologically grounded in view of self as a child of God,
- is an effective steward of time and gifts so as to maintain a healthy balance between concern for self, family, vocation and avocation,
- is attentive to administrative issues so that programs and policies are carried out,
- understands that congregational ministry requires supervision and oversight of staff, volunteers and financial resources, and
- is aware of technological advances which could assist the church to accomplish its mission.

Norms

Integrated Personality

- individual's private and public life are compatible with a maturing Christian faith within the context of The Episcopal Church,
- demonstrates a healthy and loyal but not uncritical relationship to their diocese, province and national church,
- demonstrates integrity between faith, action, theological reflection, and personal life choices,
- individually lives out the baptismal covenant so that people see the congruence between what is professed, and his or her actions,
- acts prudently in relationships and maintains confidentiality,
- demonstrates maturity, stability, and appropriate boundaries; uses humor appropriately,
- is widely trusted and seen as direct and truthful,
- accepts responsibility for his or her own mistakes, and does not misrepresent facts for personal protection, and
- recognizes personal need for forgiveness, and is a forgiving person.

Self-awareness

- reflects with insight on her or his personal strengths and weaknesses, gifts and vulnerabilities,
- discerns God's presence and activity in her or his own life,
- individual's self-esteem is sufficiently healthy to ensure independence and differentiation from those with whom he/she works, ministers and lives,
- lives with ambiguity or paradox, including such creative tension as brings about healthy change,
- distinguishes between what can and cannot be changed in personal or congregational life,
- deals with conflict honestly and creatively,
- deals with problems firmly and in a timely manner, and is able to confront or mediate when appropriate,
- is able to acknowledge and accept mistakes and failures as part of life, learns from each set-back, and when appropriate, can laugh at own mistakes, and
- willingly shares own thoughts about personal strengths and limitations.

Discerner of Gifts

- is committed to empowering and preparing the People of God for their ministries in the church and the world,
- has good judgment about the creativity and talents of others and is able to discern, call forth, and nurture their gifts,
- understands how people of all ages learn and develop in faith, and
- appreciates the need for training and support of volunteers.

Communicator

- exhibits a developing ability to express thoughts and feelings clearly in order to inform, motivate and/or challenge and persuade,
- can tell the Story; desires to transmit the traditions and teachings of the church,
- is effective in a variety of settings: one-to-one, small and large groups, peers, and
- can manage group process during a presentation and can change tactics midstream when something isn't working.



Team Player

- uses a leadership style appropriate to the situation,
- delegates, plans, coordinates and leads as appropriate,
- is able to work in groups, share leadership and respect the opinion of others,
- builds a sense of community in groups, allowing other's gifts to come forward,
- works collaboratively and consults with others,
- is able to discern when to function collegially and when a decision is required, and
- is flexible and able to adapt.

Compassionate

- genuinely loves people, showing compassion and concern for all aspects of their lives; is able to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep,
- is approachable and puts people at ease,
- listens attentively and sensitively to people's spiritual and emotional needs and is aware of what is being communicated, even covertly,
- is sensitive and patient with the interpersonal anxieties of others, and
- helps to promote healing, wholeness and reconciliation.

Acquired Competencies

It is critical when identifying and discerning an individual called to holy orders that the individual demonstrate the intellectual, emotional, and physical capacity to acquire the following competencies that he or she will be expected to demonstrate following a period of formation.

Holy Scripture

- has read and studied the Bible in depth,
- is able to interpret select texts from the Bible using appropriate theological, historical, critical, and literary tools,
- understands the significance of the different genres of the materials within the Bible,
- is aware of how the Bible is interpreted through the lenses of gender, socioeconomic, and cultural location,
- engages with the Scriptures and the traditions of Christian thought in faithful obedience and with openness to new insights,
- develops a practice of study and reflection, and a working knowledge of how to interpret and use Scripture in a range of different contexts,
- interprets the Bible in a way that makes it accessible to the community,
- is able to assist the community to read the Bible in the light of Christian tradition and God-given reason,
- understands a wide range of theological themes within the canon of Scripture, and is familiar with how these themes relate to the basic creedal doctrine and the teaching of major figures in church history.

Theology

- understands the development of the Christian tradition and how that has been received and interpreted in Anglican thought,
- articulates core Christian doctrines, including their defenses and their critiques, and the particularities of how they have been received within Anglicanism,
- understands the significance of philosophy in the development and apology of the Christian faith,



- is familiar with the writings of several major theologians, including key shapers of the Anglican tradition,
- is able to articulate creedal doctrines and how they have been understood within the Anglican tradition.

Church History

- understands the diversity of the Christian tradition, historically and globally,
- understands the significance of the relationship between the Christian faith and its Jewish origins,
- is familiar with Anglican history in colonial America and how it shaped the Episcopal Church,
- is familiar with the history of missions of the Anglican Church globally,
- has an understanding of the Anglican Communion worldwide, its character, history, diversity, challenges, and polity,
- is familiar with the history of the English Reformation and critical areas of English church history post-Reformation.

Contextual Ministry

- is aware of the challenges and promises facing Christian theology and evangelism in a pluralistic and secular society,
- is familiar with the teachings and practices of partner Christian Churches, particularly those that are encountered in the context of the United States,
- is aware of the teachings and the practices of other faiths, particularly those that are encountered in the United States,
- considers the place of the Christian faith in this new context and its implications for building of relationships with those of other faiths and, for effective proclamation of the Gospel,
- demonstrates a capacity to understand how the ministry of a congregation is shaped by and shapes its local context.

Liturgy

- displays an understanding of Anglican spirituality and of the centrality of liturgy in Anglican identity and self-understanding in both modern and historical contexts,
- demonstrates a thorough grounding in the authorized worship texts and resources of the Episcopal Church,
- understands the role of liturgy in expressing and forming doctrine and ethics,
- presides or serves effectively and gracefully within worship, as appropriate for the role (priest/deacon),
- preaches the gospel with faith and passion in a way that reflects an understanding of the role of proclamation within the liturgy,
- understands and participates in worship with a clear sense of the role of the whole people of God in worship, including the particular roles of deacon, priest and bishop,
- understands the contextual and missional implications of liturgical practice and is familiar with a range of recent developments in the life of the church, e.g. emerging church / missional church,
- displays an understanding of traditional worship within the Anglican tradition.



DISCERNMENT FOR HOLY ORDERS

QUESTIONS FOR SPONSORING PRIESTS

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

INQUIRY PERIOD

SPIRITUAL:

- What are the inquirer's current ministries?
- What other ministries are suggested by the inquirer's gifts?
- How does the inquirer display growth in his/her Christian faith?
- How clearly does the inquirer articulate his/her faith?
- How does the inquirer's spirituality manifest itself to you?
- How does the inquirer differentiate between the ministries of the laity and of the ordained?
- How well does the inquirer articulate his/her call to ministry?
- Could the inquirer serve the Church more effectively as a layperson or as an ordained person?

INTELLECTUAL:

- What is this person's academic background?
- Does the inquirer have the skills and ability to do the canonically required study and preparation?
- Does the inquirer demonstrate the ability to reflect upon his/her personal experiences and to grow from them?
- Does the inquirer exhibit curiosity?
- Does the inquirer demonstrate a desire to learn?
- Is there an ability to integrate theological concepts and to transfer them into practical use?

EMOTIONAL:

- How does the inquirer cope with stress?
- How aware is the inquirer of his/her feelings?
- How does the inquirer deal with conflict?
- How does the inquirer deal with anger?
- How does the inquirer deal with guilt?
- Is the inquirer's emotional maturity commensurate with his/her chronological age?
- How does this person understand his/her sexuality? Is he/she comfortable with his/her own sexual identity?
- Are there traumas in his/her history? Do they continue to affect the person?
- If the discernment process does not lead to ordination, is the person mature enough to accept this outcome?



PHYSICAL:

- Can the inquirer handle the physical demands of the ministry to which he/she is or may be called?
- Does the inquirer take good care of his/her physical needs?

PERSONAL/FINANCIAL:

- What are the inquirer's family responsibilities?
- Is the inquirer's family supportive of his/her ministry?
- How many times has the inquirer been married? If divorced, what were the circumstances? Has the relationship with the previous spouse been reconciled?
- Is the inquirer able to relocate in order to serve wherever the church may need him/her to serve?
- How will the inquirer finance his/her seminary/diaconate education?
- Does the inquirer have any significant financial obligations which would interfere with his/her ministry?

LEADERSHIP:

- Evaluated against the Core Values and Competencies of "Capacity for Leadership," what are the inquirer's leadership strengths? Weaknesses?
- Evaluated against the Core Values and Competencies of "Skills for Teaching and Learning," what are the inquirer's leadership strengths? Weaknesses?
- How does the inquirer function in interpersonal relationships?
- How has the inquirer demonstrated the ability to motivate others?
- How effectively does the inquirer communicate orally? In writing?
- In what ways has the inquirer demonstrated effective leadership?
- How does the inquirer deal with authority?
- How does the inquirer interact in a team/leadership situation?



APPLICATION FOR DISCERNMENT PROGRAM FOR HOLY ORDERS

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

Name _____
(Last) (First) (Middle/Maiden)

Discerning (circle one) Priesthood Diaconate

Section I: Personal Data

Home Address _____
(Street, Apt #)

(City, State, Zip)

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Fax _____ Other _____

Preferred Email Address _____

Occupation _____

Employment/Retirement: _____
(Name of business)

(Street, suite #) (City, State, Zip)

Business Phone _____ Fax _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____

Spouse's Name _____
(If applicable)

Spouse's date of birth _____ Spouse's Occupation _____

Children's Names and Ages _____

Previous Marriage(s): If applicable, list name of spouse, wedding date, divorce date

Congregation _____

Congregation Address _____

Congregation Phone _____ Fax _____

Priest _____ Cell _____

Length of Time _____
At above congregation *In the Diocese of Upper South Carolina* *In the Episcopal Church*

Section II: Canonical Status

Date of Baptism _____ Denomination _____

Name of Church _____ City/State _____

Date confirmed/received into the Episcopal Church _____

Name of Church _____ City/State _____

Religious Background (if not Episcopal/Anglican) _____

Section III: Education

High School Diploma - City/State/School Year

Technical/Vocational/Special Education – School/Type of Training or Degree/Certification Year

Undergraduate/Graduate (start with most recent)-School/ Major/ Degree Year

Current and Previous Theological Education)-School/ Major/ Degree Year

Please describe any previous seminary study, or diocesan, parish, or extension programs. If you wish to submit previous study for consideration of transfer credit, an official transcript must be submitted.

Section IV: Previous Ordination History (If applicable)

Previous applicant for holy orders? If yes, please give details including dates and diocese

Ordination in another denomination? Yes No

If yes, have orders been resigned? Yes No (If yes, include copy of official resignation.)

If yes, please give details including years of service: _____

Section V: Work History

Attach resume with name, addresses, and dates

Section VI: Vocational and Personal Understanding of Ministry

Please answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper:

1. Briefly describe the nature of your vocation as you now perceive it.
2. What expectations do you have for your ministry?
3. If applicable, how do you feel that ordination would help you live out your ministry more fully?
4. Write a brief spiritual autobiography concentration on individual spiritual development and ministries of the church in which the person has been engaged. Included in the autobiography, the inquirer should outline both family of origin and current family dynamics.

Section VII: Reference Letters

Please include letters from your sponsoring priest and current senior warden, which answer the following questions. These letters should be sealed and returned with the application or separately.

1. How does this person's life show a commitment to following Jesus Christ?
2. How does this person's life reflect the Christian disciplines of prayer and worship, and the particular practices of the Episcopal Church?
3. How would you describe this person's style of leadership? How does this person empower others to serve?

Section VIII: Financial

Check Applicable Items:

1. I have adequate financial resources. _____
2. My parish will be helping with expenses. _____
3. May need financial assistance. _____

Section IX: Other Documentation

Submit with Application:

- Baseline Criminal Check
- Credit Report
- Medical Evaluation
- Psychological Assessment

Section X: Applicant's Signature

I have discussed the information contained in following documents with my sponsoring priest, as well as any relevant information that might be disclosed by more thorough checks in the areas of Personal Background Information, Physical and Mental Health, and Financial Health. The information presented in this application and my signature below signifies my desire to participate fully in the Vocational Discernment Process in the Diocese of Upper South Carolina.

Applicant's Signature

Date

Section XI: What to do to complete your application

Return completed form to: The Rev. Canon Jimmy Hartley
The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina
Discernment Program for Holy Orders
1115 Marion Street
Columbia, SC 29201-3706
Phone: (803) 771-7800



VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

INQUIRY PERIOD

Biblical Competency Assessment

Provided that the sponsoring priest is satisfied with the results of all the items noted above, and the inquirer is admitted into the Vocational Discernment Program, the inquirer will take the Biblical Competency Assessment (BCA) provided by the Board of Examining Chaplains. The assessment will take place at the beginning of Discernment Program.

This should not be understood to be an entrance examination. Rather, through a written assessment and subsequent conversations, it will give the inquirer, the sponsoring priest and committees involved in continuing discernment a base-line understanding of the inquirer's engagement with Holy Scripture. As such, it provides an opportunity for further guided readings of Holy Scripture and related books and commentaries.

Vocational Discernment Internship

The inquirer will have the opportunity to engage in the ministry of a Parish within the Diocese. This will be another parish from her/his own. The goal of the internship is primarily to deepen ones understanding of God call in her/his life with the focus being on a call to ordained vocational ministry. The intern will be asked to engage in the life of the site parish to test the Inquirer's vocation to serve Christ and his church. During her/his time as intern, she/he will afforded opportunities explore her/his call by engaging in the life of the site parish. The intern's time should not only be served by engaging in the site parish, but also by reflecting on these experience so that one's vocational calling is sharpened, affirmed, and better articulated.

During the internship, the Inquirer will also have an opportunity to engage in a supervised parish internship project at the site parish. The goal is by their work in creating, reenergizing, or enhancing a ministry in the site parish, there will be an opportunity to further discern one's vocational call.

Commission on Ministry Mentors

The call to ministry is a call which is most often first heard by an individual and then confirmed by the larger church. An inquirer in this process has already had discussions with his or her parish priest as well as Commission on Ministry and is in a six-month internship in a parish other than his/her own. The mentoring that takes place now represents the wider church.

One lay and one ordained person from the diocese will be assigned to the inquirer. The inquirer will schedule their own course of meetings over the next three months (a minimum of three meetings) to discuss and explore one's vocational call.

Vocational Discernment Retreats

The inquirers will also have an opportunity to attend two vocational discernment retreats. These retreats will offer the inquirer ways to explore one's vocational call, and the realities of seminary and ordained life.





FORMATION FOR HOLY ORDERS

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

ORDINATION PROCESS

Once the inquirer is granted postulancy by the Bishop the postulant will enter at formal period of formation. The kind of formation will depend upon recommendations from the Board of Examining Chaplains and Commission on Ministry to the Bishop. For example, a postulant for the priesthood would typically enter into seminary. During this formal period of formation, the postulant/candidate/ordinand will have opportunities to connect with the bishop and the diocese throughout the year.

PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT FOR CANONICALLY-MANDATED MINISTERIAL PROFICIENCIES (THE PORTFOLIO PROCESS AND THE SEMINARIAN'S RETREAT)

The Board of Examining Chaplains of the Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina, at the instruction of our Bishop and with the full support of our Commission of Ministry, has developed a portfolio process as an alternative means of demonstrating proficiency in the canonical areas for ordination. Our vision for the future demonstration of proficiency is founded on the compilation of a portfolio of work submitted over the course of the formal formation.

These submission are evaluated annually at the January "Seminararian's Retreat." The retreat is attended by all postulants, candidates, and ordinands for Holy Orders of the Diocese, our Bishop, the Commission on Ministry, the Transition Officer, and the Board of Examining Chaplains. Furthermore, the portfolio and the retreat is intended to cultivate a process that is incarnational at its roots, embracing a healthy tension of the evaluative process while also walking with and empowering candidates in their calling.

EMBER DAY LETTERS

Every postulant or candidate for Holy Order in the Episcopal Church is required by canon to report to the bishop four times a year, during Ember Weeks. The report must be made in person or by letter, and must include reflection on the person's academic experience as well as personal and spiritual development.

DIOCESAN CONVENTION

Every postulant, candidate, and ordinand for Holy Orders is required to attend the Diocesan Convention each fall.





APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE HOLY ORDERS PROCESS

The Episcopal Diocese of Upper South Carolina

NAME: _____

CONGREGATION: _____

Application for Discernment Program for Holy Orders: *Documents listed below must be submitted with Application Form for Application for Discernment to be complete. Materials due December 1.*

- _____ Application for Discernment Form
 - _____ Sponsoring Priest Recommendation
 - _____ Senior Warden Recommendation
 - _____ Baseline Criminal Report
(SLED & Criminal CBS check if in SC less than 10 yrs)
 - _____ Credit Report
 - _____ Medical Evaluation
 - _____ Brief Bio
 - _____ Spiritual Biography
 - _____ Psychological Examination (Contact Dr. Rhea Merck – 803.237.3803)
 - _____ Resume or Work History

Application for Postulancy: *To be completed during the Diocesan Vocation and Discernment Program. Materials due September 15 of the year preceding enrollment in Seminary (Priesthood) or Diocesan Formation Program (Diaconate)*

- _____ Nominee provides a picture for their file
- _____ Congregation provides a letter supporting nomination for holy orders to include:
 - _____ Pledge from the congregation to contribute financially to the nominee's preparation and process of involvement in the preparation for ordination
 - _____ Letter to be signed by two-thirds of the vestry and the sponsoring priest
- _____ Inquirer submits Acceptance of Nomination for holy orders to the Bishop including:
 - _____ Full name and date of birth
 - _____ The length of time resident in the Diocese
 - _____ Evidence of Baptism and Confirmation
 - _____ Whether an application has been made previously for postulancy or if the nominee has been nominated in any other diocese.
 - _____ A description of the process of discernment by which the nominee has been identified for ordination
 - _____ The level of education attained, and, if any, the degrees earned and areas of specialization, together with copies of official transcripts
- _____ Authorization to Release Information to the Diocese (Form provided)
- _____ Financial Worksheet (Form provided)
- _____ Behavior Screening Questionnaire (Form provided)
- _____ Life History Questionnaire (Form provided)

_____ Medical Examination (Form provided)
 _____ Background Check
 _____ (Oxford Document Management Company – initiated through the Bishop’s Office)
 _____ Biblical assessment results letter from Examining Chaplains
 _____ Internship Covenant:
 _____ Mid Term evaluation by Supervising Priest
 _____ Mid Term evaluation by Applicant
 _____ Final Evaluation by Supervising Priest
 _____ Final Evaluation by Applicant
 _____ 3 Mentor reports (either submitted jointly or 3 reports from each of the 2 mentors)
 _____ The Commission on Ministry will provide an evaluation of the nominee’s qualifications to
 _____ the Bishop
 _____ If granted postulancy, the postulant will communicate with the Bishop by letter four times
 _____ a year during the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Postulant’s academic experience and
 _____ personal and spiritual development throughout the discernment/ordination process

Application for Candidacy: *To be completed during Year 2 of Formation. Materials due April 1 during the spring semester. Candidacy interviews with the Standing Committee will be scheduled in June of the same year. An email with interview details will be sent to all who have completed applications by April 1.)*

_____ Postulant submits an application to the Bishop expressing desire for consideration as a
 _____ Candidate for Ordination
 _____ Postulant provides a copy of their Certification of Postulancy
 _____ Postulant’s congregation provides a letter supporting candidacy signed by two-thirds of
 _____ the vestry and the sponsoring priest
 _____ Postulant’s seminary provides a recommendation for candidacy
 _____ (need on letterhead & w/ signature)
 _____ Seminary provides transcripts to date (need transcripts through last semester)
 _____ Postulant provides CPE evaluation
 _____ Postulant provides all field placement evaluations
 _____ Commission on Ministry provides a statement attesting to continued formation, along with
 _____ all mentor evaluations
 _____ Standing Committee submits approval to the Bishop after interviewing the postulant

Process for Ordination to the Transitional Diaconate – *To be completed during the third year of formation. All materials due by February 15.*

_____ Candidate submits an application to the Bishop requesting ordination to the (transitional)
 _____ diaconate
 _____ Candidate provides a copy of their certifications for postulancy and candidacy
 _____ The candidate provides the following training certifications:
 _____ Prevention of sexual misconduct and civil requirements for reporting and
 _____ pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse
 _____ The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, Title IV
 _____ The Church’s teachings on racism
 _____ Candidate’s congregation provides a letter supporting application for ordination signed by
 _____ two-thirds of the vestry and the sponsoring priest
 _____ Seminary (or other program of preparation) provides a certificate showing the candidate’s
 _____ scholastic record in the subjects required by the canons and an evaluation with other
 _____ recommendations as to the candidate’s personal qualifications for ordination to the
 _____ (transitional) diaconate
 _____ The Examining Chaplains provide a certificate to the Commission on Ministry regarding
 _____ proficiency in the canonically required areas of study
 _____ The Commission on Ministry provides a recommendation regarding ordination to the
 _____ (transitional) diaconate

_____ The Standing Committee will certify that the canonical requirements for ordination have been met and that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds (Form provided)

Transitional Deacons Process for Ordination to Priesthood – *To be completed during the first six months after being ordained to the diaconate. All materials due by August 31.*

_____ Transitional Deacon submits an application to the Bishop requesting ordination to the priesthood

_____ Candidate provides a copy of their certifications for postulancy, candidacy and ordination to the diaconate

_____ Candidate's congregation provides a letter supporting application for ordination to the Priesthood signed by two-thirds of the vestry and the supervising priest

_____ Seminary (or other program of preparation) provides a certificate showing the candidate's scholastic record in the subjects required by the canons (final transcripts) and an evaluation with other recommendations as to the candidate's personal qualifications for ordination to the priesthood

_____ The Examining Chaplains provide a certificate to the Commission on Ministry regarding proficiency in the canonically required areas of study

_____ The Commission on Ministry provides a recommendation regarding ordination to the (transitional) diaconate

_____ The Standing Committee will certify that the canonical requirements for ordination have been met and that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds (Form provided)

Prior to all Ordinations

_____ The Diocesan Officer for Discernment and Transition Ministries will certify that the following requirements have been completed within **thirty-six months** prior to ordination:

_____ Background Check

_____ Medical evaluation

_____ Psychological evaluation

