

GUIDELINES FOR DIACONAL ORDINATION In the Diocese of Newark

The Rt. Rev. Mark Beckwith, Bishop

Introduction

We welcome those members of the Diocese of Newark who seek to discern if God is calling them to serve Christ in the Church by ministering as a deacon. We are grateful for your willingness to discern your call with us. Our goal is to offer you a process for discernment and formation that is one of depth, integrity, challenge and support.

These Guidelines seek ...

- to give an outline of a process for diaconal ordination
- to describe a program which can be completed in three years by a person who has full-time secular employment. We believe this program is designed to train deacons who are well-prepared to minister in a wide range of settings

The Guidelines assume the diaconate to be ...

- a ministry serving the poor, weak, sick and lonely
- a ministry carried out as a connection between the Church and the World and with accountability to the Bishop, who may assign a deacon to serve in a specific congregation or social service ministry or in his/her present setting
- a ministry carried out by a person with skills and training both in the social services and in liturgical, congregational and spiritual leadership.

Diaconal Ordination Committee

In 2001, the Diocese of Newark initiated a process for the ordination of deacons. This process is administered by the Commission on Ministry's Diaconal Ordination Committee (DOC). As this process is a new one in our diocese, we anticipate that we will be modifying and improving it during the upcoming years.

Our goal will be to create a process that is responsive and accommodating to persons we believe will seek diaconal ordination while also honoring the church's need for deacons well-prepared to minister in diverse situations. If you have any questions about the diaconal ordination process, contact the Diaconal Ordination Committee co-chairpersons, The Rev. Paul Olsson (973-285-0884) or Archdeacon Nancy Read (973-778-7533).

The Diaconal Ordination Process

The diaconal ordination process shall follow the procedures outlined in Title III, Canon 6 of the Canons of the Episcopal Church (published by the General Convention of the Episcopal Church and available from the NAAD website, www.diakonia.org). Persons entering the diaconal ordination process should obtain a copy of these canons. .

Selection

A confirmed adult communicant in good standing sensing a call to diaconal ordination may be nominated for ordination to the Diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith. After consultation with members of the discernment committee, if the priest wishes to encourage this person to continue in his/her pursuit of ordination, the priest shall direct the person to communicate his/her interest in ordination to the bishop in writing.

The Parish Discernment Committee mentioned above will be set up for the individual by the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge who will not sit on the committee. Members of the committee shall be invited by the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge on behalf of the nominee. This committee should consist of a cross-section of the parish and, if possible, include a person with a social service background and a deacon. The committee will meet with the individual on a regular basis in order to assist the individual's process of discernment. It is expected that the committee will continue to meet as a support group for the Deacon-in Training until such time that he/she is ordained or withdraws from consideration. The Parish Discernment Committee shall report to the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in- Charge. Diaconal Parish Discernment

Guidelines are available on the diocesan website.
(<http://www.episcopaldioceseofnewark.org>).

Following a report from the discernment committee, a written nomination, signed by the Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge and at least two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body, shall be submitted to the Bishop with a copy to the DOC. This Vestry Nomination Form may also be accessed from the website. The nomination shall be in writing and include:

- (1) Full name and date of birth
- (2) The length of time resident in the Diocese
- (3) Dates of Baptism and Confirmation
- (4) Whether an application has been made previously for postulancy or the person has been nominated in any Diocese
- (5) A description of the process of discernment by which the applicant has been identified for ordination to the Diaconate
- (6) The level of education and, if any, the degrees earned and areas of specialization
- (7) A letter of support by the applicant's discernment community, including a statement committing the discernment community to involve itself in the applicant's preparation for ordination to the Diaconate.
- (8) An acceptance in writing by the nominated person.

In the Diocese of Newark, the Nominee shall be invited and attend a Nominee Conference that consists of a series of interviews, scheduled by the Diaconal Ordination Committee (DOC). The primary purpose of the Nominee Conference is to provide feedback to the Nominee with respect to his/her pursuit of diaconal ordination. It additionally provides a way of initiating a relationship with the Nominee, and can help the Nominee gain a sense of the way in which the DOC functions. The Nominee should complete and submit to the DOC the requirements for this conference including:

- (1) Copies of all information previously submitted for nomination
- (2) An Application Form provided by the DOC
- (3) A four-page, double-spaced autobiography
- (4) A four-page, double-spaced call statement
- (5) Two recent passport photographs
- (6) Transcripts or other evidence of coursework completed

(7) A letter from the Nominee's spouse/partner stating his/her reactions to the whole ordination process

The Nominee will be advised of the outcome of the Nominee Conference and a report submitted to the Bishop.

The Bishop may then admit the nominee as a Postulant for ordination to the Diaconate.

The goal of the interviews conducted at each step of the entire process is to discern

- + a sense of call

- + a feeling of passion for the diaconate's unique ministry

- + a desire to serve others for the glory of God and not one's own recognition

- + an ability to articulate one's own faith and sense of call in a way that best suits their communication skills

During our growing relationship with each person as she or he journeys through the discernment process we hope to see the person demonstrate by their life and work

- + a sense of being called by God

- + a feeling of passion for seeking and serving Christ in all people

We anticipate that people who embark on this journey will reveal their deacon's heart to us in their own individual ways.

Postulancy

Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and includes a process of exploration of and decision on the Postulant's call to the Diaconate. During this time, the thorough investigation of the Postulant shall be continued including: the background check and medical and psychological examinations

by professionals approved by the Bishop. If deemed desirable or necessary, a psychiatric referral may be made. The Bishop, or the Bishop's designee, may interview the Postulant.

The Postulant will be required to pay an application fee of \$550.00, payable to the Commission on Ministry to cover administrative costs and the psychological evaluation* performed by Kenwood Associates (212-744-2121). The Postulant is expected to make his/her own arrangements for the evaluation. The sponsoring parish is encouraged to pay this fee.

Forms for the medical examination* are provided by the Church Pension Fund.

* These reports are confidential and will be kept on file by the Bishop.

During the Postulancy period, which may last 6 months or more, Postulants test working models of diaconal ministry, with the goal of identifying a theology and style of diaconal ministry that suits them well. Completing CPE requirements should take precedence during Postulancy since this is a requirement for attending a Candidacy Conference. The fulfillment of other requirements may be initiated or completed.

During Postulancy, each Postulant shall communicate with the Bishop by letter four times a year in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Postulant's academic, human, spiritual and practical development.

After a period of at least six months, a postulant may attend a Candidacy Conference. At the Candidacy Conference, interviewers will evaluate Postulants for their integration of course work and field education, and for their ability to articulate the way in which they will live out their Diaconal ministry.

Papers required for this conference include, in addition to forms provided by the diocese,

- An application for Candidacy
- An evaluation from both congregational intern and social service ministry sites (if complete),

- A reaffirmation of the Vestry/Executive Committee endorsement
- A transcript or other evidence of coursework completed to date,
- A written copy of a sermon, and
- A four-page essay setting forth the postulant's theology of diaconal ministry.

At the conclusion of the Candidacy Conference, the DOC will submit its recommendation to the Bishop.

The Bishop may then admit the Postulant as a Candidate, informing the Candidate by telephone and the Member of the Clergy or other leader of the Candidate's discernment community in writing.

Candidacy

Candidacy is a time, no less than one year in length, of formation in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate. The Bishop, or the Bishop's designee, in consultation with the DOC shall determine the length of time and extent of formation needed to prepare each candidate for ordination.

During Candidacy, each Candidate's progress shall be evaluated from time to time and there shall be a written report of the evaluation by the DOC. Upon certification by the DOC that the Candidate has successfully completed preparation, has successfully passed an examination of the canonical requirements and is ready for ordination, a final written assessment of readiness for ordination to the Diaconate shall be prepared as determined by the Bishop in consultation with the DOC. This report shall include a recommendation from the DOC regarding the readiness of the candidate for ordination. Records of all evaluations, assessments and recommendations shall be kept and made available to the Standing Committee.

During Candidacy, each Candidate shall communicate with the Bishop by letter four times a year in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Candidate's academic, human, spiritual and practical development.

If the medical examination, psychological evaluation or background check has taken place more than 36 months prior to ordination, it must be updated

Upon certification in writing by the Standing Committee that all canonical requirements have been met and that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, doctrinal, or spiritual grounds and that they recommend ordination, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate a Deacon.

Before ordination each Candidate must have reached the age of twenty-four and made application for ordination.

At the Bishop's sole discretion, any Candidate may be removed from the list of Candidates with written notice of the removal being given to the Candidate and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the nominating congregation or any other community of faith, the COM and the DOC.

Requirements for Ordination

Before ordination each Candidate shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas:

(1) Academic studies

- a. A thorough knowledge of the Bible
- b. Basic knowledge of the Church's doctrine, liturgy, history, ethics and moral theology, and tradition of the Church
- c. Identification of ancient heresies in today's church
- d. Theological reflection on contemporary concerns

(2) Diakonia and the Diaconate

- a. Meanings of *diakonia* and *diakonos*
- b. Biblical and primitive roots of the Diaconate
- c. Changes in the medieval and modern church
- d. Modern and postmodern commitment to mercy and justice

- (3) Human awareness and understanding
 - a. Developing the capacity to relate to others
 - b. Entering into dialogue with those who differ, including their interpretation of theology and scripture
 - c. Articulating biases in race, sex, culture, and class
 - d. Dealing with people of diverse ages and generations

- (4) Spiritual development and discipline
 - a. Observing Sunday Eucharist and daily prayer, reading scripture
 - b. Developing commitment, accountability and obedience
 - c. Using resources such as a spiritual director and retreats
 - d. Sharing the love of Christ

- (5) Practical training and experience
 - a. Supervised practice in pastoral ministries of care and/or other specialties
 - b. Practice in collaborative leadership
 - c. Fieldwork in other congregations or ministry sites
 - d. Practice for the Deacon's role in liturgy

In (3) above, a 9 month internship in a social service setting with a minimum of 25 hours a month spent on site and including 20 hours of direct supervision by a social service professional during the internship.

In (4) c. above, monthly meetings with a spiritual director for at least two full years

In (5) a. above, one standard unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE). A CPE unit is a specified period of no less than 400 hours, including supervised clinical practice in ministry, and structured group and individual study and reflection, at an accredited CPE center. See <http://www.acpe.edu> for more information and a list of accredited centers.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) is theological and professional education for ministry. In CPE, theological students, ordained clergy, members of religious orders, and qualified lay people minister to people in crisis situations

while being supervised. CPE is an experience in process education that has been shaped by history and yet remains responsive to the present-day cultural developments that will affect pastoral formation

In (5) c. above, a 9 month internship in a church setting other than the home parish with a minimum of 25 hours a month spent on-site and including 20 hours of direct supervision by the ordained leader of the congregation. A minimum of three sermons should be preached at regular Sunday services.

The Bishop may assign the Candidate to any congregation of the Diocese or other community of faith after consultation with the member of the clergy or other leader exercising oversight.

The formation process shall include sexual misconduct prevention training, training regarding Title IV of the Canons and anti-racism training.

Formation shall reflect the local culture and each Candidate's background, age, occupation, and ministry. Prior education and learning from life experience may be considered as part of the formation required for ordination.

Wherever possible, formation shall take place in community, including persons in preparation for the Diaconate, or others preparing for ministry.

Conclusion

We appreciate your interest in exploring a possible call to diaconal ministry. Please contact the DOC chairperson with any questions about this process. We look forward to hearing about your sense of call and hope that your time in this process will be a time of life-deepening spiritual growth.