



## 2013 Discernment for Ministry

A Handbook for The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts  
Compiled by the Commission on Ministry



*Answering God's urgent call*  
**TOGETHER**

INVITING, FORMING, SENDING, SERVING  
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS

### ***Inviting***

Showing one another how God's love crosses boundaries  
of race and class, generation and language

### ***Forming***

Working, studying, praying and giving in order to grow in faith

### ***Sending***

Encouraging one another to take our faith into our daily living

### ***Serving***

Sharing God's love, justice and peace through our works and actions,  
at home and throughout God's world

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*“Go and make disciples”*

*-- Matthew 28:19*

*The call to ordained ministry in The Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts*

- ✦ If Jesus Christ is the source of hope and joy for you,
- ✦ If you see a world hungry for Christ’s healing love,
- ✦ If you are able to gather, teach, and inspire other people,
- ✦ If you can make peace between people in conflict,
- ✦ If you meet the living God in Anglican worship,
- ✦ If you are nourished by prayer and the sacraments,
- ✦ If you are devoted to God’s Word in Holy Scripture,
- ✦ If you help others find God in times of grief or anguish,
- ✦ If you are willing to sacrifice many comforts to do Christ’s work,
- ✦ If you are able to seek and serve Christ in all people,
- ✦ If you seek opportunities to create, build and transform,
- ✦ If your church community has identified these qualities in you,  
you may be called to serve as a deacon or priest in the  
Diocese of Massachusetts.



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February 2, 2013

Dear Friends in Christ,

As I thought about the message I wanted to write to those of you discerning if God is calling you to ordained ministry or a vital lay ministry, I was reminded of something I recently wrote in an article for the diocesan web site. “Imagine with me our diocese so drawn outside itself into places of need that we find ourselves meeting Jesus, again and again, and being changed through those mission encounters more and more into what we are meant to be for the world.” I was reminded of this because the deacons and priests that the church of the future needs are those individuals who can bring this imagining into reality; visionary leaders who can lead our community in responding to God’s urgent call together.

Each of you has much to offer to our Church and therefore to the world around us, whether you are an ordained or lay person, considering ordination or re-committing yourself in your ministry as a baptized Christian. Whether you are here as an inquirer, sponsoring priest, discernment committee member, or volunteer, my hope is that you will offer yourself again and again to God’s call in your life.

To those of you discerning a call to Holy Orders, trust not only your own sense of your vocation but the wisdom and prayer of the body of Christ. Let your faith community, people who have known you in ministry, men and women who know the needs of the Church today, priests and lay people who have been given a gift of discernment, and your bishop decide how God might be calling you to serve God in Jesus Christ. If you are willing to go where you are needed and led, you will be formed and transformed more than you ever imagined and more and more into the likeness of Christ.

I pray for you and ask that you pray for me in our life together.

Faithfully yours,

M. Thomas Shaw, SSJE



## **To New Inquirers**

We are grateful that you are responding to a call to serve God. Your committed service is needed more than ever in our Diocese as we carry out our Mission Strategy.

This handbook describes “what happens” in the process that leads from initial inquiry to ordination. It is a long process with many aspects. Many people are involved. Many questions, some of them very difficult questions, have to be raised and answered, fully and honestly. All this is a reflection of the seriousness with which we take Christian ministry, and the great importance of the discernment needed to provide the Church with able and well-trained ministers, lay and ordained.

No handbook can tell you everything. We urge you to find and consult the persons who can support you as you begin to discover more clearly where God may be leading you.

Wherever you may be led, you have our blessings.

*The Commission on Ministry*



## I. LEADERS FOR THE CHURCH

### Equipping the Saints

Our mission goals call for us to turn every Episcopal congregation into a center of preparation for active discipleship. Ordained leaders must be able to build spiritually healthy and energetic congregations and equip the saints for participation in mission. They must understand that worship, witness, and pastoral care do not stop at the church door, and must be ready to do God's reconciling work in the world.

We have matched our diocese's vision for mission with some particular traits of leaders who could fulfill that vision. We hope that these descriptions will help inquirers, sponsoring priests, and discernment committees to recognize someone who is especially suited for ordained leadership—as a deacon or priest—in the Diocese of Massachusetts or to guide someone toward a renewed understanding of lay ministry.

As you begin your discernment, please bear in mind:

- Everyone is called by God. Our Baptismal Covenant makes that clear. In Baptism, we promise to “proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.”
- Lay leadership is essential to the Church, and requires many of the same qualities as ordained leadership.
- The mission priorities of this diocese at this time are specific ways to turn our vision into reality. They call for enterprising leaders who can see possibilities, overcome obstacles, and draw many others with them to bring in the Kingdom (*Addendum A*).

*Deliver us from the presumption of coming to this Table for solace only, and not for strength; for comfort only, and not for renewal.*

— *Eucharistic Prayer C*

### The Deacons and Priests We Need

We need deacons and priests who:

- will be strong leaders. Whatever their style of leadership, they must be able to bring a community to life in Christ.
- are committed to following Jesus Christ and are growing to spiritual maturity. In a culture where many people do not understand what it means to be a Christian, they must live as witnesses.
- are willing to take risks for the sake of the Gospel. They are adventurous self-starters who can seed new communities or revitalize dying congregations. They are flexible and willing to go where the Church needs them.

*“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I, send me.’”*

— *Isaiah 6:8*



- reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural and theological diversity of our Diocese. They will speak English and another language (or be willing to learn) and have cross-cultural and cross-class experience.
- communicate Christian hope. In the face of loss they are able to hold on to the hope of new life and to awaken that hope in others.
- are in love with the faith. They can articulate the gospel of God revealed in Christ Jesus clearly and passionately to all kinds of people, inside and outside the Church.
- are gifted at building up the body of Christ. They recognize the importance of lay people in the Church and are able to build up leaders. Their spirit of warmth and hospitality invites people into community.
- are reconcilers. They address conflict and work for understanding and healing.
- have a sense of inner authority and a center in God. They have a prayerful, vital relationship with God. They are emotionally stable, able to tolerate stress, aware of their limitations, and willing, when necessary, to seek appropriate help and support. They understand and accept the costs of becoming a public figure.
- act as God's instruments in bringing in a realm of justice and mercy. Like the ancient prophets, they love their community enough to call it to account.

Within these broad guidelines, we intend to keep on ordaining deacons and priests with a wide variety of gifts, while actively seeking those who can fill particular needs at this time. We are especially interested in finding applicants for ordination who:

- are skilled in working with youth, or attracting young people to the Christian faith.
- empower the poor and outcast to work for change.
- are willing to go where the church needs them.

The Bishop and the Commission do not impose a limit on the age at which persons may enter the discernment process, or on the number of persons who may be considered for ordination at any one time. Practically speaking, however, the Bishop and Commission take into account how many persons it is possible to guide effectively during their formation, and how long it can be expected that they will be able to serve the Church as ordained ministers.

*...[What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

— Micah 6:8





## **The role of the congregation or other faith community**

The Episcopal tradition understands that a call to ordination comes in the context of Christian community. Sometimes it is the community which first discovers a potential deacon or priest among its members and asks that person to begin discernment. Sometimes it is the person who first feels a call and looks to the community to test it.

The Commission on Ministry works with both aspects of call. We help individuals use the resources of their faith and diocesan communities in clarifying a call. We also strongly encourage local congregations to recruit potential leaders who have the particular gifts needed in the Church in this diocese.

We depend primarily on congregations for recruitment. The local congregation can recognize those with gifts of spiritual leadership, prophetic voices, and the ability to build Christian community. Congregations can discover promising young people with gifts for ordained leadership that are just becoming visible.

If you are discerning a call, consider carefully:

- Do you recognize yourself in many parts of the descriptions?
- Does your community see these qualities in you?
- Why is ordination essential to your sense of call?
- Do your gifts and aspirations match the work of deacons or of priests?
- What work remains before you are ready to apply?

If you are a potential sponsoring priest, or a member of a Discernment Committee working with inquirers for Holy Orders, consider these questions:

- Is the inquirer the sort of person who springs to mind as you read this profile?
- Is there someone else in your congregation who does, and who might be encouraged to think about this path?
- What other means would be appropriate for testing this vocation?

“In the year and a half that I was in parish discernment, I was encouraged to taste all avenues of service. A delightful by-product of the work they gave me was the relationships that were built. Their prayerful support gave me a sense of a ‘home team’ that cared about me, my family, and the incredible transitions of those years. My ordination was a celebration, not just of my new path, but of their part in nurturing me. They left a stamp of hospitality and acceptance that has always been a part of my ministry. I thank God for their thoughtful presence and their willingness to push me toward things I didn’t know I could do.”

—Joe Robinson



## II. DEACON OR PRIEST?

Discerning whether a call is to be a deacon or a priest is a central question for everyone involved in testing a call.

### **The Role of a Deacon**

This is a very exciting time for deacons in the Diocese of Massachusetts. Bishop Tom Shaw has encouraged deacons to think creatively about the ways in which their ministries can draw the Church into the life of the community in which it resides. Deacons serve a particular congregation taking a full role in the liturgy and life of the congregation but their charge is to use their specific skills in service to the needs of the community and to lead and equip the Church to bring the ministry of Christ to those outside their doors. We are looking for deacons who are ready to challenge the Church to understand and address needs in places where the Church may not have gone before.

Deacons are called:

- to be bold community agents who make their Christian faith visible where they live and work
- to interpret “the needs, concerns, and hopes of the world” to the Church (*BCP*, p. 543)
- to serve as catalysts and guides for baptized people engaged in the outreach work of the Church; and
- to assist bishops and priests in proclaiming the Gospel and administering the sacraments (*BCP*, p. 856).

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.*  
— 1 Cor 12:4-6

## **The Role of a Priest**

The priest exercises the ministry of Christ on behalf of the local community, “particularly as pastor to the people” (*BCP*, p. 856). Priests are called:

- to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by word and deed.
- to teach the faith, administer the sacraments, and bless and declare pardon in the name of God.
  
- to share with the bishop in building up the Church
- to “equip the saints,” and to inspire and challenge them to fulfill their Baptismal Covenant through their work in the world.

While many priests serve local congregations, we also seek those with particular gifts for different ministries, such as chaplaincies, storefront churches, overseas missions and new models of ministry. Priests with entrepreneurial skills may create interesting and important ministries for a congregation or the Diocese and those with satisfying careers may consider becoming bi-vocational priests.



### III. INTRODUCTION TO THE ORDINATION PROCESS

#### The Design of the Ordination Process

The ordination process in this diocese has three components: discernment, decision, and formation.

- **Discernment** is the work of prayerful attention to God's will for the Church and the people within it. All of us are called to service as members of the body of Christ. Our life together in congregations includes the responsibility to discern who is being called by God to serve as an ordained leader in the Church. The call to ordination is not a private matter, any more than Christian faith is purely individual. In the Episcopal Church, there will always be a local congregation that explores and assesses a person's own sense of being called. The local congregation is usually the parish or mission where the inquirer is a member. Sometimes, discernment will take place more appropriately in a different sort of faith community such as a college chaplaincy. Chaplains should talk to the Canon for Ordained Vocations before beginning a discernment process for an inquirer.
- **Decision** refers to the Bishop's decision to invite a person to become a postulant for Holy Orders. The Commission on Ministry helps the Bishop to select from among those nominated by their congregations the people whose gifts are most needed in this diocese at this time.
- **Formation** is the ongoing preparation to do God's work—in this case, the work of ordained leadership—authentically and responsibly. It happens before and during the time of discernment, as the inquirer/nominee learns habits of openness, self-awareness, prayer, discipline and trust that will keep this time centered in God. It happens with particular intensity during the time of postulancy and candidacy, as the Bishops and the Commission on Ministry provide guidance and resources for further learning and experience in leadership.

*"I have found a joy in my ministry while participating with God's people and rejoicing in the very existence of each other. It seems that it doesn't matter whether we're married or divorced or single, whether straight or gay, whether or not we live in accordance with church teaching, learning that we all really exist for God brings a whole new meaning to life, and a whole new meaning to ordained ministry."*

—Harry Birkenhead

#### Stages in the Ordination Process

- **An inquirer** is beginning to consider and discuss the possibility of ordination, or has taken some formal steps under the guidance of the sponsoring priest and Discernment Committee to explore his/her vocation to ordination.
- **A nominee** has completed work with the Discernment Committee and, on the basis of the Committee's report, has received the Vestry's endorsement, as well as that of the sponsoring priest. He/she submits these and other required materials to the Bishops and Commission on Ministry for evaluation.



- **A postulant** has been accepted formally into the process for Holy Orders by the decision of the Bishop, with the advice of the Commission on Ministry. The Canon for Ordained Vocations and an advisor provided by the Commission on Ministry work with the postulant to make sure that he/she knows what is expected.
- **A candidate** has shown enough clear evidence of a call that ordination is expected unless significant issues arise. Standing Committee and Commission on Ministry members interview postulants and then make recommendations to the Bishop, who decides whether to grant candidacy.

### **The Role of the Commission on Ministry**

The Commission on Ministry helps the Bishop to find and evaluate people with a possible vocation to ordained ministry. In carrying out this task, it considers the opinions of many people who have known the applicant in diverse situations. Admission to postulancy recognizes that many have observed what seems a strong call to ordination in the nominee, as well as specific skills and gifts that are especially needed in this Diocese at this time. Postulancy begins a period of intensified formation, during which the Bishops and Commission on Ministry (COM) give support and clear direction.

### **Attending Seminary**

The Bishop and Commission on Ministry believe firmly that nominees should not attend seminary before beginning the discernment process. Those who have attended or graduated from seminary before admission to postulancy for the diaconate will be required to participate fully in the three-year diaconate formation program.

For nominees to the priesthood, the Bishop chooses the seminary that will offer the best setting for that postulant's formation, taking into account all circumstances that need to be considered. Those who have attended or graduated from seminary before admission to postulancy for the priesthood may be required to take additional courses. In particular, graduates of non-Episcopal seminaries will be required to complete a one-year certificate program in Anglican studies at an Episcopal seminary of the Bishop's choosing.

### **Inquirers already ordained in other Denominations**

Clergy from another denomination are required to be confirmed or received in The Episcopal Church, become active members of a congregation, and seek discernment and nomination in that congregation in the same manner as any other inquirer. If the person is admitted as a postulant, the length of time before ordination may be shortened depending on the amount of



additional formation required. For further information about the canonical requirements involved, please speak to the Canon for Ordained Vocations.

### **Spouses, Partners, and Families**

The work of ordained ministry can be exhilarating and joyful, and the joy can include members of the deacon's or priest's immediate family. It can also be a source of strain, confusion, and sometimes anger. The Bishop and the Commission urge everyone who considers ordination to include spouses, partners, and families in the discernment process from the very first. We strongly recommend conversation with professional counselors and with experienced members of the clergy.



## IV. THE CONGREGATION'S WORK OF DISCERNMENT

### To Support these Persons

As members of congregations, we all promise one another at the time of baptism to do everything we can to support each other in our lives in Christ. From time to time, a member of a congregation experiences a change in his or her understanding of baptismal call. The community then has the opportunity, indeed the sacred responsibility, prayerfully to assist such a person in discerning the nature of this seemingly new call. This is most effectively done by a small group, the discernment committee, working on behalf of the Vestry and the whole congregation.

The inquirer meets with a discernment committee, which works on behalf of the Vestry and is assisted by a liaison from the Commission on Ministry. Their conversations should be prayerful, truthful, and confidential. Both the time and the situation are extraordinary, and they call for courage and honesty. The committee should help the inquirer examine her/his whole self – heart, soul, and mind. Their report to the Vestry must be succinct, direct and candid about their sense of the inquirer's call and that person's strengths and challenges.

The process of discernment is neither an employment interview nor an exercise in packaging an image. The Vestry, the congregation, and the diocese as a whole need to know what the committee has discerned in their work about the nature of the inquirer's baptismal call, and how it can best be fulfilled.

Our ordained and lay church leadership must reflect the entire spectrum of the human condition. In order for this to happen, there must be a steady flow of candidates who reflect the diversity of humanity. Candidates from diverse backgrounds are therefore not merely welcomed into the process, but as a people of God we are expected to nurture all with the gifts for ministry that we discern and encourage them to come forth.

In addition to the Bishop's role in recruiting candidates for ordination, ethnically and culturally diverse congregations have a very important and specific role to play in the mission to broaden the Church and its leadership. These congregations may see a young person who displays leadership talent, but who has not thought of ordained ministry as a possibility. They may then encourage such a person to "come and see", and in doing so have a significant impact upon the Church as a whole.

*Celebrant: Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?*

*People: We will.*

*—Holy Baptism, BCP*

*p. 303*



Inquirers from diverse backgrounds must meet the expectations expressed by the Bishops and the Commission on Ministry for all inquirers, but also will bring additional talents to the community and thus enrich us all. Any inquirer's life and experiences are an asset to the church; inquirers from diverse backgrounds can bring significant assets to a church in mission.

Inquirers whose primary language is English will be expected to have or develop proficiency in a second language that will be useful in this diocese; inquirers for whom English is a second language will be expected to develop proficiency in English.

Once an inquirer has become a postulant, the congregation will continue to nurture and support him or her. Although as a postulant, he or she may no longer be worshiping regularly with the sponsoring congregation, and although postulants are expected to do their field placements in other congregations, nonetheless the sponsoring congregation is still a postulant's first home, and is expected to remember him or her in their hearts and prayers, and offer practical and financial assistance.

### **The Role of the Sponsoring Priest**

The sponsoring priest is an advisor and mentor, and a guide in deciding when it is time for a next step. The sponsoring priest should maintain a strong pastoral role with the inquirer throughout his or her journey of discernment, whatever direction it may take. In the early stages of conversation with an inquirer, there are three broad questions that the sponsoring priest should focus on:

- What is the evidence that the inquirer is called not to a committed and disciplined lay ministry but to Holy Orders?
- What particular gifts does the inquirer bring to ordained leadership in today's Church? How have these gifts been demonstrated already within and/or beyond the congregation?
- What work needs to be done to make the inquirer better known to the congregation, to address weaknesses and to develop gifts, before she/he is ready to meet with a Discernment Committee, and to be nominated to the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry for a final decision?

As discernment moves forward, it becomes the responsibility of the sponsoring priest:

- to help the inquirer decide if and when it is appropriate to enter the formal diocesan process.

*“The Diocese of Massachusetts is now like the Pentecost community where it is necessary to communicate in more than one language to accomplish the task of ‘making disciples of all nations.’ This skill allows the church to reach out to and connect with a wider range of populations directly and efficiently, hence its desirability among those seeking ordination.”*

—Edgar Gutierrez-

Duarte

*“We are one family in Christ yet the language( s) we speak express our authentic spiritual voices and passions. It is a blessing to be able to speak or experience more than one language, to be able to preach, teach, minister in the heartfelt language(s) of our communities and to be spiritually nourished by diverse traditions.”*

—Lisa Fortuna





- to discuss how the required education and training might be managed.
- to begin pastoral conversations with the inquirer's family members, helping them to consider the implications of this possible change in their lives.
- to identify any personal or family-related problems which may be part of this person's history and should be addressed.
- to recognize that there may come a point where the best answer is neither "yes" nor "no" but simply "not now. Wait."
- to follow through on the whole process, whatever the formal outcome, by providing support for the inquirer and assuring that the gifts for ministry that have been discerned are recognized and put to use.
- to write a one to two page letter to the Vestry recommending nomination if applicable.

*Special cases:*

If a congregation is without a member of the clergy, the Canon for Ordained Vocations will appoint another clergy sponsor, such as the Dean of the deanery, or a priest in a neighboring congregation.

If an inquirer is a spouse, partner, or child of a priest in the sponsoring congregation, or is employed by the congregation or holds a key lay position (such as Senior Warden), the sponsoring priest must contact the Canon for Ordained Vocations before forming a Discernment Committee.

**Beginning the Formal Process toward Ordination**

If the inquirer and sponsoring priest agree to go forward with their exploration of a potential call to ordained ministry, the priest accompanies the inquirer and at least one or more potential Discernment Committee members, one of whom must be a Vestry member, to the diocesan Ministry Discernment Conference. If possible, all members of the committee should attend.

If, after prayerful consideration, they decide to proceed, the inquirer and sponsoring priest notify the Office for Ordained Vocations by the specified date, using the Ordination Process Commitment Form (*Addendum B*). The congregation's work of formal discernment begins at this time.

The inquirer writes two statements that will form a basis for initial conversations with the Discernment Committee. The first is a spiritual autobiography and the second is a ministry statement that describes the inquirer's understanding of the Church's ministry and his/her call (*Addendum C*). Both statements are to be given to the Committee prior to its first meeting.

*"Discernment may appear to be a discipline aimed at direction setting. It is really the art of perception. It is a practice in which we strive to awaken and tune ourselves to God's movement in our lives and in the world. What is God doing out there? What is happening in my soul? Which may lead to the question, where is my heart called to follow?"*  
— Karen Montagno



## **The Discernment Committee**

### **Composition, Qualifications and Work of the Committee**

- The Discernment Committee is composed of four to six members of the congregation. It is appointed by the sponsoring priest with the Vestry's consent, and one person must be a Vestry member.
- The Committee's charge is to explore and challenge the individual's call to ministry.
- Those appointed to the Committee should reflect diverse backgrounds and have differing perspectives, but proven ability to listen and to learn from others.
- They must have room in their schedules for eight regular meetings.
- It is the policy of the Diocese that employees of the inquirer's congregation may not be members of the inquirer's Discernment Committee. No one who is currently a postulant or candidate for Holy Orders may be a member. Close friends and relatives of the inquirer should not be asked to serve.

### **Training and Guidance of the Discernment Committee**

After the Ordination Process Commitment Form has been received, a Commission on Ministry liaison is appointed, and must meet with the Committee early in its process for orientation. Without this orientation meeting, the completed application will not be considered. Guidelines for meeting with the liaison are found in *Addendum D.1*.

The liaison is available to the Committee for consultation during its entire process, and should be kept informed about progress. He/she is a liaison to the whole Committee, and not to the individual inquirer. Ordinarily consultations happen through the Committee's chairperson, though the inquirer may ask for help if major problems arise. Before the Committee submits its report to the Vestry, it must give a copy to the liaison so that she/he can review it to make sure it includes all that is needed. The Committee is required to meet with the liaison at the end, to review its experience.

If a congregation or other faith community has had little experience with discernment or seems uncertain of its task, an experienced person from another congregation may be assigned as a trainer or consultant.



## **The Discernment Committee's Responsibility**

Discernment Committees are asked to make a recommendation to the Vestry as to whether an inquirer should be nominated. The Committee does this by presenting a careful, thorough report of its work and its observations by following the format found in *Addendum D.2*. The report must not be more than ten pages in length, 12 pt. type, double spaced.

A Committee should beware of turning into an advocacy group. Withholding information perceived as negative for fear of "hurting someone's chances" is damaging to the integrity of this process, and prevents both a sound evaluation and important guidance for growth. The Bishop and Commission on Ministry are not looking for a portrait of a perfect person.

During the months and years that follow, and whatever the final outcome may be, the Discernment Committee has a particular responsibility for making sure that those who have raised up the individual continue to hold him/her in prayer and in care.

## **Organizing the Committee's Work**

Like other aspects of discernment, the work of the Discernment Committee is grounded in the baptismal covenant and its promise to support each other in our life in Christ. Different congregations have different ways of doing things, so each committee needs to make some of its own decisions about how to proceed.

*Here are some important guidelines:*

- Call the Liaison, if s/he has not contacted you, to arrange his/her presence at the first or second meeting, changing its date if necessary.
- Distribute copies of the applicable pages of this Handbook in advance, and ask that all members read it thoroughly and note questions.
- Schedule a first meeting as early as possible, for the purpose of getting to know one another and clarifying rules of confidentiality.
- At the initial meeting, plan all meeting dates so as to keep attendance high and complete all work within the three month period shown on the Timeline. Allow sufficient time for meetings, and identify any members who may have to withdraw because of insufficient time.



- Acknowledge from the start that the committee may not affirm the call, and discuss what will happen then.
- Always open and close with prayer.

*Here are some suggestions that others have found helpful:*

- At the first meeting, identify a scribe who will keep a record of discussions and draft the final report.
- Structure meetings around the areas that will need to be addressed (*Addendum D.2*)
- End each meeting by giving the inquirer questions to consider or work to do either before the next meeting or before the final report. Committee members may do their own homework by exploring the issues in their own lives and prayers.

The Discernment Committee's work is not yet complete. During the months and years that follow, and whatever the final outcome may be, the close bond formed through discernment is a foundation for continuing support of the nominee. Acting on behalf of the whole congregation, the Committee has a particular responsibility for making sure that those who have raised up the individual keep on holding him/her in prayer and in care.

### **The Role of the Vestry**

The final step in the congregation's work of discernment is taken by the Vestry.

As the elected representative body of the congregation, the Vestry has canonical responsibility for discernment and nomination for ordination. In the Diocese of Massachusetts, the Vestry ordinarily delegates the work of discernment to a Discernment Committee comprised of four to six members of the congregation who show gifts for this ministry.

In deciding whether to nominate the inquirer, the Vestry will consider:

- the report presented by the Discernment Committee addressing the areas found in *Addendum D.2*.
- a written recommendation of one to two pages in length from the sponsoring priest to nominate the inquirer. Without this recommendation, the inquirer cannot be nominated.
- the inquirer's ministry statement



- interviews with the inquirer, with representatives of the Discernment Committee, or with both together.

After careful consideration of the above, the Vestry makes one or the other of these determinations:

- to nominate the inquirer for admission to postulancy for Holy Orders. In this case, the Endorsement for Admission as Postulant (*Addendum E*) is to be signed and sent to the Office for Ordained Vocations together with the Discernment Committee's report, the written recommendation of the sponsoring priest and, if the Vestry so desires, a further letter of its own.
- not to recommend the inquirer at present. In this case the application process goes no further and the Chair of the Discernment Committee notifies the Liaison accordingly. The inquirer may, however, at a later time, in new circumstances, ask that discernment begin again.

A Vestry nomination also includes:

- a pledge to contribute financially to the applicant's preparation. (See section VII. FINANCIAL COSTS).
- a commitment to involvement in that preparation, as appropriate.

### **Responsibility of the Nominee**

If the sponsoring priest and Vestry agree to nominate the inquirer, it is then the nominee's responsibility to make certain all material required for application is sent to the Office for Ordained Vocations.

- Autobiographical Statement
- Ministry Statement
- Discernment Committee Report
- Sponsoring Priest Recommendation (maximum 1-2 pages in length)
- Vestry Recommendation (*Addendum E*)
- Financial Statement and/or Disclosure (*Addendum F.1 or F.2*)
- Three Letters of Recommendation (*Addendum H*, maximum 1-2 pages in length)
  - **one clergy, one laity, one from either clergy or laity**
- Application for Holy Orders (*Addendum I*)
  - Attach copy of confirmation and baptism certificates, passport size photo, resume, and transcripts from all colleges/universities/seminaries



## **V. THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP AND COMMISSION ON MINISTRY IN DISCERNMENT**

The final discernment in accepting a nominee as a postulant for Holy Orders rests with the Bishop. There are two stages between the nominee sending in all the necessary written materials, and being accepted into postulancy.

- (1) The Bishop and members of the Commission on Ministry review all the written materials and, on that basis, agree that the nominee will, or will not, be invited to an interview. A nominee who, at this stage, is not invited to interview may apply again for consideration at a later time.
- (2) Nominees who are invited for interviews meet with the Bishops, members of the Commission on Ministry and members of the Standing Committee at an overnight interview conference generally held in November.

After consulting with those members of the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee who have interviewed each nominee, the Bishop decides whether or not to invite the nominee to become a postulant. The Commission liaison notifies the sponsoring priest of the Bishop's decision. The sponsoring priest meets with the nominee to discuss the decision as quickly as possible. The decision is confirmed in a letter sent by the Bishop to the nominee and sponsoring priest. In the case of a nominee who is not accepted into postulancy, the letter will also name a member of the Commission who may be contacted if further discussion is desirable.

A nominee who has been interviewed, but not accepted into postulancy, is not eligible to apply again in this Diocese.



## VI. FORMATION DURING POSTULANCY AND CANDIDACY

### Formation in this Diocese

All new postulants will receive a separate Formation Handbook outlining the various steps for each stage of the process, postulancy through candidacy and ordination.

In this diocese, postulancy and candidacy usually each last for 18 months, making a three year period of formation before ordination to the diaconate or transitional diaconate. In exceptional circumstances, this three-year period of formation is sometimes shortened. The fact that a postulant has already earned a seminary degree is not, however, sufficient reason for shortening the process.

The period of postulancy and candidacy is a time to develop habits and disciplines that will sustain deacons and priests in their work. During this time, postulants and candidates are directed by the Bishop both directly and through the Commission on Ministry and the Canon for Ordained Vocations so that their formation provides the best possible opportunities to prepare for ordination.

An advisor is assigned to each postulant and maintains regular contact until the time of ordination. The advisor also communicates with the Commission on Ministry so that the COM is kept up to date with the progress of each postulant and candidate.

Discernment continues throughout this time of formation.

### Spiritual Formation

Postulancy and candidacy are intended to be a period of great spiritual openness, in which those who are preparing for ordination are aware of a deep desire to relate and to respond wholeheartedly to God.

It is essential that postulants and candidates learn to ground themselves in the spiritual disciplines of the Christian life. They can offer a rhythm and structure to life, so that we find ourselves more in tune with the movement of the Holy Spirit.

Postulants and candidates are expected to participate fully in a worshipping community and to carve out a regular, daily time for solitary prayer. They are asked to make one or more retreats each year and to meet regularly with a spiritual director.

*“It seems to me that people of faith are forever in formation, if that formation is going to be honest. Our journeys cover landscapes that are impossible to predict, and my greatest learning has been that I am always, somewhere, somehow, saying goodbye, welcoming,, becoming,, and then saying goodbye again.”*

—Hall Kirkham



### **Preparation for the Diaconate**

Postulants and candidates for the diaconate are enrolled in a three-year program of formation built on the foundation of weekend colloquiums, one each month from September through June (see *Program for Diaconal Formation located in the back of the Handbook*). Formation includes five general areas:

- academic studies
- worship
- community building
- spiritual development and discipline
- practical training and experience.

Evaluation of the academic component of formation is carried out by the Diocese, as an ongoing part of formation and through written and oral examinations in the third year.

Postulants and candidates for the diaconate are also required to complete two internships, one secular and one in parish ministry, as well as individual learning projects.

*"[As Deacons] we are called to honor, respect, encourage and empower all of God's children. Each a unique and wonderful creation unconditionally loved by God. In serving God's children our Faith and Spirit are strengthened. We become the hands and feet of Jesus in the world teaching His love as we share the Good News."*

— Sharon Powers

### **Preparation for the Priesthood**

The traditional, and still preferred, way of acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary for ordained leadership is the standard three-year course of study in one of the Episcopal Church's seminaries.

The Episcopal Church, through its General Board of Examining Chaplains (GBEC), has identified seven areas of knowledge in which candidates for ordination should be well prepared. In this Diocese, candidates for ordination are expected to take the General Ordination Examination and demonstrate proficiency. If there are special circumstances (such as documented learning disabilities) that make the General Ordination Examination as usually administered inappropriate for a particular candidate, accommodations can usually be made.

The seven areas of knowledge are:

- Scripture
- Christian Theology
- Church History
- Ethics and Moral Theology
- Liturgy and Church Music
- Contemporary Society
- Theory and Practice of Ministry





Postulants and candidates for the priesthood are required to complete one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education prior to application for candidacy and two years of field education.

The Bishop and Commission on Ministry expect people in the ordination process for priesthood to observe the following guidelines.

- *Wait until postulancy to begin formal education.* The choice of seminary, like other aspects of formation, is not a matter of individual preference but is directed by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission on Ministry and the postulant.
- *Attend an Episcopal seminary.* Seminaries accredited by The Episcopal Church provide a unique experience of Anglican community and offer the full range of academic studies required for effective preparation for ordained ministry, with an emphasis on the traditions and charisms that identify our church. Experience has proven to us that in general, graduates of an Episcopal seminary are far better prepared for ministry in an Episcopal congregation. Those who have attended other seminaries can expect to be required to enroll in a year-long certificate program in an Episcopal seminary.

### **Other Requirements for Diaconate and Priesthood**

All new postulants are required to participate in a one-day Leadership Development Institute training workshop held in May or June of the year Postulancy is effective.

During the formation period, all postulants and candidates are required to be involved in work which continues to prepare them for ordained leadership. In this diocese, they are required to:

- Complete thorough background check, arranged by the Diocese.
- complete psychological evaluations and testing, as well as medical exam in accordance with the requirements of the Church Pension Fund.
- attend Bishop's annual retreat for postulants and candidates in March.
- attend annual Diocesan Convention in November.
- keep in touch with the Bishop through quarterly "Ember Day Letters" written every March, June, September and December.
- complete anti-racism training.
- complete safe church training.
- receive education in the disciplinary sections of the canons as required by canon law, usually available at Episcopal seminaries.

*"The single most important skill I learned during the formation process was to clearly and coherently articulate my own theology. I was asked to think through and write about many issues: marriage, death and dying, human sexuality, and theological doctrines such as sin, atonement, forgiveness, and the Trinity. Now, as a parish priest, that grappling with beliefs is paying off. I am able to say what I believe, clearly and confidently.*

— Kate Cress



## VII. FINANCIAL COSTS

Those who are preparing for ordained leadership must be keenly aware of where the spiritual life intersects with the created order. They need to pay close attention to the choices they make in their personal lives that have to do with sustaining themselves and their families in a vocation that often requires sacrifice. Ultimately we understand that “God will provide,” but without careful planning for one’s financial future, a load of debt may cripple one’s freedom to minister where she/he is needed.

Financial disclosure is therefore required of all prospective ordinands. The financial information will be held confidentially and disclosed only to the Bishops and their designees.

We know that the financial costs of formation for ordained ministry are considerable. The Bishops and Commission on Ministry want to ensure that financial costs do not deter anyone who is called to serve as an ordained leader in this Diocese and will work with postulants to find creative means of financing.

### **Costs for Postulants**

Immediately following acceptance as a postulant, he/she is required to:

- have a medical examination in accordance with the requirements of the Church Pension Fund. For most postulants, the fee is covered by health insurance. If not, the cost is to be paid by the postulant.
- complete psychological evaluations and testing. The combined fees are approximately \$1500 and are to be shared equally among the postulant, sponsoring congregation or other faith community, and the Diocese (each paying one-third).
- complete an Oxford Documents background and criminal check. The current fee is \$160 and is to be paid by the postulant.

Other costs of formation for ordained ministry include Clinical Pastoral Education, which is usually \$1,000-\$1,500 (priesthood only), language training if needed, and books.

If paying these fees presents a hardship for a postulant or a congregation, financial assistance is available from the Diocese. The postulant or sponsoring priest should contact the Canon for Ordained Vocations.



### **Seminary Education for the Priesthood**

The traditional three-years of full-time study at an Episcopal seminary for the Master of Divinity degree is expensive and it can prove a major obstacle for some postulants. The Bishops and Commission on Ministry have in the past approved alternative means of preparation for some postulants when it seemed appropriate and will continue to do so. However, in most cases, postulants will attend seminary full-time.

Every sponsoring congregation is required to provide some financial support during each year of postulancy and candidacy. The amount of financial support will vary according to the circumstances of the congregation but should not be less than one percent of the congregation's operating budget. The Episcopal Church has set one percent as the standard for parishes for supporting theological education.

In addition, postulants are expected to apply for financial aid as widely as possible. Seminary financial aid offices can provide postulants with information on sources of financial support. Postulants should also contact the Canon for Ordained Vocations.

When doing parish visitations, the Bishops ask that the collection be designated for theological education. These offerings, together with some reserved diocesan funds, allow the Diocese to make some grants each year. Grants are awarded based on need as determined by the Financial Aid Subcommittee of the Commission on Ministry. For more information, please contact the Canon for Ordained Vocations.

### **Financial planning and disclosure for the Priesthood**

The Church's canons require regular consultation about financial resources before and during postulancy and candidacy. In this diocese, every nominee for the priesthood is required to submit a financial disclosure form that shows what resources will be available to support that person throughout preparation for ordination (*Addendum F.1*). ***Nominees must research and complete section III. Future Planning and not leave this section blank.***

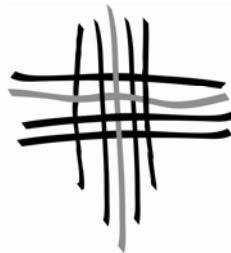
### **Financial planning and disclosure for the Diaconate**

Although the diocese covers the cost of the weekend training for the diaconate program, there are other costs in time, talent and treasure that are required of nominees. In this diocese, every nominee for the diaconate is required to submit a disclosure form relating directly to these three areas. (*Addendum F.2*).

## Addendum A

### Mission Priorities

- ✦ **Answering God's urgent call for children, youth and young adults**, by supporting their care and nurture in faith so that they can know they are God's beloved and exercise their individual gifts and talents for the good of the world.
  
- ✦ **Answering God's urgent call for urban, ethnic and multicultural communities**, where meeting Jesus in places of both great need and great potential teaches and transforms us into examples of how God's reconciling love crosses boundaries of race and class, generation and language.
  
- ✦ **Answering God's urgent call for vital and viable congregations**, so that the Episcopal Church's presence in our local communities is visible and robust and God's people are cared for and equipped to join God's mission through the ministries of their daily lives.



INVITING  
FORMING  
SENDING  
SERVING



**Addendum B**

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS  
Ordination Process Commitment Form**

This form serves as notification to the Bishop's Office and the Commission on Ministry that the following person will be entering the formal time of inquiry and discernment for Holy Orders **(please print clearly)**.

Inquirer's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Inquiring about (*circle one*):                      Diaconate                      Priesthood

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsoring parish: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsoring priest: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Parish Discernment Committee: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signatures**

Inquirer \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsoring Priest \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please send by February 28 to:*                      Office for Ordained Vocations  
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts  
138 Tremont Street  
Boston, MA 02111



**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS  
AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AND MINISTRY STATEMENTS**

**The autobiographical and ministry statements combined must not be more than six pages total, 12 pt. type, double spaced.**

- The **autobiographical statement** is a brief summary of the inquirer's life, including important formative experiences. Since some of this information may be highly personal, this document should be written separately, and not made available to the Vestry unless the inquirer so chooses. It is to be shared with your Discernment Committee and it will also be read by the Bishops, the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the Canon for Ordained Vocations.
  
- The **ministry statement** should describe the inquirer's decision to seek ordained ministry, with specific references to the following, and is to be shared with the Vestry:
  - ✦ When did you first decide to seek ordination, and why?
  - ✦ Under what circumstance(s) was your decision tested?
  - ✦ Who are the individuals who influenced you?
  - ✦ What are the needs of the Church as you see them?
  - ✦ What do you hope to contribute?
  - ✦ What alternative callings have you considered?
  - ✦ Why do you seek the priesthood or diaconate rather than another vocation?

**Addendum D.1**

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS  
GUIDELINES FOR MEETING OF COMMISSION ON MINISTRY LIAISON  
WITH DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

The liaison's initial meeting with a discernment committee is partly to underline information that is already in the Handbook for Discernment Committees; but just as important, it is intended to give the Commission on Ministry a human face. These points should be covered:

- Coming to the parish and meeting with the committee helps the COM to see the applicant in context, to understand his/her written material much better.
- According to our Baptismal Covenant, God calls everybody to ministry. It also seems that God is now calling this individual in some special way. The committee's responsibility is to help him/her figure out what God has in mind, whether ordained ministry or something else.
- Our Church's understanding is that vocation has two parts. Sometimes it is the individual who first senses a call to new ministry. Or God first issues a call to him/her through other people, the body of Christ, the Church. Together they may confirm a call.
- In the Episcopal Church, the Church is represented both by the local congregation, or other faith community, where the applicant has been known and tested for some time, and also by designated folks at the diocesan level who see the individual's gifts against the background of the Diocese's needs. Each group has an essential perspective; neither is complete without the other.
- The discernment committee's task is to come to know the applicant well, especially in terms of qualities needed for leadership in ministry within and/or beyond the Church, and then to pass on its findings to the Vestry, which must then decide whether to nominate the inquirer for ordination. The committee cannot carry out this task on tiptoe. It will have to ask hard, challenging questions and seek answers in some areas that are sometimes considered private. People who are used to being polite may find this uncomfortable at first, but failing to do so will leave the applicant unprepared for the even tougher challenges that come later. Honest, open, sometimes even painful discussion often produces wonderful surprises: a deeper, richer sense of God's activity not just in the life of the inquirer, but in the committee members' lives as well. Appropriate confidentiality is, of course, required, such that discerning what insights to share and respecting what matters may be confidential will require the care of the committee.
- Every parish wants to support its members, but in this case support may mean a faithful refusal to affirm a call for which the applicant is unsuited. Every discernment committee must talk with the applicant early on about what would happen if the committee found itself unable to encourage him/her to proceed, as well as what would happen if the Bishop and Commission on Ministry were not to discern a call to ordained ministry in this diocese.
- A second consultation with the liaison as the committee ends its work will help it to clarify its report to the Vestry, and it will further fill out the context within which the applicant's materials can be read.

**Addendum D.2**

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS  
DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE REPORT TO VESTRY**

Thank you for your willingness to serve on a parish discernment committee for an inquirer in your congregation or faith community who has begun exploring a vocation to ordained ministry in the Diocese of Massachusetts. Your voices are among many that will provide information about this person, but what you say is critically important. You are the people who have first-hand experience of the inquirer. Others who read your report will discern the inquirer's call to ordained ministry without ever meeting the person you have come to know so well. Be both honest and thorough. We need a frank appraisal of this person's gifts for ministry and an understanding of the skills which he/she might bring to ordained ministry. No one comes to ordained ministry fully formed. We need an honest assessment of the inquirer's areas for growth.

Your report should reflect the following format and can be signed by the Chair on behalf of the Committee or by all members of the Committee. The report must not be more than ten pages in length, 12 pt. type, double spaced.

***Name of Parish/Faith Community***  
***Address of Parish/Faith Community***  
***Contact telephone numbers***  
***e-mail address***

**TO:** The Vestry of *(Name of Parish/Faith Community*  
**FROM:** Discernment Committee for *(Name of Inquirer)*  
*(Name, telephone number and e-mail address of Chair; Names of Committee Members)*  
**DATE:** *(Final date of report)*  
**RE:** Discernment Committee Report

**Introduction**

In this Introduction, describe the process undertaken by the committee. Remember this report is for the Vestry of your parish/faith community and its members may not be familiar with the guidelines for discernment. Therefore, we suggest that the Committee either attaches a copy of the relevant pages of the Discernment Handbook or attaches a summary of those pages.

In this section please include the number of meetings held, the name of the COM liaison and whether the report is endorsed by all members of the committee and if not, why. **Remember:** The committee must meet with the COM liaison early in its process and must review the committee's report before it is submitted to the Vestry. Failure to meet with the liaison to your committee may result in a delay or in a report that will not be accepted by the Commission on Ministry.

Discernment Committee reports may be written as essays or as responses to categories of questions suggested by your conversations with the inquirer. The questions provided here are meant to serve as a guide to conversations that the committee should have with the inquirer.



**Guidance for Meetings with the Inquirer**

Members of the Discernment Committee should ask for and receive the inquirer's autobiography and ministry statements very early in the process.. These will help to guide your conversations and will lead to questions about who the inquirer is, how he/she is being called to ordained ministry, whether there is a clear commitment in the inquirer's life to serving Jesus Christ and to working for justice and peace. These documents may be helpful in discerning the nature of the inquirer's personal relationships as well. The members of the committee must feel able to answer these questions in some form in their report.

Discernment is the formal process of discovering where the Holy Spirit is at work in an inquirer's life. The Commission on Ministry will reply upon the report of your committee to help us to understand that. Therefore, questions that lead to a clear sense of the inquirer's regular engagement in the disciplines of prayer and worship, service in the church, leadership, pastoral care, and community are particularly important.

Your conversations with the inquirer should answer the question of the inquirer's call to ordained ministry rather than to a disciplined and committed lay ministry. The members of the committee should also be able to express in its written report the ways in which ordination will serve the inquirer's sense of call. What unusual gifts, skills, and experiences does the inquirer bring that might be useful in a rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, missionary church? What evidence do you see of skill in crossing barriers of class, race, culture, education, age?

The Discernment Committee report should address the inquirer's needs as you perceive them. What areas do you see in which the inquirer needs particular care and guidance for further growth? If there are serious considerations which might prevent the inquirer from serving well as an ordained leader, be sure to discuss them with the inquirer and include them in the report. Your response is intended to help shape the inquirer's formation if he/she is granted Postulancy.

**Conclusion**

The Discernment Committee must come to a conclusion as to whether the inquirer should be nominated for Postulancy. Your endorsement or decision not to endorse the inquirer must be part of your report to the Vestry, Commission on Ministry and the Bishop.



**Addendum E**

**Certificate Required  
Under TITLE III, Canon 5, Sec. 2(c) and TITLE III, Canon 8, Sec. 2(a)**

**ENDORSEMENT for ADMISSION as POSTULANT  
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS**

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

TO: The Commission on Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts:

We, whose names are hereunder written, testify to our belief (based on personal knowledge or on evidence satisfactory to us) that:

\_\_\_\_\_

is sober, honest, and godly, and that he/she is a confirmed communicant of this Church in good standing. We do further declare that, in our opinion, he/she possesses such qualifications as fit him/her to be admitted as a POSTULANT FOR HOLY ORDERS; and we pledge to contribute financially to and involve ourselves in his/her preparation for ordination.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Minister of \_\_\_\_\_

**VESTRY OF THE PARISH**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**ATTESTATION OF THE FOREGOING CERTIFICATE**

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of \_\_\_\_\_ Parish duly convened at \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_ and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Clerk/Secretary of Vestry

Should there be no Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the letter shall be signed by a Priest of the Diocese acquainted with the nominee and the Parish, the reason for the substitution being stated in the at-testing clause.



### Addendum F.1

## Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts Financial Assessment and Planning Guide for Nominees to Holy Orders for the Priesthood *(please print)*

### Confidential information for the Bishop and his designees

If information requested is not applicable, enter N/A.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of dependents: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of incomes in family: \_\_\_\_\_

Names and ages of other members of the household: \_\_\_\_\_

#### I. Current Income and Assets

##### **Current Income:**

Your salary	\$ _____
Benefits	\$ _____
Family salary <i>(not including yours)</i>	\$ _____
Benefits <i>(not including yours)</i>	\$ _____
Other <i>(e.g. investments, military pension, etc)</i>	\$ _____
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

##### **Current assets:**

Market value of real estate	\$ _____
Market value of automobile(s)	\$ _____
Value of stock/bonds	\$ _____
Value of trust fund	\$ _____
Value of savings account	\$ _____
Investments/Retirement	\$ _____
Other	\$ _____
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>



## Financial Assessment and Planning Guide for Nominees to Holy Orders for the Priesthood (Continued)

### II. Current Indebtedness and Expenses

**Indebtedness:**

Balance on mortgages [yearly mortgage payment: \$ _____]	\$	
Balance on automobile loans	\$	
Balance on educational loans	\$	
Balance on charge accounts	\$	
Other	\$	
<b>Total Indebtedness</b>		<b>\$ _____</b>

**Expenses (per year):**

Total rent and/or utilities	\$	
Other household expenses	\$	
<i>Itemize:</i> _____		
_____		
_____		
_____		
Charitable contributions	\$	
Other	\$	
<b>Total Annual Expenses</b>		<b>\$ _____</b>

### III. Future Planning

**Research the cost of a theological education and sources for funding:**

1. What will each year of seminary cost (tuition, books, CPE, etc)? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
2. How much will the seminary pay for each year (scholarships, etc)? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
3. What amount can you expect from other scholarships or assistance? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
3. How much of your own savings will you use for the first year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
     For each additional year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
4. How much of your own income will you use for the first year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
     For each additional year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
5. How much debt will you incur for the first year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
     For each additional year? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Other considerations (please respond on separate page):**

Discuss what concerns you have about repaying any debt incurred.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**Addendum F.2**

**Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts  
Disclosure and Planning Guide for  
Nominees to Holy Orders for the Diaconate  
(please print)**

**Confidential information for the Bishop and his designees**

As baptized Christians, we are called to give our time, talent, and treasure to God in thanksgiving for all that God has done for us. As you consider a call to ordination as a deacon, please use the following worksheet as a means of understanding the practical issues of such a call.

**TIME:**

The formation process for the diaconate in the Diocese of Massachusetts requires postulants and candidates to give one weekend a month for three years to training, education, and community. The weekend begins at Evening Prayer on Friday and ends at noon on Sunday. Retreats usually take place at St. Anne’s Convent in Arlington, Mass. Exceptions to this commitment are made for unusual circumstances only.

How many hours per week do you work? \_\_\_\_\_

How many vacation days do you receive? \_\_\_\_\_

How long is your commute from work or home to Arlington? \_\_\_\_\_

How much weekend time is dedicated to regular activities, family, etc.? \_\_\_\_\_

Diaconate formation requires two internships during your three years in the process of formation, as well as learning projects.

Will your work and family commitments allow you to work 8-12 hours a week in addition to your retreat weekends? \_\_\_\_\_

Are you prepared to leave your home parish to serve an internship in the parish of your Bishop’s choosing? This may occur in any one of your three years of formation. \_\_\_\_\_



## Disclosure and Planning Guide for Nominees to Holy Orders for the Diaconate (Continued)

### TALENT:

Deacons are ordained for the whole church and not for one congregation. You will be required to share your gifts with many in the Diocese at the direction of the Bishop. Although location and special gifts are certainly considered in your placement, you must be willing to serve many congregations and may be asked to accept a wide range of ministries.

Are you prepared to leave any position you hold in your home parish when you begin your formation?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are you prepared to leave your home parish once you become a candidate? \_\_\_\_\_

What skills have you acquired in your education, work, church that you feel competent to share?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### TREASURE:

Although your formal education is paid for by the Diocese, there are costs which must be considered.

A Deacon in our Diocese holds non-stipendiary status. You will be expected to serve 12-15 hours a week in a parish without compensation. Will your work schedule and your salary allow this? \_\_\_\_\_

You must make a decision about pledging. Will you continue to support your sponsoring parish, pledge to the parish you are serving, or both? \_\_\_\_\_

Because you will serve many parishes in the years of your ministry, you must consider the cost of vestments. At the very least, you will need an alb, a set of stoles, a clerical shirt, and a clerical collar. Costs certainly vary, but the following is an approximate cost for each. Will your discretionary money allow purchases of clericals as you need them? \_\_\_\_\_

Alb - \$150.00

Stole - \$150.00

Clerical shirt - \$50.00

Clerical collar - \$10.00

In your ministry, books may become a valuable resource. Building your personal library may be an ongoing expense. Are you prepared to purchase materials as they are necessary? \_\_\_\_\_

Continuing education is a cost that some churches pay to deacons as well as to priests. If the parish you are serving does not offer a stipend for education, you must be prepared to absorb the cost. If you are asked or wish to take a course or attend a workshop, will your budget allow it? \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS  
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION (3)**

**To Those Writing Letters of Recommendation for Ordained Leadership**

Thank you for your willingness to write to the Commission on Ministry on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_, who has begun a formal exploration of vocation to ordained ministry in the Diocese of Massachusetts. Many others will provide information about this person, but what you say may be critically important. You bring a unique point of view that may complete and confirm a picture of a priest or deacon in the making. We ask you to be honest and thorough. We need a frank appraisal of this person's present gifts and skills, and of needed growth as well, with specific examples to help us understand. The following questions should be addressed. Please attach your answers to this form and limit your response to one to two pages total.

1. How long have you known the applicant, and under what circumstances?
2. What evidence have you seen that the applicant is called to ordained ministry, rather than to disciplined and committed lay ministry?
3. Has the applicant shown evidence of strong leadership? How, and in what circumstances? How would you describe this person's style of leadership? Please be specific.
4. What unusual gifts, skills, and experience does the applicant bring that might be useful in a rapidly changing, increasingly diverse, missionary Church? (Examples: proficiency in a second language, time spent in a culture or class different from one's own.)
5. What areas do you see in which this person needs particular care and guidance for further development during the postulancy/candidacy period? Are there any serious considerations which might prevent the applicant from serving well as an ordained leader? Have you discussed these matters with the applicant?

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_

*Please send to:*

Office for Ordained Vocations  
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts  
138 Tremont Street  
Boston, MA 02111



**Addendum I**

**THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MASSACHUSETTS  
APPLICATION FOR HOLY ORDERS  
(please print)**

**Confidential information for the Bishop and his designees**

To: The Rt. Rev. \_\_\_\_\_, Bishop of Massachusetts

I, \_\_\_\_\_, wish to apply for admission as a  
(full name)

Postulant for the:      Diaconate      Priesthood      (circle one)

1. Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you a US Citizen?**    Yes / No    (circle one)

**If no, state status and attach copy of all applicable documentation:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of partner/spouse: \_\_\_\_\_

Names and ages of children: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Length of time resident in the Diocese: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Baptized by \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
at \_\_\_\_\_  
(name and address of church)

4. Confirmed in the Episcopal Church by Bishop \_\_\_\_\_ on  
\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
(date) (name and address of church)





5. I have / have not previously applied for admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders.  
 If previously applied, state name of Diocese and date. Explain circumstances on separate page and attached to this document

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Grounds for seeking Holy Orders: to be included in Ministry Statement.

7. Present occupation and name and address of employer:

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Level of education attained \_\_\_\_\_

Degree(s) conferred:

Institution	Degree Conferred	Date Conferred	Area(s) of Specialization

9. Have you ever been convicted of a misdemeanor or felony? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, explain on separate page and attach to this document.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: (home) \_\_\_\_\_ (work) \_\_\_\_\_ (cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsoring parish (name/address) \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsoring priest \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Parish Discernment Committee (name/address/telephone/email): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



***Include the following with your application:***

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Copy of Certificate of Confirmation</b> | <b>4. Resume</b>   |
| <b>2. Copy of Certificate of Baptism</b>      | <b>5. Transcripts from all colleges, universities and/or</b> |
| <b>3. Photo (Passport Size)</b>               | <b>seminaries attended</b>                                   |

*Send application and materials by August 1 to:*

Office for Ordained Vocations  
Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts  
138 Tremont Street  
Boston, MA 02111