

# MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROCESS IN THE DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS

## A TIMELINE FOR THOSE DISCERNING A CALL TO PRIESTHOOD

### PRE-APPLICATION

<i>Form</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
	If a person senses a call from God to discern a vocation to ordained ministry, the person should be a confirmed adult communicant in good standing and a member of a parish or faith community in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts for at least one year before being nominated for Postulancy by the Vestry and Rector of a congregation. Anyone interested in discerning a call must complete the Loving the Questions (LTQ) and Community of Discernment (CofD) programs. Rector's recommendation is required for all persons applying to attend LTQ/CofD. If accepted, the Inquirer begins LTQ/CofD in September-October. [Note: LTQ and the discernment work of the CofD can be done in sequential years, but no application for ordination can be made until <i>both</i> are complete, unless the Bishop has approved an alternative program of discernment.] LTQ/CofD runs from fall through spring.	Late summer
	A person wishing to enter the ordination process should be in regular spiritual direction with a director who is not the person's rector, be tithing or moving toward tithing, and be engaged in lively Baptismal ministry.	
	The Inquirer will meet with the parish priest over a period of time (usually a year or more) to discuss and continue discerning the perceived call.	
	Mandatory <b>Inquirers' meetings</b> for the Inquirer, their Rector, and a vestry member (and other clergy and vestry members who wish to learn about the diocesan process leading to ordination), will be held in June. The Inquirer must also have completed the LTQ/CofD programs before attending Inquirers' meetings. If the Inquirer is seeking ordination, they sign a waiver that permits leaders of the small Community of Discernment to give their observations to the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry (COM).	June
	When the parish priest feels confident that the discernment process should continue the priest asks the vestry of the congregation to nominate the person to enter the process for Holy Orders. If the vestry nominates the person, the priest helps the Nominee begin the application process with the diocese.	

### APPLICATION / PRE-POSTULANCY

<i>Form</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
P-1 P-2 P-3 P-4	The Nominee prepares the application packet, to be submitted to the Bishop's office. See Title III Canon 8.2 and Forms P-1 through P-4. <b>Deadline for application is early September.</b>	
	The Bishop will meet with each Nominee prior to the COM Day of Discernment.	Sept. Sept.-Oct.
	The Commission on Ministry (COM) meets with applicants in a Day of Discernment in October. Immediately following that meeting, the COM makes its recommendation to the bishop regarding Postulancy. After a preliminary decision has been made, the Bishop's office will arrange for applicants to meet with the Bishop to discuss the decision.	Oct.
	Those recommended by the Bishop for postulancy will undertake A CORI background check and a psychological evaluation. Payment for these evaluations, in the amount of \$650 from applicant and \$650 from parish must be made. (Total is \$1,950 divided in thirds among the applicant, parish, and the diocese.) Postulancy is confirmed upon satisfactory evaluations.	
	If the Bishop does not make the Nominee a Postulant, the Nominee is expected to meet with their rector to continue discernment for baptismal ministry.	
	Those accepted for Postulancy will discuss formation plans with the Bishop and the chair of the Board of Examining Chaplains, including seminary application.	
	Postulants apply to seminaries or other training programs. At this time, they may also be assigned by the Bishop to a congregation other than the one which sponsors them in order to broaden their understanding and experience of The Episcopal Church.	Jan.

<i>Form</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
	Postulants (and Candidates) will write Ember Day letters to the Bishop. See Title III Canon 8.3(e).	

## POSTULANCY

P-7	When the Bishop and the chair of the COM believe the Postulant ready to become a Candidate for ordination and the canonical requirements have been met, the Postulant submits an application for Candidacy to the Bishop's office. See Form P-7.	
P-8	At the same time the Postulant requests that the Rector and Vestry submit the letters of support required by Title III, Canon 8.4(a), Form P-8.	
	The Postulant meets with the Standing Committee.	
P-9	With the Standing Committee's recommendation, the Bishop makes the decision for CANDIDACY. See Title III Canon 8.4 (b).	
	Before applying for ordination, the Candidate will submit documentation of completed training in Title IV, in Safe Church (prevention of sexual misconduct), and the Church's teaching on racism.	

## CANDIDACY

P-11 P-12	When the Bishop and the chair of the COM believe the Candidate ready to be ordained and the canonical requirements have been met, the Candidate shall supply an application requesting ordination and a letter of support from the Clergy and Vestry. See Title III. Canon 8.6 ( c ) ( a and 2 ) and Forms P-11 and P-12. The Candidate also submits an updated CORI background check and a psychological evaluation if the initial reports were made more than 36 months prior to the anticipated ordination date.	Sept.
P-14	The Standing Committee submits the Certificate for Ordination to the (transitional) Diaconate to the Bishop. See Form P-14.	

## ORDINATION

	With the Bishop's consent, ordination as a (transitional) Deacon takes place.	
	Deacons/Candidates take the General Ordination Examination (GOE), offered each year in early January. When GOE results arrive, the diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains (BOEC) meet and discuss with the Deacon/Candidate and recommend any remediation if required. [Note: GOEs may be taken before or after ordination to the (transitional) Diaconate, at the Bishop's discretion.]	
P-15	After a minimum of six months from the date of ordination to the (transitional) Diaconate and no less than eighteen months after accepting the nomination of the congregation, the Deacon may be ordained to Priesthood. The Deacon makes application for ordination using Form P-15.	
	Working with the Canon for Transition Ministries, each (transitional) Deacon secures a cure/canonically recognized ministry. [Note: Ordination to the priesthood may not occur until a position in ministry acceptable to the bishop is secured.]	
P-16	The (transitional) Deacon's congregation submits another Letter of Support, using Form P-16. The COM and the BOEC determine if the Candidate has successfully completed the required study and training, and makes a report/evaluation/recommendation to the Standing Committee and Bishop as to the Candidate's personal qualifications and readiness for Holy Orders.	
P-18	The Standing Committee submits a Certificate for Ordination to the Priesthood to the Bishop. See Form P-18.	