Discerning and Responding to a Call to Holy Orders

Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota
Approved by the Commission on Ministry
Date: ________________
To those Discerning a Call to Holy Orders:

It is at the diocesan level that the Church is whole or complete. What we mean by that is that it is able in all but one aspect to replicate and provide for the life, mission and ministry of our congregations. That one aspect is that in order to have a bishop they are ordained by other bishops of the churchwide organization.

Baptism begins the process in the Call to Holy Orders for the Church and its members. All ministry flows from the foundational belief that the Holy Spirit provides the call and the gifts necessary to engage Christ’s work through us. Discernment to Holy Orders is likely more complicated as it calls people into a life long vocation.

The aspects of discernment that result in ordination are a combination of being both objective and subjective. Moral aptitude, theological faithfulness in the Christian tradition, discipline in study, worship, prayer and service and need of your unique blend for ministry in one of our congregations or being released for ministry elsewhere.

We have a track for an ordained vocation serving in the local faith community from which the person is discerned. This is generally called Total or Mutual Ministry. It likely involves the whole of the congregation taking up the various aspects necessary to have a common life. The training is adequate to the particular ministry to which the Candidate to Holy Orders is being called. This track may result in a call to the priesthood or the diaconate. We ordain to the diaconate when the congregation has access to the regular services of a priest.

A second track generally prepares the person for ordained ministry in any number of places. The training is much broader and deeper and likely requires being accepted into a Master’s Level of study in a Seminary. This most always results in ordination to the priesthood. It may, if there is a Call available, result in a return to the Diocese of North Dakota for ministry in one of our congregations that has the ability Call a seminary trained priest.

While we talk about these two tracks as stipendiary or non-stipendiary the Call is the same. It is a Call into Holy Orders. It is responding to the Holy Spirit and the Community’s desire to have you equipped to serve pastorally and sacramentally. For the liturgical ministry performed from our Prayer Book there is no difference.

This book brings you, your congregation and diocese through a process from recognizing the interest or desire to seek discernment through to the point of being ordained. It takes into consideration what training will take place and the amount of time that the formation and training will take to complete. The Commission on Ministry will help guide your way through this process of discovering what it may be that God is up to in the life, mission and ministry of the Church and in your life.

May God bless you on your journey of exploration.

The Standing Committee of the Diocese of North Dakota
Serving as the Ecclesiastical Authority, beginning April 1, 2019
**Introduction**

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Introduction

This document describes the process for discernment and ordination in the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota. It is faithful to the requirements of the Canons of the Episcopal Church (Title III, Canons 6 and 8), and covers both the diaconate and priesthood. The Commission on Ministry assists the Bishop in overseeing the discernment and ordination process. The Bishop and Commission intend for the process to be transparent, collegial and supportive. Questions may be addressed to the Chairperson of the Commission on Ministry.

Members of the Commission on Ministry
Summary of the Steps in the Ordained Ministry Discernment Process

1. **Exploration** – The Diocese of North Dakota uses several ways for exploration to occur. The twice yearly Minister’s Conference at Richardton (fall and spring) is one. It offers a time of retreat, conversation with others that are going through the process as well as those already ordained, and time with the Bishop. This is one of the places that formation and the educational component of preparation is done. Another is the nomination process itself within the congregations of the Diocese. As a congregation discerns its need for diaconal and priestly leadership it will begin to explore who among them could be called. The Diocesan School for Ministry that is convened at Richardton and in several locations around the Diocese is another place to explore this sense of call.

2. **The Priest in Charge’s Careful Inquiry** – An individual interested in pursuing ordination must discuss his or her interest in discerning a call to ordained ministry with the Priest in Charge of his or her congregation. The Priest in Charge, Vestry or Elders of a congregation may also approach congregation members whom they believe may answer a call to ordination. The Priest in Charge may proceed with a careful inquiry of the person’s heart for ministry, skills, interest in ordination, and availability.

3. **Congregation’s Discernment Committee** – A congregation with a person exploring ordained ministry will need a committee to assist in the initial discernment process. This can be a committee already formed and on hand, or one which is formed just for the current situation. The Priest in Charge will convene the first meeting to present the process they are asked to undertake and be available for any questions. The Vestry will be informed that a discernment process is being undertaken. These congregation representatives will meet with and interview the potential nominee several times and will make a recommendation to the Priest in Charge and Vestry.

4. **Vestry** – It is important that the Discernment Committee is made up of members of the congregation that have the trust of the Vestry. If the Priest in Charge recommends that an individual continue in the discernment process, the Vestry will also interview the individual. If the individual is to become a Nominee, the Priest in Charge and two-thirds of the Vestry must forward their favorable recommendation to the Diocese. If the individual accepts the nomination, at this point he or she becomes a **Nominee**.

5. **Commission on Ministry** – The Commission on Ministry is a group of lay persons, priests, and deacons appointed by the Bishop to represent the wider body of the diocese and assist the Bishop in the discernment process. The Commission holds several meetings each year to meet with Nominees and other individuals in the process, and also supports Congregation Discernment Committees.

6. **Bishop and Commission on Ministry** – Following the recommendation of the Priest in Charge, Vestry, and Commission on Ministry, the Bishop decides whether to admit the Nominee as a **Postulant** for ordination. Postulancy is usually the time in which the individual begins formation for the diaconate or priesthood through forms of study approved by the Bishop. The Postulant will continue to meet periodically with the Commission and the
Bishop. Later the Postulant may apply to the Bishop for consideration to become a Candidate for ordination. Ultimately the individual, if approved for ordination, is ordained as Deacon. If the individual is a candidate for priesthood, if approved the individual is later ordained Priest. Their congregation continues to be involved in supporting the individual, and must favorably recommend the individual to continue to move forward to ordination at each step.
Guidelines for The Priest in Charge's "Careful Inquiry"

The discernment process of a potential nominee begins with the "Careful Inquiry" of the Priest in Charge of the individual’s congregation. This consists of a series of interviews with the potential nominee, and her/his spouse (if married, or fiancé(e) if engaged), inquiring into the individual's background and suitability for ministry. It concludes with a summary recommendation from the Priest in Charge whether or not the process should continue to the next step, namely to the Congregation Discernment Committee.

During the interviews, the Priest in Charge should encourage the individual to share some of her/his life journey. The potential nominee should be a confirmed member in good standing in the congregation for at least a year. They should already be active in various ministries of the church. The Priest in Charge should determine the following about the potential nominee:

- What is the person’s relationship with Christ?
- Who or what has shaped her/him as a person?
- Would the potential nominee be described as a person of stable character?
- What support/impediment does their family offer?
- What is the potential nominee’s physical and emotional health?
- How does the person take care of herself/himself?
- What are the potential nominee’s moral and religious principles upon which she/he acts and what is the main source of authority for these principles?
- To what extent has the person been shaped by individual and corporate devotional disciplines?
- Is the person well acquainted with the Bible and the Prayer Book?

The answers to these questions will help the Priest in Charge to come to know the potential nominee as a "whole person," which is in the last analysis the goal of the entire process. The Priest in Charge should stress the importance of the background check that will be conducted on the potential nominee upon applying for postulancy, and encourage the potential nominee to share anything that may be brought to light by such a check. Background checks are routinely conducted, and are a matter of diocesan policy.

At some stage during the "Careful Inquiry," the Priest in Charge will ask the potential nominee to prepare the following three documents:

- Personal History Questionnaire
- Self-Reflection Questionnaire
- Theological Reflection Paper on Ministry (One to two pages)

The Theological Reflection Paper may serve as a point of departure for the Priest in Charge's exploration of the potential nominee's understanding of ministry. Questions such as the following should be answered by the potential nominee:

- Who or what exemplifies what ministry is all about?
• How does the potential nominee understand the church in relationship to her/his concept of ministry?
• In what ministries is the potential nominee already involved?
• What would happen if the potential nominee were not put forward for ordination?

As the Priest in Charge puts the answers to all of these questions together, along with the two questionnaires, she/he will be seeking to determine whether or not the potential nominee is suited for ordained ministry and if so, whether as a deacon or a priest. One of the questions the Priest in Charge must address at this point is whether the potential nominee is capable of acquiring the needed body of knowledge and skills for the ministry under consideration. Beyond the necessary academic ability, does this person give evidence of an intellectual curiosity and openness to growth and change? Does this person lead and/or motivate others? Is this person's call really to ordained ministry?

The Priest in Charge shall also request that the individual obtain and submit two letters of recommendation, one from someone in a professional relationship, and one from someone in a friendship relationship.

If the Priest in Charge is supportive of the potential nominee to continue the journey through the discernment process, the Priest in Charge will need to write a summary of the "Careful Inquiry" for the Congregation Discernment Committee. This summary becomes part of the congregation documentation. Before the Priest in Charge introduces the potential nominee to the Congregation Discernment Committee, it should be explained that the journey into ministry, being necessarily thorough, is often long. The individual or the church is generally not served by trying to hasten the process. If discernment is to be effective, the journey must be undertaken with deliberation. The Priest in Charge should be careful, therefore, to explain to the potential nominee a realistic schedule of the events and time required to go through the process.

The next steps are described in the Guidelines for Congregation Discernment Committees.
Personal History Questionnaire

General Information

Full Name:
Address:
Primary Telephone: Secondary:
Email:
Date of Birth: Place of Birth:
Marital Status: If Married, Date of Marriage:
Additional Marital Information (Divorced, Widowed, Remarried; give dates):

Children (names and dates of birth):

Military Experience (give dates)

Church History

Date of Baptism:
Congregation: Place:
Date of Confirmation or Reception in the Episcopal Church:
Congregation: Place: Bishop:
Present Congregation: How long have you been a member:
Congregation Based Ministries (please provide congregation, place, dates and services):
Family History

Parents

Mother’s Name: Date of Birth:
Occupation: Religious Background:

Father’s Name: Date of Birth:
Occupation: Religious Background:

Are both of your parents still living? If not, please give date(s) of death:

Siblings

Name: Date of Birth:
Name: Date of Birth:
Name: Date of Birth:
Name: Date of Birth:

Are all of your siblings still living? In not, please give date(s) of death:

Medical History

Serious medical illness, surgery, treatments (give dates):

Are you currently taking any medication? If so, please give details:

Have you ever been diagnosed with a learning disability? If so, please give details.
Education

High School (name, location):

College/University (name, location):

Degree(s): 
Graduation Date:

Graduate School (name, location):

Degree(s): 
Graduation Date:

Other training/education (name, location, areas of study, dates):

Employment History

Provide information for your last 10 years of employment. (Begin with the most recent):

Employer (name, address):

Dates of employment:

Title/Position:

Supervisor or Reference:

Describe your job/responsibilities:

Reason for leaving (if not presently employed):

Employer (name, address):

Dates of employment:

Title/Position:

Supervisor or Reference:

Describe your job/responsibilities:

Reason for leaving (if not presently employed):
Employer (name, address):

Dates of employment:

Title/Position:

Supervisor or Reference:

Describe your job/responsibilities:

Reason for leaving (if not presently employed):

**Financial Situation**

If pursuing a call to the priesthood, what do you perceive would be the financial impact of going to seminary?

**Social and Recreational Life**

How do you maintain a healthy balance between your social/recreational activities and professional responsibilities?

What are some of your hobbies and interests?

What are some of your favorite books?

**Background Information**

During the last ten years, were you fired from any position for any reason?

Did you ever resign after being told you would be fired?
Did you leave any job by mutual agreement because of specific problems?

If yes to any of the above, give the name and address of the employer, the date you left and the circumstances surrounding your departure:

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? If yes, give details of each violation providing the date, place, charges, court and action taken.

Are you engaged in any current or pending civil or criminal litigation? If yes, provide details.

I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that all my statements herein are true, correct, complete and in good faith.

Signature:_____________________________________________ Date: __________________
Self-Reflection Questionnaire

Name:
Date:

Self Description
Describe your present life circumstances.

Describe your personal strengths and weaknesses.

Describe a conflict situation in which you were involved, how you reacted, what you might have done differently and what you learned about how you react to conflict.

Describe your usual reaction to stress.

Describe your family’s religious affiliation and church attendance during your childhood and adolescence.

Spiritual Autobiography
Please write a brief history (2,000 words) of your faith journey, including significant events, persons, etc. that have influenced you. You may include the autobiography here or attach it as a separate document. If you submit a separate document, please include your name and date at the top of the first page of the document.

Perceived Call to Ordained Ministry
Do you feel called to the priesthood or the diaconate?
Describe how you have felt drawn to the ordained ministry as a vocation. When did you first entertain the idea, what events and people most influenced you and in what specific ways have you experienced this call?

Describe your spiritual life and discipline.

What are the major differences between a lay person and an ordained person?

List five things you see yourself doing as an ordained person that you cannot do as a layperson.

In what ways have others affirmed your perceived call to ordained ministry?

What special skills and talents will you bring to ordained ministry?

What is most attractive to you about ordained ministry?

What specific forms of ordained ministry are most attractive to you? (congregation, chaplain, teacher, counselor, diaconal, etc.)

**Relationship with your Family**

Describe your relationship with your parents and siblings.

If applicable, describe your relationship with your spouse and children.
What effect will pursuing a call to ordained ministry have on your family?

How does your immediate family feel about your perceived call to ordained ministry?

**Summary**

What barriers do you see for yourself in pursuing your ministry aspirations?

What are your greatest fears and reservations about pursuing ordination?

What is your greatest hope about pursuing ordination?

What will you do if you are not approved to continue the process?
Guidelines for the Congregation Discernment Committee

The Congregation Discernment Committee helps the Priest in Charge and Vestry identify and assist persons in responding appropriately to a call to congregation and diocesan leadership. The Congregation Discernment Committee assists in assessing whether a person’s call is to continued or expanded lay ministry, or pursue a call to ordained ministry. The Committee conducts a thorough and probing inquiry into all aspects of the potential nominee's life and calling. It seeks to evaluate the individual’s ministry in the congregation and in the case of those aspiring to ordained ministry, examines the potential nominee’s call to ordination. The Committee considers knowledge gained through the interviews, from communication with the Priest in Charge or Priest in Charge, and from observing the individual in congregation ministry.

The Congregation Discernment Committee is asked to enter into an intentional relationship with the individual on behalf of the congregation and the larger church. This requires a commitment of time and energy, a willingness to share of one’s self and to ask difficult and challenging questions of the potential nominee. In the course of its work, the members may be challenged to probe their own spiritual lives as well as that of the potential nominee and this can be a time of great reward and challenge.

The following are two models for selection of the Congregation Discernment Committee, as determined by the Priest in Charge or Priest in Charge:

1. A permanent committee, composed of lay members of the congregation
2. An ad hoc committee, composed of lay members of the congregation, and perhaps members from other congregations, if the congregation is small.

Standing Congregation Discernment Committee

The permanent committee model is appropriate in larger congregations or ones in which several are being called to ordained ministry. It is appointed by the Priest in Charge, and should have five to seven members, with at least one Vestry member on it. The Priest in Charge appoints its Chair. Since the committee is in place before anyone comes forward for discernment, an impartial discernment process is likely. It is important that those called to serve on the Congregation Discernment Committee should be able to assist in seeking God's will for the potential nominee’s life and ministry with honesty and without partiality.
**Ad Hoc Congregation Discernment Committee**

The *ad hoc committee* model is appointed by the Priest in Charge once an individual comes forward with a perceived call to ordained ministry. The committee should have three to five members on it. The group organizes itself. The Priest in Charge is given a list of potential committee members by the nominee, but ultimately the membership of the committee is the choice of the Priest in Charge.

**Congregation Discernment Committee Interviews and Meetings**

**Prerequisites**

Before the potential nominee begins the interview process, the Congregation Discernment Committee should meet initially to pray and review the:

- Summary of the Priest in Charge’s Careful Inquiry
- Theological Reflection Paper on Ministry
- Personal History Questionnaire
- Self-Reflection Questionnaire
- Two letters of recommendation

Following each interview or meeting, the Chair of the Committee should keep the Priest in Charge informed as to the status of discernment.

**The Interviews**

Once the Congregation Discernment Committee has met and has had the opportunity to review the potential nominee's papers, it should plan to meet with the individual for a minimum of four interviews, or as long as it takes to discern a recommendation. The potential nominee’s spouse or fiancé(e), if applicable, is encouraged to attend all interviews. The purpose of the interviews is to put together a profile of the individual in ministry and to assess the suitability of the potential nominee for ordained or lay leadership. The process is not to be an inquisition; rather it should be a very important step in exploring and testing by the church, which may or may not eventually result in ordination. The Committee may discern that the individual is better suited to a wider lay ministry. This is an equally valid outcome of the committee’s work.

The Committee should try to create a caring environment where the potential nominee can be encouraged to test his/her sense of call to the ordained ministry. The Committee should be aware that its inquiry is necessarily intensely personal; the potential nominee is vulnerable in the trust he or she places in the members of the Committee. The Committee should provide the potential nominee with all assurance of confidentiality and share its findings with him or her openly upon the conclusion of the interviews. The Committee should be willing to ask questions that challenge and affirm the potential nominee’s special gifts of ministry, lay or ordained, which God calls forth, and to prayerfully make an assessment as to the potential nominees call.
During the first two interviews the Committee should seek to form an understanding of the potential nominee’s relationship to God, devotional life and discipline. Following the completion of this first phase of the Committee's inquiry, the Committee members should meet with the Priest in Charge to discuss their findings and to determine whether the potential nominee should go forward for further interviews. At any point, if the Committee deems the process should be terminated, the members should request to meet face to face with the Priest in Charge.

During the third and fourth interviews the Committee should focus more specifically on questions pertaining to ministry and ordination, with particular attention to the question of whether the ministry envisioned must be ordained to be effective.

The Congregation Discernment Committee should try to help the potential nominee to grow in his or her understanding of how he or she ministers, where he or she is gifted, and where further growth is appropriate. The Committee may request that the potential nominee develop and complete a ministry project in the congregation, especially if he or she is not deeply involved in the life of the congregation.

When the interviews and meetings are complete, the Committee should meet to review all the information and progress, pray together, and prepare to offer a final recommendation to the Priest in Charge. This recommendation is *The Congregation Discernment Committee Evaluation for Postulancy, Parts One and Two*. (The evaluation forms follow in this document.) If the Priest in Charge agrees that this individual should become a nominee, it is the Priest in Charge’s responsibility to provide all of the documentation to the Vestry.

The next step is to consult the Guidelines for the Vestry.

**Resources for the Congregation Ministry Committee**

Selecting Church Leaders: A Practice in Spiritual Discernment  


Congregation Discernment Committee Evaluation For Postulancy - Part One

Potential Nominee’s Name________________________________________________________

Congregation____________________________________________________________________

PDC Member Names______________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

1. How long have you known the potential nominee and in what context?

2. How does the person’s life reflect the love of God?

3. What have you learned about the person’s devotional life and discipline?

4. Is the person regular in attending worship and participating in the liturgy?

5. Does the person think theologically, giving evidence of an awareness of God’s involvement as much in the ordinary and the everyday as in times of crisis?
6. Describe the potential nominee’s attitude to learning. Is he or she teachable and able to learn from other perspectives? Do you believe this person is capable of meeting the challenges of seminary or diaconal formation, and of the ministry?

7. What have you learned about the individual’s family life?

8. Does the individual have a stable employment history? What else have you been able to learn from the person’s employment history?

9. Does the individual use his or her leisure time re-creatively? How does he or she spend Sabbath time?

10. Does the individual have a deacon’s character, being able to serve without the need for recognition, and to be responsive to praise without being dependent on it?

Signature of Chairperson ________________________________

Date ________________________________
Congregation Ministry Committee Evaluation For Postulancy - Part Two

Potential Nominee's Name______________________________________________________________

Congregation____________________________________________________________

PDC Member Names ________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

1. Describe the potential nominee’s ability to develop and maintain relationships in the congregation.

2. Is the individual encouraging and enabling of other people’s ministries?

3. How has the individual demonstrated leadership in the congregation community? Can he or she accept the authority of others?

4. What experiences does the individual have in ministry and service in the Church and in the community?
5. What are his or her greatest strengths in ministry?

6. In what areas does the individual need further development?

7. What comment can you make about the individual’s ministry skills in preaching, teaching, group leadership, worship leadership, pastoral visiting, counseling, interpersonal relationships, administration, as a conflict manager, and as an enabler?

8. How would you describe the individual’s potential for ordained ministry based on your own observations and knowledge of him or her at this time?

9. What do you feel is motivating the individual’s pursuit of ordination?

10. Do you have any concerns about the individual’s fitness for ministry? Does he or she show any evidence of self-defeating qualities? Is there evidence of insecurity, manifesting itself in defensive or manipulative behavior? Does the individual hold his or her opinions dogmatically, or give evidence of legalism? Are the person’s expectations of himself or herself, and of others, realistic? Does the individual show impatience with himself or herself, and with others, in weakness? Does the person lack sensitivity to the needs of others, blame them for failures, or have a need to dominate in groups?

11. Would you describe this person as conscientious, responsible, professional and trustworthy?
12. Would you recruit this person to serve you, your congregation and the Episcopal Church as an ordained leader?

13. Describe briefly why you would (or would not) support this person on his or her journey into ordained ministry.

Signature of Chairperson_____________________________________

Date_________________________________
Guidelines for the Vestry

It is the Vestry’s responsibility to attest to the potential nominee’s suitability for ordained ministry. In order for an individual to be nominated for postulancy, both the Priest in Charge and two-thirds of the Vestry must sign the Recommendation for Postulancy form. Before recommending the potential nominee for postulancy the Vestry must ascertain to its satisfaction that the Congregation Discernment Committee has been responsible in its work and that the potential nominee is trustworthy and of good character. On the Vestry’s behalf the Congregation Discernment Committee conducts a thorough and probing inquiry into all aspects of the aspirant’s life and calling, and prepares a report for the Vestry. The Vestry relies on the Congregation Discernment Committee to carry out its inquiry with care and deliberation.

If the Priest in Charge agrees, based on his or her Careful Inquiry and the results of the Congregation Discernment Committee evaluations, that the potential nominee should go forward in the process, the Priest in Charge forwards copies of all relevant documents to the Vestry and schedules a meeting with the Vestry and the potential nominee. This meeting could either be a separate meeting of the Vestry for this purpose only, or possibly be part of a regular Vestry meeting. If included within a regular Vestry meeting, this portion should be held in Executive Session and closed to any non-Vestry members except for the potential nominee and his or her spouse or significant other.

The Vestry, Priest in Charge and Nominee are discerning call to Holy Orders. It is also important for them to be discerning where this call may take place. Is this nominee being considered for ordained ministry in their home congregation (following and adapting a Total Ministry Model) or are they being called to become ordained to serve elsewhere. If the call is to serve their own congregation then it is also important for the Vestry and the Priest in Charge to discern and support the various ministries they are being called to do there.

Costs Associated with the Ordination Process

In addition to recommending postulancy, the Vestry must also “pledge to contribute financially” to the nominee’s preparation for ordination. The issue of financial support for the nominee should be discussed and decided by the Vestry. Possibilities including providing support through the congregation operating budget and/or taking up special offerings throughout the ordination process. Individuals seeking ordination to the priesthood will face very difficult financial challenges, particularly if the individual attends seminary on a full time basis. The Diocese will provide support as possible, the congregation must provide support, and the individual will be required to bear a portion of the costs. The following lists the usual expenses related to the ordination process, and who is responsible for them:

From the individual

Costs of transportation at the Minister’s Conference in Richardton
Books North Dakota School for Ministry
Travel costs to and from the North Dakota School for Ministry/Minister’s Conferences
Costs of seminary (for the priesthood) or deacon formation
Cost associated with having a Spiritual Director
Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), if applicable
From the congregation

Support for costs of seminary or deacon formation – $500 per semester recommended

From the Diocese

Child Abuse History Clearance
Oxford Background Check
Registration for the Minister’s Conferences
Support for costs of seminary or deacon formation
Costs of mentors

Expenses shared equally among the individual, the congregation, and the Diocese

Psychological examination
Medical examination

The Vestry Interview

In most situations the Vestry would have one meeting with the potential nominee and spouse or fiancé before making its evaluation. However, there may be circumstances in which more than one session is necessary. The Vestry must keep everything that is said in confidence, and should request that the potential nominee also maintain confidentiality. The Vestry must share its findings and decision with the individual.

If the Vestry and Priest in Charge agree to nominate the individual, a minimum of two-thirds of its members and the Priest in Charge must sign the Recommendation for Postulancy. Please indicate at the appropriate place on the form whether this is for the Diaconate or the Priesthood. All of the nominee’s paperwork should then be sent to the Bishop’s office. If either the Vestry or Priest in Charge decide not to nominate the individual, they shall provide a written explanation to the Bishop as to why they have rejected the recommendation of the Congregation Discernment Committee. It shall be the responsibility of the Priest in Charge to provide an appropriate pastoral response to the individual.
Vestry Recommendation for Postulancy
Title III, Canon 6, Section 2 (a) for Diaconate
Title III, Canon 8, Section 2 (a) for Priesthood

To: The Bishop and the Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of North Dakota

We, whose names appear below, certify that

______________________________________________________
is a confirmed adult communicant in good standing of
______________________________________________________ congregation.
We declare that, in our opinion, this person possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for admission as a postulant for Holy Orders, Diaconate/Priesthood. (Indicate which by circling one.) Furthermore, we pledge to contribute financially and involve ourselves in the Nominee’s preparation for ordination.

_____________________________________________
Priest in Charge/Member of Clergy in charge of congregation

_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________
_____________________________________________

ATTESTATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of
_________________________________________ congregation, duly convened at ________________________ on
the ______ day of ________________________, 20___, and that the names attached are those of all (or two thirds of all) the members of the Vestry, number of Vestry members is ________.

__________________________________________
Signature of Clerk or Secretary of the Vestry
Application For Postulancy For Holy Orders
Title III, Canon 6, Sec. 2 (b) for Diaconate
Title III, Canon 8, Sec. 2 (b) for Priesthood

To: The President of the Standing Committee
3600 25th St S
Fargo, North Dakota 58104

I hereby accept the nomination of my congregation and apply for admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders, Diaconate/Priesthood. (Indicate which by circling one.)

Name: _____________________________________
Address: ___________________________________
Telephone: Home_________Office______________Cell ____________________

Length of time resident in the Diocese
Congregation __________________ Priest in Charge _______________________

Date of Birth __________________ Place of Birth _________________________
Marital Status __________________ Spouse’s Name if Married ________________

Children’s Names and Ages

Have you had previous marriages?

Date of Baptism __________________ Where _____________________________
Date of Confirmation or Reception __________________ Where _____________

By (Name of Bishop)

(Please enclose evidence of baptism and confirmation or reception)

How long have you been a confirmed or received communicant in good standing in your present congregation?

Have you ever applied for Postulancy before?

Have you ever been nominated before?

If yes to either, where?

If yes to either, what was the outcome?
Education

High School

College

Date of Graduation

Years completed

Date of Graduation

Major

Degree

Graduate work: Schools

Fields

Degrees

Other Specialized Training/Education, if any

Name, Signature, and Date

Please fill out and attach the Financial Information questionnaire.

Please provide copies of official transcripts from your education institutions.

_______________________________________
(signed)

_______________________________________
(date)

Please make a copy for your records
## Financial Information Questionnaire

### Current income

- **Salary**
- **Benefits**
- **Other**

Total annual earnings:

### Assets

- **Savings accounts**
- **CDs or money market accounts**
- **Stocks, bonds, mutual funds**
- **Other investments**
- **Equity in home**
- **Other**

Total value of assets:

### Liabilities

- **Home mortgage**
- **Home equity loans**
- **Car loans**
- **Student loans**
- **Credit card debt**
- **Other loans or liabilities**

Total amount of liabilities:

If you go to seminary, how will you handle the cost and impact on your finances?
Guidelines for Postulants

The Bishop’s Interview

Once the Priest in Charge and Vestry have given their recommendations and the potential nominee’s file has been sent to the Bishop, the nomination process is complete.

The nominee is now ready to meet with the Bishop and shall contact the Bishop’s office to schedule an interview. Following a satisfactory interview, the Bishop will then forward the nominee’s file, including the Bishop’s recommendation, to the Commission on Ministry.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction in its simplest form is the ministry of one member of the body of Christ acting as support, companion and guide to another along the pilgrim’s way. Traditionally the term has been used to describe the pastoral ministry of confessor and guide in the spiritual life. Together the director and the directed seek to make sense of their earthly pilgrimage in light of the heavenly Jerusalem.

The spiritual director listening awareness of the other should convey an acceptance of and a respect for his or her personhood, and of the individual as an individual. “To be truly and contemplatively present to other people is always to respect their integrity and ultimate mystery.”

What passes between the director and the directed is absolutely confidential. Spiritual director’s who are also members of the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, the Board of Examining Chaplains or otherwise involved in the assessment of the nominee, will be asked to excuse themselves from discussion and voting relating to their suitability for ministry.

The nominee is required to meet quarterly with a Spiritual Director. This practice is required through ordination and is strongly recommended beyond it. The spiritual director should be selected in consultation with the Spiritual Direction Coordinator and the Bishop.

During postulancy, if the postulant is away from the diocese attending seminary or Clinical Pastoral Education, he or she may wish to change directors. In this event the Spiritual Direction Coordinator should assist in the selection of a new director.

The nominee is required to keep a record of the dates of meetings with their spiritual director. This form must be signed by the director and submitted to the Chair of the Committee on Ministry prior to all Commission interviews.

Mentoring

The Commission on Ministry will pair the nominee with a mentor. The mentor will typically be a Priest in Charge or Priest-in-Charge who is not from the nominee’s home congregation and

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who is willing to supervise the nominee throughout their internship. The Commission may meet with the nominee as necessary in order to effectively pair them with an appropriate mentor.

**Internship**

The nominee will be required to complete two internships before interviewing with the Commission on Ministry: a congregation internship and a clinical internship.

*The congregation internship* will take place in the mentor’s congregation. The internship will be an opportunity for the nominee to gain experience serving in a congregation setting other than their home congregation. The nominee will also benefit from the guidance of his or her mentor throughout the internship process.

During the internship process the nominee should plan to attend weekend services and assist in worship as their mentor sees fit. As part of the internship, the nominee must plan, organize, and execute a ministry project in the congregation or surrounding community. The type of project undertaken will be up to the nominee and mentor to agree upon. It should take into consideration the gifts and interests of the nominee as well as the needs of the congregation and surrounding community.

The nominee is expected to meet with their mentor on a regular basis throughout the congregation internship for direction and encouragement. The internship should last a minimum of three months. The length will depend on the ministry project and the recommendation of the mentor.

*The clinical internship* will take place in a hospital, long term care facility, or similar setting. The nominee will be supervised by one of the resident chaplains at the facility. The internship should last approximately three months and the nominee is expected to complete 80 hours of supervised care. The clinical internship may be completed concurrently with the congregation internship or after it. If it is done after, the nominee should continue to serve at their mentor’s congregation on Sundays until the internship process is completed.

Upon the completion of the internship process four items must be submitted to the nominee’s file: an evaluation from the mentor, an evaluation from the clinical supervisor and two reflection papers from the nominee. The reflection papers should describe their experiences at each of their internships. The congregation reflection should include a description of their ministry project.

Any costs associated with the clinical supervision will be split evenly between the nominee, his or her home congregation and the diocese.

**Background Checks**

The Diocese of North Dakota is strongly committed to protecting persons from sexual and professional misconduct by Episcopal clergy. Before the nominee interviews with the Commission on Ministry for postulancy, a series of background checks must be completed in order to determine if there is any history of criminal behavior, child abuse, financial difficulty or serious motor vehicle violations.
The Oxford Document Management Company Inc. is contracted by the diocese to conduct and to administer on its behalf these background investigations. Oxford Document Management is an entity created by a Certified Public Accountancy firm in Minneapolis, MN for the purposes of assisting the Episcopal Church in its inquiries. Nominees should be assured that confidentiality is of utmost importance to the diocese and is written into its contract with Oxford Document Management.

Nominees are contacted directly by the company. The nominee will be requested to complete and return all forms and can expect to provide the identity of teachers, employers, congregational leaders and bishops who have had oversight of the nominee in the five years prior to entry into the diocese’s ordination process. The nominee will be asked to authorize, on a form provided, the release of any relevant information held by these authorities.

The diocese pays for the Oxford Document Management Company’s background checks for all nominees of the diocese.

If any information concerning misconduct or conviction is returned, the information will be given directly to the bishop to determine what action should be taken. If such a report is made, the nominee will be given the opportunity to respond.

The nominee will be asked to sign a separate form authorizing the release of credit and motor vehicle records.

The nominee must also complete the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance and Request for Criminal Record Check contained in this manual and mail them, including the fee for each, to the appropriate authorities (If it is more convenient, the criminal record check may be completed online). The diocese will reimburse any expenses associated with these background checks.

The results of these checks should be forwarded to the diocese immediately upon receipt and will be placed in the nominee’s file.

N.B. – these background checks are for the protection of the diocese and those we serve from potential dangers. We also take the well being of our clergy very seriously and require Sexual Misconduct Training during postulancy in order to protect them from potentially dangerous situations.

**Medical and Psychological Examinations**

Title III, Canon 6, Section 6 (j) of the National Canons requires that all applicants for postulancy take comprehensive medical and psychological examinations administered by competent professionals.

Medical examinations should be arranged by the nominee with a physician of their own choosing. The required form is included and should be submitted upon completion to the Committee on Ministry.

Any costs associated with the medical exam will be split evenly between the nominee, his or her home congregation and the diocese.
Psychological examinations for the Diocese of North Dakota are assigned by the Bishop.

If the bishop and the Commission on Ministry determine any areas of serious concern expressed in any report, the nominee may be asked to undergo further psychological evaluation.

The cost of the consultation will be split evenly between the nominee, his or her home congregation and the diocese.

Prior to ordination, the canons require an update to this examination. The nature of the update will depend on the length of time since the first evaluation and the judgment of the Bishop.

**Meetings with the Standing Committee and the Commission on Ministry**

The Commission on Ministry schedules a number of events each year to provide opportunities for those in the ordination process to interact with the Bishop, the Standing Committee and the Commission on Ministry. Attendance at all events is expected throughout the entire ordination process and spouses (or fiancées) are encouraged to attend.

**Commission on Ministry Interviews**

Upon completion of the internship process, background checks and medical/psychological evaluations the nominee may interview for Postulancy. The Commission on Ministry is charged with the task of meeting with each nominee to evaluate his or her qualifications and to review and direct the nominee’s calling. After interviews are completed, the Commission will make a recommendation to the Bishop and Standing Committee regarding postulancy.

Nominees should come to their interview accompanied by their spouse/fiancée (or personal support person if unmarried), mentor and Priest in Charge/Priest-in-Charge of their home congregation. If approved by the Bishop, the nominee becomes a postulant.