

The Commission on Ministry Manual

Revised January 2025



The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina

The Rt. Rev. José A. McLoughlin, Bishop

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Updated: 1/10/2024

An Overview of the Discernment and Ordination Process

The Book of Common Prayer states that the ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons. (BCP, pg.855) At our baptism, each of us has been commissioned to a life of prayer and service, proclaiming the Good News of God in Jesus Christ as we strive for peace with justice for all. As baptized persons, all followers of Jesus live lives of continual discernment, always listening and testing in community what we might be sensing of God's intention for our life and work. It is in community that we identify our gifts for ministry.

The role of the community in discernment is an important one. Whether an individual is discerning options for lay ministry and leadership or is sensing a call into Holy Orders, discernment is a prayerful, Spirit-filled process that occurs within that person's community of faith and invites trust and openness. The community helps each member identify their gifts for leadership and service and by this process the entire Body of Christ is broadened and strengthened.

In The Episcopal Church, when an individual senses a call into Holy Orders it is the community (priest and laity) that is required to listen prayerfully to discern whether they, too, hear God's call for the individual into ordained ministry. Discernment, particularly in this early stage, considers whether God is calling an individual into ordained ministry, as well as whether the individual's gifts and strengths match the demands and challenges of ordained leadership at this time in the life of the church.

The role of the church in our society has changed over the last several decades. Many people are seeking spiritual sustenance but no longer feel the institutional church can meet their longings. Therefore, the demands of ordained ministry have changed. These new demands require different gifts and strengths in our ordained leaders. The church needs priests and deacons who are able to share the Good News in new contexts and in new and creative ways. At the same time, the ordained leaders of the church need to be able to equip the laity to understand the changing needs of our communities.

Given the new landscape the church now inhabits, the Commission on Ministry in the Diocese of Western North Carolina provides this discernment process to strengthen the community, its priest and lay members, in their task of prayerful listening for God's call. As the community engages the spiritual practice of prayerful discernment, they will be listening deeply and intentionally in order to hear and understand the movement of the Spirit in an individual's life. At the same time, in order to clarify God's call and help the individual move more deeply into that call, the community will also discern how well that individual's gifts and strengths match the demands of ordained ministry in the church at this time.

To aid in this prayerful discernment, the Commission on Ministry has articulated the qualities that we sense are needed in ordained leaders at this particular time in the life of the church. The qualities are divided into four areas of exploration: Sense of Self, Spiritual Vitality, Relational Maturity, and Capacity to Lead. The COM has developed a survey instrument (Addendum 1:

Qualities for a Life-giving Ordained Ministry) to provide the individual and those involved at every level of the discernment process— Rector/Priest- in-Charge, Parish Lay Discernment Committee, Commission on Ministry, Standing Committee, Field Placement Supervisor, and Bishop—a way to discern the presence of these qualities in the Nominee. By ascertaining the presence and development of these qualities at every level throughout the discernment process, increasing clarity will emerge about the shape of ministry that will be the most life- giving both for the Nominee and for the Church that he or she is seeking to serve.

This manual outlines the steps in the discernment process from Nominee through Postulancy, Candidacy and Ordination. Beginning on page 53 of this manual is a flowchart of this process and a checklist of the documents, reports and actions that are required at each stage of the discernment process. This checklist is provided as an aid for the Nominee, as well as all involved in the Nominee's discernment.

Vocational discernment is exciting and challenging and best done prayerfully and intentionally, in community and over time. We hope that this manual provides clear guidance for those entering discernment as well as those who walk with them on this journey.

Please feel free to contact me, at lynnorville98@gmail.com with any questions or comments. You are also welcome to contact the Bishop's office with questions or comments.

Faithfully,

Lynn⁺

The Rev. Lynn Orville
Chair, Commission on Ministry/DWNC Revised, January 2025

Nominee

Step 1: Initial Conversations between the Rector/Priest-in-charge and Nominee

- Rector/Priest-in-Charge and Nominee read the COM manual thoroughly to familiarize themselves with the entire discernment process.
- Rector notifies the Bishop's office (Bishop's Executive Assistant and the Canon to the Ordinary) **as well as** the COM Chair that discernment has begun.
- The COM Chair will connect directly with the Rector/Priest-in-Charge regarding next steps.
- The Rector/Priest-in-charge will ensure that the Nominee and the Vestry understand and follow the process from early discernment through Ordination.
- It is always the Rector's/Priest's-in-Charge responsibility to provide pastoral care and guidance to the Nominee. It is the mutual responsibility of the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and the Nominee to make certain that all requirements are met and all forms and documents are submitted in a timely manner. **Failure to do so can result in a delay of the discernment process. Provided in this manual is a flowchart and detailed checklist that both Nominee and Rector/Priest-in-Charge should use to keep track of all required steps.**
- The Nominee must have been a confirmed communicant in good standing in the local congregation for one year and be able to provide evidence of baptism and confirmation to the Rector/Priest-in-Charge. (Title III.6.2(b)(3))
- Special permission shall be sought from the Bishop to initiate a discernment process when a congregation is in an interim phase.
- The Rector/Priest-in-Charge begins an intentional, prayerful conversation with the Nominee in order to hear the Spirit's movement and God's call. The Rector/Priest-in-Charge and the Nominee also discern how well that individual's gifts and strengths match the demands of ordained ministry. The assessment tool *Qualities for a Life-giving Ordained Ministry* (Addendum 1) is provided as a tool for the discernment process. The Commission on Ministry seeks to offer guidance for these conversations while also granting the Rector/Priest-in-Charge generous latitude in how she/he explores these questions in each specific case. Best practices for these conversations include the following:
 - Begin and end in prayer.
 - Establish an environment of trust and acceptance with the assurance that this time together is safe, sacred, and confidential.
 - Help the Nominee to understand that her/his initial call is to the process of discernment. It is through discernment that the more specific call of God will be heard and known.
 - Engage in open-ended questions that prompt the Nominee to reflect upon and articulate how his/her understanding of God's movement in his/her life at this time.
 - Listen to the stories/narrative the Nominee shares for evidence of the *Qualities for a Life-giving Ordained Ministry*.

- Structure the conversations to explore the four sections of Qualities for a Life-giving Ordained Ministry: Spiritual Vitality, Sense of Self, Relational Maturity, and Capacity to Lead. The definitions provided for each quality can help formulate questions to explore the corresponding quality.
 - If the Nominee has not led anything in the congregation, have them create a ministry project that would involve recruiting, organizing, and leading others. This will help both the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and the Nominee gauge his/her capacity to lead.
 - It is important for the Rector/Priest-in-Charge to not avoid asking meaningful questions that will help both clergy and nominee discern. In particular, it is important for the nominee is able to offer a clear and robust articulation of why a call to Holy Orders rather than lay ministry. Neither the Nominee nor the Church are well served when the Rector/Priest-in-Charge avoids asking the hard questions.
- The Nominee shall write a spiritual autobiography to share and discuss with the Rector/PIC.
 - The spiritual autobiography is an account of one's own life, one's understanding of how God has been present in various significant events, and in certain significant people. One way to prepare for writing the spiritual autobiography is to think back over your life in blocks of time, such as childhood, high school, college, marriage, arrival and rearing of children, jobs and career changes, etc. Note any ways in which you saw, or now see, God's hand at work in your life. Don't neglect to include important events just because they were unpleasant, e.g., illness, divorce, death of a loved one, etc. Include significant people, events, and places even if God's presence was not obvious to you at the time. (See **Addendum 2** for a copy of Guidelines for Spiritual Autobiography.)
- The Nominee shall interview a deacon and a priest, neither of whom should serve in the Nominee's congregation and write a reflection essay for discussion with the Rector/Priest-in-Charge. See **Addendum 3** for questions to be included in the interview and the reflection questions for the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and Nominee to discuss following the interviews.
 - The Rector/Priest-in-Charge is seeking evidence that the Nominee is responding to God concerning the ordained ministry. Is the Nominee confusing a response to Christian service with a response to ordination? Are the Nominee's primary interests congruent with the basic function of an ordained ministry? Are the Nominee's innate abilities commensurate with the demands of the ordained ministry?
- The Rector/Priest-in-Charge shall discuss the financial and time demands of seminary/diaconal education and the potential impact on Nominee's family. (**Addendum 4**)
- The conversations between the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and the Nominee will take whatever appropriate time, as determined by the Rector/PIC and the nominee, is necessary to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit.
- If the Rector/Priest-in-Charge believes that the Nominee is better suited to lay ministry, assistance is provided in identifying suitable ministries. There are a number of resources available that may be offered to the Nominee to assist in clarifying the specific shape of his/her lay ministry, including Parker Palmer's *Clearness Committee* or the asset-based tool from The Episcopal Church, *Called to Transformation*.

- If the Rector/Priest-in-Charge affirms that the Nominee should continue in the discernment process, then the following steps are taken:
 - Letter of Support of Rector/Priest-in-Charge (**Addendum 5**) is completed and forwarded to the Bishop;
 - Rector/Priest-in-Charge completes the assessment tool Qualities for a Life-giving Ordained Ministry (**Addendum 1**) and it is forwarded to the Bishop;
 - Nominee sends the following to the Bishop:
 - A completed Nominee Information Form (**Addendum 6**)
 - Nominee's spiritual autobiography
 - Nominee's reflection essay of the interview with a priest and a deacon.
 - Evidence of baptism and confirmation (if evidence of either sacramental rite are not available, please provide a brief statement of the time and place of the event)
 - Rector/Priest-in-charge and Nominee request a meeting with the Bishop.

Step 2: Meet with the Bishop

- The purpose of the first meeting with the Bishop is:
 - To provide the Bishop with adequate information of the Nominee's life circumstances and discernment of ministry;
 - To allow the Bishop to assess the adequacy of the initial conversations with the Rector/Priest-in-Charge; and
 - To allow the Bishop to assess the readiness of the Nominee to continue discernment.
 - Following the meeting, the Bishop may invite the Nominee to
 - discern lay ministry; OR,
 - take more time for discernment and return at a later date; OR,
 - continue discernment and establish a Parish Lay Discernment Committee (PLDC).
- If the Bishop approves the Nominee to continue discernment with a PLDC:
 - Nominee requests the Psychological Packet from the Bishop's Office.
 - The Nominee contacts the diocesan psychologist and schedules an appointment for the psychological evaluation. **It is the Nominee's responsibility to pay the expenses associated with the psychological evaluation. The Nominee's psychological evaluation must be done and the report provided to the Bishop prior to the completion of the PLDC's work.**
 - If the Nominee is discerning the diaconate, they make an appointment with the Archdeacon.
 - Nominee engages a Spiritual Director. The most up to date list of Spiritual Directors is on the diocesan website.
 - The Rector/Priest-in-Charge contacts the chair of the COM to receive a list of authorized PLDC trainers, and, utilizing the guidelines provided by the COM, appoints a Parish Lay Discernment Committee. (**Addendum 7**)

- It is strongly recommended that at this point in the process the Rector/Priest-in-Charge notify the Vestry of the status of the Nominee and the next steps involved in a PLDC. The rationale is to apprise the Vestry of the financial costs of discernment and seminary/diaconal training and enable them to incorporate financial support in their budget planning. (Addendum 4)

Step 3: The Parish Lay Discernment Committee

- The Rector/Priest-in-Charge provides copies of the PLDC manual to the members of the PLDC and to the Nominee. The PLDC manual is available on the Diocesan website.
- Before the PLDC begins its work, the PLDC, the Rector/Priest-in-Charge, the Nominee and a Vestry liaison meet with a PLDC trainer for training.
- Members of the diocesan Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee may not serve on a PLDC.
- Nominee provides PLDC with completed Spiritual Autobiography.
- The work between the PLDC and the Nominee will take whatever appropriate time, as determined by the PLDC and the nominee, is necessary to discern the movement of the Holy Spirit.
- The Nominee should verify that the psychological evaluation is done and the report is in the Bishop's office prior to the completion of the PLDC's work.
- Following the work of the PLDC, the convener of the PLDC submits a completed Discernment Narrative. (Found in *Guidelines for Parish Lay Discernment Committee* (Addendum 7). It is strongly recommended that following the completion of the narrative, the PLDC discusses it with the Nominee. The PLDC also completes and signs the Recommendation Letter to the Bishop along with the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and the Nominee. The letter is then sent to the Bishop.
 - If it is the PLDC's recommendation that the Nominee continue discernment to identify appropriate lay ministry, the Rector/Priest-in-Charge offers to provide a list of resources to assist the individual in continuing discernment.
 - If it is the PLDC's recommendation that the Nominee possesses qualities necessary for life-giving ordained ministry and should continue discerning his/her call into ordained ministry, then:
 - Nominee requests **Application Packet for Postulancy** from the Bishop's office. Please know that this packet is a comprehensive document which will require considerable time and attention to detail and should not be rushed.
 - Nominee completes the Application Packet and sends to the Bishop's office.
 - Following receipt of the application packet, the Bishop may choose either of the following or a combination thereof:
 - to invite the Nominee to participate in Field Placement, or
 - to invite the Nominee to a COM retreat, or
 - to continue discerning lay ministry.

- If the Nominee is moving forward to Step 4 and/or Step 5, the Bishop's office provides the Nominee the forms to be completed for the medical examination and the background check as described in Title III.6.5 (j) for the Vocational Diaconate and Title III.8.5 (k) for the Priesthood. These forms should be completed and returned to the Bishop's office as soon as possible. The Nominee is responsible for the expense of these examinations (**see Addendum 4**)

Step 4: Field Placement

- The usual process for most nominees will be to progress from a PLDC to a Field Placement followed by attendance at a COM Retreat.
- The Bishop may discern and arrange a field placement for the Nominee as an extension of formation and discernment See Guidelines for Field Placement (**Addendum 8**). The Canon to the Ordinary will communicate with the Nominee the next steps in the Field Education Placement process.
- At the completion of the Field Placement, the supervising Rector/Priest-in-Charge must provide the Bishop's office a completed Field Placement Report (**Addendum 8**).
- At the completion of the Field Placement, the Nominee must provide the Bishop's office a completed Field Placement Report (**Addendum 8**).
- After review of Field Education Placement reports, and in consultation with the COM Chair, the Bishop will invite the nominee to a face-to-face meeting to discern and coordinate with the nominee next steps, which may include:
 - Invite the Nominee to attend a COM Retreat; or
 - Take more time for discernment; or
 - Recommend the Nominee pursue lay ministry opportunities in the church.

Step 5: Commission on Ministry Retreat

- Occasionally, a nominee, because of their unique circumstances will be invited to a COM retreat directly after their time with their PLDC.
- COM retreats are scheduled in the Spring and Fall of each year.
- The Parish is responsible for expenses incurred for the retreats and must be paid in full prior to the meeting.
- At the conclusion of the retreat with the Nominee, the COM may recommend to the Bishop any of the following actions:
 - Recommend Postulancy, or
 - Ask the nominee to participate in a field placement, or
 - Ask the Nominee to return at a later date, or
 - Recommend the Nominee pursue lay ministry opportunities in the church.
- If the Bishop asks the Nominee to move forward in the process, work begins in Step 6.

Step 6: Next Steps

- The Bishop, in consultation with the COM Chair, will customize next steps with each nominee, Including, but not limited to, the following options:
 - The Bishop will request the nominee to set up a face-to-face meeting to discuss these next steps.

- A nominee may be invited to submit letter requesting Admission as a Postulant (Addendum 9) and begin discerning potential formation options (residential seminary; online seminary; or local formation through Iona WNC). If this option is offered, the Nominee's Vestry and Rector/Priest-in-charge submits a Letter of Support for Postulancy (Addendum 10).
 - A Nominee may be invited to attend a second COM retreat for ongoing support and discernment;
 - Recommend the Nominee pursue lay ministry opportunities in the church.
- If the nominee is married, a follow up meeting will be arranged between the Bishop, the nominee and the nominee's spouse/partner to reflect on the vocation of ordained ministry and the blessings and a challenges to the whole family unit, not just the Nominee.
- If the Nominee is invited to a second COM retreat, following the retreat the COM will:
 - Recommend Postulancy; OR,
 - Recommend the Nominee to continue discernment and return to the COM at a later date. (Specific recommendations about time frame and further study and discernment will be communicated); OR,
 - recommend the Nominee pursue lay ministry opportunities in the church. If it is the COM's recommendation that the Nominee pursue lay ministry opportunities, the Rector/Priest-in-charge will offer to provide resources to assist the individual in his/her discernment to identify the particular shape of his/her lay ministry.
 - Two years will be the length of time required before a person can formally enter a new discernment process.
 - The Bishop, at the conclusion of the second COM retreat:
 - will inform the Nominee of the COM's recommendation and the Bishop's decision.
 - The Bishop shall also notify the Nominee's Rector/Priest-in-charge, the COM and the Standing Committee, and the Archdeacon of the diocese of the Bishop's decision.

Postulancy

Postulancy is the time between being a Nominee and a Candidate for Holy Orders that involves continued exploration of and formation in the Postulant's call to the Diaconate or the Priesthood. Postulancy is required to enter seminary or the Iona WNC School for Ministry.

- If the Nominee is seeking Ordination to the Priesthood:
 - Nominee submits a financial plan to the Bishop. The Bishop may request a financial plan at an earlier date if there are concerns about the Nominee's financial situation. A copy of this form is available from the Bishop's office.
- During the time of preparation for Holy Orders, all Postulants are expected to communicate with the Bishop by letter four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting upon academic, personal, and spiritual life and development. Contact the Bishop's Office for a calendar of these weeks.

Candidacy

Candidacy is the time of ongoing education and formation in preparation for ordination. A Postulant may apply for Candidacy status after successfully completing one half of his/her Seminary studies or the Iona WNC School for Ministry or other approved program (especially for those in an Anglican Studies year) and a minimum of six months after being granted Postulancy status.

To request candidacy:

- The Postulant submits Application for Admission as a Candidate (see **Addendum 11 or 12**) to the Bishop. The request must include the date Postulancy was granted;
- The Vestry and Rector/Priest-in-Charge of the Postulant's congregation must submit A Letter of Support for Candidacy (**Addendum 13**) to the Bishop.

Other documentation needed for candidacy:

- A report is submitted from the seminary or Iona WNC School for Ministry or other approved program related to the Postulant's suitability for Holy Orders.
- An updated Spiritual Autobiography

The COM will review all requests for Candidacy at its next regular meeting or, if requested by the Bishop, at a designated meeting of the COM, and will make a recommendation to the Standing Committee. The COM's recommendation will be made after the COM has reviewed:

- Middler report from the seminary or report from diaconal training program;
- CPE evaluation, if applicable;
- Academic reports from the seminary or diaconal training program; and
- An updated spiritual autobiography.

The COM can recommend to the Standing Committee the following:

- The Postulant be granted Candidacy; OR,
- The Postulant continue discernment through additional studies or programs as clearly outlined by the COM; OR,
- The Postulant's request for Candidacy be denied.

Upon receipt of a statement from the COM attesting to the continuing formation of the Postulant, and having had the opportunity to review the documentation, the Standing Committee will then find the nearest opportunity to meet with the Postulant prior to rendering a recommendation to the Bishop that:

- The Postulant be granted Candidacy; OR,
- The Postulant continue discernment through additional studies or programs as clearly outlined by the COM; OR,
- The Postulant's request for Candidacy be denied.

Ultimately, the decision to admit the Postulant as a Candidate for Ordination resides solely with the Bishop. The Bishop may:

- Admit, deny or defer the Postulant as a Candidate for ordination; and
- Communicate the decision regarding Candidacy to the Postulant. At the request of the Bishop, the Chair of the Standing Committee may communicate the Bishop's decision to the Postulant.
- If Candidacy is granted, and the Candidate is in the process for the Priesthood, the Bishop registers the Candidate for the General Ordination Examination (GOE).

A Candidate for ordination to the Priesthood must remain in canonical relationship with the Diocese in which admission has been granted until ordination to the Priesthood, except, for reasons acceptable to the Bishop, the Candidate may be transferred to another Diocese upon request provided that the Bishop of the receiving Diocese is willing to accept the Candidate. Title III.6.4(c) Please know a candidate's first vocational call and church placement must be in consultation with the Bishop before any decisions are made.

Each Candidate for Ordination shall continue to communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter, four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Candidate's academic, human, spiritual and practical development.

Any Candidate may be removed as a Candidate at the sole discretion of the Bishop

- The Bishop shall give written notice of the removal to the Candidate, the Candidate's Rector/Priest-in-charge, the COM, the Standing Committee and the Dean of the seminary the Candidate may be attending or the director of the Iona WNC School for Ministry.

Ordination to the Diaconate (Vocational Deacons)

A Candidate for the Diaconate (Vocational Deacon) may apply for Ordination at least six (6) months after being granted Candidacy and upon attainment of at least twenty- four years of age.

- The Bishop shall obtain in writing and provide to the Standing Committee:
 - An *Application for Ordination as a Deacon* (**Addendum 14**) from the Candidate requesting Ordination to the Diaconate.
 - Evidence of admission to Postulancy and Candidacy.
 - a *Vestry Letter of Support* from Candidate's congregation (**Addendum 15**).
 - Covenant Agreement with the Internship Parish, as presented in the Diaconate Manual; and
 - Certificate from the Iona WNC School for Ministry.
 - A certificate, provided by the Bishop's office, from the COM giving a recommendation regarding Ordination to the Diaconate.
- If the medical, psychological examination and the background check have taken place more than thirty-six months prior to Ordination, they must be updated as stated in Title III.6.5 (j).

Upon review of the required documents, the Standing Committee:

- If a majority of the members consent, shall certify that the canonical requirements for Ordination to the Diaconate have been met, that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds and that they recommend to the Bishop approval of the Candidate's request for Ordination to the Diaconate.
- The Bishop informs the Candidate and the Candidate's Rector/Priest-in-charge of his decision.
- The Bishop sets the date for Ordination.

Ordination to the Diaconate for those called to Priesthood

A Candidate for Ordination to the Diaconate for those called to the Priesthood must apply for Ordination by October 1, after being granted Candidacy and upon attainment of at least twenty-four years of age.

The Bishop shall obtain in writing and provide to the Standing Committee:

- An Application for Ordination as a Deacon from the Candidate (**Addendum 14**).
- Evidence of the admission to Postulancy and Candidacy.
- Vestry Letter of Support for Ordination as a Deacon (**Addendum 15**).
- A certificate, provided by the Bishop's office, from the COM giving a recommendation regarding ordination to the Diaconate.
- A certificate from the seminary, showing:

- the Candidate's scholastic record in the subjects required by the Canons;
- the evaluation with recommendation as to the Candidate's other personal qualifications for ordination;
- If the medical, psychological examinations and the background check have taken place more than thirty-six months prior to Ordination, they must be updated as stated in Title III.8.5 (k).

Upon review of the required documents, the Standing Committee, a majority of all the members consenting, shall certify that the canonical requirements for Ordination to the Diaconate have been met and there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds and that they recommend ordination.

- The Bishop informs the Candidate and the Candidate's Rector/Priest-in-charge of the Bishop's decision.
- The Bishop sets the date for Ordination.

Ordination to the Priesthood

A person may be ordained a Priest at least six months after Ordination as a Deacon.

The Bishop shall obtain in writing and provide to the Standing Committee:

- *An Application for Ordination as a Priest* from the Deacon (**Addendum 16**);
- Evidence of the Deacon's dates of admission to Postulancy, Candidacy and Ordination as a Deacon;
- The *Vestry Letter of Support for Ordination as a Priest* (**Addendum 17**); and
- A certificate, provided by the Bishop's office, in which the COM attests to the successful completion of the program of formation designed during Postulancy (Canon III.8.5) and proficiency in the required areas of study, and recommending the Deacon for ordination to the Priesthood.

The Bishop may require reports from other persons attesting to the readiness of the Deacon for Ordination to the Priesthood.

On receipt of the letters and certificates, the Standing Committee, a majority of all the members consenting, shall certify that the canonical requirements for Ordination to the Priesthood have been met and there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, or spiritual grounds and that they recommend ordination.

The Bishop informs the Deacon, and sets a date for Ordination to the Priesthood.

Addendum 1

Qualities for a Life-giving Ordained Ministry

Nominee's Name: _____

Person completing the survey: _____

Date: _____ Role: _____

Introduction

As the Commission on Ministry, we have attempted to articulate the qualities that we sense are needed in ordained leaders at this particular time in the life of the church—a time of great change, a time when the way of Jesus is vibrant, vital and life-giving, and a time when the Body of Christ in its institutional expression is under great stress. These qualities naturally fall into four areas of exploration: Spiritual Vitality, Sense of Self, Relational Maturity, and Capacity to Lead. These qualities exist in a wide range of personalities—for instance, introverts and extraverts may possess them, all nine of the enneagram types may possess them, or those who fit the frames of any of the other ways we understand human beings may possess them. We understand that no one person may possess all of these qualities, but at this point in the church's life, we believe these qualities point both toward the types of leaders we need and toward the capacities one needs for one's own sake to thrive in this work. We are aware that these capacities may not be fully developed at the early stages of the discernment process, especially if the Nominee is younger. In this instance, we are attempting to discern whether or not these qualities exist in some nascent form.

Discernment is the spiritual practice of listening deeply and intentionally to a person's life in order to hear and understand the movement of the Spirit, clarify God's call, and move more deeply into that call. In the Episcopal Church, we believe that discernment is best done in community over time. We have developed this survey instrument to provide the Nominee and the others involved at every level of the discernment process— Rector/Priest-in-Charge, Parish Lay Discernment Committee, Commission on Ministry, Standing Committee, Field Placement Supervisor, and Bishop—a way to discern the presence of these qualities in the Nominee. In our experience, as we circle back to these qualities at every level throughout the process, increasing clarity emerges about the shape of ministry that will be the most life-giving both for the Nominee and for the Church that he or she is seeking to serve.

Instructions

The qualities are divided into four areas of exploration: Spiritual Vitality, Sense of Self, Relational Maturity, and Capacity to Lead. Below each quality, there is a brief statement that articulates how the Commission on Ministry understands this quality. Some of us think more concretely, some of us think more narratively. We have provided a place for narrative to capture as fully as possible your sense of these qualities in the Nominee.

Narrative

Directly below each quality, are three lines. Please provide a brief narrative to express more fully your sense of this quality as it relates to the Nominee.

SPIRITUAL VITALITY

Our ordained leaders need to have a compelling spirituality because a tangible connection with the Living God is at the heart of all ministry. These qualities support and reveal such a spirituality.

- **Holiness and wholeness of life**

-

Has a lived experience of the presence of God and dedicated his/her life both to being a conduit of that presence as well as to growing in that presence. Drinks from the wellspring of faith, hope, love, and mercy.

- **Compassion**

Exhibits a passionate awareness of God's connectedness with all creation. She/he exhibits an awareness of God's mercy in her/his life and has a capacity to extend that mercy.

- **Committed to the way of Jesus**

One has a sense in how she/he lives and in how she/he speaks that Jesus and his way are central to her/his being and life.

- **Exhibits paschal living (cycle of death and resurrection)**

Can identify the cycle of death and resurrection in the pattern of her/his life, in the lives of those around them, in the life of the community of faith, and in the life of the world.

- **Genuine love of the Body of Christ in all of its manifestations**

Has a capacity to love the Body of Christ, in all of its manifestations, even when it is necessary to critique/challenge it. Note: The Body of Christ is to be found in the body of the Church, at the congregational/local level, diocesan level, church-wide level, and global level, and the Body of Christ is broader than any one institutional expression of the Church.

- **Spiritual practice**

One senses in his/her presence that he/she walks the talk and that his/her spiritual practices give witness to the grace/faith that undergirds those practices.

- **Vulnerability**

She/he is willing to risk letting her/himself be known. She/he is willing to live the baptismal life publicly so that those entrusted to her/his care can see what this life looks like. She/he is willing to risk exposure to reveal some aspect of the Gospel that may not be comfortable.

- **Willingness to question/grow/engage**

Has a learning stance toward life/self/vocation/the Church. Exhibits curiosity. Likes to be engaged with the process of growing as a human being and as a follower of Jesus.

- **Additional Comments**

SENSE OF SELF

Our sense of self is given in our baptism. At this time in the Church's life, these are the qualities of the self that we believe are needed in ordained leaders in order that they and the communities they serve may thrive.

- **Authentic/real**
-

Has a capacity to allow her/himself to be truly seen and to let her/his True Self be present. Her/his life is congruent. Words and actions, being and doing, line up.

- **Honesty**

What he/she says and how he/she lives are congruent. One senses an integrity about the person, his/her actions, and his/her words.

- **Integration of mind, heart, body, and spirit**

One senses in his/her presence that the mind, heart, body, and the spirit are all hooked up.

- **Playful**

Doesn't take her/himself too seriously. Has a capacity to have fun and to laugh.

- **Resilience**

Has the capacity to come through a difficult circumstance/season. Has a capacity to find a way forward when he/she hits a wall.

- **Rooted**

Conveys a sense of rootedness, groundedness, stability. Knows who he/she is, even while knowing that he/she is always growing/changing/evolving.

- **Self-Awareness**

Knows her/himself. Has a capacity to observe her/himself and to know what is her/his piece in an encounter with another and what is not. Has a capacity to understand what other people/situations trigger in her/him. Knows her/his demons or Achilles heel, as well as her/his gifts.

- **Self-Care**

Has clear practices to care for his/her body, mind, heart, and spirit. Exhibits healthy rhythms of rest, work, and play. Tends to one's intimate relationships with care.

- **Additional Comments**

RELATIONAL MATURITY

Life in Christ is inherently relational. We believe these qualities are needed for relationships in the Body of Christ to be life-giving.

- **Ability to connect/interact**

Has a capacity to connect and interact with a wide range of people in a wide range of settings.

- **Emotionally engaged, even in conflict**

Has a capacity to stay present in the face of conflict, anxiety, anger, fear, grief, and the other emotions from which we generally run. Has a capacity to step out of the immediacy of strong emotion, his/hers or others, and has the capacity to know when and how to re-engage in a more life-giving way.

- **Empathy**

Has the capacity to be with another without discounting their experience (because their experience makes us uncomfortable) and without trying to fix them (because their experience makes us uncomfortable). Has the capacity to connect with the emotion that someone is experiencing (Brené Brown's definition).

- **Having a heart for people**

Genuinely likes people. Has a curiosity about people. Has a capacity to love the people entrusted to his/her care and to receive their love.

- **Humbleness**

Has a sense of her/his own humanity and the humanity of others. Is in touch with and has a comfort with her/his limits and the limits of others because she/he is aware of God's grace. Has a capacity to see that others may be right. Approaches life as a learner, even when she/he has some experience under her/his belt. Has a sense of groundedness.

- **Trustworthiness**

Her/his presence invites trust. One senses that she/he can be trusted.

- **Additional Comments**

CAPACITY TO LEAD

In a time of great change in the Church and in the world, we believe these qualities are needed to lead communities such that they may thrive and flourish.

- **Ability to articulate**

Her/his presence invites trust. One senses that she/he can be trusted.

- **Accountability**

Has a capacity to admit when he/she has made a mistake/messed up, is willing to do what he/she needs to do to make it right, and when the fabric of a relationship has been strained, is willing to make amends to mend the threads that have been broken. Has a willingness to be held accountable by others. Has a willingness to hold others accountable

- **Authority**

Has a clarity and a willingness to claim her/his voice and to be decisive in action once appropriate action has been discerned. Has a capacity to help others claim their authority.

- **Capacity to inspire**

Has a capacity to rally others to a vision or course of action that has been discerned. He/she is someone you would want to follow.

- **Comfort with change**

Has a capacity to stay anchored in the midst of change. Has a capacity to stay present when the people and environment around her/him are anxious.

- **Contextual awareness of the Church, cultures, and the world**

Has an awareness of the changes flowing through the Church, cultures, and the world.

- **Courage**

Has a capacity to speak, act, and take risks for the sake of truth.

- **Creativity**

Has some practice that embodies the process of creating/creation. Has a capacity to make something new, or to take something that is and see something new in it.

- **Imaginative**

Has a capacity to see possibilities and alternatives. Has a capacity to see a third way forward in the midst of either/or options.

- **Intellectual curiosity**

Exhibits a curiosity about people, ideas, the tradition, her/his faith, and the world.

- **Resourceful**

Has a capacity to assess a situation and bring appropriate skills/gifts/competencies of self or others to that situation.

- **Sacrifice**

She/he exhibits a willingness to offer her/himself. She/he exhibits a willingness to yield for the sake of another and has the capacity to discern when such yielding is called for.

- **Vocational flexibility**

He/she is open to a variety of ways that ministry might be expressed. He/she is open to a variety of locations/situations in which ministry might be expressed.

- **Willingness to ask for help**

Exhibits a willingness to ask for help. He/she seeks out counsel from appropriate sources. He/she works best in collaboration with others, and not as a lone ranger.

- **Willingness to experiment**

Exhibits a capacity to try new things as an experiment. Has a capacity to risk failure and to learn from it.

- **Additional Comments**

Addendum 2

Spiritual Autobiography Guidelines

All persons applying to enter the Ordination process are asked to submit a spiritual autobiography. The following guidelines are offered to explain what is expected.

Definition An autobiography is one's account of one's own life. A SPIRITUAL autobiography adds one's understanding of how GOD has been present in various significant events and in certain significant people.

Preparation One way to prepare for writing your spiritual autobiography is to think back over your life in blocks of time, such as childhood, high school, college, marriage, arrival and rearing of children, first job, job or career changes, etc. As you do so, note any ways in which you saw, or NOW see, God's hand. (Often we recognize God's presence in retrospect, more than we do at the moment.)

Don't neglect to mention important events just because they were unpleasant (e.g. illness, divorce, death of a loved one, etc.) include all significant people, events and places, even if God's presence was not particularly obvious to you.

Suggestion: Begin this exercise with prayer.

Remember Jesus' "summary of the Law", that we are to love the Lord our GOD, and our NEIGHBOR as OURSELF. Some of the things noted in your spiritual autobiography might reflect how you see your past and present relationship to (1) God, (2) your neighbor, and (3) yourself:

1. What is my personal relationship with GOD?
2. How well do I relate to my NEIGHBORS?
3. How do I feel about MYSELF?

Length Don't be overwhelmed by the above, or discouraged. These are only suggestions, intended as possible aids in your self-examination. Don't be concerned about saying all the "right" things. There is not a requirement on how long or how short your spiritual autobiography should be. If you wish, you may submit another spiritual autobiography later on, revising it or adding further thoughts. Also, the COM may at some time ask you to revise it or to provide further reflections on your spiritual journey.

Addendum 3

Nominee's Interview with a Deacon and a Priest

The Bishop recommends that the Nominee interview a deacon and a priest (neither of whom should serve in the Nominee's congregation) and ask them the questions listed below. The answers will not be shared with the Rector/Priest-in-charge but rather the Nominee's reflections on what was learned. It would be good for the Nominee to explain how the interviews are being used when making arrangements for the interviews. Please allow one to two hours.

Possible Types of Interview Questions:

1. How did you experience your call to ordained ministry and how has your understanding and experience of that call changed, grown, or focused overtime?
2. Describe the ministry of a deacon, as you understand it.
3. Describe the ministry of a priest, as you understand it.
4. Describe the process of vocational discernment that led to your ordination. What in/during that process helped clarify for you and the Church that your call to ordained ministry was that of the Diaconate/Priesthood?
5. Tell me about a few of your experiences of greatest learning and growth while you were preparing for ordination.
6. Tell me about a few of your experiences of greatest learning and growth since you were ordained.
7. What is the most difficult aspect of ordained ministry for you? For your household?
8. What has been the "cost" of ordination for you and your household? What have you and your household sacrificed in order to respond to this vocational call?

The Nominee is to write a reflection no more than 5 pages in which he/she reflects on what has been learned from these interviews which addresses the following questions. The Nominee is to share this reflection with the Rector/Priest-in-Charge for discussion and, should the Nominee continue discernment, with the PLDC.

- What was stirred up in you as you listened and remembered the interview?
- How do you understand the public nature of ordained ministry and the potential stresses that ordination will put on your household?
- How do you think your age may affect your vocation as an ordained person? What might its positives and its negatives be?

Addendum 4

Expected Financial Costs of Discernment, Seminary or Diaconal Training

It is the hope and expectation of the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry (COM) that the Nominee and the Nominee's congregation will begin a conversation early in the process to discuss the realistic sharing of these expenses. If a congregation lifts up a member of their congregation for Holy Orders, the congregation should be willing to offer that person significant financial support.

If the Nominee is invited by the Bishop to continue in discernment:

- The psychological evaluation is scheduled (paid to the diocesan-appointed psychologist): **\$1100**
- A PLDC is formed and trained for their work by a consultant appointed by the Bishop and the COM. (Note: this fee plus mileage [2025 IRS reimbursement rate of \$.70/mile] is paid by the congregation to the Diocese, who pays the consultant): **\$150 plus mileage**

If the Rector and the PLDC affirm the Nominee's call to Holy Orders and the Bishop invites the Nominee to attend the retreat with the COM and the Standing Committee of the Diocese: (Note: This meeting begins on Friday morning and ends on Saturday which would require the Nominee to take time from work to attend the entire session.)

- Oxford Background Check (paid to the Diocese): **\$350**
- Medical examination (paid to physician; cost is dependent upon Nominee's health insurance) **\$350**
- Cost of room and board at COM retreat **\$165**

If the Nominee is invited by the Bishop to return for a second retreat with the COM, the following expenses will be incurred: (Note: This meeting begins on Friday morning and ends on Saturday which would require the Nominee to take time from work to attend the entire session.)

- Cost of second retreat **\$165**

If the Nominee receives Postulancy, the costs of formation:

- Deacons: IONA Formation Program: (3-year program @ approximately \$2200/year, plus books, vestments, travel, etc.) **\$1250**
- Priests:
 - IONA Formation for bi-vocational priests **\$1000**
 - Residential seminary application fees(estimated) **\$150**
 - Three years of residential seminary (estimated) **\$60,000 - \$125,000+***

*(**Note:** this is calculated based on annual costs of \$20,000-\$35,000/year depending on which of the approved Episcopal seminaries one attends. This estimate does not include the cost of books, vestments, or other incidental living expenses. It also does not take into consideration scholarships which may be available through the seminaries that would reduce the cost.)

- Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) fees **\$750**

If the Postulant receives Candidacy:

- Updated psychological and medical examinations may be required again per the Canons prior to Ordination.

Addendum 5

Letter of Support from the Rector/Priest-in-Charge

Date _____ Nominee's Name _____

Rector's/Priest's-in-charge Name and Parish _____

I, the undersigned, have met with the above-named Nominee beginning

(date) _____ and ending (date) _____, for the

purpose of discerning his/her call into ordained ministry.

As a result of our prayerful conversations and the completion of the assessment survey Qualities for a Life-giving Ordained Ministry, I find that this individual exhibits the requisite spiritual vitality, sense of self, relational maturity, capacity to lead, and strong sense of God's movement and intention for his/her life that are needed for ordained ministry.

Therefore, I strongly affirm the Nominee's proceeding in the discernment process in the Diocese of Western North Carolina.

Rector/Priest-in-Charge

Additional comments:

Addendum 6

Nominee Information Form

Full legal name: _____

Preferred name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Residential address (if different from mailing address):

Telephone Home () _____ Work () _____

Cell () _____ Other () _____

Email address: _____

Date and place of birth: _____

Church Membership

Sponsoring Congregation: _____

Name of your presenting priest: _____

How long have you been a member?: _____

Baptized (date and place): _____

Confirmation/Reception (date and place): _____

Please provide evidence of Baptism and Confirmation with this information form.

Discerning (circle one)

Diaconate

Priesthood

Nominee Signature: _____

Rector/Priest-in-charge signature: _____

Addendum 7

Guidelines for PLDC Membership

Discernment Committee membership (ideally 5-7 members) should include:

- Vestry Liaison
- Members of the congregation who know the Nominee
- Members of the congregation who do not know the Nominee (these might be members of a nearby congregation if the parish is small in number)
- A member who has served on another discernment committee (optimal, not always possible)
- No clergy, active or retired and no member of the Rector's/Priest's-in-Charge family
- Members of the diocesan Commission on Ministry and Standing Committee may not serve on a PLDC.

Roles of those involved in the Discernment Process:

- Convener:
 - Makes sure meeting times are set and PLDC is notified.
 - Makes sure all areas of discussion are covered.
 - Makes sure meetings begin and end on time.
 - Makes sure PLDC stays on task and each member has opportunity to share.
 - Keeps PLDC Trainer informed and asks for help when needed.
 - Reminds PLDC of confidentiality of discussions.
 - Leads the PLDC in setting group norms/covenants.
 - Invites Nominee's family member as appropriate to be involved in a meeting.
- Chaplain:
 - Makes sure the meeting begins and end with prayer.
 - May share role with other members of the PLDC.
 - Can invite the PLDC to pause in discussion for silent or oral prayer and discernment.
- Recorder:
 - Takes notes of the meetings.
 - Distributes note to the PLDC.
 - Reminds the PLDC of confidentiality of discussions
- PLDC Member:
 - Prayerfully agrees to participate fully
 - Willing to be open, honest, able to confront, supportive and candid in the context of a caring community.
 - Will not ask any question that she/he is not willing to answer.
- Nominee
 - Prepares her/his Spiritual Autobiography.
 - Reviews Spiritual Autobiography with the PLDC.
 - Prepares for each meeting with assigned reflection topic from prior meeting.

- Agrees to the involvement of appropriate family members when asked by PLDC.
 - Answers questions from PLDC with open, honest, candid answers understanding that sometimes there is no answer.
- Rector/Priest-in-charge:
 - Invites the members of the Discernment Committee.
 - After the PLDC has completed its work, if appropriate, with the Vestry, makes a recommendation to the Bishop.
 - May include the work of the PLDC in the prayers of the congregation
 - Provides pastoral care for the Nominee during the discernment process.
- Vestry
 - Keeps informed of the process of the PLDC through the committee's Vestry Liaison.
 - Receives the recommendation from the PLDC and, if the process has been properly followed, completes the letter of support. (They are not a second discernment committee.)
- Vestry Liaison:
 - Makes a monthly report to the Vestry about ongoing work of the PLDC, not content, just that group continues to meet.
 - Educates the Vestry about its role in the PLDC process.
- Commission on Ministry:
 - Educates the clergy on the PLDC process and recommendation for types of PLDC members.
 - Keeps up-to-date with the progress of the PLDC through the PLDC Trainer.
 - Provides support for the Rector/Priest-in-charge, the Nominee, and the PLDC through the PLDC Trainer.
- PLDC Trainer:
 - Meets with the PLDC, Nominee, and Rector/Priest-in-charge to review the PLDC in detail and to answer questions, with an emphasis on the process, not a timeline.
 - Provides support for the PLDC as needed with the process.
- Bishop:
 - Maintains a pastoral relationship with the participants in the process.
 - Authorizes a local PLDC.
 - Reviews the reports and recommendations of the PLDC, the Rector/Priest-in-charge and Vestry.
- Parish:
 - All members of the parish are encouraged to keep the Nominee and the PLDC and the discernment process in prayer.

Addendum 8

Nominee's Field Placement

The Bishop may arrange a field placement for Nominee to be completed following the retreat.

- If Nominee is discerning the vocational Diaconate, the field placement congregation will have an active deacon.
- The supervising Rector/Priest-in-Charge and the Bishop will create a field placement plan that both challenges and supports the Nominee in his/her continuing discernment.
 - The supervising Rector/Priest-in-Charge will meet regularly with the Nominee during the field placement
- The supervising Rector/Priest-in-Charge will convene a small group of lay persons from the congregation to meet regularly with the Nominee to provide feedback.
- At the conclusion of the field placement, the Rector/Priest-in-Charge will provide the Bishop's office a report that includes:
 - The tasks/projects undertaken by Nominee
 - An assessment of Nominee's experience in the congregation (what worked well, what didn't work well; what were the growth areas for Nominee)
 - A completed Qualities for a *Life-Giving Ordained Ministry* survey.
- At the conclusion of the field placement, the Nominee will provide the Bishop's office a report that includes:
 - The tasks/projects undertaken by Nominee.
 - Her/his assessment of the field placement in the congregation (what worked well, what didn't work well; what was learned, what was challenging? How have you grown?)
 - A completed Qualities for a Life-Giving Ordained Ministry survey.

Addendum 9

Application for Admission as a Postulant

Date:

Full Name:

Date of birth:

Have you ever before applied for admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders?

If yes, where and when?

What, if anything, do you particularly want the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee and the Bishop to know about you at this point in your formation?

I, _____, hereby request admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders.

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date:

Addendum 10

Vestry Letter of Support for Postulancy

To the Bishop, the Standing Committee and the Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Western North Carolina:

In accordance with Title III, Canon 6, Section 2 (a) 1-2, and Canon 8, Sec. 2 (a) 1-2, of the Canons of The Episcopal Church, The Vestry of _____ Church, in _____, North Carolina, in the Diocese of Western North Carolina, certifies that _____ is a communicant in good standing of the congregation. The Vestry supports this person for Postulancy and believes that he/she possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders.

This judgment is based on personal knowledge of the applicant. Yes _____ No _____
If no, on what evidence is the judgment based?

We pledge to contribute financially and being involved in the formation process toward ordination to the _____.

Date _____

Signatures of at least two thirds of the Vestry

Signature of the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge _____
(Should there be no Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, this form will be signed by a Priest of the Diocese acquainted with the nominee and the Parish, the reason for the substitution being stated below.)

Certification by the Clerk of the Vestry

I hereby certify that the foregoing letter was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____ Church, duly convened at _____ on the _____ day of _____, and that the signatures are those of all, or a two-thirds majority, of the members of the Vestry.

Clerk of the Vestry

Addendum 11

Application for Admission as a Candidate for the Diaconate

Full name:

Date of birth:

Date of admission to Postulancy:

Have you ever before applied for admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders? If yes, where and when?

What significant events or growth have you experienced since being accepted as a Postulant?
[There's no specified length for your response, but two or three pages is good guide. Consider your postulancy recommendation letter and your Spiritual Autobiography from your postulancy application—in what ways have you been formed and grown since those were written?]

What, if anything, do you particularly want the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee and the Bishop to know about you at this point in your formation?

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date:

Addendum 12

Application for Admission as a Candidate for Priesthood

Full name:

Date of birth:

Date of admission to Postulancy:

Have you ever before applied for admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders? If yes, where and when?

What significant events or growth have you experienced since being accepted as a postulant?
[There's no specified length for your response, but two or three pages is good guide. Consider your postulancy recommendation letter and your Spiritual Autobiography from your postulancy application—in what ways have you been formed and grown since those were written?]

What, if anything, do you particularly want the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee and the Bishop to know about you at this point in your formation?

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date:

Addendum 13

Vestry Letter of Support for Candidacy

To the Bishop, the Standing Committee and the Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Western North Carolina:

In accordance with Title III, Canon 6, Section 4 (a. 2.) and Title 3 Canon 8, Sec. 4 (a. 2.) of the Canons of The Episcopal Church, The Vestry of _____ Church, in _____, North Carolina, in the Diocese of Western North Carolina, certifies that _____ is a communicant in good standing of the congregation. The Vestry supports this person for Candidacy and believes that he/she possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders.

This judgment is based on personal knowledge of the applicant. Yes _____ No _____
If no, on what evidence is the judgment based?

Date _____

Signatures of at least two thirds of the Vestry

Signature of the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge _____
(Should there be no Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, this form will be signed by a Priest of the Diocese acquainted with the nominee and the Parish, the reason for the substitution being stated below.)

Certification by the Clerk of the Vestry

I hereby certify that the foregoing letter was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____ Church, duly convened at _____ on the _____ day of _____, and that the signatures are those of all, or a two-thirds majority, of the members of the Vestry.

Clerk of the Vestry

Addendum 14

Diocese of Western North Carolina Application for Ordination as a Deacon

Full name:

Date of birth:

Date of admission to Postulancy:

Date of admission to Candidacy:

Phone Number:

Email address:

I, _____ hereby request to be ordained as a Deacon in the Episcopal Church.

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date:

Addendum 15

Vestry Letter of Support for Ordination as a Deacon

To the Bishop, the Standing Committee and the Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Western North Carolina:

In accordance with Title III, Canon 6, Section 6 (b) and Canon 8, Sec. 6 (c) of the Canons of The Episcopal Church, The Vestry of _____ Church, in _____, North Carolina, in the Diocese of Western North Carolina, certifies that _____ is a communicant in good standing of the congregation. The Vestry supports this person for Ordination and believes that he/she possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for Ordination to the Diaconate.

This judgment is based on personal knowledge of the applicant. Yes _____ No _____
If no, on what evidence is the judgment based?

Date _____

Signatures of at least two thirds of the Vestry

Signature of the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge _____
(Should there be no Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, this form will be signed by a Priest of the Diocese acquainted with the nominee and the Parish, the reason for the substitution being stated below.)

Certification by the Clerk of the Vestry

I hereby certify that the foregoing letter was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____ Church, duly convened at _____ on the _____ day of _____, and that the signatures are those of all, or a two-thirds majority, of the members of the Vestry.

Clerk of the Vestry

Addendum 16

Diocese of Western North Carolina Application for Ordination as a Priest

Full name:

Date of birth:

Date of admission to Postulancy:

Date of admission to Candidacy:

Parish/cure and position I will be serving at proposed date of ordination to the Priesthood:
(e.g., *St. Swythen's, Hickory; Associate Rector – include the name of the diocese if the parish/cure is not in the Diocese of Western North Carolina*)

Phone number:

Email address:

I, _____ hereby request to be ordained as a Priest in the Episcopal Church.

Printed Name:

Signature:

Date:

Addendum 17

Vestry Letter of Support for Ordination as a Priest

To the Bishop, the Standing Committee and the Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Western North Carolina:

In accordance with Title III, Canon 8, Section 7 (b) 2, and the Canons of The Episcopal Church, The Vestry of _____ Church, in _____, North Carolina, in the Diocese of Western North Carolina, certifies that

_____ is a communicant in good standing of the congregation. The Vestry supports this person for Ordination and believes that he/she possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for Ordination to Priesthood.

This judgment is based on personal knowledge of the applicant. Yes _____ No _____
If no, on what evidence is the judgment based?

Date _____

Signatures of at least two thirds of the Vestry

Signature of the Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge _____
(Should there be no Rector, Vicar or Priest-in-Charge, this form will be signed by a Priest of the Diocese acquainted with the nominee and the Parish, the reason for the substitution being stated below.)

Certification by the Clerk of the Vestry

I hereby certify that the foregoing letter was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of _____ Church, duly convened at _____ on the _____ day of _____, and that the signatures are those of all, or a two-thirds majority, of the members of the Vestry.

Clerk of the Vestry

Commission on Ministry Policies and Guidelines

A. Terms of COM Membership

The Commission on Ministry is composed of up to 18 members who are appointed by the Bishop and ratified by Diocesan Convention.

Members will serve a three-year term with the option for the Bishop to appoint a Member to a second term. Three people rotate off and on each year.

Terms end at year end.

It is the norm that, except where the Bishop has cause to make an exception, two (2) years will pass before a person can be reappointed to the Commission. Officers will include a Chair, a Vice-Chair and a Secretary, all appointed by the Bishop. The length of Officers' service will be determined by the Bishop in consultation with the Chair.

B. Meeting Dates and Times

The Commission on Ministry meets twice each year for a Retreat with the selected Nominees, Postulants and Candidates. The exact days and times and locations change each year.

The Commission on Ministry also meets monthly, when necessary, or unless otherwise rescheduled due to the volume of business to be done. Meetings are usually scheduled in concert with the Bishop's schedule. Scheduled meetings typically occur at the Bishop Henry Center or by Zoom video conference.

C. Attendance

Members are expected to make attendance at meetings an important priority. Guiding a person's discernment requires developing relationships not only with Nominees but also with other members of the COM. **Attendance is most important at COM retreats.**

D. Voting

When voting during the discernment process, a majority of the combination of negative responses and/or abstentions will be interpreted as a "no". Those voting "no" or abstaining should be prepared to share with the group why they voted as they did.

New members to the Commission can "pass" on a vote if they feel they don't know enough about the Nominee/Postulant/Candidate.

E. Purpose of Psychological Testing

The psychological evaluation will be scheduled before the Nominee meets with the Parish Lay Discernment Committee.

The purpose of the psychological evaluation is to provide the Bishop with information that will:

1. help clarify the call the Nominee is sensing and identify Nominee's strengths, weaknesses and gifts.
2. identify any psychological and relational patterns that, while not significantly impairing one's interpersonal relationships, need to be addressed for the health and wholeness of one's life and work, i.e., the identification of growing edges.
3. identify any acute psychological distress under which the Nominee may be operating.
4. identify any enduring personality characteristics which can significantly impair interpersonal relationships. Of particular concern are issues of authority, sexuality, self esteem/direction and potential for caring for others.

In the event that serious problems are revealed during the psychological evaluation, the Bishop may refer the Nominee to another health-care professional for further examination or therapy.

Format of testing:

In order to accomplish the purpose of the testing, the components of the examination may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. MMPI, a personality inventory test which is structured and standardized.
2. A Rorschach, a non-structured personality test which presents the individual with stimuli and records the projected information.
3. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.
4. Any other testing components the psychologist, in consultation with the Bishop, select.

Two interviews will be held, totaling around three-and-one-half hours, preferably with a shorter intake interview and a longer post-test evaluation session.

The professional doing the interviews conducts and scores/studies the test and submits a written report to the Bishop following the final interview. Nominees are responsible for payment and can seek help from their parish if necessary. The Diocese can offer assistance in the case of extreme need.

Appeal process:

It is hoped that questions and concerns of the psychological evaluation can be addressed in the feedback interview. It is expected that, if an Nominee has a question or controversy with the final report, the Nominee will first talk with the professional who conducted the interviews and testing.

Should this not be resolved to the Nominee's satisfaction, the Nominee should address her/his concerns to the Bishop.

F. COM Retreats

People in the discernment process will not be assigned to rooms with COM members at the COM retreats.

G. Seminarian Assistance

Each Seminarian receives regular financial assistance in a very modest amount from the Bishop twice a year. Other financial assistance should be discussed with the bishop.

H. Discernment Processes During Interim Periods

It is the norm that a Parish does not initiate a discernment process during an Interim Phase in the Parish. Requests for exceptions are to be addressed to the Bishop.

I. Application for Candidacy

Before a Postulant can apply for Candidacy, he/she will have completed one and a half years of Seminary or be at least halfway through the Diaconal Formation Program.

J. Deployment of Seminary Graduates

In early December of a Seminarian's final year, if the Bishop does not know of a specific placement for that person within our Diocese, he or she may be given permission to look at places and to be in communication with the Deployment Officers or Bishops of other Dioceses. However, before one makes a commitment to another Diocese, he or she must be back in touch with the Bishop. Permission to talk to others is only a conditional release, not an absolute or full release. It is done to give the Seminarian an opportunity to be in touch with the greater job market and to become informed of possibilities, but acceptance of another job is not possible without the full release from the Bishop.

During a time of conditional release the Seminarian ought to from time to time be in touch with the Deployment Officer of the Diocese to see what developments might have occurred in Western North Carolina.

When one, with the Bishop's approval, enters into an agreement for placement in a Parish within our Diocese or within another Diocese, and when the Standing Committee and the Bishop have given their consents for the Candidate to be ordained, he or she should contact the Canon to the Ordinary in order to make plans for the Service of Ordination to the Diaconate

Canons of The Episcopal Church
TITLE III MINISTRY
CANON 2: Of Commissions on Ministry

Sec. 1. In each Diocese there shall be a Commission on Ministry ("Commission") consisting of Priests, Deacons, if any, and Lay Persons. The Canons of each Diocese shall provide for the number of members, terms of office, and manner of selection to the Commission. Any Diocese may agree in writing with one or more other Dioceses to share a Commission on Ministry.

Sec. 2. The Commission shall advise and assist the Bishop:

- A. In the implementation of Title III of these Canons.
- B. In the determination of present and future opportunities and needs for the ministry of all baptized persons.
- C. In the design and oversight of the ongoing process for recruitment, discernment, formation for ministry, and assessment of readiness therefore.

Sec. 3. The Commission may adopt rules for its work, subject to the approval of the Bishop; Provided that they are not inconsistent with the Constitution and Canons of this Church and of the Diocese.

Sec. 4. The Commission may establish committees consisting of members and other persons to report to the Commission or to act on its behalf.

Sec. 5. The Bishop and Commission shall ensure that the members of the Commission and its committees receive ongoing education and training for their work.

The Diocese of Western North Carolina
Article IX
The Commission on Ministry

SECTION 9.1.

The Diocese shall have a Commission on Ministry consisting of such persons designated or elected as provided by the Canons of the Diocese.

SECTION 9.2 The Commission on Ministry shall act as the Bishop's council of advice and shall have those powers and perform those functions as prescribed by the Constitution and Canons of the Church. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Commission on Ministry shall advise and assist the Bishop:

- a) in matters pertaining to the enlistment, selection, examination, education and pastoral care of aspirants, postulants, and candidates seeking Holy Orders;
- b) in matters pertaining to the enlistment, selection, examination, education and pastoral care of aspirants, postulants, and candidates seeking Holy Orders;
- c) in matters pertaining to continuing education, pastoral care, and accountability of priests and deacons; and

- d) in matters pertaining to the enlistment, selection, examination, education and pastoral care of aspirants, postulants, and candidates seeking Holy Orders;
- e) in matters pertaining to continuing education, pastoral care, and accountability of priests and deacons; and
- f) in supporting the development, training, licensing, utilization, and affirmation of the ministry of other persons in the world. Annual Convention, the incumbent Commissioners shall continue in office until their successors are nominated and confirmed.

Canon 7 – Commission on Ministry

7.1 COMPOSITION. The Commission on Ministry shall be comprised of any archdeacon of the Diocese as well as twelve (12) members appointed by the Bishop and confirmed by the Convention, six (6) of whom shall be Clerics and six (6) of whom shall be Laypersons. The appointed members shall be grouped into three (3) classes of four (4) members each, each such class including two (2) Clerics and two (2) Laypersons. The terms of such classes shall be staggered so that one (1) such class is appointed each year to commence a new term. The terms of office of appointed members shall commence on January 1 next following their appointment. Except for the initial classes, whose members shall serve either a one-year term, two-year term or a three-year term as specified by the Executive Council in accordance with Article XVII of the Constitution, the members of each class thereafter shall serve a three-year term.

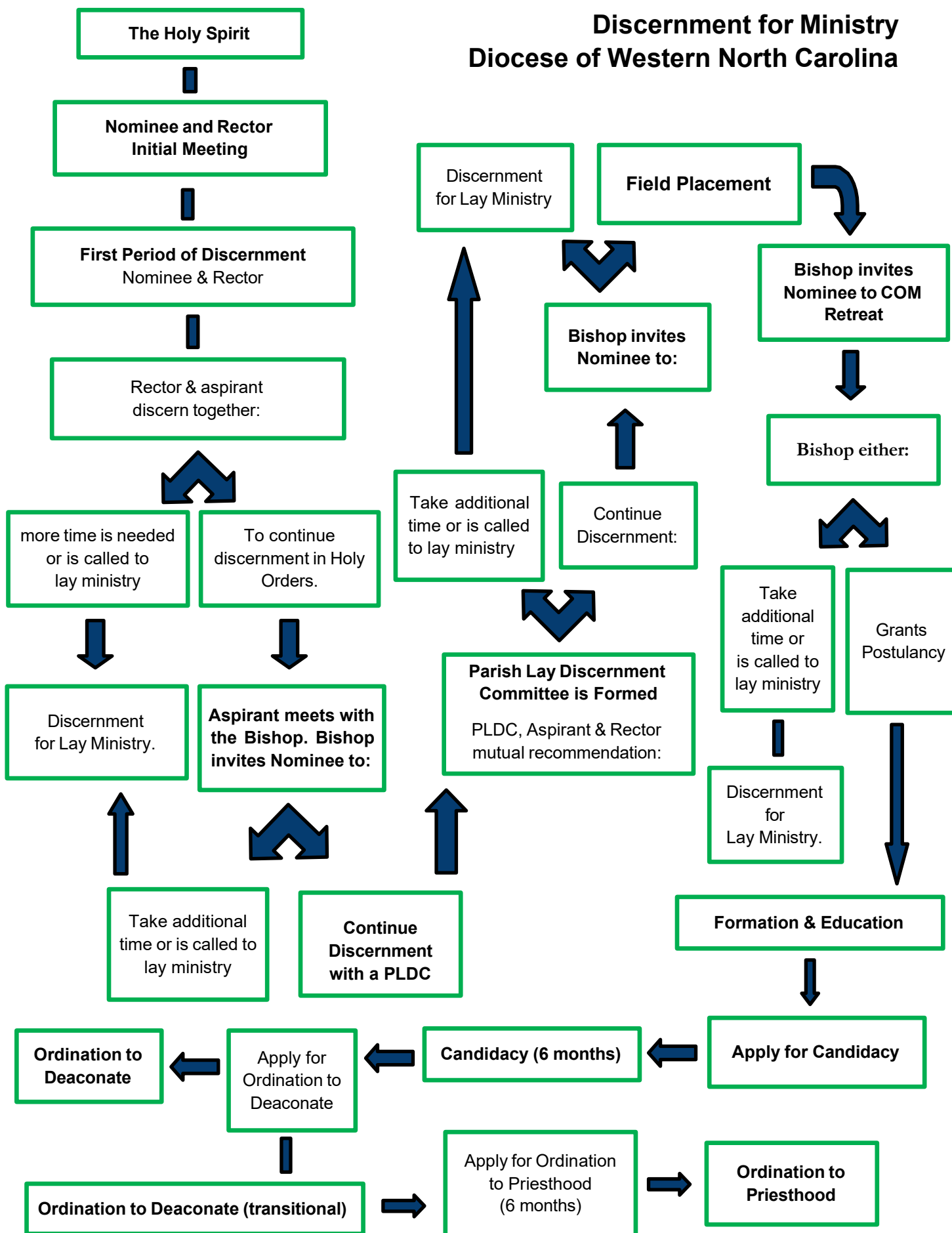
CANON 7.2 QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERS. To be eligible to serve as an at-large member of the Commission on Ministry, a Cleric must be Canonically Resident in the Diocese and not under ecclesiastical discipline, and a lay individual must meet the requirements for being a Layperson as set forth in the definition of such term. No person who has served a full three-year term as an appointed member of the Commission on Ministry shall be eligible for appointment to a new term as a member of the Commission on Ministry unless a year has passed or will have passed since such person's last term of office and the start of a new term of office. At the discretion of the Bishop, the Commission on Ministry may join with like Commissions of other diocese in performing the duties here in after prescribed.

CANON 7.3 OFFICES OF THE COMMISSION ON MINISTRY. The officers of the Commission on Ministry are a President, a Vice-President and a Recording Secretary. The persons to hold such offices are to be elected from the membership of the Commission on Ministry at the first meeting of the Commission on Ministry following the annual Diocesan Convention, and each shall serve in the office to which such person is elected until the first to occur of such person's resignation or removal by the Commission on Ministry or the election of such person's successor. Upon the occurrence of a vacancy in the office of President, Vice-President or Recording Secretary, the Commission on Ministry shall immediately fill the same. The President presides at all meetings of the Commission on Ministry. In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall preside at a meeting of the Commission on Ministry, and in the absence of the President and Vice President the Commission on Ministry shall select one of its members to preside at such meeting. The Recording Secretary shall keep regular minutes of the Commission on Ministry's proceedings.

CANON 7 .4 RESIGNATION, REMOVAL, AND REPLACEMENT. Any member of the Commission on Ministry may resign by submitting a letter of resignation to the Bishop or the President, Vice President, or Recording Secretary of the Commission on Ministry. The Bishop may declare vacant any seat not filled by nomination or confirmation at the Convention; the seat of an appointed member who fails to maintain the qualifications for membership; the seat of an appointed member who has failed without excuse to attend two (2) consecutive regular meetings of the Commission on Ministry; or the seat of an appointed at-large member who has failed, without excuse, to attend a total of three (3) regular meetings of the Commission on Ministry during any calendar year. The vacancy as to any seat for an appointed member may be filled by the Bishop, with confirmation by Executive Council, and in filling any such vacancy the Bishop must appoint a candidate of the same order to which the vacant seat is allocated. A person appointed to fill a vacant seat shall serve the remainder of the term otherwise allocated to such seat, and any uncertainty as to the duration of such term shall be resolved by the Bishop.

CANON 7.5 THOSE WITH SEAT AND VOICE ONLY. The following shall, by virtue of their offices, be entitled to notice of, and to seat and voice (but not vote) at meetings of the Commission on Ministry: the Bishop, the Bishop Coadjutor (if there is one), each Bishop Suffragan (if there is one), and each Assisting Bishop (if there is one).

Discernment for Ministry Diocese of Western North Carolina





Checklist and Helpful Information

Nominees are required to read this checklist in full and should share this information with their presenting priests.

Scheduling and Deadlines

It is imperative that discernment is not rushed in order to make any of the deadlines within this checklist.

Nominees begin applying for postulancy at the conclusion of the Parish Lay Discernment period and only with their recommendation, along with the continuing support of the aspirants priest endorsing that the aspirant move forward in the process.

Please note that the bishop's office must be in possession of the entire application at least four weeks in advance of the interviews. This includes the psychological evaluations. Please Note: the psych evaluation can sometimes take 60 days to complete.

Submitting: Who and How

All documents must be sent to Ms. Jess Ives (jess@thediocese.net).

Email attachments are preferred in all instances save the college transcripts and medical evaluation, which should be sent to the diocesan offices directly:

The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina
900-B CentrePark Drive, Asheville, NC 28803
Attn: Jess Ives

Please send regular updates via email to Jess Ives to let her know when to expect any materials, especially those with deadlines.

Copies: Nominees must keep copies of all documents in their own file.

Checklist

Name of Nominee: _____ Parish: _____

Nominee Address: _____ Rector/PIC: _____

Nominee Email: _____ Rector/PIC Email: _____

Nominee Phone: _____ Rector/PIC Phone: _____

Phase 1

_____ Initial Meeting between Rector/PIC & Nominee Date: _____

_____ Rector notifies Bishop's Office & COM Chair

_____ Nominee provides evidence of baptism and confirmation to Rector

_____ Nominee and Rector – prayerful conversations no less than 6 months (Addendum 1)

_____ Rector review's Addendum 3

_____ Nominee interviews a Deacon and a Priest (see addendum 2)

_____ Nominee receives *Guidelines for Spiritual Auto.* from Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Nominee completes Spiritual Autobiography and discusses with Rector Date: _____

Rector/PIC affirms Nominee's call to lay ministry

_____ Rector/PIC establishes ongoing resources for lay discernment

Rector/PIC affirms Nominee's call to Holy Orders

_____ Rector/PIC completes Addendum 1 – forwarded to Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Rector/PIC completes Addendum 4 – forwarded to Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Nominee completes Addendum 5 – forwarded to Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Nominee provides evidence of baptism & confirmation to Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Nominee provides copy of Spiritual Autobiography to Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Rector/PIC requests meeting with the Bishop Date: _____

Meeting set for: _____

Phase 2

Bishop discerns call to lay ministry, or

Bishop invites Nominee to continue discernment

_____ Nominee receives Psychological Packet from Bishop's Office Date: _____

Remember this report needs to be completed before PLDC is complete

_____ Nominee schedules appointment with Archdeacon Date: _____

Meeting set for: _____

_____ Nominee engages Spiritual Director

_____ Rector contacts PLDC Trainer Name of Trainer: _____

Trainer Email: _____

Trainer Phone: _____

_____ Rector and Nominee appoint a PLDC

Phase 3

_____ Rector provides PLDC manual to members of PLDC

_____ PLDC Trainer meets with: Rector, Nominee, PLDC and Vestry Liaison

Meeting set for: _____

_____ Nominee tracks submission of psych eval before end of PLDC

_____ Nominee provides Spiritual Autobiography to PLDC

PLDC begins: _____

PLDC ends: _____

_____ PLDC completes Discernment Narrative – PLDC. Nominee, Rector/ PIC discuss

_____ PLDC, Rector/PIC & Aspirant sign Recommendation Form; forward to Bishop's Office

PLDC affirms Nominee's call to lay ministry, or

PLDC affirms Nominee to continue discernment

_____ Nominee receives *Application Packet for Postulancy* from Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Nominee completes Application Packet

_____ Nominee submits application to Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Nominee forwards Reference Form to all references Date: _____

Reference Forms returned to Bishop's Office

_____ Nominee submits Spiritual Auto. to Bishop's Office Date: _____

Phase 3 (continued)

Bishop discerns more time is needed and aspirant is asked to return at a later date.

Bishop discerns call to lay ministry.

Or

Bishop invites Nominee to participate in Field Placement and/or attend COM Retreat

_____ Nominee receives from Bishop's Office:

Medical Examination Form

Authorization for Release of Information

_____ Nominee pays expenses for background check and medical exam

_____ Forms completed and provided to Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Field placement assigned Supervising Rector/PIC: _____

Parish: _____

Clergy cell: _____ Clergy email: _____

_____ Supervising Rector/PIC submits FP report to Bishop's Office (Addendum 8) Date: _____

_____ Nominee submits FP report to Bishop's Office (Addendum 8) Date: _____

Bishop discerns more time is needed and aspirant is asked to return at a later date.

Bishop discerns call to lay ministry.

Or

Bishop invites Nominee to attend COM Retreat

_____ Nominee submits to Bishop **at least one (1) month prior to COM Retreat:** Date: _____

A letter requesting Admission as a Postulant (Addendum 8)

_____ Rector/PIC & Vestry completes & submits Addendum 9 to Bishop's Office Date: _____

Phase 4

_____ Nominee pays retreat expenses in full to Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ Nominee attends COM Retreat Date: _____

Bishop & COM discern more time is needed and aspirant is asked to return at a later date.

Bishop & COM discern call to lay ministry.

Or

Bishop grants Postulancy

Phase 4 (continued)

Postulant for Priesthood

_____ requests Financial Plan Form from Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ submits Financial Plan Form to Bishop Date: _____

_____ researches seminary options

_____ requests meeting with the Bishop Date: _____

Meeting set for: _____

2nd conversation on finances and seminary options with Bishop

Postulant for Diaconate:

_____ requests Financial Plan Form from Bishop's Office Date: _____

_____ submits Financial Plan Form to Bishop

_____ requests meeting with the Bishop Date: _____

Meeting set for: _____

2nd conversation on finances and seminary options with Bishop

Phase 5 - Postulancy

Postulant attends (circle one):

Diocesan Deacon Formation Program

Seminary

Name of School: _____

Matriculation date: _____

Postulant submits Ember Day Letters to Bishop:

Dates: _____

Postulant for Priesthood participates in accredited CPE program

location: _____

Phase 6 - Candidacy

_____ Postulant submits *Application for Admission as a Candidate* (A - 10 or A - 11) Date: _____

Note: Request for Candidacy usually occurs after successful completion of one half of seminary or Deacon Formation Program. Please consult with the Bishop's Office if certain circumstances allow for candidacy application.

_____ Postulant provides an updated Spiritual Autobiography to Bishop's Office Date: _____

Note: updated autobiography must be submitted 30 days prior to Standing Committee interview.

_____ Vestry & Rector/Priest-in-charge submit Addendum 12 Date: _____

_____ Postulant requests interview with the Standing Committee Date: _____

Coordinate this through the Bishop's Office

Interview set for: _____

_____ Report submitted by Postulant's seminary or Deacon Formation Program. Date: _____

_____ Bishop's Office provides the following documents to the COM and SC prior to the next retreat:

Seminary Transcripts

Middler Report

Updated Spiritual Autobiography

_____ The COM submits a recommendation to SC that Candidacy: Date: _____

_____be granted. _____be deferred. _____be denied.

_____ SC meets with Postulant

_____ The SC submits a recommendation to the Bishop that Candidacy: Date: _____

_____be granted. _____be deferred. _____be denied.

The Bishop may

_____ admit Postulant as a Candidate for ordination.

_____ defer the Postulant's request for Candidacy.

_____ deny the Postulant's request for Candidacy.

_____ The Bishop communicates the decision regarding Candidacy to Postulant. Date: _____

_____ Bishop registers Candidates in the process for priesthood for the GOE. Date: _____

Postulant submits Ember Day Letters to Bishop

Dates: _____

Ordination to the Diaconate

____ Candidate submits Application for Ordination to Diaconate (A - 13) Date: _____

Note: request can be submitted only after 6 months as a Candidate.

____ Vestry & Rector/PIC submit Addendum 14 . Date: _____

____ Certificate from Deacon Formation Program or Seminary:

____ Scholastic record in canonical subjects

____ Evaluation and recommendation of Candidate's qualifications for ordination

____ Medical, psychological and background checks updated.

____ COM recommendation submitted to SC.

____ SC recommendation submitted to the Bishop.

____ Candidate and Rector/Priest-in-charge informed.

____ Date for ordination set with the Bishop.

Ordination to the Priesthood

____ Candidate submits Application for Ordination to Priesthood (A - 15). Date: _____

Note: request can be submitted any time after ordination to diaconate but may not be ordained until at least 6 months following ordination as a deacon.

____ Vestry & Rector/PIC submit Addendum 16 . Date: _____

____ Results of GOE's and any necessary follow-up

____ COM recommendation submitted to SC. Date: _____

____ SC certification of canonical requirements submitted to the Bishop. Date: _____

____ Candidate and Rector/Priest-in-charge informed. Date: _____

____ Date for ordination set with the Bishop. Date: _____