

Who does what in the ordination process:

The Sponsoring Congregation

Everyone in the process, but particularly the Bishop, Commission on Ministry, and the discernment community (sponsoring congregation), is involved in discerning, with God's help, this main question:

What are the appropriate avenues for the expression and support of this person's ministries, either lay or ordained?

To assist in answering this question, the following are advisable:

- Become familiar with different types of lay ministry, including licensed lay ministries as described in the *Handbook on Licensed Lay Ministry*.
- Become familiar with the variety of priestly ministry and particularly with the responsibilities of a priest as described in the ordination service in the prayer book.
- Become familiar with the varieties of diaconal ministry and particularly with the responsibilities of a deacon as described in the ordination service in the prayer book.
- Learn about the person's experiences in ministry up to this point and notice strengths and gifts
- Listen to the person's sense of what types of ministry he/she is called to
- Compare the gifts expressed and the calling described to each other and also to the various lay and ordained ministries above to see which seem to fit the best
- So far as you can become aware of them, consider the needs of the wider church for different types of lay and ordained ministers, since the appropriate exercise of ministry relates both to the person's gifts and to the needs of the Church.

In addressing this overall question of discernment, each participant in the process has some specific, nuts-and-bolts responsibilities. The responsibilities of the sponsoring congregation, including the member of clergy having oversight, the Parish Discernment Group (PDG), the Vestry, and the Clerk of the Vestry are detailed below, roughly.

Member of Clergy or Leader having oversight

- Ascertain that the person has been baptized
- Ascertain that the person has been confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church
- Affirm whether the person is a communicant in good standing
- Write a letter (to be included with parish nomination) stating reasons for recommending the person as a postulant to the order of priests or deacons
- If in favor of nomination, sign congregational nomination form for postulancy
- If continuing in support of the person's process, sign subsequent letters of support to be included in applications for Candidacy, for Ordination as a Deacon, and, if applicable, for Ordination as a Priest

Parish Discernment Group

- Meet with the person several times for prayer & discernment
- Write a report or letter (to be included with the parish nomination) articulating whether ordination as a priest or deacon would represent the most appropriate exercise of the person's ministry

Vestry

- Decide at a duly convened meeting whether to nominate the person for postulancy, considering these factors:
 - knowledge of the person's ministry within the congregation
 - recommendations from the priest and PDG
 - congregation's ability/willingness to pay associated costs
- If a 2/3 majority is in favor of nomination, sign the nomination form at the meeting.
- Determine details of financial support for formation and participatory support in the person's process and implement these decisions at the appropriate times
- If continuing to support the person's process, sign subsequent letters when the person applies for Candidacy and for Ordination as a Deacon – and, if applicable, for Ordination as a Priest. ***For a deacon, the vestry will be asked to sign a total of three letters; for a priest, a total of four.*** These letters satisfy canonical requirements at each stage of the process and cannot be combined or omitted.

Clerk of the Vestry:

- Sign each of the letters of congregational support (**three letters in total for a deacon; four for a priest**) to attest that each was signed at a duly convened meeting of the vestry and that the signatures represent a 2/3 majority of the members

What are the associated costs of sponsoring a person through process?

In nominating a person for postulancy to the priesthood or diaconate, the congregation is making a commitment to support that person in various ways throughout the process.

Church canons require (III.6.2.a / III.8.2.a) that, in nominating someone for postulancy, the nominating congregation

- “involve itself in the Nominee’s preparation for ordination” and
- “pledge to contribute financially to that preparation”

The specifics of its involvement and financial support are decided by the congregation. A

“Menu of Support” is available through the Diocesan Office to provide ideas on types of support that might be offered, both financial and participatory.

It is advisable that representatives of the vestry communicate with the Nominee regarding the support that will be provided. At the least, a vestry representative should inform the Nominee what financial support has been committed toward their formation and how it will be disbursed. Congregations/vestries may find it useful to involve the Nominee in determining what forms of financial and/or participatory support would be most helpful, since needs will vary. An opportune time for such a conversation is after the vestry has signed the congregational nomination form, when requesting the person’s signature to accept the nomination.

The Diocese requests that the sponsoring congregation pay these costs:

- 1/3 the cost of the required background check (1/3 is approximately **\$100**)
- 1/3 the cost of the required psychological exams (1/3 is approximately **\$150**)

For these requirements, the diocese pays 1/3, the person in the process pays 1/3, and the sponsoring congregation is requested to pay 1/3.