

Preface to the Diaconal Packet

The diaconal formation process, of which this diocese has had several graduating classes over the last few years, is now formally administered by a Council for the Diaconate, which is appointed by the Bishop. When someone finds that they are feeling some sort of pull to ordained life, and that this expression is to diaconal service, and not to priesthood, their first stop is to their Rector/Vicar and then to the Bishop.

If the Bishop concurs that exploration of a call is warranted, then he makes such a person a postulant. They spend the first year in the diaconal formation process both exploring the call, and working with their Vestry/Bishop's Council and Rector/Warden. The diaconal formation process involves attendance at one weekend a month, beginning Friday night at 7 pm, and running through 1:30 pm on Saturday. There are reading assignments, projects, and yes, even take home quizzes. There is a small cost, and the student must have already completed, or currently be enrolled in an Education for Ministry course from the University of the South. In the Fall of this first year, the individual must complete the Holy Orders Discernment Committee process (HODC) -- see the HODC manual.

If the individual is recommended by their Rector/Vicar, their Vestry (who receives the report from the HODC), and the Bishop's Advisory Conference on Applicants to the Ministry (BACAM), they are interviewed by the Commission on Ministry. The COM makes recommendation to the Bishop, who may award Candidacy.

For two further years, the individual is in the diaconal formation process as a Candidate. Then, in the Fall of the 4th year of formation, the Candidate is ordained to the Diaconate, but must complete the 4th year as a type of continuing education.

After ordination, the Deacon functions as per the Letter of Agreement, that the Vestry/Bishop's Committee, Rector/Vicar, Warden, Archdeacon, and Bishop have negotiated. Oversight of the deacon normally rests with the Rector/Vicar and the Archdeacon. Annual reports on the ministry of the deacon are required by canon to be submitted to the Archdeacon.

Does all this sound a bit over the top? The short checklist gives every step in order, and the Packet has an expanded version of the checklist, which explains every step. Remember that at this point, you are not expected to be an expert on process, but rather to simply be faithful to a possible call to begin to explore whether or not ordained ministry as a deacon is your call from God.