

**The Process of
Becoming a Deacon
in the Diocese of Northwest Texas**

Dianconal Packet

Information and Forms

Table of Contents

Along with this packet, you will need three separate documents. These are the Holy Orders Discernment Committee (HODC) Manual, the HODC Guide, and the Checklist. Much of the explanatory materials is found in the Manual. All are available as downloadable files in pdf format.

Expanded Checklist **page 3**

Canons regarding the Diaconate in the Episcopal Church **page 7**

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Expanded Checklist
Title III Canons 6 and 7
(Of the Ordination of Deacons, Of the Life and Work of Deacons)

Preliminary meeting with Rector

This is an unofficial meeting. A member of the clergy, either the Rector, Vicar, or some member known to the person, should consult and give encouragement for the person to continue. While unofficial, this is not casual. The member of the clergy, for example, must be aware that the person intends to consult the Bishop, and must give *his* approval.

Preliminary meeting with Bishop*

Likewise this is an unofficial meeting. The Bishop's encouragement here is not an official endorsement of the person, but rather a more informal, "get to know you" type of meeting.

Completed local discernment process* III.6.1(a)

The Commission on Ministry provides a document to guide this process called the Holy Orders Discernment Handbook. It provides all relevant guidance on the matter. Report of the Parish Advisory Committee on Discernment must accompany the acceptance of nomination in III.6.1.(a)(8)

Nominated by community of faith* III.6.1(a)

Normally done by the Vestry of the parish, or the Bishop's Committee. If the discernment community is other than a parish, the Bishop should be informed in advance. The nomination form must include full name and date of birth, length of time resident in Diocese, dates and places of Baptism and Confirmation, whether a previous application or nomination has been made, and a statement expressing the commitment of the community of faith to involve itself in the applicant's preparation for ordination. If from a congregation, this must be signed by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry or Bishop's Committee, as well as the Rector/Vicar and Clerk of Vestry/Bishop's Committee.

Acceptance of nomination/letter of application* III.6.1(a)(8)

Once nominated by the local community of faith, the applicant must formally accept the nomination. There is a provided form for this.

Bishop awards Postulancy III.6.1(b)

"Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and includes a process of exploration of and decision on the Postulant's call to the diaconate." III.6.1(b)

Background check*

III.6.1(b)(1i)

Background checks are initiated by the Diocesan office (but paid for by the community of faith) conducted by an outside firm (currently Oxford Document Search). It includes a check of personal references, past employers, and a credit history, as well as a legal search.

Medical exam*

III.6.1(b)(1ii)

This is a general exam, done by your physician (at your expense). Results are confidential, held by the Bishop. In rare instances, the Chair of the Commission on Ministry may need to be informed of a particular fact. The Church Pension Fund provides the appropriate forms.

Psychological exam*

III.6.1(b)(1ii)

There are forms for this provided by the Church Pension Fund. This exam, also at your expense, is done by a psychiatrist in Lubbock. Having everyone use the same psychiatrist provides a uniformity of response. For more information, contact the Hulsey Center. Again, results are confidential, held by the Bishop.

Attends the Bishop's Advisory Committee on Aspirants to the Ministry (BACAM)

BACAM is a series of interviews with lay and ordained people not previously well known by the Postulant. It is usually held in Lubbock on a Saturday in late Spring. BACAM provides an "outside" look at the Postulant. BACAM reports are made directly to the Bishop. For registration details, contact the Commission on Ministry.

Interview with the Commission on Ministry

III.6.1(b)(2)

The Commission on Ministry is a board appointed by the Bishop, composed of clergy and laity. It serves in an advisory capacity to the Bishop. He is not bound by its recommendations, but does work exceedingly closely with the Commission. Since the Commission is advisory to the Bishop, its recommendations are made directly to him. Meetings of the Commission are held quarterly (approximately) in Lubbock.

2nd Interview with the Bishop

III.6.1(b)(2)

The Bishop may elect to meet with the applicant for a formal interview, or he may waive this interview at his discretion.

Bishop awards Candidacy

III.6.1(b)(3)

"Candidacy is a time, no less than one year in length, of formation in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate, established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission and the congregation or other community of faith." III.6.2(a)

While Candidate, writes Ember Day letters III.6.3(e)

Four times a year, the candidate must write the Bishop reflecting on “the candidate’s academic, diakonal, human, spiritual, and practical development.”

Attends a program of preparation III.6.3(a and b)

In terms of time involved, this is the single largest step. The diaconal formation program involves several years of study. For further details, contact the Archdeacon.

Demonstrates competence in the following areas:* III.6.3(b)

Academic: The Holy Scriptures, theology, & the tradition of the Church
Diakonia and the diaconate
Human awareness and understanding
Spiritual development and discipline
Practical training and experience

The Diaconal Formation Program does have final exams in the above mentioned areas. Exams are usually more diagnostic than evaluative. That is to say; they are not graded. Rather, they indicate areas in which further work needs to be done. Evaluation is done by the Examining Chaplains, the ordained members of the Commission on Ministry.

Receives training in:* III.6.3(c,d)

Sexual misconduct awareness and avoidance
Title IV
Anti-racism

These are covered as a part of the Diaconal Formation Program.

Annual evaluations
and final assessment from program of preparation* III.6.3(f)

At the end of every year of Diaconal Formation, the formation Directors give a written assessment of each Candidate. These are sent to the Candidates, the Commission on Ministry, and the Bishop.

Final recommendation from COM to Bishop* III.6.3(g)

The Commission may request a second interview. Its recommendation is given directly to the Bishop.

Certification by Standing Committee*

III.6.3(j)

The Standing Committee of our Diocese must certify in writing that all canonical requirements have been met, that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, doctrinal, or spiritual grounds, and that they recommend ordination.

Bishop may ordain

III.6.3(g)

Ordinations are not private ceremonies, but celebrations within the community life of our Diocese. Therefore, the usual pattern is Ordinations are at Diocesan Convention. Details of the ceremony are determined by the Bishop and the hosts of Convention.

After ordination

Must have letter of agreement*

III.7.4(a)

Before ordination, the Candidate must negotiate a letter of agreement with the Rector/Vicar and the Vestry/Bishop's Committee which spells out the responsibilities of the Deacon. This agreement must be approved by the Bishop, and copies provided to the Archdeacon and Bishop.

Must report annually to Bishop

III.7.4(b)

Deacons must report annually to the Archdeacon on their life and work. The Archdeacon will file these reports with the Bishop.

Must engage in continual education

III.7.5

The Bishop and Commission shall require and provide for the continuing education of Deacons and keep a record of such education. Failure to engage in continuing education is a very serious matter. In extreme cases, permission to serve as a deacon may be withdrawn, pending the filing of an appropriate continuing education plan. Continuing education for all clergy in our Diocese is monitored by the Commission on Ministry.

*requires form

CANON 6: Of the Ordination of Deacons

Sec. 1. Selection

The Bishop, in consultation with the Commission, shall establish procedures to identify and select persons with evident gifts and fitness for ordination to the Diaconate.

(a) Nomination. A confirmed adult communicant in good standing, may be nominated for ordination to the diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith. The Nomination shall be in writing, and shall include:

- (1) Full name and date of birth.
- (2) The length of time resident in the Diocese.
- (3) Evidence of Baptism and Confirmation.
- (4) Whether an application has been made previously for Postulancy or the person has been nominated in any diocese.
- (5) A description of the process of discernment by which the applicant has been identified for ordination to the Diaconate.
- (6) The level of education attained and, if any, the degrees earned and areas of specialization.
- (7) A letter of support by the applicant's discernment community, including a statement committing the discernment community to involve itself in the applicant's preparation for ordination to the Diaconate. If it be a congregation, the letter shall be signed by a two-thirds majority of the Vestry or comparable body, and the Member of the Clergy or leader exercising oversight.
- (8) An acceptance in writing by the nominated person. The nomination shall be submitted to the Bishop, who may admit the person as a Postulant for ordination to the Diaconate.

(b) Admission to Postulancy. Admission is the time between nomination and candidacy and includes a process of exploration of and decision on the Postulant's call to the Diaconate.

- (1) There shall be a thorough investigation of the Postulant which shall include:
 - (i) a background check, and
 - (ii) medical and complete psychological evaluation by professionals approved by the Bishop, using forms prepared for the purpose by The Church Pension Fund,

and if desired or necessary, psychiatric referral.

(iii) Reports of all investigations and examinations shall be kept on file by the Bishop.

(2) The Bishop, or the Bishop's designee, may interview the Postulant. The Commission or a designated committee shall interview the Postulant, and the Commission or designated committee shall submit a recommendation to the Bishop.

(3) The Bishop may then admit the Postulant as a Candidate, informing the Candidate and the Member of the Clergy or other leader of the Candidate's discernment community in writing.

Sec. 2. Candidacy

(a) Candidacy is a time, no less than one year in length, of formation in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate, established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission, and the congregation or other community of faith.

(b) The Bishop may assign the Candidate to any congregation of the diocese or other community of faith after consultation with the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight.

(c) At the Bishop's sole discretion, any Candidate may be removed from the list of Candidates, with written notice of the removal being given to the Candidate and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight of the nominating congregation or other community of faith and the Commission.

Sec. 3. Preparation for Ordination

(a) The Bishop, in consultation with the Commission, shall determine the length of time and extent of formation needed to prepare each Candidate for ordination.

(b) Before ordination each Candidate shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas:

(1) Academic studies including, The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church.

(2) Diakonia and the diaconate.

(3) Human awareness and understanding.

(4) Spiritual development and discipline.

(5) Practical training and experience.

(c) The formation process shall include sexual misconduct prevention training, training regarding Title IV of these Canons, and anti-racism training.

(d) Formation shall reflect the local culture and each Candidate's background, age, occupation, and ministry. Prior education and learning from life experience may be considered as part of the formation required for ordination.

(e) Wherever possible, formation shall take place in community, including persons in preparation for the diaconate, or others preparing for ministry.

(f) Each Candidate shall communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter, four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Candidate's academic, diaconal, human, spiritual, and practical development.

(g) During Candidacy each Candidate's progress shall be evaluated from time to time, and there shall be a written report of the evaluation by those authorized by the Commission to be in charge of the evaluation program.

Upon certification by those in charge of the Candidate's program of preparation that the Candidate has successfully completed preparation and is ready for ordination, a final written assessment of readiness for ordination to the Diaconate shall be prepared as determined by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission. This report shall include a recommendation from the Commission regarding the readiness of the Candidate for ordination. Records shall be kept of all evaluations, assessments, and the recommendation, and shall be made available to the Standing Committee.

(h) If the medical examination, psychological examination, or background check have taken place more than 36 months prior to ordination, they must be updated.

(i) Before ordination each Candidate must have reached the age of twenty-four, and made application for ordination.

(j) Upon certification in writing by the Standing Committee that all canonical requirements have been met and that there is no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, doctrinal, or spiritual grounds and that they recommend ordination, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate a Deacon.

Form A1
Biographical Information

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Home Phone _____

Work Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____ Mobile Phone _____

Occupation _____

Marital Status _____ (If married previously, please attach a short paragraph describing the previous marriage.)

Spouse's Name and Occupation _____

Children's Names and Ages _____

Congregation to which you belong _____

Educational Background _____

To get to know you better as an individual, answer any **one** of the following: Do you have any hobbies? What do you and your spouse like to do together? What were your favorite subjects in school? Have you read any good books lately? _____

Form A2
REPORT OF THE HODC

(This is identical to Appendix B in the HODC Guide)

III.6.1(a) Nomination. A confirmed adult communicant in good standing, who has been a member of the Episcopal Church for the preceding three years, may be nominated to be a Postulant for ordination to the diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith. The nomination shall be in writing, signed by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and at least

two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body, and shall be submitted to the Bishop. Upon acceptance in writing by the nominated person, the Bishop may admit the person as a Postulant

for ordination to the diaconate. (a) Nomination. A confirmed adult communicant in good standing, who has been a member of the Episcopal Church for the preceding three years, may be nominated to be a Postulant for ordination to the diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith. The nomination shall be in writing, signed by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and at least

two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body, and shall be submitted to the Bishop. Upon acceptance in writing by the nominated person, the Bishop may admit the person as a Postulant

for ordination to the diaconate.

TO: The Rector and Vestry of _____

DATE: _____

ASPIRANT: _____

HODC CONVENOR: _____

The finding of the Holy Orders Discernment Committee based on the questions furnished by the Diocese of Northwest Texas are as follows: When answering these questions, please be as specific as possible and provide examples to support your response. Please feel free to attach additional sheets for longer answers to any question.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

1. Please consider the following:

a) How have you experienced the aspirant's ability to articulate his/her understanding of Christian Ministry?

b) How does the aspirant see himself/herself fitting into the Christian Ministry?

GROWTH IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

2. Please consider the following:

a) In what ways is the aspirant able to describe his/her spiritual journey and growing relationship with Christ? Give examples.

CURRENT MINISTRIES

3. Please consider the following:

a) Describe the aspirant's current ministries within the parish community, home and workplace (if applicable).

b) Describe the aspirant's ability to interact with the parish family and to develop relationships with others.

c) Describe the qualities the aspirant brings to his/her current ministries that make them especially effective.

CAPACITY FOR LEADERSHIP

4. Please consider the following:

a) In what ways has the aspirant demonstrated his/her leadership skills in the parish?

b) How do people respond to his/her leadership?

c) How does he/she respond to the leadership of others?

EMOTIONAL HEALTH

5. Please consider the following:

a) How have you experienced the aspirant's overall emotional health in the periods before and during the PACM process?

b) What is your sense of the aspirant's ability to work under pressure, with conflicting demands/or under stress?

c) How have you experienced the aspirant's ability to recognize appropriate boundaries, e.g., regarding issues of leadership, finance, sexuality, sense of responsibility?

d) From your observation, is the aspirant comfortable with his/her sexuality?

6. In what ways can you envision this person as your deacon or priest? / as a deacon or priest?

7. Do you have any reservations about the aspirant? Please explain.

8. From your observation, are there any areas of growth that the aspirant should pursue prior to or during theological education (other than the normal course of study)?

9. Describe how the aspirant responded within the group, e.g., his/her willingness to share personal concerns and commitments, openness to differences of opinions, willingness to consider new insights.

We recommend that

_____ pursue:

1. Lay Ministry _____ in the area(s) of

2. Diaconate _____

3. Priesthood _____

Additional Comments: Please be specific.

Form A3

Nomination by a Community of Faith

III.6.1(a) Nomination. A confirmed adult communicant in good standing, who has been a member of the Episcopal Church for the preceding three years, may be nominated to be a Postulant for ordination to the diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith. The nomination shall be in writing, signed by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and at least

two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body, and shall be submitted to the Bishop. Upon acceptance in writing by the nominated person, the Bishop may admit the person as a Postulant

for ordination to the diaconate.(a) Nomination. A confirmed adult communicant in good standing, who has been a member of the Episcopal Church for the preceding three years, may be nominated to be a Postulant for ordination to the diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith. The nomination shall be in writing, signed by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and at least

two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body, and shall be submitted to the Bishop. Upon acceptance in writing by the nominated person, the Bishop may admit the person as a Postulant

for ordination to the diaconate.

Nominee's name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Date of Nomination _____

Length of Time Resident in Diocese: _____

Date of Baptism: _____

Place of Baptism _____

Date of Confirmation: _____

Place of Confirmation: _____

Is this Community willing to involve itself in the preparation for ordination? How will you support him/her? Please attach a statement expressing this support.

The nominee () has () has not previously applied for consideration (if so, please attach a statement expressing the details).

This nomination must be signed by the Rector/Vicar, Clerk of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee, and 2/3 of the Vestry/Bishop's Committee.

(Rector/Vicar)

(Clerk)

Form A4
Acceptance of Nomination

III.6.1(a) Nomination. A confirmed adult communicant in good standing, who has been a member of the Episcopal Church for the preceding three years, may be nominated to be a Postulant for ordination to the diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith. The nomination shall be in writing, signed by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and at least

two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body, and shall be submitted to the Bishop. Upon acceptance in writing by the nominated person, the Bishop may admit the person as a Postulant

for ordination to the diaconate. (a) Nomination. A confirmed adult communicant in good standing, who has been a member of the Episcopal Church for the preceding three years, may be nominated to be a Postulant for ordination to the diaconate by the person's congregation or other community of faith. The nomination shall be in writing, signed by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge and at least

two-thirds of the Vestry or comparable body, and shall be submitted to the Bishop. Upon acceptance in writing by the nominated person, the Bishop may admit the person as a Postulant

for ordination to the diaconate.

To the Bishop of Northwest Texas

Name: _____

Date: _____

Having been nominated by my community of faith, I hereby formally accept such nomination, and apply to you for postulancy for the Diaconate. I understand that this is a time for exploration, and not yet decision.

Signed _____

Present address _____

Phone (H) _____ (W) _____

Fax _____ Email _____

Form B1
Admission as Postulant for Holy Orders
Diocese of Northwest Texas

III.6.1(a)...the Bishop may admit the person as a Postulant for ordination to the diaconate.
(b) Postulancy. Postulancy is a time of exploration of and decision on the Postulant's call to the diaconate.

Date of Admission _____

To _____

After having reviewed your nomination by your local community, and your acceptance of the nomination, I am pleased to admit you as a Postulant for Holy Orders for ordination to the Diaconate in the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Northwest Texas.

(signed) Bishop of Northwest Texas

cc. Rector/Vicar of Congregation
Commission on Ministry
Standing Committee
Diaconal Formation Program
Adventure Editor

Form B2
Reports of Outside Examinations

III.6.1(b)(1) During Postulancy there shall be a thorough investigation of the Postulant which shall include: (i) a background check, and (ii) medical and psychological examinations, by professionals approved by the Bishop, using forms prepared for that purpose by The Church Pension Fund. Reports of all investigations and examinations shall be kept on file by the Bishop. The Bishop, with regard for confidentiality, may make information from the reports available to the Commission.

Attached to this sheet, there are

Background Check

Medical Exam

Psychological Exam

BACAM Report

Form B3

Report of the Commission on Ministry

III.6.1.(b)(2) The Bishop, or the Bishop's designee, may interview the Postulant. The Commission or a designated committee shall interview the Postulant, and the Commission or designated committee shall submit a recommendation to the Bishop.

Date _____

To: The Bishop of Northwest Texas

On the _____ day of _____, in the year _____, while meeting in the city of _____, We have interviewed _____, who is pursuing ordination for the diaconate. It is our recommendation that

(Signed) Chair of the Commission on Ministry

Form C1
Admission as Candidate for Holy Orders
Diocese of Northwest Texas

III.6.1(3)The Bishop may then admit the Postulant as a Candidate, informing the Candidate and the Candidate's Rector or Priest-in-Charge in writing. Sec. 2. Candidacy (a) Candidacy is a time, no less than one year in length, of formation in preparation for ordination as to the Diaconate.

Date of Admission_____

To_____

After having reviewed your nomination by your local community, and your acceptance of the nomination, I am pleased to admit you as a Candidate for Holy Orders for ordination to the Diaconate in the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Northwest Texas.

(signed) Bishop of Northwest Texas

- cc. Rector/Vicar of Congregation
- Commission on Ministry
- Standing Committee
- Diaconal Formation Program
- Adventure* Editor

Form C2
Annual/Final Report of Program of Preparation
Deacon Formation Program
Diocese of Northwest Texas

III.6.3. Preparation for Ordination (a) The Bishop, in consultation with the Commission, shall determine the length of time and extent of formation needed to prepare each Candidate for ordination. Formation shall reflect the local culture and each Candidate's background, age, occupation, and ministry. Prior education and learning from life experience may be considered as part of the formation required for ordination. (b) Before ordination each Candidate shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas: (1) Diakonia and the diaconate, (2) Human awareness and understanding, (3) Spiritual development and discipline, (4) Practical training and experience, (5) Academic study and education. (c) Wherever possible, formation shall take place in community, including persons in preparation for the diaconate, or others preparing for ministry. (d) The formation process shall include sexual misconduct prevention training, training regarding Title IV of these Canons, and anti-racism training. (e) Each Candidate shall communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter, four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Candidate's diaconal, human, spiritual, practical, and academic development. (f) During Candidacy each Candidate's progress shall be evaluated from time to time, and there shall be a written report of the evaluation. Upon certification by those in charge of the Candidate's program of preparation that the Candidate has successfully completed preparation and is ready for ordination, a final written assessment of readiness for ordination to the Diaconate shall be prepared as determined by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission. Records shall be kept of all evaluations and assessments and shall be made available to the Standing Committee.

To the Bishop of Northwest Texas

DATE _____ YEAR IN FORMATION _____

NAME _____

Attached, or on the back of this form, is the annual evaluation of the Diaconal Formation Program.

cc. The Standing Committee
The Commission on Ministry
Postulant/Candidate

Form C3

Report of The COM upon readiness for Ordination

III.6.3(f)...Upon certification by those in charge of the Candidate's program of preparation that the Candidate has successfully completed preparation and is ready for ordination, a final written assessment of readiness for ordination to the Diaconate shall be prepared as determined by the Bishop in consultation with the Commission. Records shall be kept of all evaluations and assessments and shall be made available to the Standing Committee.

To the Bishop of Northwest Texas Date _____

Regarding the readiness for Ordination of _____

(Signed) Chair of the Commission on Ministry

cc. The Standing Committee

Form C5

Certification of the Standing Committee

III.6.3(g) Upon certification in writing by the Standing Committee that all canonical requirements have been met, the Bishop may ordain the Candidate a Deacon.

To the Bishop of Northwest Texas

We, being a majority of all the members of the Standing committee of Northwest Texas, and having been duly convened at _____, do testify that _____ has met all the canonical requirements for ordination. Accordingly, we hereby certify him/her for ready for ordination to the DIACONATE.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands this _____ day of _____, in the year of our Lord _____.

[Signed]

(This testimonial shall be signed by all consenting to its adoption.)