
Handbook for Ordination to the Vocational Diaconate

Episcopal Diocese of
East Tennessee

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How Our [Diocese](#) Discerns Calls to Ordained Ministry

Overview

All Christians are called to be ministers by virtue of their baptism—ministry is at the heart of our life together as the Body of Christ. In fact, our [Canons](#) require that “Each Diocese shall make provision for the *development and affirmation of the ministry of all baptized persons* in the Church and in the world” ([Canon III.1](#), *Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, 2015*). Most church ministers are lay ministers, whether their ministry serves the church’s life or the life of the world at large. Lay ministry offers the broadest, most varied opportunities for serving the world in Christ’s name. The hope of the Commission on Ministry is that all the baptized are discerning calls to ministry all of the time.

A smaller percentage of Christians are called to ordained, “ordered,” ministries: specifically focused roles that symbolize the work of all Christians—as servants ([deacons](#)), as people who bless and pardon ([priests](#)), and as those who gather disparate humanity into unity in Christ ([bishops](#)). Perceiving the direction of one’s ministry is a matter of prayerful, but not solitary, deliberation. We experience God’s calls to us in ways as varied as we are. Some persons will identify a call through specific experiences in which they sense God inviting them to reach out to the world through ordination. Such a call can be very deeply felt, and submitting that deep sense of call to discernment challenges everyone involved. Sometimes church communities reach out to specific members, asking them to serve in a particular function or capacity. That, too, can be a pathway to vocation. Some calls come to persons from the church at large, expressing the need of a particular diocese of The Episcopal Church. Each of these avenues can lead toward ordination; likewise, each may not.

Every Christian has a partner in this dance of call-and-response with God: the Body of Christ. Like individuals, the Church also continuously, attentively, and prayerfully searches for discernment. Every call to ordination, then, needs to be affirmed by both the aspirant and the wider church over time and across locales, so that ordination, like marriage, can be a covenant of mutual will, mutual purpose, and common joy.

The canonical process and the requirements for ordination in The Episcopal Church are covered in detail in [Title III, Canons 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7](#) of our *Constitution and Canons, 2015*, but each

diocese designs its own structures and systems to implement those canons. The [Commission on Ministry](#) (COM) for East Tennessee, through the process outlined in these *Handbook for Ordination* documents, intends to discern, affirm, and enable calls to ordination. Sometimes, though, our process will reaffirm a person's lay ministry as his or her vocation. Meeting the requirements of the following diocesan guidelines, then, is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for being ordained.

At any stage in the process an aspirant may realize that he or she is *not* called to *ordained* ministry. Such a decision is not a failure. It reveals spiritual wisdom and attentiveness to God's leading. Similarly, permission to proceed toward ordination may be withdrawn by parish or diocesan leadership (COM or Standing Committee) at any stage in the discernment process. That decision, too—though initially disappointing—may be a gracious doorway into satisfying and lively ministry as a [layperson](#). Everyone involved in these discernments—[aspirant](#), his/her congregation, [rector](#), COM members, and bishop—will need time and opportunities to ask questions, to reflect, and to pray.

The role of the bishop in discerning calls to ordination is pivotal. The bishop bears the ultimate responsibility whether to accept nominees as [postulants](#); whether, upon written approval of the [Standing Committee](#), to accept postulants as candidates for holy orders; and, after receiving the Standing Committee's testimonial of approval, whether to ordain a candidate as vocational deacon or priest. The Commission on Ministry oversees the multiple layers of discernment shared among aspirant, rector, Diaconal Discernment Committee, and diocesan leadership as they unfold in this process. The Commission on ministry also oversees the continuing formation of postulants and candidates as they prepare for ordination. At key points along the way, the COM gives the bishop and the Standing Committee their evaluations, letters of support, and attestations of progress in formation. (See [Canons of the Episcopal Church, Title III, Canons 2, 5, and 6.](#))

The purpose of the following guidelines and lists is to help an aspirant articulate and test what he or she has perceived as a call to Holy Orders. This work challenges everyone involved. We risk this vulnerability together to elicit insight, to clarify awareness, and to deepen faith. These are the marks of successful discernment, whether an aspirant is ordained or not. We hope that everyone involved will seek the joy in the journey, trusting the One who leads us sheep over many terrains before we reach home.

Specific Steps in the East Tennessee Discernment Process

This handbook describes the specific steps in the [discernment process](#) in the Diocese of East Tennessee. The required actions and responses of all parties in the process are outlined herein. These steps are summarized in a [Discernment Process: Steps and Due Dates which also lists due dates](#) for specific steps. The forms to be completed for those steps, except those for psychological and medical evaluations, are available as linked forms, which may be filled out via computer before they are signed, dated, and mailed to the bishop's office. In case of conflict between the statements contained in this manual and Title III of the [Canons of the Episcopal Church, 2015](#), the *Canons of the Episcopal Church* shall prevail. Both this manual and the *Canons of the Church* are subject to change, modification, and revision.

Taking initiative for your part of this journey is essential. Aspirants are responsible for tracking their own progress against the stated timelines and requirements. Completing all paperwork and assignments on time is the aspirant's responsibility. Any member of the Commission on Ministry or the COM liaison assigned to you will gladly find answers to your questions—ask them!

Acknowledgments

The inspiration for this handbook came from the Commissions on Ministry in the dioceses of Tennessee, West Tennessee, South Carolina and Minnesota. In some instances, we have used their exact words in describing our process. We thank our sisters and brothers in other dioceses for their assistance.

The Role of Deacons

A deacon's ministry, says the catechism of the Book of Common Prayer, is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Deacons reach out in both directions, bringing the needs of the world to the church and the gifts of the church to the world. They connect us with the neglected. They remind us where Jesus spent his time. They incarnate that about-face we are all directed to make when we have received the grace of Holy Communion: "Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord." Deacons help those of us who come to worship seeking the presence of God to turn around and find that awesome presence everywhere. Deacons breathe the Gospel afresh on us who otherwise might get too clubby and comfortable, that we may be blown out into the streets and scattered to the uttermost parts of the earth by the Gospel's power to transform fear into joy. They are icons, windows into the sacred; catalysts for the whole church's ministry; enablers of the church's redemptive healing of society.

Deacons bear a special responsibility for ministering in Christ's name to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the helpless. The deacon's ordination service exhorts him or her to "interpret to the church the needs, hopes, and concerns of the world." Deacons lead all of us by precept and example to claim our own servanthood ministries.

Traditionally, deacons have been in close relationship with Bishops, as the special representatives of their Bishops in the church's servant ministry. Their real base is the diocese. Deacons serve directly under the authority of and are accountable to the Bishop, or in the absence of the Bishop, the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese. As such, they remind us all that our focus, like theirs, is not limited to a specific local congregation, but also looks outward to society as a whole. Deacons help bishops extend the church's reach to larger horizons.

Deacons have their own work, different from that of bishops and priests. They find their primary service in the world, initially a ministry in which the individual has already been engaged prior to ordination (perhaps visiting the sick, hospice work, prison ministry, food kitchens, other ministries to the poor and homeless. Though they serve parishes in liturgy—reading the Gospel or leading the Prayers of the People—that work is a symbol of their following Jesus in responding directly to the needs beyond the church's walls. Generally, deacons are not employees of a parish or a diocese. Instead the order of deacons canonically resident in each Diocese constitute a Community of

Deacons, which may meet from time to time. The Bishop may also establish a Council on Deacons to oversee, study, and promote the Diaconate.

The Bishop, after consultation with the Deacon and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight, may assign a Deacon to one or more congregations, to other communities of faith, or to non-parochial ministries. Deacons assigned to a congregation or other community of faith act under the authority of the Member of the Clergy or other leader who exercises oversight in all matters concerning the congregation. Subject to the Bishop's approval, Deacons may have a letter of agreement setting forth mutual responsibilities in the assignment, and, if such a letter exists, it is subject to renegotiation with the Vestry/Bishop's Committee after the resignation of the Rector or the Priest-in-Charge.

Deacons report annually to the Bishop or the Bishop's designee on their life and work. Deacons may serve as administrators of congregations or other communities of faith, but no Deacon shall be in charge of a congregation or other community of faith. Deacons may accept chaplaincies in any hospital, prison, or other institution. Deacons may participate in the governance of the Church. For two years following ordination, new Deacons continue a process of formation authorized by the Bishop. (See [*CANON III.7: Of the Life and Work of Deacons.*](#))

Persons are ordained to the vocational diaconate with the intention of serving in that order for the rest of their lives, choosing the servant's niche in their own in structures of the church.

<p>At May vestry meeting </p> <p>Before June 1 </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vision Exercise ○ Discernment Committee Individual Report <p>5. Diaconal Discernment Committee reports to vestry or chapter its recommendation about continuing the discernment process</p> <p>6. Vestry approves or rejects the Discernment Committee's recommendation and sends a written report to bishop and the Commission on Ministry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clergy and Vestry Letter of Support for Postulancy Form
<p>Before July 1 </p> <p>Before Sept. 1 </p> <p>Late Oct. or early Nov. </p>	<p>Discernment with diocesan leaders</p> <p>7. Bishop meets with aspirant a second time —and with spouse, partner, or fiancé(e) if aspirant is married, partnered, or engaged; The bishop informs the aspirant about applying for postulancy</p> <p>8. Bishop invites aspirant to apply for postulancy</p> <p>9. Aspirant arranges for physical and mental health evaluations (use forms from bishop's assistant at diocesan house), orders college and theological school transcripts. The following are due in the bishop's office before September 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for Postulancy Forms • Financial Disclosure Form • Full, official college transcripts, unless waived by the bishop • Reports of physical health evaluation (<i>sent directly to bishop by examiner</i>) • Report of mental health evaluation (<i>sent directly to bishop by examiner</i>) • Letter of support from someone who has direct experience of the aspirant's current ministry in the world. • Release for Background Inquiry <p>10. Bishops invites aspirant to attend the diocesan discernment retreat</p> <p>11. Aspirant discerns with the diocesan COM on retreat; the Commission on Ministry makes its recommendation to the bishop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bishop informs the aspirant (and spouse/partner/fiancé(e), if desired) of the decision regarding postulancy; aspirant receives bishop's letter about postulancy <p>12. Bishop informs aspirants/spouses, COM, Standing Committee, and director of diaconal formation of the decision regarding postulancy; clergy informs DDC chair.</p>

	<p>As a Postulant</p> <p>13. Bishop and postulant discuss the next steps in meeting <u>Title III.6.5</u> regarding preparation requirements for Holy Orders, which are clear with regard to the educational requirements and standards.</p> <p>14. Postulant reviews finances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Financial Disclosure Form</u> <p>15. Postulant discusses financial plan and health insurance with bishop</p> <p>16. All postulants and candidates write Ember Day letters to the bishop four times per year (Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays after the First Sunday in Lent, the Day of Pentecost, Holy Cross Day, and December 13)</p>
	<p>17. Postulant maintains contact with the COM liaison, Formation Director, and with supporting clergy and congregation</p> <p>18. Postulant attends diocesan convention and other events as asked</p> <p>19. Postulant confers regularly with his or her COM chaplain</p> <p>20. Postulant applies to be Candidate for Holy Orders after one year of formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Application for Candidacy</u> <p>21. Postulant requests supporting documentation for Candidacy to be sent to the bishop's office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Clergy and Vestry Letter of Support for Candidacy</u> • <i>Evaluation of postulant's formational process toward the diaconate</i> <p>22. Bishop confers with the COM and Standing Committee and decides regarding candidate status.</p>

As a Candidate

23. Candidate remains in canonical relationship with the Diocese unless removed or released to another diocese.
24. Candidate continues to submit Ember Day letters to the bishop
25. Candidate completes trainings regarding prevention of sexual misconduct, civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse; the [Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church](#), particularly Title IV thereof (Ecclesiastical Discipline); and the Church's teaching on racism.
26. Candidate applies for ordination to the Vocational Diaconate after one year as Candidate
 - [Application for Ordination to the Vocational Diaconate](#)
 - [Clergy and Vestry Letter of Support for Ordination to Vocational Diaconate](#)
 - Copies of bishop's letters attesting to postulancy and candidacy
 - An evaluation and a document of completion from the diaconal formation program in which the candidate was enrolled, and
 - Any other documentation about readiness for service that might be helpful to the bishop and the Commission on Ministry (e.g., a report of the candidate's performance of her specific ministry in the world since being admitted to postulancy).
27. Candidate undergoes physical and mental health evaluations, using appropriate forms
 - Reports of physical health evaluation (*sent directly to bishop by examiner*)
 - Report of mental health evaluation (*sent directly to bishop by examiner*)
 - [Release for Background Inquiry](#)
28. Candidate meets with Board of Examining Chaplains
 - [Expectations of Candidates Seeking Ordination](#)
29. Candidate meets with Standing Committee; Standing Committee sends to the bishop its recommendation for ordination as a vocational deacon
30. Candidate and bishop set date and location for ordination

Discernment with the Local Church

Step 1: Aspirant gains knowledge of The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of East Tennessee

According to the canons of the church, an aspirant seeking ordination must be a confirmed adult [communicant in good standing](#) to be nominated for ordination by his or her congregation or other community of faith. The nomination shall be in writing and shall include a letter of support by the nominee's congregation or other community of faith, committing the community to

- (1) pledge to contribute financially to that preparation, and
- (2) involve itself in the Nominee's preparation for ordination.

In addition, the preference of this diocese is that a nominee be actively involved for at least two years in the life of The Episcopal Church.

As a foundation for further exploration, aspirants should read the [Canons of the Episcopal Church: Title III, Canons 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7](#)

Step 2: Aspirant meets with clergy in charge of his or her congregation

An aspirant's discernment with the local church begins with the rector (or other clergy of the parish appointed by the rector) or the clergy-in-charge of an aspirant's congregation. The clergy and the person desiring to enter formal discernment with the diocese should take as much time in conversation as the rector deems necessary to reach clarity. See

- [Process for Clergy Discussion with Aspirants](#)
- [Questions for Exploring Vocation](#)

Before meeting with the bishop, the **rector/clergy** completes and sends to the bishop's office the

- [Clergy Referral and Recommendation Form](#)

Also before that meeting, the *aspirant* completes and sends to the bishop's office the

- [Aspirant's Application Form](#) with spiritual autobiography and photograph—see also [Prompts for Writing a Spiritual Autobiography](#)

- [Information Release Form](#)
- [Release for Background Inquiry](#), which allows the diocese to initiate the required background check. This background check will be conducted by an agency selected by the diocese; the information is reported only to the bishop.
- [Letter of Understanding](#)
- [Authorization to Release Information, Release of Claims and Indemnity and Hold Harmless Agreement](#)

Step 3: Before December 1, aspirant and clergy meet with the bishop

This initial meeting gives the bishop an opportunity to meet the aspirant to discuss his or her understanding of call and to ask about the aspirant's personal circumstances. This is also an opportunity for the aspirant to ask questions about diocesan policies and the requirements of the canons. If the aspirant is married, partnered, or engaged, the bishop may request that the spouse, partner, or fiancé(e) attend this meeting.

If the bishop wishes the aspirant to continue in the discernment process at this time, the bishop will inform the rector and the Commission on Ministry.

Step 4: Before March 15, Diaconal Discernment Committee (DDC) Meets with Aspirant to Discern Call

When an aspirant has been approved to continue discernment with the diocese, the Commission on Ministry (COM) designates one of its members as liaison to consult with the rector on formation of the Diaconal Discernment Committee (DDC) and to consult with the DDC throughout the local discernment process. Then the clergy in charge and the senior warden of the aspirant's congregation jointly nominate a Diaconal Discernment Committee, whose purpose is to broaden the aspirant's vocational discernment and to recommend to the vestry whether the aspirant has the potential for the skills and awareness needed for ordained ministry. For details of the committee's composition and its charge, as well as a step-by-step guide to the local discernment process, see

- [Guidelines for Diaconal Discernment Committees](#)
 - [Session Information](#)
 - [Vision Exercise](#)
 - [Discernment Committee Individual Reports](#)

At the DDC's first meeting the COM liaison meets jointly with the aspirant and the committee members to familiarize everyone with the DDC process, using the documents listed above.

Step 5: Before the May vestry/chapter meeting, the DDC reports to vestry or chapter its recommendation re continuing discernment

Step 6: At its May meeting, vestry/chapter approves or rejects the DDC's recommendation and before June 1 sends a written report to bishop and the Commission on Ministry

When the clergy in charge, DDC, and vestry concur to recommend that the aspirant's call continue to discernment with the diocesan COM, the vestry signs the Letter of Support form and sends it and the DDC evaluation materials to the bishop. Vestry approval includes the vestry's commitment to contribute financially to the aspirant's preparation and to involve itself in the nominee's preparation for ordination to the Diaconate. (See [Canons III.5 and III.6.2a](#) .)

- [Letter of Support for Postulancy Form](#)

Discernment with Diocesan Leaders

Step 7: Before July 1, the bishop meets with the aspirant a second time—and with the spouse, partner, or fiancé(e) if the aspirant is married, partnered, or engaged

As preparation for this meeting with the bishop, the aspirant should review the rite of ordination in the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the *Canons of the Episcopal Church* respecting ordination, specifically [Title III](#).

Additionally, this meeting gives the bishop the opportunity to hear about an aspirant's experience of discernment thus far and how communal discernment has affected the aspirant's sense of being called by God, the Church, and the diocese. It also allows the bishop to become acquainted with the aspirant's spouse. The aspirant can ask further questions about the process requirements and about the vocation to Holy Orders.

On the basis of this meeting and information gleaned from prior steps, the bishop decides whether or not an aspirant may apply for postulancy. The bishop may also inform an aspirant that further preparation and evaluation is needed prior to inviting him or her to apply for postulancy.

Step 8: The bishop invites the aspirant to apply for postulancy

The bishop indicates by letter to the aspirant his/her decision to continue discernment and sends a copy to sponsoring clergy.

Step 9: The aspirant applies for postulancy and schedules evaluations of physical and mental health, so as to ensure that those reports and the following documentation reach the bishop's office before September 1.

- [Application for Postulancy Forms](#)
- [Financial Disclosure Form](#)
- Full, official college transcripts, unless waived by the bishop
- Reports of physical health evaluation (*sent directly to bishop by examiner*)
- Report of mental health evaluation (*sent directly to bishop by examiner*)
- Letter of support from someone who has direct experience of the aspirant's current ministry in the world.
- Release for Background Inquiry

An aspirant may choose any licensed physician to conduct the physical exam. The Commission on Ministry anticipates that an aspirant's individual or group medical insurance plan may cover the cost of the physical evaluation. The aspirant should check with the bishop's office before the exam to ask about financial reimbursement for any out-of-pocket expenses the aspirant might incur.

The aspirant should also contact the bishop's office to ask with whom to schedule the mental health evaluation, as the bishop chooses the mental health evaluator, whose role is to obtain a psychological perspective on the aspirant's life history, family dynamics, interpersonal relationships, leadership style, behavior patterns, personality characteristics, emotional fortitude, and self-concept. These dimensions will be explored with respect to readiness and fitness for life as a diaconal postulant and as a vocational deacon. Any aspirant who has been, or is currently, undergoing counseling or psychotherapy must give written permission in order for the counselor or therapist to provide information to the mental health examiner chosen by the bishop. The diocese pays, in most cases, for the mental health evaluation.

Step 10: The Bishop invites the aspirant to the diocesan discernment retreat

The bishop invites applicants and their spouses/fiancées/partners to the annual pre-postulancy discernment retreat, usually held in October, so that the Commission on Ministry can assess further an aspirant's application for postulancy.

Step 11: Aspirants discern with the diocesan COM on retreat; the COM makes its recommendation to the bishop.

Prior to the retreat the COM members confidentially review each aspirant's complete file. During the two- to three-day retreat Commission on Ministry members observe, converse with, and evaluate all attendees. Respect for the openness and vulnerability of each person present is foundational to these proceedings. The aspirant's information and the perceptions shared by COM members are strictly confidential.

The principal question the Commission seeks to discern as attendees participate in group discussion, meals, worship, and personal interviews is whether the Church is calling this person to ordination—in this diocese, at this time. At the end of the conference, the Commission on Ministry meets to discuss and develop their joint recommendations to the bishop for each aspirant.

Once the COM has made a recommendation to the bishop, it stands closed, and the aspirant's postulancy moves into the purview of the bishop. Individual COM members do not discuss findings or recommendations with the aspirant or anyone else.

The bishop decides regarding postulancy as informed by previous conversations, information received before the retreat, and the recommendation of the Commission on Ministry.

Step 12: Bishop informs aspirants/spouses, COM, Standing Committee, and director of diaconal formation of the decision regarding postulancy; clergy informs DDC chair.

The bishop informs aspirants and discusses the decision regarding postulancy privately with the aspirant (and spouse/partner/fiancée, if any), usually at an appointment set by the bishop and the aspirant for a time soon after the diocesan discernment retreat.

The Bishop notifies the following of the date on which the bishop admitted that person to postulancy:

- the Standing Committee,
- the Commission on Ministry,
- the aspirant's sponsoring clergy,
- and the director of diaconal formation in which the aspirant may be participating.

The aspirant's sponsoring clergy then reports the decision of the Bishop to the chair of the Diaconal Discernment Committee.

Canons require that the name of each new postulant be recorded in a book kept for that specific purpose. The bishop may report back to the COM as the bishop deems necessary and helpful.

As a Postulant

Step 13: Bishop and postulant discuss the next steps in meeting [Title III.6.5](#) regarding preparation requirements for Holy Orders, which are clear with regard to the educational requirements and standards.

Before pursuing a course of theological education, a postulant normally will have obtained an accredited baccalaureate degree. However, the canons do provide for those persons who have not achieved such a degree. In that case, the Commission on Ministry will oversee the academic work that needs to be done.

The norm in this diocese is that all persons seeking ordination to the vocational diaconate will have a bachelor's degree and participate in a diocesan formation program for approximately two years.

Step 14: Postulant reviews finances

The bishop asks postulants to review their current financial situation so that their expectations of financial requirements ahead will be reasonable. Postulant submits that information to the bishop using the Financial Disclosure Form.

- [Financial Disclosure Form](#)

Step 15: Postulant discusses financial plan and health insurance with bishop

The postulant arranges for enrollment in the formation program in accordance with the bishop but by his or her own initiative and at his or her own expense. Some limited monies are available through the diocese to help with some of the expenses. Another source of some financial support may be the postulant's home church.

Step 16: All postulants and candidates write Ember Day letters to the bishop four times per year

From the time of acceptance as a postulant until ordination to the vocational diaconate, postulants and candidates write Ember Day letters to the bishop four times per year (see [Title III.6.5\(h\)](#)). These letters are for the bishop's eyes only. Their purpose is for the aspirant and the bishop to continue discussion about the postulant's or candidate's call, relationships, and ministry.

Step 17: Postulant maintains contact with the COM liaison, Formation Director, and with supporting clergy and congregation

The Commission on Ministry assigns to each postulant a COM liaison for the duration of the training and formation process in order to continue evaluating and supporting postulants and candidates until ordination.

A postulant also maintains an active role in the parish and close communication with his or her sponsoring rector and vestry during formation, as the postulant needs their letters of support for each step remaining in the process. The bishop may ask the postulant to attend another parish from time to time. Often, the clergy of a postulant's supporting parish will invite the postulant to preach for Theological Education Sunday or to share with the congregation, in other ways, the fruits of his or her training.

Step 18: Postulant attends diocesan convention and other events, as asked

Postulants for this diocese are invited and expected to participate in diocesan events, particularly the annual diocesan convention. Usually, postulants meet jointly with the Commission on Ministry and the Standing Committee at yearly diocesan conventions in an informal setting, such as breakfast.

Step 19: Postulant confers regularly with his or her COM chaplain

Postulants are assigned a Commission on Ministry chaplain for the duration of their training and formation. The chaplain serves as pastor to the postulant: they communicate regularly with each other about the postulant's experience and spiritual life during formation for the diaconate.

Step 20: After one year of formation, the postulant applies to become a candidate for holy orders.

The postulant also makes sure that the bishop's office has received the evaluation prepared by the director of the diaconal formation program in which the postulant is enrolled. In the postulant's second year of formation, the director of the diaconal formation program provides a detailed evaluation of each postulant's formational progress to his or her bishop. The bishop and the Commission on Ministry use this evaluation, along with the parish vestry's and clergy's letter of support letter of support, in considering whether to name a postulant as a Candidate for Holy Orders.

- [*Application for Candidacy*](#)
- [*Clergy and Vestry Letter of Support for Candidacy*](#)
- Evaluation from the director of the diaconal formation program at The School of Theology, University of the South.

Step 22: Bishop confers with the COM and Standing Committee and decides regarding candidate status.

Upon the postulant's compliance with **Step 21**, and having acquired the attestation of the Commission on Ministry regarding the postulant's continuing formation, the Standing Committee reviews the postulant's documentation and interviews him or her. The Standing Committee then submits its approval or non-approval in writing to the bishop.

With the Standing Committee's approval, the Bishop may admit the postulant to candidacy for ordination to the diaconate and inform the candidate, clergy, the COM, the Standing Committee, and the DFC or other director of the candidate's program of preparation, of the fact and date of his or her admission. (See [Title III.6.4.](#))

As a Candidate

Step 23: Candidate remains in canonical relationship with the Diocese unless removed or released to another diocese ([III.6.4](#)).

Candidacy is a time of continuing education and formation in preparation for ordination to the diaconate, established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the congregation or other community of faith. A Candidate must remain in canonical relationship with the Diocese in which admission has been granted until ordination to the Diaconate except that, 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.

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 and the clergy in charge or other leader exercising oversight of the Candidate's congregation or other community of faith, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the Director of Formation or the director of an institution's program of preparation.

If a Bishop has removed the Candidate's name from the list of Candidates, except by transfer, or if the Candidate's application for ordination has been rejected, no other Bishop may ordain the person without readmission to Candidacy for a period of at least twelve months.

Step 24: Candidate continues Ember Day letters to the bishop

Step 25: Candidate completes trainings as required by Title III: Training in anti-racism and sexual misconduct prevention

The candidate registers for, or documents completion of, training in preventing sexual misconduct, civil requirement for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse, [Constitutions and Canons of the Episcopal Church, particularly Title IV](#), and the Church's teaching on racism (contact the Canon to the Ordinary).

Step 26: Candidate applies for ordination to the diaconate.

A candidate for holy orders may apply for ordination to the vocational diaconate at a minimum of six months after he or she is admitted to candidacy. Again, the candidate must request that a letter of support signed by vestry and clergy of the candidate's supporting parish be sent to the

bishop's office.

- [*Application for Ordination to the Vocational Diaconate*](#)
- [*Clergy and Vestry Letter of Support for Ordination to the Vocational Diaconate*](#)

Copies of bishop's letters attesting to postulancy and candidacy

An evaluation and a document of completion from the diaconal formation program in which the candidate was enrolled, and

Any other documentation about readiness for service that might be helpful to the bishop and the Commission on Ministry (e.g., a report of the candidate's performance of her specific ministry in the world since being admitted to postulancy).

Step 27: Candidate again undergoes physical, mental health, and background evaluations.

If the candidate's physical health, mental health, and background have not been evaluated within 36 months prior to the candidate's application for ordination, the candidate must undergo another set of physical, mental health, and background evaluations.

As with the first physical evaluation, a candidate may choose any licensed physician to conduct the physical exam. The Commission on Ministry anticipates that a candidate's individual or group medical insurance plan *may* cover the cost of the physical evaluation. The candidate should check with the bishop's office—before the exam—to ask about financial reimbursement for any out-of-pocket expenses the aspirant might incur.

The candidate should also contact the bishop's office to ask with whom to schedule the mental health evaluation, as the bishop chooses the mental health evaluator, whose role is to obtain a psychological perspective on the aspirant's life history, family dynamics, interpersonal relationships, leadership style, behavior patterns, personality characteristics, emotional fortitude, and self-concept. These dimensions will be explored with respect to a candidate's readiness and fitness for life as a deacon. Any candidate who has been, or is currently, undergoing counseling or psychotherapy must give written permission in order for the counselor or therapist to provide information to the mental health examiner chosen by the bishop. The diocese pays, in most cases, for the mental health evaluation.

- Reports of physical health evaluation (*sent directly to bishop by examiner*)
- Report of mental health evaluation (*sent directly to bishop by examiner*)
- [Release for Background Inquiry](#)

Once these documents are received by the bishop's office, the bishop requests from the Commission on Ministry a recommendation regarding ordination for this candidate. (See [Canon](#)

[III.6.5.\)](#)

Step 28: Candidate meets with Board of Examining Chaplains

The diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains shall evaluate whether a candidate has met the preparation for ordination specified in [Title III, Canon 6.5\(f\)](#). Evaluation by the diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains is reported as a recommendation to the COM and the bishop. If the diocesan Board determines that a candidate's performance in any given canonical area is deficient, they will recommend further studies and work.

- [Expectations of Candidates Seeking Ordination as Vocational Deacons](#)

Step 29: Candidate meets with Standing Committee

- *Certification from Commission on Ministry recommending ordination.* (See [Title III 6.6\(c\)](#).)

Though a candidate's Commission on Ministry liaison is still available to him or her, at this point specific questions about requirements for ordination are best directed to the Standing Committee, who bear responsibility to review the Commission on Ministry's attestation regarding formation and to evaluate whether a candidate has met the canonical requirements for ordination. (See [III.6.5.](#))

Candidates for ordination meet with the Standing Committee to go over any questions which either the Standing Committee or the candidate have about the requirements for ordination. If a candidate's preparation is in compliance with the canons, the Standing Committee then certifies to the bishop by its attestation that the candidate has met canonical requirements and that there being no sufficient objection on medical, psychological, moral, and spiritual grounds, they recommend that the candidate be ordained. (See [Canon III.6.6\(d\)](#).)

Step 30: Bishop and candidates for the vocational diaconate set the date and location for ordination and plan the liturgy.

The bishop, of course, has authority over the ordination liturgy, but often candidates are invited to suggest preachers, lectors, cantors, and presenters, and other ministers in the service, as well as suggesting preferred lections and music. Currently the diocesan office sends invitations to all diocesan clergy and provides invitations for the candidate to send to personal guests.

Guidelines for Diaconal Discernment Committees

Role of the Diaconal Discernment Committee

Ordained ministry is but one expression of the ministry of the Church. One way to start thinking about the differences between ordained ministry and the ministry of all the baptized is to read the Rites of Baptism and Ordination in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

The Diaconal Discernment Committee (DDC) is the first opportunity for an aspirant to clarify and test his or her call in the wider Christian community. If the DDC discerns a call to ordained ministry, the aspirant will continue to explore that call with an ever-wider circle of community—the diocese, the director of the diaconal formation program, the leadership of The Episcopal Church. Each of these discernments is essential in listening for God’s guidance. The DDC’s recommendation to their vestry is a critical first step in seeking what is best for the Church as well as for the individual. Each circle’s discernment offers a piece of clarity to the discernment process as a whole.

The Diaconal Discernment Committee is a joint committee of the vestry and the Commission on Ministry. It is to enable the vestry to decide whether or not to support a person as aspirant for ordination as a deacon. The Diaconal Discernment Committee has a diaconal flavor because the order of deacons is a diocesan order under the direct authority of the bishop.

The discernment committee’s task is to become familiar with the aspirant’s background, articulation of call to ordained ministry, and his or her present ministry. Appreciating the aspirant’s current ministry is extremely important. Both the DDC and the aspirant may consider new ways in which the aspirant might minister during the discernment process (e.g., Eucharistic minister, Stephen Minister, teacher).

Composition of the Committee

Members of the Diaconal Discernment Committee (DDC) are nominated jointly by the rector (or clergy-in-charge) and the senior warden, according to the following guidelines, and approved by the vestry.

- The committee will consist of six persons:
 - the chair of the committee, who will be a member of the vestry,

- one deacon from outside the parish,
- at least two adult communicants (including chair) from the aspirant's congregation,
- at least two communicants from outside the aspirant's congregation.

These six persons are to be nominated jointly by the clergy and the senior warden and approved by the vestry. (The aspirant's parish clergy contacts clergy of other parishes from which these extra-parish members will come, to seek help in choosing DDC nominees.)

- The committee will reflect the diversity of the diocese, particularly in regards to involvement in helping ministries.
- At least one member shall be significantly involved in a community helping ministry.
- Any variations in the composition of the committee will be made in consultation with the Commission on Ministry liaison.
- The committee will not be a permanent committee. A different committee will be formed for each person presenting himself or herself for discernment.
- The committee members will make a firm commitment to attend and to participate in all sessions of the committee's work.
- DDCs work best when members are chosen for keen insight, pastoral sensibilities, and an understanding of a deacon's servant ministry.

Keys to Effective Diaconal Discernment Committees

Coordination with the diocesan process via the COM liaison: Because it is essential that congregational and diocesan discernments are in tune, the COM appoints one of its members as liaison to each DDC. Prior to the DDC's first meeting, the COM liaison will confer with the Chair to answer questions and clarify procedures. At the DDC's first meeting the liaison will explain the process, alert members to documents used for the process, and answer questions. After that, the liaison remains in contact with the chair of the DDC to answer process questions that arise and to inform the COM about the committee's scheduling and progress.

Focus on responsibility with the larger church: It is crucial that committee members clearly

understand—regardless of how much they like an aspirant—that the DDC is *not a support group*. It is a committee charged with assisting aspirants and the church in discerning a vocation by listening, asking questions, reflecting, and praying together.

Generosity of presence: Discernment means letting go of our presumptions and quick judgments so that the Spirit can be heard. That takes time and a relaxed presence. A rushed or truncated process can be damaging to the aspirant and to the diocese. DDC *chairs* need to plan well ahead of an aspirant’s deadlines, and DDC *members* need to commit to being present for the full meeting, every meeting.

Confidentiality: Both the DDC and the aspirant commit to confidentiality. Discussions and documents may be shared only with the consent of the aspirant and only with appropriate persons (those charged with a specific role in this discernment). Information about the aspirant is being shared with the DDC in trust and is to be kept confidential.

Seeking what God seeks: Success in discernment is measured by growth in faith, awareness, and insight, not by whether the aspirant proceeds toward ordination. The DDC committee, the aspirant, and the congregation at large can benefit by such open and attentive listening, reflecting, and prayer.

Understanding the parameters of the task: Members of the DDC, and especially the chair, should become familiar with the steps described in these [Guidelines](#); the national and diocesan canons on Commission on Ministry, on Discernment, and on Ordination of a Deacon; the Book of Common Prayer (BCP) on Rite for Ordination of a Deacon; and the *BCP* Catechism on Ministry and on Ordination. The book, *Listening Hearts*, is usually provided to DDC members by the parish. The COM liaison will distribute these documents at the first meeting of the DDC.

Discernment Sessions

- The committee will meet a minimum of four times. Each session will last a maximum of two hours. Each meeting begins and ends with prayer. Agendas and homework for each session are listed under [Session Outlines](#).
- The committee reports its recommendation to vestry **no later than the May vestry meeting**.
- **The vestry must report its recommendation or non-recommendation to the bishop no later than June 1**

Skills and awareness to look for

The DDC is looking for the skills and awareness of an effective ordained leader, which include at least these eight areas:

1. **Ministry in the Diocese of East Tennessee:** Is the aspirant familiar with the tradition and practice of The Episcopal Church? Is he/she familiar with The Episcopal Church in East Tennessee and willing to work within the Church as it is expressed in this area?
2. **Vocation:** Can the aspirant speak of his or her sense of vocation to ministry and mission, referring both to his/her own conviction and the extent to which others have confirmed it? Is his/her sense of vocation obedient, realistic, and informed?
3. **Faith:** Does the aspirant show an understanding of the Christian faith and a desire to deepen that understanding? Can the aspirant demonstrate personal commitment to Christ and a capacity to communicate the Gospel?
4. **Spirituality:** What evidence can the aspirant give for commitment to a spiritual discipline of individual and corporate prayer and worship? How does the aspirant's spiritual practice sustain and energize the aspirant's daily life?
5. **Personality and Character:** How does the aspirant show that he or she is sufficiently mature and stable to sustain the demanding role of an ordained minister and face change and pressure in a flexible and balanced way? How does the aspirant present himself or herself as a person of integrity?
6. **Relationships:** How does aspirant demonstrate the self-awareness and self-acceptance needed to develop open and healthy professional, personal, and pastoral relationships? How does the aspirant's life demonstrate that he or she respects the will of the Church in matters of sexual morality?
7. **Leadership and Collaboration:** How does the aspirant offer leadership in the Church community and, to some extent, in the wider community? How does he or she exemplify faith and discipleship in collaborating effectively with others, as well as in guiding and shaping the life of the Church community for its mission to the world?
8. **Intellect and Academic Preparation:** How has the aspirant demonstrated the educational background and intellectual capacity to complete a course of theological study in preparation for ordained ministry and to cope with the continuing intellectual

demands of ordained ministry?

To say “yes” to an aspirant’s continuing formal discernment for ordination is to affirm that the aspirant is either already clearly competent in these areas or is potentially competent and moving in that direction.

DDC Session Outlines

I. First Session

Those present: Committee members, aspirant, COM liaison

1. The beginning of this meeting is a time to “get-acquainted.” All those present should introduce and tell something about themselves. Any basic get-acquainted group exercise may be used for this purpose.
2. The chairman states clearly the purpose of the group and the time frame in which it will be working.
3. The other meeting dates are set.
4. The COM liaison alerts DDC members to the following materials:
 - a copy of the sections of the national canons which apply to ordination, with special attention to where the local vestry fits into the process
 - a copy of the diocesan ordination process, explaining that this is the way we fulfill the requirements of the national canons
 - a copy of the relevant sections of the Catechism and Ordination Rite describing the office which the person is considering
5. The DDC chair provides each member with a copy of the book *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community* (the newer version, with updated appendices). This is to be purchased for each member of the DDC by the parish in which the DDC is formed. (The Chapter and Verse Bookshop in Diocesan House is able to assist in ordering the book.)
6. Time is allowed for questions about the process.

Homework in preparation for second session

Aspirant: He or she provides a spiritual autobiography to be shared with the committee. This should be a narrative account of his or her spiritual journey, including major turning points in

that personal journey. (The application an aspirant sends to the bishop to apply for postulancy also requires a spiritual autobiography; the aspirant may submit that same autobiography or a new composition to the DDC. See [*Prompts for Writing a Spiritual Autobiography*](#). Aspirants should note that, if the vestry recommends continued discernment with the diocese, the spiritual autobiography submitted to the DDC will be forwarded to the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry.

Committee members: Prepare a brief faith pilgrimage statement (one page, typed). This should be a description of your life in relationship to God.

Aspirant and committee members: These assignments, both from aspirant and committee members, should be turned in to the committee chair, reproduced, distributed, and read by all before the second meeting takes place.

II. Second Session

Those present: Committee members, aspirant

1. As an introduction, ask members to speak about the elements of the aspirant's spiritual autobiography with which they could identify.
2. Discuss the aspirant's spiritual autobiography, and ask about the following:
 - What have been his or her sources of stress and how has this stress been handled? (Skills and awareness-5)
 - In what situations has the aspirant felt opposed to an authority figure, and what happened? (Skills and awareness-5)
 - How did the aspirant first recognize, notice, consider a call? (Skills and awareness-2)
 - What has been the aspirant's ministerial involvement, and what evidence has there been of service? (Skills and awareness-1, 3, 4, 7)
 - How does the aspirant describe situation(s) in which he or she experienced personal growth? (Skills and awareness-5,6)
 - What have been the best and the worst of family and interpersonal relationships? (Skills and awareness-5,6)
 - What is the aspirant's awareness of personal weaknesses and areas in which improvement is needed? (Skills and awareness-5, 6, 8)
 - What are the aspirant's significant connections with community? (Skills and awareness-4, 6, 8)
 - Of what personal gifts and abilities is he or she aware? (Skills and awareness-5, 1)
3. To explore the aspirant's emotional health, notice:
 - Does the aspirant express strong positive and negative feelings? How? How does this match the word he/she is saying? ((Skills and awareness-5)
 - When dealing with feelings, do physical gestures and movements match the words spoken? (Skills and awareness-5)
 - In what ways, if any, does the aspirant look to the ordained ministry as a way of resolving personal or career problems? (Skills and awareness-5, 6, 7)

- Does the aspirant show the maturity and an ability to adapt that are appropriate to his/her age?

Homework in preparation for third session

Aspirant: [Vision Exercise](#). The aspirant's answers should be distributed to the members of the committee and read by them before the next meeting.

All: Read *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*.

III. Third Session

Those present: Committee members, aspirant

1. Members of the committee read aloud the relevant portions of the Catechism and the service for Ordination of a Deacon, which describe the gifts a deacon offers in service to the body of Christ.
2. Members and aspirant discuss the aspirant's vision of potential ordained ministry as he or she has outlined it in the vision exercise.

How realistic is this vision in terms of

- the aspirant's own personal gifts and abilities? (Skills and awareness–2, 3)
 - the church's vision of ordained ministry expressed in the Catechism and ordination rites? (Skills and awareness–1, 3)
 - the way ordained ministry is actually exercised in The Episcopal Church? (Skills and awareness–1)
3. Discuss the questions relating to ordained ministry on pages 92-96 of *Listening Hearts*.
 4. Set the date for the final meeting.

Homework in preparation for fourth session

All but aspirant: Complete the [DDC Individual Report](#). These forms should be returned to and collated by the chairman before the next meeting.

IV. Fourth Session

Those present: Committee members, aspirant

1. In the first part of the meeting, without the aspirant present, the committee members bring

their personal evaluations and insights and discuss them as a group. Prayerfully, the group shares information from their evaluation forms and comes to a consensus whether or not to recommend that the vestry support the person as an aspirant for ordination.

2. At the end of the first part of the meeting, the aspirant joins the group. The committee members discuss the cumulative results of the evaluations with the aspirant, and the chairman informs the aspirant of the committee's recommendation. Any reservations should be expressed to the aspirant at this time. The chair immediately reports the recommendation of the committee to the rector, who is present in the building, if they perceive the aspirant may need clergy counsel. The DDC chair presents the recommendation to vestry at the next regular vestry meeting. [Vestry Letter of Support for Postulancy.](#)
3. The DDC chair will report the vestry's decision to the COM liaison as soon as possible thereafter.
4. If the vestry recommends the aspirant for postulancy, copies of all written materials used will be sent to the bishop. This will include the aspirant's spiritual autobiography, the vision exercise and all evaluation forms. The faith statements of the DDC members *should not* be forwarded.
5. If the vestry does not recommend the aspirant for postulancy, all written documents related to the DDC process are to be destroyed.

VISION EXERCISE

In this exercise, you will focus on two accomplishments as a means to identify skills you have successfully used. These reflections will then serve as a springboard for your vision of your potential work as an ordained minister. Please take plenty of time to complete this exercise. Choose your accomplishments carefully, and try to remember them in as much detail as possible.

Please complete this exercise on separate sheets of paper.

Step One: Accomplishments

List two accomplishments in your life. The main criterion here is not "biggest," but "best." Choose times when you felt most secure and confident in your skills and talents, and in your ability to use them effectively. A detailed description is not necessary, a few lines is enough.

Now do the following exercise for each accomplishment you listed:

1. List the accomplishment at the top of the page.
2. List the steps that were necessary for this accomplishment – what did you have to do to accomplish this? Number each step. It is helpful to list them chronologically.
3. Look over your list of steps and identify the skills you exhibited each step of the way. List each skill, and beside each list the number of the step (or steps) in which you used that skill. Obviously, the same skill may be used in more than one step. Be thorough – and don't be bashful.

Step Two – Vision

As you consider your calling to ordained ministry, what would be the ideal position for you to carry out that ministry? What is the job you see yourself holding? Please describe this vision.

What tasks and/or roles make up this position? What are the responsibilities of a person in this position? Please list them.

What skills are necessary if these tasks and responsibilities are to be successfully met? List them. Then, review the previous pages and place a star beside the skills you have already demonstrated.

Diaconal Discernment Committee

Individual Report

Your Name _____

Parish _____

Aspirant's Name _____

How long have you known the aspirant and in what ways?

It is a high calling to serve God and the Church in Holy Orders. The aspirant, vestry, and diocese share in discerning this call. The following information, your thoughts and impressions will assist in this process. Please answer prayerfully and to the best of your knowledge.

Circle your answer. 1 = Poor; 3 = Adequate; 5 = Superior

Does this person have a regular and mature prayer life?

1 2 3 4 5

Is this person committed and active in public worship?

1 2 3 4 5

Does the person exhibit emotional maturity appropriate to his or her age?

1 2 3 4 5

Can the aspirant be described as “A person of Christian character in his or her community . . . ”?
(Canons of the Episcopal Church)

1 2 3 4 5

Can this aspirant be described as having leadership skills?

1 2 3 4 5

Does this person have a stable family life?

1 2 3 4 5

Does this person have healthy long-term relationships?

1 2 3 4 5

Does this person have a stable employment history?

1 2 3 4 5

What experience does the aspirant have in lay ministry and service within the Church and outside the Church?

Is his or her ministry in the world clear to him or her? To you?

Since you have heard the aspirant share his or her spiritual journey and desire for Holy Orders, briefly state your understanding of the aspirants' spiritual journey and desire.

Would you want this person to serve and represent you, your parish and The Episcopal Church as an ordained person?

Yes No

What do you consider to be at least three strengths of the aspirant's character? Use more paper if needed.

What do you consider to be at least three areas in which the aspirant needs to grow? Use more paper if needed.

Can you in good conscience recommend this person for Holy Orders?

Yes No If "no," please explain.

Feel free to add any additional comments. Use more paper if necessary.

Process for Clergy Discernment with Aspirants

1. Determine recorded membership status:

- Confirmed [communicant in good standing](#) for at least one year?
- Actively involved for two years in the life of his/her parish or worshipping community? (preferred by the diocese)

2. Spend enough time with the aspirant to discern the clarity and suitability of

- his or her vocation, spirituality, faith, relationships, aptitude for ministry, intellectual aptitude, leadership and collaboration, personality and character. These are the categories that the aspirant will be asked to explore with the Diaconal Discernment Committee (DDC) and the diocesan Commission on Ministry (COM) at its discernment retreat (See Questions for Exploring Vocation.)
- his or her perspective on the variety of ministry in the church: ask the aspirant to discuss ministry with the diocesan Deputy for Ministry and Congregational Development, and with a priest and deacon outside of his or her own parish and then to reflect with you on that experience.

3. Suggest a substantive book(s) for the aspirant to read, then ask and discuss what seems substantive or personally significant to the aspirant. How does that discussion confirm your opinion about his or her readiness/suitability for proceeding or how does it raise questions?

4. Ask the aspirant to write a spiritual autobiography (*emphasis on his or her relationship with God* through the various phases, events, and circumstances of the aspirant's life).

- How does this autobiography clarify or raise questions about a call to ordained ministry? What would you want to know more about? What can you imagine that the Diaconal Discernment Committee or the COM might ask about it?
- How does the autobiography compare with his or her life in community, as you have experienced it?
- How comfortable is the aspirant with sharing this autobiography with others? How does he or she understand the significance of corporate discernment in exploring a call to ordained ministry?

5. Suggest what experiences, if any, might help the aspirant develop any of the key areas listed in #2, above: leading a class, chairing a committee, serving as a Eucharistic visitor or Stephen Minister, taking a writing class, learning more about church history, enrolling in EFM, getting a spiritual director, observing clergy who serve in a setting different from the aspirant's, participating in worship different from the style to which he/she is most accustomed.

6. Explore the corporate nature of discernment and decision in an aspirant's / postulant's / candidate's / ordinand's / clergyperson's life. What stresses/gifts might

the aspirant experience as her or his life becomes under the purview of committees, professors, deans, fellow clergy, congregations, bishops? How does his or her spouse feel about how such a corporate life affects childrearing, family lifestyle, social life, finances, moving to new locations, changes in employment?

- **Discuss** the roles of the rector/clergy, CDC, COM, bishop, Standing Committee, and director of formation with the affirmation of an aspirant's call.
 - **Consult** [*Handbook for Ordination to the Vocational Diaconate*](#)
7. Discuss the steps outlined in the Handbook, especially [*Discerning a Call to the Vocational Diaconate: Process Outline*](#). Emphasize the aspirant's initiative in seeking and giving information with whomever he or she is working at each phase.
 8. Fill out the [*Rector's Letter of Support*](#) and send it to the Bishop.
 9. ~~At the bishop's invitation,~~ **accompany the aspirant** to his or her first meeting with the bishop.
 10. If the bishop so indicates, **name a Diaconal Discernment Committee** with the parish's senior warden. (See [*Guidelines for Diaconal Discernment Committees*](#), especially the section on [*Composition of the Committee*](#).)
 11. **Continue pastoral support and discernment** as the aspirant meets with the DDC, the COM, the bishop, and others engaged in discernment about this call. Ask the aspirant to keep you up-to-date about progress through the list of aspirant's milestones.)

Questions for Exploring Vocation

Vocation

- Why does this person long for *ordained* ministry? Why does he or she consider this order to be the best fit for her or his ministry?
- How does the spouse/family feel about this perceived call?
- What does the aspirant understand to be his or her financial picture if postulancy is granted and he or she seeks the education needed for advancing to candidacy?
- If the aspirant is interested in the diaconate, how does he or she imagine a deacon's life to be (not Mitford)? What models or styles of the diaconate has he or she observed: campus ministry, chaplaincy, deacons in parishes, deacons serving Christ in the world? How does his or her work experience of paid or volunteer service enrich capabilities for the diaconate?
- If this aspirant is interested in the diaconate, what is his or her current "ministry in the world," that is, outside of the local church?
- With what priest and/or deacon (other than those serving in his/her congregation) might this aspirant meet in order to get a glimpse of ordained ministry different from that with which the aspirant is most familiar?
- Has the aspirant talked with the Diocesan Deputy for Ministry and Congregational Development to learn about shared ministry opportunities in our diocese? If not, when might he or she do so?

Spiritual Life

- What do you notice in reading the aspirant's spiritual journey as written in his/her spiritual autobiography? Can the aspirant articulate his/her faith?
- Does the aspirant have an ongoing prayer life or spiritual discipline?
- Does the aspirant recognize "gray areas" in the faith, or is everything either "black or white"?
- Does the aspirant regularly participate in adult Christian education?
- Has that the aspirant read Parker Palmer's book on vocation and the spiritual life—*Let Your Life Speak*—or *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community*? If not, ask that he or she read a book on discernment, of your choosing, and discuss what he or she heard in the book.
- Does the aspirant view a call to ordination to be personal, communal, both? Why? How does that show up in the aspirant's life and engagement with the church?
- What churches (Episcopal/not?) has the aspirant visited to experience worship that is

different from that to which he/she is most accustomed? (Consider the demographics of the parish, its style of worship, the size of its membership, the gender of its clergy leadership, its homogeneity or heterogeneity.)

- Does the aspirant have a priest, other than his or her clergy in charge, with whom to seek spiritual guidance and companionship during this process?

Academics

- Discuss the aspirant's past education: whatever his or her past engagement with learning, how does he or she read that experience now? How do you read it?
- What are the strengths and weakness in expressing himself/herself, verbally and on paper?
- What books or authors have the aspirant read and what is significant about that text, to the aspirant and to the life of faith? (Perhaps assign a book for the aspirant to read and then discuss with you.)
- Does the aspirant exhibit a general familiarity with the contents of the Book of Common Prayer and basic Inquirer's Class knowledge? If so, how?
- Can the aspirant discuss the Catechism thoughtfully?
- Has the aspirant read the four Gospels?
- In what structured, corporate learning has the aspirant participated: *Disciples of Christ in Community* (DOCC)? *EFM*? *Kerygma*? *Disciple*? *Companions in Christ*? Stephen Ministry training? Eucharistic Visitor training? Worship Leader training? *LifeCycles*? *Bible Workbench*? Other structured Bible studies? Book studies? Other life-and-lectionary studies?

Personal Traits

- Does the aspirant exhibit good listening skills?
- Does the aspirant display or not display a need to be in control of situations?
- How does the aspirant's need to be liked by others shape his or her communication and behavior?
- Explore the aspirant's current lay involvement in the church. For example, has the aspirant taken on any leadership roles?
- Should this aspirant have more involvement with leading groups before moving on in the process?
- Does the aspirant have stable, healthy relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and others?
- What are the guiding / directing / driving forces in the aspirant's life?

Prompts for Writing a Spiritual Autobiography

A spiritual autobiography is a tool for listening to your life and for telling others about it. It records not “just the facts, ma’am” but your reading of their significance, also. It focuses on how you engage with the world, yourself, others, and God. It speaks to recurring themes, changes in latitude and attitude, shocks and surprises, tides and turnings, calms in the storm.

For our purposes, your spiritual autobiography should be about five typed pages long, but no less than three typed pages. Use **any or none of these suggestions**, as seems helpful for revealing who you have been, who you are, and who you seem on your way to becoming.

1. **Think of your life till now as a five-chapter book:** what are the titles of the chapters, and why? Explain what is the same or different about each chapter. Who are the significant characters in each chapter? What are their significant gifts and challenges to you? What tensions (attraction, conflict, companionship) hold these characters in the plot of your life? Which characters have dropped out of that plot, and what difference has that made?
2. **Think of your life as a series of hit songs:** What are they? Who “sang” them in which era of your life, and why? Who is singing to you now? How have the harmonies and rhythms changed, and what do you make of that? As you seek ordination, are you asking to change key, add a refrain, write another verse?
3. **If your life were plotted out on a map,** what would be the interstates? What would be the wandering back roads? What would be the dead ends and how did you come to take them? Where are the scenic routes, and what do they show you? Where did you start at birth and how long did you stay there? With whom did you hitchhike along the way? Did you have to walk through any storms? Where were you when the clouds broke? What led you to take the turns that now seem to direct you toward ordination?
4. **Think of your life as a kayaking trip down a river.** Where did you put yourself and your kayak into the water, and how did you come to that point of entry? Who floats with you on this trip downriver? Where has the river changed course? Where has it deepened and quieted, and what did you do with those pools? Where have you hit the rapids—when and how did

you know that things had changed? How did you respond? When and where did you roll over or fall out of the kayak? Have you had to bail yourself out of a sinking situation? If so, how did you do it? Is the river clear and cold, warm and silty, fast or slow now? What kind of water do you think is ahead, and how will you navigate it? What makes you think so?

5. **Think of your life as a pie chart:** into how many slices is the pie divided? What are they? What color is each piece and why? How do the pieces compare in size? In what order are they arranged and why? Where and how did you get the data from which this pie chart is drawn? How would your best friend draw a pie chart of your life and why? Your spouse? Your most tenacious detractor? What slices would you change, and how?

Expectations of Candidates Seeking Ordination as Vocational Deacons

[\(See Title III.6.5\(f\) of the *Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church*\)](#)

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.

Preparation for ordination shall include training regarding

- (1) prevention of sexual misconduct.
- (2) civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse.
- (3) the Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, particularly Title IV thereof.
- (4) the Church's teaching on racism.

Aspirant's Application Form

Diocese of East Tennessee

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full Name _____

Present Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Cell Phone _____

Permanent Address _____

(if different from above) _____

Phone at Permanent Address _____

E-Mail Address _____

Sex: Male Female _____

Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

Birthplace (City/State): _____

Communicant of: _____

Length of Residency in Diocese: _____

Date of Baptism (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

Performed by: _____

Confirmation Date (MM/DD/YYYY): _____

Performed by: _____

Have you previously applied for postulancy? If so, when and briefly describe resulting action.

EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION

Are you currently enrolled in an educational institution? If so, where?

Name of High School _____

Address _____

Date of Diploma/GED ____ / ____ / ____.

College/University	Attended		Type of Degree	Grade Point Average	Major Subject
	From	To			
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					

List principal extra-curricular activities, volunteer work or avocations. Indicate whether during *high school, college, both, or recently* by checking the appropriate box.

Activity	High School	College	Recently

Total years of education to date, beyond high school: (Please circle)

College				Graduate/ Professional School			
1	2	3	4	5	5	7	8

WORK HISTORY

Dates of Employment ___ / ___ / ___ to ___ / ___ / ___

Employer _____

Type of Work _____

What I Liked Least _____

What I Liked Best _____

Reason for Leaving _____

Dates of Employment ___ / ___ / ___ to ___ / ___ / ___

Employer _____

Type of Work _____

What I Liked Least _____

What I Liked Best _____

Reason for Leaving _____

Dates of Employment ___ / ___ / ___ to ___ / ___ / ___

Employer _____

Type of Work _____

What I Liked Least _____

What I Liked Best _____

Reason for Leaving _____

Continue on additional pages, as necessary.

FAMILY INFORMATION

Marital Status

Current marital status: (Please circle)

Single Married Partnered Engaged Separated Divorced

Widowed If married, partnered, or engaged, spouse, list name of spouse,

partner, or fiancé(e)

What has been the length of the marriage, partnership, or engagement? _____

If previously married, length of marriage(s): _____

Write a brief evaluation of your spouse's feelings regarding your intent to enter the diaconate:

Children

Name of Child	Birth Date	Sex
_____	_____	M F

Parents

Father's Name	Address	Occupation	Religious Preference
---------------	---------	------------	----------------------

Mother's Name	Address	Occupation	Religious Preference
---------------	---------	------------	----------------------

Give a brief description of each parent's feelings regarding your intent to enter the diaconate.

SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Attach a brief spiritual autobiography, including personal history, your relationship with the Church, and your reasons for desiring Holy Orders. (See [Prompts for Writing a Spiritual Autobiography.](#))

PHOTO

Please include a recent photo.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Please return the completed form and attachments to:

The Rt. Rev. George Dibrell Young, III
Diocese of East Tennessee
814 Episcopal School Way
Knoxville, TN 37932

Rector's Letter of Support for One Seeking Ordination to the Vocational Diaconate

Diocese of East Tennessee

Date of this application: ____ / ____ / ____

Full name of aspirant: _____

Present parish _____

Length of time confirmed _____

[Communicant in good standing?](#) _____

Length of time you have known aspirant _____

On an attached sheet, please respond to the questions below, clearly noting the question by number.

1. In what way(s), and for how long, have you been associated with the aspirant?
2. When did you first meet together for the purpose of discussing the aspirant's sense of call to Holy Orders? Outline your meetings/discussions with the aspirant concerning this call. Did you recruit this person for Holy Orders, or did he/she first approach you? Give your perception of the aspirant's reason for seeking Holy Orders.
3. Give aspirant's past and present involvement in the Church. How has the aspirant demonstrated commitment to public and private worship, leadership ability, desire for learning and willingness to grow and change?
4. What strengths, weaknesses and growing points do you identify in this aspirant for the diaconate?
5. Have you discussed with the aspirant the discernment process as described in the "Pre-Postulancy Discernment Policy"?
6. Does the aspirant (and spouse) understand that a background check will be required of the aspirant?
7. Does the aspirant understand that if the bishop recommends that he or she continue in this process, the aspirant will be required to undergo physical and psychological examinations by a physician and psychiatrist/psychologist selected by the bishop's office?
8. If aspirant is married, partnered, or engaged, in your opinion, how supportive is the spouse, partner, or fiancé(e)? How well does he or she fully understand the education requirements, the potential for changes in home and parish affiliation, the financial considerations, and the potential for lifestyle changes? Does he or she understand the possible stresses that a family may face?

-
9. How confident are you that this person possesses the education, stability, gifts and experience needed to undertake formational study?
 10. How confident are you that this person has “the evident gifts and fitness for ordination”?
(Title III, Canon 5, Sec.1, Canon 6 and Canon 7)
 11. Do you recommend that we proceed to consider the aspirant’s application for postulancy at this time?

Signature of Rector _____ Date _____

Please return form to:

The Rt. Rev. George Dibrell Young, III
Diocese of East Tennessee
814 Episcopal School Way
Knoxville, TN 37932

Background Inquiry Release Form

Diocese of East Tennessee

In relation to my serving in the Diocese of East Tennessee, I understand and authorize the access of information from various federal, state and other agencies maintaining information regarding any public record information including consumer credit, criminal convictions, motor vehicle and other reports.

I also understand this information may be accessed during my service and up to 30 days after separation from this diocese. I hereby consent to your obtaining various public record information from diocesan; Church employers, from Edge Information Management, Inc., and/or any other party or agency in accordance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act and any and all state and federal laws. I also understand that the requested information below is to be used for proper identification only and not for discriminatory purposes.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please complete the following information. PLEASE PRINT!

Full Name: _____

First Middle Last

Current Address: _____

Street

City State Zip

At current address more than 5 years? Yes _____ No _____

Previous Address: _____

Street

City State Zip

Social Security #: = = Date of Birth: _____ / _____ / _____

Driver's License # _____ State _____

Letter of Understanding

Diocese of East Tennessee

TO: The Rt. Rev. George Dibrell Young, III
Episcopal Diocese of East Tennessee
814 Episcopal School Way
Knoxville, TN 37932

I, _____, have read the *Handbook for Ordination* and understand that the process does not guarantee ordination. I further hold harmless the Diocese of East Tennessee, its bishop, the Commission on Ministry, the Diaconal Discernment Committee and rector, or any people professional or lay who represent the Diocese of East Tennessee.

Signed: _____

Witnessed: _____

Date: _____

Authorization to Release Information, Release of Claims and Indemnity, and Hold-Harmless Agreement

Diocese of East Tennessee

(referred to herein as “Authorization and Release”)

Name of Applicant: _____

1. I am voluntarily seeking to become or am presently a candidate for, postulancy, ordination, and/or other ministry position (referred to herein as my “application”) in The Episcopal Church through a process conducted by the Diocese of East Tennessee (“Diocese”). I understand that as a part of the diocesan decision-making process about my application I am required to undergo a psychiatric and/or psychological assessment (“Assessment”) by a person or persons selected or approved by the Diocese.
2. I understand that the Assessment is only one part of the Diocese’s decision making process and that information provided to the Diocese about the Assessment may be considered with other information available to the Diocese in deciding whether or not to accept me or to continue considering my application for postulancy, ordination, and/or other ministry position in the Diocese. Nonetheless, I understand that information from the Assessment may be determinative of the Diocesan decision.
3. I voluntarily consent to participate in the Assessment and I agree to cooperate fully with the Assessment. I understand that the Assessment may include one or more attitude questionnaires, psychological tests, psychiatric tests, and/or clinical interviews. I understand that I will be asked to provide various types of information about myself which may include but not be limited to, information about my family, medical history, psychological and psychiatric history, criminal history, sexual behavior and attitudes, drug and alcohol use, relationships, education, and employment. I agree that all the information I provide for the Assessment will be true, correct, and complete, to the best of my knowledge. I understand that false or misleading statements made by me or significant omissions of any kind in the Assessment process are sufficient cause for dismissal from the application process or denial of my application for a ministry position in the Diocese.
4. I authorize all mental health professionals involved in the Assessment to disclose to each other, both orally and in writing, all records and information, including opinions, pertaining to the Assessment, and including, but not limited to, my responses to any questionnaires, tests and interview questions.
5. I understand that at the conclusion of the Assessment a written report may be prepared which will contain conclusions, opinions, observations, recommendations for follow-up and the like. I authorize the mental health professionals involved in the Assessment to disclose the written Assessment report to the bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese. I authorize the Bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority to disclose to and discuss the written Assessment report with those involved in the application process. I authorize the mental health professionals involved in the Assessment to discuss the written Assessment report with the bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority and those involved in the application process.

-
6. I understand and agree that, whether or not I have paid for the Assessment or any part thereof, all of the records and documents related to the Assessment do not belong to me and I do not have the right to see them, have them reviewed by or sent to anyone else, or to receive a copy of them at any time. I further understand and agree that I am not entitled to discuss the Assessment with the personnel involved in the Assessment process nor am I entitled to have anyone else discuss the Assessment with them on my behalf. I agree that I will not request or seek to obtain from the bishop or Ecclesiastical Authority or Diocese or from any of the personnel involved in the Assessment or from any other person or entity the originals or any copies of any records or documents related to the Assessment nor will I authorize anyone to do so on my behalf.
 7. I understand that, after the Assessment described herein, the Diocese may determine that further assessment is necessary before a decision is made on my application. If I elect to participate in such further assessment, all the terms of this Authorization and Release shall apply to any further assessment.
 8. I understand and agree that the Diocese will have the right to control the use and disclosure of information regarding the Assessment both during consideration of my application and after consideration of my application has terminated, regardless of the action taken on my application, and that the Diocese does not have to obtain any further authorization from me to disclose any information regarding the Assessment or the written Assessment report.
 9. I consent to the use of information that I provide or that is developed from the Assessment for research purposes, including but not limited to publication and presentation to the scientific or religious communities and/or other audiences, provided that, if so used, the information will be presented in a disguised format to preclude identification of my individual identify.
 10. As consideration for having my application considered by the Diocese, I hereby waive, release and discharge the Diocese and its officers, directors, employees, volunteers, agents and legal representatives, and all personnel and entities involved in conducting the Assessment and their officers, directors, employees, volunteers, agents, heirs, administrators, successors, assigns and legal representatives (“the Released Parties”) from liability of all kinds, including but not limited to personal injury, defamation, slander, libel, negligence, invasion of privacy, breach of contract, or otherwise, in law or in equity, arising out of my participation in the Assessment, use or disclosure of information regarding the Assessment, or arising in any other way as a result of the Assessment. I do not release the Released Parties from liability for willful or intentional acts or punitive damages.
 11. I also agree not to sue or make a claim against the Released Parties for injury, damage, or loss of any kind sustained as a result of my participation in Assessment, the use or disclosure of information regarding the Assessment, or relating in any way to the Assessment. I will indemnify and hold harmless the Released Parties from all claims, judgments, and costs, including attorneys fees, incurred in connection with any such action.
 12. I agree that if any portion of this Authorization and Release is found by a court to be unenforceable for any reason, the remainder of this Authorization and Release shall remain valid and in full force and effect.
 13. I have carefully read this authorization and release and fully understand its contents. I sign it of my own free will. I understand that I may consult with an attorney of my choice before

signing this document. I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to ask questions concerning the contents of Authorization and Release and any such questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

14. Nonetheless, in agreeing to sign this Authorization and Release, I have not relied upon any statements or explanations made by any of the Released Parties or by any attorney of any of the Released Parties. I have initialed each page of this Authorization and Release indicating that I have read and understand each paragraph.

Applicant's signature

Date

Print or type applicant's name

Witness signature

Date

Print or type witness name

Financial Disclosure Form for _____ (Name)

Diocese of East Tennessee

Monthly Income	
Wages, Salary, Tips	
Other Income	
Total Monthly Income (=SUM above)	
Monthly expenses	
Mortgage payment / rent	
Automobile loans	
Personal loans	
Student loans	
Charge accounts	
Church pledge	
Federal income taxes	
State income taxes	
FICA (social security)	
Real estate taxes	
Other taxes	
Utilities	
Household repairs / maintenance	
Food	
Clothing / laundry	
Education expenses	
Child care	
Car expenses	
Life insurance	
Homeowner's insurance	
Automobile insurance	
Med. / dental / disability	
Unreimbursed medical	
Entertainment / dining	
Recreation / travel	
Hobbies	
Gifts	
Charitable contrib.	
Other expenses	
Total Monthly Expenses (=SUM above)	
Net Cash Flow (Income less expenses)	

Assets	
Residence	
Vacation home	
Furnishings	
Automobiles	
Rental real estate	
Art, jewelry, valuables	
Checking accounts	
Savings accounts	
Money market funds	
Certificates of deposit	
Other cash reserve	
Stocks	
Mutual funds	
Annuities	
Ltd. Partnerships	
Business interests	
Total Assets	
Liabilities	
Home mortgage	
Other mortgage	
Car loan	
Bank loan	
Personal loans	
Student loans	
Charge Acct. debt	
Other debt	
Total Liabilities (=SUM above)	
CASH FLOW	
Net Worth (Assets less liabilities)	

Application for Postulancy

Diocese of East Tennessee

I, _____, an Aspirant for Holy Orders, respectfully apply for recommendation to the Bishop of East Tennessee for admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders and submit the letters/documents required by the Canons of the Church.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

cc: Commission on Ministry

Standing Committee

Clergy and Vestry Letter of Support for Postulancy

Diocese of East Tennessee

To: The bishop and Commission on Ministry of The Diocese of East Tennessee

From: _____ on _____
Name of Parish Date

We, whose names appear below, certify that (Name) _____ is a confirmed adult [communicant in good standing](#) of this Parish. We declare that, in our opinion, this person possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for admission as a Postulant for Holy Orders.

This judgment is based on our personal knowledge.

(To be signed by the rector and at least two-thirds majority of the Vestry.)

Rector _____

Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretary:

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of (Name of Parish) _____ in (City) _____, Tennessee, duly convened at (time) _____ on the _____ day of (month) _____, (year) _____, and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Clerk/Secretary of the Vestry Date signed by Clerk/Secretary

Application for Candidacy

Diocese of East Tennessee

I, _____, a Postulant for Holy Orders, respectfully apply for recommendation to the bishop of East Tennessee for admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders and submit the letters/documents required by the Canons of the Church.

Date of Birth: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

cc: Commission on Ministry

Standing Committee

Clergy and Vestry Letter of Support for Candidacy

Diocese of East Tennessee

To: The bishop and Commission on Ministry of The Diocese of East Tennessee

From: _____ on _____
Name of Parish Date

We, whose names appear below, certify that (Name) _____ is a confirmed adult [communicant in good standing](#) of this Parish. We declare that, in our opinion, this person possesses such qualifications as would be fitting for admission as a Candidate for Holy Orders.

This judgment is based on our personal knowledge.

(To be signed by the rector and at least two-thirds majority of the Vestry.)

Rector _____

Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretary:

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of (Name of Parish) _____ in (City) _____, Tennessee, duly convened at (time) _____ on the _____ day of (month) _____, (year) _____, and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Clerk/Secretary of the Vestry Date signed by Clerk/Secretary

Application for Ordination to the Vocational Diaconate

Diocese of East Tennessee

I, _____, a Candidate for Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church, seeking the Vocational Diaconate, respectfully apply to the bishop of East Tennessee for recommendation for ordination to the Vocational Diaconate.

Date of Birth: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

cc: Commission on Ministry

Standing Committee

**Clergy and Vestry Letter of Support for Ordination
to the Vocational Diaconate
Diocese of East Tennessee**

To: The bishop, Commission on Ministry, and Standing Committee of The Diocese of East Tennessee

From: _____ on _____
Name of Parish Date

We, whose names appear below, do certify that, after due inquiry, we are well assured and believe that (Name) _____ for the last three years, has lived a sober, honest, and godly life, and is loyal to the Doctrine, Discipline, and Worship of this Church, and does not hold anything contrary thereto.

And moreover, we think (Name) _____ a person worthy to be admitted to the Sacred Order of Deacons. This judgment is based on our personal knowledge.

(To be signed by the rector and at least two-thirds majority of the Vestry.)

Rector _____

Attestation of Clerk or Recording Secretary:

I hereby certify that the foregoing certificate was signed at a meeting of the Vestry of (Name of Parish) _____ in (City) _____, Tennessee, duly convened at (time) _____ on the _____ day of (month) _____, (year) _____, and that the names attached are those of all (or a two-thirds majority of all) the members of the Vestry.

Clerk/Secretary of the Vestry Date signed by Clerk/Secretary