

RESPONSIBILITY OF VESTRY AND GUIDELINES

There are two different roles at a sponsoring congregation for a person discerning a call as a vocational deacon. After approval by the presbyter (priest), a Parish Discernment Committee (PDC) is assembled to deepen the discernment. This is an intensive, supportive, confidential and time-limited assignment. The vestry has a subsequent, ongoing support/evaluation role as follows.

According to Canon III, 6, Sec. 2 of The Episcopal Church, the sponsoring parish/congregation of a Nominee to the diaconate commits the community to:

1. Pledge to contribute financially to that preparation, and
2. Involve itself in the Nominee's preparation for ordination to the Diaconate.

Vestry must meet at least four times with the individual during their formation. See below.

Phase I. Discernment

Meeting # 1: Nomination (Nominee): PDC convener and Nominee meet with Vestry.

Before the Vestry meeting, the Sponsoring Presbyter gives the Vestry members the PDC report to read and the relevant section of the Church Canons (Canon III, 6) and any diocese-specific requirements.

The Vestry members talk with the Nominee about his/her discernment process and with the PDC convener about the PDC's recommendation. The Vestry members discuss their responsibility required by the Church to support an individual toward ordination. If 2/3 of Vestry agrees to support the individual, they must sign a certificate to that effect.

The PDC report and a certificate of support from the Vestry [III.6.2(a)]* will accompany the Sponsoring Presbyter's letter of endorsement to the Bishop. (Electronic form is available on Diocesan website.)* This certificate is submitted to Bishop Suffragan's office by June 1.

Meeting # 2: Internship (Intern)

At the conclusion of the internship, Interns must schedule a meeting with their Sponsoring Presbyter and Vestry to check in. The purpose is to reflect on their internship experience and on the completion and significance of other elements of this discernment phase, i.e., academic study and spiritual formation and confirm the Vestry's commitment to support the individual. [Refer to Canon III, 6, Sec. 2] Some possible questions:

Tell the Vestry about the internship and the academic courses: where internship was, who was supervisor, what responsibilities were; what courses were taken.

Give some specific examples of what was learned. What was exciting? New? Challenging? What was difficult? How did the intern deal with the difficulties? What was the value of the internship and the academic courses in terms of their ongoing discernment?

Tell the Vestry about spiritual formation: importance of prayer, service in the world, relationships and any other key aspects that are enriching their spirit and their relationship with God in this ongoing discernment.

What additional support does intern need from Vestry and others at sponsoring congregation?

The Vestry reflects on their conversation with intern and re-affirms their commitment to support this individual. Include these comments in the meeting's minutes. Future Vestry members will refer to these comments as the individual proceeds in the discernment/formation process.

Phase II. Formation Year (Postulant)

Meeting # 3: Integration of personal history and formation in context of Clinical Pastoral Education

*All Vestry forms related diaconal formation are on the diocesan website.
See "Ordination Process Required Forms - Vocational Diaconate."

(CPE)

During the Formation year the Postulant meets with the COM-D (Committee on Ministry for Deacons) and Standing Committee and, based on recommendations, the Bishop Suffragan confers Candidacy in May or June of that year. (Candidacy is required for a minimum of 6 months before ordination.)

Before meeting with COM-D, Postulant must meet with Sponsoring Presbyter and Vestry. The purpose of this meeting is to assess and recommend the Postulant for candidacy. At least two-thirds of the Vestry and the Sponsoring Presbyter must *certify in writing* their approval for candidacy. [III.6.4(a)(2)]* Some possible questions:

Tell the Vestry about the formation year, including CPE.

Give some specific examples of what was learned. What was exciting? New? Challenging? What was difficult? How did the Postulant deal with the difficulties? What has been the value of the formation year in terms of his/her feelings about the call toward candidacy and ordination?

Tell the Vestry about spiritual formation: importance of prayer, service in the world, relationships and any other key aspects that are enriching their spirit and their relationship with God in this ongoing process.

What other formation does Postulant need/want before ordination?

What additional support does Postulant need from Vestry and others at sponsoring congregation?

The Vestry reflects on their conversation with Postulant and includes these comments in the meeting's minutes. Future Vestry members will refer to these comments as the individual proceeds toward ordination. After discussion, at least 2/3 of vestry signs the certificate for candidacy. [III.6.4(a)(2)]*

Following the Postulant's meeting with Standing Committee, the Sponsoring Presbyter and Vestry will receive notification from the Bishop Suffragan of the Postulant's acceptance as a Candidate.

Phase 3: Candidacy and Ordination

Meeting # 4: Ordination (Candidate)

At the end of the Formation Program the Candidate has a final meeting with Sponsoring Presbyter and Vestry. *An Endorsement for Ordination* [III.6.6(b)(2)]* must be signed and dated by at least two-thirds of the Vestry and the Presbyter. This letter will be sent to the Bishop Suffragan who will give it (along with all of the supporting documentation) to the Standing Committee.

The Vestry reflects on their conversation with Candidate and includes these comments in the meeting's minutes (suggested questions are below). At the end of this discussion, answer the following question: *In what ways do you envision and experience the Candidate as a Deacon in the Church?* Based on discussion at least two-thirds of the Vestry and the Sponsoring Presbyter *certifies in writing* their approval for candidacy. [III.6.6(b)(2)]*

What is the Candidate's understanding of the Christian ministry?

How does he or she view the ministry of the whole Body of Christ?

How does he or she understand the deacon's ministry?

How does Candidate envision his/her central task as a deacon, including being a bridge between the church as gathered, worshiping community and the needs of the world?

What further growth is needed, and how will he/she pursue such growth?

What ongoing support does Candidate need from Vestry and others at sponsoring congregation?

The candidate meets with the COM-D and Standing Committee and, if approved, is ordained in January (or when at least 6 months have passed since their approval for candidacy).