

# Ordination Process Handbook



## The Episcopal Diocese of Kansas

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## **To new inquirers**

We are so grateful for your interest in serving the church through ordination as a deacon or priest. These are exciting times to be a disciple of Jesus, and the changing nature of the church means that we need leaders who are bold, passionate about Christ and the Episcopal Church, entrepreneurial, grounded by a deep faith and robust spiritual life, animated by the love of God, and have a proven track record of organizing and leading others in mission and ministry.

Deacons and priests in the 21st century will need to be willing to explore new and innovative forms of ministry alongside traditional ways of being and doing church. The call is demanding, and we hope you will find the journey richly rewarding.

This handbook seeks to give a general overview of the process that leads toward ordination in the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas. The process is long, and there are several steps along the way. Discernment begins at the local level; anyone seeking ordination should first be deeply rooted in their baptismal ministry in their local parish. A call to ordination is always a call by and to community, and so the process unfolds in ever-expanding circles of community discernment (parish, convocation, diocese).

The process is not intended to be needlessly bureaucratic, difficult or mysterious. However, a great trust is bestowed in ordination, and so the discernment process must be careful, thoughtful and deliberate. By no means will this handbook answer all your questions, either initially or along the way. Our ministry is to serve you and the church, so please call us with any questions or confusions you may have at any point.

In the meantime, please be assured of our prayers for you as you continue to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In Christ's Love and Service,

The Rev. Gail Greenwell, Chair, Commission on Ministry  
The Rev. Canon Craig Loya, Canon to the Ordinary

## Three tracks toward ordained ministry

There are three overarching paths through which one might be called and formed for ordained ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas (one track for deacons and two different tracks for priests). They are:

### 1) Deacon

Deacons are called to exercise a ministry of service that reflects the fact that Christ himself came not to be served, but to serve. Deacons lead all of us in serving the world outside the walls of the church, “particularly as a servant to those in need.” (*Book of Common Prayer*, page 856) It often is said that deacons bring the church to the world and the world to the church. A deacon’s ministry is outwardly focused. They are called to be agents who organize people both in the church and the world to serve the lost, the least and the lonely. They act as essential catalysts for the church’s mission of service and outreach. Deacons also assist the bishop and presbyters in proclaiming the gospel and administering the sacraments.

Deacons receive their formal training through a two-year course of study at the Kansas School for Ministry.

### 2) Priest

Priests exercise a ministry of oversight in local parishes, particularly as “pastor to the people” (*Book of Common Prayer*, page 856). The primary task of a priest is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry,” by coordinating, encouraging and empowering the ministry of all the baptized in a particular place. Priests are called to proclaim the gospel in word and deed, administer the sacraments, teach the faith, share with the bishop in the councils of the Church, and bless and declare God’s forgiveness.

**a. Bi-vocational priest.** There is a great need in the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas for bi-vocational priests, that is, priests who will serve as sacramental leaders of small congregations as part of a team ministry and who will earn their primary income outside of church work. Currently, more than half our congregations are served by priests who serve on a part-time or non-stipendiary basis. In coming years the need for priests who are able to serve in this capacity will continue to increase. Individuals interested in being ordained to the priesthood who are already established professionals in their community are strongly encouraged to explore a call to bi-vocational ministry.

Bi-vocational priests receive their formal training through a three-year course of study at the Kansas School for Ministry.

**b. Seminary trained priest**

If an individual discerns a call to priesthood as their primary profession and source of income, she/he will need to complete a three-year course of study leading to a Master of Divinity degree at an Episcopal seminary. Individuals interested in exploring this option should note that a willingness to relocate outside of Kansas even after seminary is of critical importance. While every effort will be made to find placements for our seminary-trained priests, the small number of jobs available in this diocese means no guarantee of full-time employment can be made.

## Stages of the ordination process

### **Inquirer**

An inquirer is a person who is interested in exploring a call to ordination and may have had some initial conversations with family, local congregation and parish clergy, but has not formally begun the ordination process.

### **Nominee**

A nominee is a person who has been formally recommended by his or her home parish for ordination as either a priest or deacon. If, after conversation with your family and parish clergy, you are encouraged to move forward in the discernment process, you should apply to be a nominee. The application to be a nominee is on the diocesan website, [http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination\\_documents/Application\\_Nominee\\_All\\_2011.pdf](http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination_documents/Application_Nominee_All_2011.pdf)

Once you have been admitted as a nominee, you will need to meet at least four times with your Convocation Discernment Committee. After receiving and acknowledging the letter of nomination from the bishop, you should contact the convener of your Convocation Discernment Committee to arrange for the first meeting.

### **Postulant**

A postulant is a person who has been formally admitted to the ordination process by the bishop. Once you have completed four meetings with your Convocation Discernment Committee, you then may apply to become a postulant. The application for postulancy is on the diocesan website, [http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination\\_documents/Deacon\\_Application\\_Postulant.pdf](http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination_documents/Deacon_Application_Postulant.pdf) or [http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination\\_documents/Priest\\_Application\\_Postulant.pdf](http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination_documents/Priest_Application_Postulant.pdf)

Once the diocesan office has received your application for postulancy, you will be contacted to set up a meeting with the bishop. The purpose of this meeting is for you to share your story of being called and to discuss plans and a possible schedule for your education and formation. If the bishop encourages you to move forward, you then will interview with the Commission on Ministry (the Commission normally meets in January and September). The Commission will make a recommendation to the bishop regarding postulancy. You will be informed by official letter of the bishop's decision.

Once you have been admitted as a postulant, you are eligible to enroll in an ordination track at the Kansas School for Ministry, or to begin the process of applying to seminary.

## **Candidate**

A candidate is a person who has received official endorsement from the Commission on Ministry and the Council of Trustees to continue his or her course toward ordination. You will apply for candidacy during the fall semester of your final year of study (second year for diaconal students, third year for priesthood students). The application for candidacy is on the diocesan website, [http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination\\_documents/Deacon\\_Application\\_Candidacy.pdf](http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination_documents/Deacon_Application_Candidacy.pdf) or [http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination\\_documents/Priest\\_Application\\_Candidate.pdf](http://www.episcopal-ks.org/life/Ordination_documents/Priest_Application_Candidate.pdf)

# **Appendix A**

## **Diaconal Ordination Process Sample Timeline**

- Year 1: Inquirer meets with parish clergy and makes application for nomination  
Meets with Convocation Discernment Committee  
Makes application for postulancy  
Meets with the bishop  
Interviews with a committee of the Commission on Ministry  
Is named postulant by the bishop
- Year 2: Begins course of study at the Kansas School for Ministry
- Year 3: Continues course of study at KSM  
Makes application for candidacy  
Interviews with another committee of the Commission on Ministry and the Council of Trustees
- Year 4: Ordination as a deacon and assignment to diaconal internship

## **Appendix B**

### **Priesthood Ordination Process Sample Timeline (Individual circumstances may vary slightly)**

- Year 1: Inquirer meets with parish clergy and makes application for nomination  
Meets with Convocation Discernment Committee  
Makes application for postulancy  
Meets with the bishop  
Interviews with a committee of the Commission on Ministry  
Is named postulant by the bishop
- Year 2: Begins course of study at the Kansas School for Ministry or seminary
- Year 3: Continues course of study
- Year 4: Continues course of study  
Makes application for candidacy
- Year 4-5: Ordination as transitional deacon