

The Episcopal Church in Western Louisiana Discernment Journey and Path to Ordination

Form(s) Needed and/or Summary	Steps	Estimated Length of Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Notify the Bishop of the initial meeting date and the name of the aspirant. ● Aspirant to begin working on Spiritual Autobiography. 	<p>1. Discussion with Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge: The person sensing a call must discuss this call thoroughly and at length with the priest of the congregation. Before beginning this discussion, the person must have been an active, confirmed communicant in good standing in the congregation for at least one year. At this time, it is appropriate to begin working on a spiritual autobiography and should be shared with the priest. The priest will notify the bishop of the aspirant's initial meeting and share the name of the aspirant.</p> <p>Spiritual Autobiography: Include information on the various "chapters" of your life such as ed-ucation, military or work experience, marriage or significant personal relationships, spiritual turn-ing points, and major life changes. There is no format to follow, but please think about these auto-biographical statements carefully, so that you include all the important turning points in your life, without writing more than five pages.</p>	<p>A minimum of six months.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Appendix A ● Resume ● 500 Word Essay ● Spiritual Autobiography 	<p>2. Application to Diocesan Discernment: If the priest concludes that the person should continue in the formal process toward ordination, the priest writes a letter to the bishop describing in detail the canonical inquiry they have made with the aspirant (now called a nominee) and confirming that the nominee has been an active member in good standing for over one year. The nominee writes a letter to the bishop, submits a 500 word essay outlining their goals and intentions for ministry, submits a spiritual autobiography and returns the completed Diocesan Discernment Application form.</p>	<p><i>Response from the diocesan office within 60 days.</i></p>
	<p>3. Initial Meeting with Bishop: The nominee together with their priest (and spouse where applicable) will meet with the bishop for an initial exploration of the nominee's interests and purposes, and for an introduction to the ordination process in the Diocese of Western Louisiana. The bishop will at this point decide whether discernment continues toward ordination or toward lay ministry.</p>	<p><i>After this initial meeting, expect a response from the bishop within 30 days unless otherwise notified.</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Appendix C ● Appendix D ● Appendix G 	<p>4. Congregational Discernment Group: If the bishop invites the Nominee to continue in formal discernment, the priest forms a Congregational Discernment Group. The Commission on Ministry will provide training for this group. This group listens to God's call with the nominee in a <i>journey</i> outlined later in this guide.</p> <p>a. Congregational Discernment Group Report: Following their work, they will recommend to the priest in writing whether or not they believe further formal discernment is called for.</p> <p>(Nominees who determine that their vocation lies in an area other than the ordained ministry are encouraged to continue an exploration of this decision with their Congregational Discernment Group and their clergy. The Nominee is also asked to notify the bishop in writing that he or she will/will not be continuing in the process toward ordination at this time.)</p> <p>b. Priest's Report: Drawing upon the Discernment Group's report, the priest completes a written report recommending that formal discernment either draw to a close or go to the next step. (Formal discernment proceeds only when both the Discernment Group and the priest support the Nominee in applying for Postulancy.)</p> <p>c. Vestry Certification: The priest shares both reports with the Vestry/Bishop's Committee. This body then votes whether or not to certify the Nominee as a candidate for Postulancy. The reports and result of certification are then sent to the diocesan office.</p>	<p>Once the group is formed and begins, this step takes six to twelve months</p> <p>Within 30-60 days of concluding session, unless otherwise notified.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Appendix B ● Appendix F ● Appendix H 	<p>5. Application to Postulancy Once the diocesan office has reviewed the certification for postulancy, the Nominee will be invited to submit an application for Postulancy.</p>	<p>This step should take no longer than 30 days to submit.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physical ● Psychological ● Background Check ● Safe Church 	<p>6. Exams, Background checks, and Safe Church</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. After submitting all materials for application to Postulancy, the Nominee will be invited by the diocesan office to arrange for a physical examination with his or her personal physician and submit the findings to the diocesan office. b. The Nominee will contact the diocesan office to make arrangements for a psychological examination and background checks. c. Complete Required Clergy Safe Church Modules. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Visit https://epiwl.org/ministries/safe-church/ for more information <p><i>Results of all reports and background checks remain confidential.</i></p>	<p>Depending on the availability of the Diocesan Psychologist, your physician of choice, and the background check, this step may last between 30-90 days.</p>
	<p>7. Bishop’s Postulancy Review: Following receipt of all postulancy application materials, physical psychological examinations, background checks, and credit report, the bishop will determine whether or not the Nominee should continue in formal discernment. For the next step in formal discernment, the bishop provides the Commission on Ministry a copy of the Postulancy Application along with a psychological recommendation.</p>	<p>Usually complete within 30-60 days of all materials being turned into the diocese.</p>
	<p>8. Commission on Ministry Postulancy Interview: Nominees moving forward in discernment toward ordination will be contacted by the Commission on Ministry for a date and time to gather with the Commission for one of their Postulancy Discernment meetings. Following this meeting, the Commission on Ministry will decide whether or not to recommend postulancy to the bishop.</p>	<p>The bishop usually responds within 30 days of receiving the COM’s recommendation.</p>
	<p>9. Postulancy Interview with Bishop: Following the Discernment interview with the COM, the bishop may meet with the nominee to discuss the Commission’s recommendation or only send a letter.</p>	<p>A determination letter will be sent (usually within 30 days).</p>
	<p>10. Postulancy and Formation: Formation depends upon each postulant’s situation (whether priest or vocational deacon) in conversation with the bishop. Ultimately, the formation decision lies within the purview of the bishop. This could be local formation (EFM or other trained clergy), IONA School for Ministry, an accredited three-year residential Episcopal seminary, or other alternative formation.</p>	<p>This step can take anywhere from 2-3 years and depends entirely upon the person and the bishop’s decision.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for Candidacy 	<p>11. Candidacy: The Postulant will make a formal application for Candidacy at the beginning for their Middler year or the equivalent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Vestry/Mission Board Recommendation for Candidacy b. Candidacy Interview: An interview is scheduled with the Commission on Ministry. The COM then makes their recommendation to the bishop and the Standing Committee of the Diocese. c. The Standing Committee: Votes upon the recommendation of the Commission on Ministry at its next regular meeting. d. The Bishop's Approval: The bishop will notify the postulant of their new status. 	<p>Once the recommendation reaches the bishop, and the bishop gives final approval, the diocesan office will notify the postulant of their new status.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application for Ordination • Vestry Support for Ordination 	<p>12. Ordination to the Diaconate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The candidate's vestry submits a form of support for ordination. A recommendation from the candidate's formational program may be needed for ordination. b. Vocational: Candidates apply for ordination to the Vocational Diaconate at the invitation of the bishop after a determined period of formation has been completed. c. Transitional: Candidates apply for ordination to the Transitional Diaconate in the autumn of their Senior year or at an equivalent time within an alternative formational program. Pending approval by the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the bishop, Candidates will be ordained to the Transitional Diaconate in December of their Senior Year. 	<p>Pending approval by the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the bishop, Candidates will be ordained to the Transitional Diaconate at a time determined by the diocesan office.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vestry Support for Ordination • Formational Program Support for Ordination 	<p>13. Ordination to the Priesthood*: The candidate's vestry submits a form of support for ordination. A recommendation from the candidate's formational program may be needed for ordination. Candidates apply for ordination to the Priesthood in the spring of Senior year or at an equivalent time within an alternative formational program. Pending approval, Candidates will be ordained to the Priesthood in June following completion of their formation process or at an equivalent time following an alternative formational program.</p>	<p>No sooner than 6 months after ordination to the transitional diaconate, date is set by the bishop and the diocesan office.</p>