

**EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE OF
CHICAGO**

Handbook for Presbyterate
Formation

Introduction

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Creator of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift...the gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Ephesians 4: 4-6, 11-13

My sister/brother, the Church is the family of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. All baptized people are called to make Christ known as Savior and Lord, and to share in the renewing of his world. Now you are called to work as pastor, priest, and teacher, together with your bishop and fellow presbyters, and to take your share in the councils of the Church.

As a priest, it will be your task to proclaim by word and deed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to fashion your life in accordance with its precepts. You are to love and serve the people among whom you work, caring alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. You are to preach, to declare God's forgiveness to penitent sinners, to pronounce God's blessing, to share in the administration of Holy Baptism and in the celebration of the mysteries of Christ's Body and Blood, and to perform the other ministrations entrusted to you.

In all that you do, you are to nourish Christ's people from the riches of his grace and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and in the life to come.

Ordination of a Priest, Book of Common Prayer

The ministry of a priest is to represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a pastor to the people; to share with the bishop in the overseeing of the Church; to proclaim the Gospel; to administer the sacraments; and to bless and declare pardon in the name of God.

An Outline of the Faith [The Catechism], Book of Common Prayer

Congratulations and blessings as you enter this next stage of discernment as a postulant for the priesthood in the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago! Members of the Commission on Ministry (CoM) have been praying for you as a nominee and will continue praying for you during your continued ordination process. Now that you are entering this more public phase of discernment, you will also be engaging in a process of intentional formation for the priesthood.

The CoM Presbyterate Formation Team (PFT) supports and guides formation within the context of the requirements of the canons of The Episcopal Church, the hopes of the Church, and the reality of a changing and challenging religious landscape. To that end, formation is not offered in a cookie cutter approach for all but in an individualized pathway to meet the needs of each postulant as well as the broader needs of the Church.

Questions regarding the formation process should be directed to the PFT chair or a members of the PFT that has covenanted to journey with you through formation. Members of the PFT recognize that we are accountable to God, the Church, postulants and the bishop to provide formation leading to ordained priests who are grounded in God, attentive to the Church, the world, themselves and their ministry. We realize that we are entrusted with holy work and seek God's guidance as we do it.

Postulants in turn should recognize that they are accountable to God, the Church, the PFT, the CoM and the bishop and apply themselves, heart, soul and mind, to formation leading to ordained ministry that is grounded in God and attentive to the Church, the world, and themselves in sacred trust.

Contacts:

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Milestone Steps from Postulancy to Ordination

Milestone: Admission to Postulancy

- Development and monitoring of a formation plan with the PFT
- Ember letters (emailed to the bishop: bishop@episcopalchicago.org with Cc: to Louisa McKellaston)
- Recommendation of PFT in consultation with other significant members of postulant's formation network; e.g., the field ed supervisor and any academic professionals supervising or working with the postulant
- Postulant's written application for candidacy
- Letter of endorsement for candidacy from postulant's nominating faith community
- Interview with the CoM, Standing Committee and bishop
- Written approval of the Standing Committee
- Ember Letters

Milestone: Admission to Candidacy

Milestone: Application for Ordination as a Transitional Deacon

- Candidate's written application
- Letter of endorsement from candidate's nominating faith community
- Certificate of academic preparation
- CoM recommendation to the Standing Committee
- Standing Committee's written approval
- Bishop's approval

Milestone: Application for Ordination as a Priest

- Deacon's written application for ordination
- Letter of endorsement from deacon's nominating faith community
- Minimum six months service as a deacon
- Cure of Souls for priestly ministry
- CoM recommendation to the Standing Committee
- Standing Committee's written approval
- Bishop's approval

Formation Requirements

Specific formation requirements for the presbyterate are defined by the canons of the Episcopal Church (Title III.8) and are authoritative. The canons may be found online [here](#).

Sec. 3. Postulancy

Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and may initiate the formal preparation for ordination. Postulancy involves continued exploration of and decision about the Postulant's call to the Priesthood.

Sec. 4. Candidacy

Candidacy is a time of education and formation in preparation for ordination to the Priesthood, established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the congregation or other community of faith.

Sec. 5. Preparation for Ordination

- a. The Bishop and the Commission shall work with the Postulant or Candidate to develop and monitor a program of preparation for ordination to the Priesthood and to ensure that pastoral guidance is provided throughout the period of preparation.
- b. If the Postulant or Candidate has not previously obtained a baccalaureate degree, the Commission, Bishop, and Postulant or Candidate shall design a program of such additional academic work as may be necessary to prepare the Postulant or Candidate to undertake a program of theological education.
- c. Formation shall take into account the local culture and each Postulant or Candidate's background, age, occupation, and ministry.
- d. Prior education and learning from life experience may be considered as part of the formation required for the Priesthood.
- e. Whenever possible, formation for the Priesthood shall take place in community, including other persons in preparation for the Priesthood, or others preparing for ministry.
- f. Formation shall include theological training, practical experience, emotional development, and spiritual formation.
- g. Subject areas for study during this program of preparation shall include:
 1. The Holy Scriptures.
 2. History of the Christian Church.
 3. Christian Theology.
 4. Christian Ethics and Moral Theology.
 5. Christian Worship according to the use of the Book of Common Prayer, the Hymnal, and authorized supplemental texts.

6. The Practice of Ministry in contemporary society, including leadership, evangelism, stewardship, ecumenism, interfaith relations, mission theology, and the historical and contemporary experience of racial and minority groups.

h. Preparation for ordination shall include training regarding:

1. prevention of sexual misconduct against both children and adults.
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, utilizing, but not limited to use of, the Title IV training website of The Episcopal Church.
4. the Church's teaching on racism.

i. Each Postulant or Candidate for ordination to the Priesthood shall communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter, four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Candidate's academic experience and personal and spiritual development.

j. The seminary or other formation program shall provide for, monitor, and report on the academic performance and personal qualifications of the Postulant or Candidate for ordination. These reports will be made upon request of the Bishop and Commission, but at least once per year.

Formation Plan

Postulants for the presbyterate come to formation with prior life experience and learning. Presbyterate formation builds upon that experience and knowledge to prepare learners for ministry as ordained priests.

Formation is based upon acquiring and demonstrating competencies within the six general areas defined by the Canons.

When postulancy is granted, the postulant will receive a letter which broadly outlines expectations for formation during postulancy. This will be reviewed with the postulant in further detail initially by a members of the PFT, followed by periodic reviews as needed.

During postulancy, completion of a Master of Divinity is preferred. The majority of postulants have either already earned one, are in the process of attaining one or plan to pursue one during their postulancy. The curricula of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) seminaries cover many of the academic canonical requirements for ordination. Postulants who complete their theological studies outside an Episcopal seminary may be required to complete further Anglican formation. Other options for theological formation may be made with the PFT. Postulants should consult with the bishop regarding seminary selection.

In addition to the academic requirements, postulants are required to complete an internship (field education), at least part of which needs to take place within an Episcopal context. A unit of Clinical Pastoral Education(CPE) is also required. If the postulant has completed either field ed or CPE (or both) prior to postulancy as part of other academic studies, those experiences will be taken into account but may not necessarily fulfill all requirements for ordination.

Options for Theological Training and Academic Coursework

- Program of study at an Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredited theological seminary (full or part-time is acceptable; residential and/or online is acceptable). A range of options is acceptable in consultation with the bishop and PFT.
- Additional courses at Bexley Seabury Seminary and other seminaries.
- Directed reading with an approved tutor, in selected subject areas.

Required Contextual Ministry Experiences

- Postulants and candidates must complete 400 hours of field education in a parish other than their nominating congregation. The congregation should differ substantially from the nominating congregation. This training should be completed under the guidance of clergy and laity of those congregations (this may be described as internship in some seminary degree programs). The student will actively participate in liturgy, pastoral care, congregational dynamics, and leadership as an intern. Preaching should be an integral part of the field education with opportunities for feedback provided.
- CPE, preferably with an accredited ACPE program, or an approved alternative, is required for postulants. Hybrid programs are acceptable.

Emotional Development

- Emotional health is critical for ordained leadership. The postulant's psychological evaluation (completed before the postulancy interview), may contain recommendations for maintaining and improving emotional and mental health. The postulant will talk with the bishop or their designee about these recommendations and following them. This is not a duty of the PFT.

Spiritual Development

- It is expected that the postulant will have a spiritual director and will see that a person on a regular basis (hybrid is acceptable).

Other Requirements

- Postulants are expected to take the General Ordination Exam (GOE) which is offered each January, online. The postulant should apply in writing to the bishop in the fall to request sitting for the exam. Results of the GOE will be shared with the PFT and CoM by the bishop.
- A postulant may, in conversation with the PFT, request a GOE equivalency exam with approval by the bishop

Individualized Formation Plan

Given the unique array of gifts each postulant brings to their postulancy, some areas of formation will be emphasized more than others.

Personal Qualities:

- Deep grounding in, and commitment to, the Christian faith
- Healthy patterns of life in study, prayer, self-care and self-awareness and discipline
- Proven strength to establish, develop, and maintain relationships
- Openness and courage
- Ability and willingness to engage conflict and seek reconciliation
- Demonstrated gifts in leading people to identify and achieve goals
- Curiosity coupled with a desire to learn and grow
- Effectiveness in communication

Pastor:

- Gifts of discernment and spiritual care
- Compassion for the sick, the dying and those in crisis
- Gifts to form a group of people who care for one another

Priest:

- Deep grounding in, and love of, the sacraments
- Commitment and ability to prepare the congregation for worship
- Excellence in leading the assembly at prayer
- Gifts to preach the Good News in ways that encourage, inspire, challenge
- Demonstrated familiarity with resources of the Episcopal Church such as: *The NRSV Bible, Book of Common Prayer, Enriching Our Worship, Hymnal 1982, and other supplemental texts and resources. Liturgical resources for the Episcopal Church can be [found here](#).*

Teacher:

- Confident familiarity with scripture and the faith of the Church
- Commitment to help the community and individuals grow in faith
- Depth and clarity of theological perspective
- Ability to relate an accessible message

Colleague in Councils:

- Awareness of Church structures and the roles people play within those
- Commitment to connect within the congregation and the wider Church

Leader and Organizer:

- Capacity to read and respond to organizational needs
- Ability to effectively convene gatherings, meetings
- Gifts and willingness to recruit and develop leaders in ministry
- Commitment and capacity to supervise staff and volunteers

- Awareness of administrative skills and necessities
- Commitment to continued reflection and evaluation

Expectations or Postulants as Learners

- Learners are expected to take an active and collaborative role in planning and fulfilling their formation journey.
- Formation is intended to be a transformative journey in community with other postulants.
- As specified in the Canons, each postulant for ordination to the priesthood shall communicate with the bishop in writing four times a year in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the postulant's academic, diaconal, human, spiritual and practical development.
- Postulancy brings with it financial expectations as well. Because all postulants come with differentiated learning and life experiences, actual costs are difficult to estimate and will vary from person to person. Nominating congregations are expected to participate in the costs. In some cases, there may be scholarship funds from the Diocese of Chicago at the discretion of the bishop.
- Total time investment is significant. The total duration of the formation process may be three years or more. Progressing at a reasonable rate means perhaps 50 to 100 hours per month spent taking courses, and writing, in addition to time invested in field formation and retreat.

Postulant and Candidate Support

Hebrews 12: Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,...let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Postulants and candidates are guided and supported through formation by a network of individual relationships.

- Each postulant is assigned a member of the PFT as a companion/liaison to help the postulant understand and navigate the process from postulancy to ordination.
- Each postulant must have a spiritual director. The role of the spiritual director is spiritual exploration, reflection, and development on the journey to ordination. Clergy continue a relationship with a spiritual director after ordination.
- Field education clergy and laity are committed to supporting their postulant during the field internship and ensuring they have opportunities to acquire and demonstrate relevant competencies (liturgy, homiletics, congregational dynamics, congregational outreach), as well as to reflect on the ministry of the presbyterate
- The nominating congregation will continue to provide spiritual and financial support throughout postulancy and candidacy, though contact will be minimal during field experience. Postulants and candidates should remain in close connection with their rector. The nominating congregation will also provide letters of endorsement for each milestone through ordination.
- The CoM will provide a mentor for the postulant during their ordination process.

Additional Information

Contacts:

- Louisa McKellaston, staff liaison to the CoM: lmckellaston@episcopalchicago.org
- The Rev. Suzanne Wille, Chair, PFT: suzanne@allsaintschicago.org
- The Rt. Rev. Paula Clark, Bishop of Chicago: bishop@episcopalchicago.org
- Karin Gutierrez, Executive Assistant to Bishop Clark: kgutierrez@episcopalchicago.org

Web Links:

- Episcopal Diocese of Chicago: <https://episcopalchicago.org/>
- Liturgical Resources: <https://www.episcopalcommonprayer.org/>
- Constitution & Canons of the Episcopal Church: <https://generalconvention.org/constitution-and-canons/>
- Association for Clinical Pastoral Education: <https://acpe.edu/programs>
- Association of Theological Schools: <https://www.ats.edu/>
- Bexley Seabury: <https://www.bexleyseabury.edu/>
- Virginia Theological Seminary: <https://vts.edu/>
- Seminary of the Southwest: <https://ssw.edu/>
- School of Theology at Sewanee: <https://theology.sewanee.edu/>