

Discernment Process: Basic Information

- The Explorers' Retreat is the entry point for the discernment process, and all who desire to begin a formal exploration of a possible call to ordained ministry are required to attend. The Explorers' Retreat typically occurs on a Friday to Saturday in late January or early February.
- The traits the Bishop and Commission on Ministry are looking for in our ordained leadership are:
 - Theologian: Someone who makes connections between faith and life
 - Makes connections between Scripture and our lives
 - Makes connections between liturgy and mission
 - Makes connections between theology and contemporary society
 - Entrepreneur: Someone who sees possibilities and takes risks
 - Sees possibilities in unlikely places and is willing to take risks to make those possibilities realities
 - Takes one's own mistakes and redeems them
 - Approaches problem solving creatively and with tenacity
 - Faith Community Organizer: Someone who galvanizes communities to take action
 - Creates communities for ministry
 - Sees a need and empowers others to meet that need
 - Makes creative use of human and material resources
- Guidance to Clergy:
 - Sponsoring clergy (Rector or Priest-in-Charge) and the Explorer's spouse **do not** attend the Explorers' Retreat.
 - Please send Explorers who have been in serious conversation with you about their call for an extended period of time (in the neighborhood of a year). Both you and they should have done some deep thinking about their vocation prior to the Explorers' Retreat.
 - Only those who have been confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church and have been active members of your parish for **at least two years** should attend the Explorers' Retreat.
 - Please consider how the Explorer may be called to priestly or diaconal ministry as a theologian, entrepreneur, and faith community organizer.
- There is no age limit for people entering the discernment process for the diaconate, except that the canonically mandated retirement age of 72 will be expected. The age limit for people entering the discernment process for the priesthood is 57. This allows for a total of five years between Explorers' Day and possible ordination, then 10 years of ministry before the canonically mandated retirement age of 72. Exceptions will be made in rare instances, by the Bishop, and only for clear missional purposes.

If you have questions about the discernment process along the way, please contact Spencer Pugh, Chair of the Commission on Ministry at spencerpugh@twc.com or the Rev. Canon John Johanssen, Canon to the Ordinary, at john.johanssen@gmail.com

Overview of Typical Ordination Process Timeline*

Jan-Feb, Year A	Explorers' Retreat (attendance required to begin process)
Mid-March, Year A	Due Date, Discernment Portfolio
March-April, Year A	CoM Interviews with those who have submitted their Discernment Portfolio. CoM makes invitations to form Regional Discernment Committees (RDC).
May – September, Year A	Regional Discernment Committee (RDC) process and Psychological & Medical Exams, background checks, request transcripts to be sent to Diocese, fill out "Information Sheet for Those Discerning a Call" and send to the Bishop's Office c/o Sherri Martin.
October Year A	Due Date: RDC recommendation, Priest & Vestry/Mission Council endorsements of applicants
December 1, Year A	Due Date for completion of Bishop's consultation with applicants
Early December, Year A	COM interviews applicants to determine recommendation for Postulancy
Mid-Dec, Year A	Bishop grants postulancy; seminary visits, applications & financial aid search
January, Year B	School for Diaconal Formation (SDF) enrollment (those discerning for the diaconate)
August, Year B	Seminary enrollment (those discerning for the priesthood)
October, Year D	Interview by CoM and Standing Committee; recommendation for Candidacy
January, Year E	General Ordination Exams (those discerning for the priesthood) Written work due and oral exam with Examining Chaplains (those discerning for the diaconate)
March or April, Year E	CoM and Standing Committee recommendations for Ordination
June Year E	Ordination as Vocational Deacon or Transitional Deacon
April Year F	CoM and Standing Committee recommendations for Ordination to Priesthood
June Year F	Ordination to Priesthood

*Note that the actual timeline for each individual can be quite different. See Isaiah 55:8-11.

Some Criteria for the Discernment Process

(Not every person will meet every criterion)

Regarding the Explorer

Spirituality

Does this person have:

- Clearly articulated personal commitment to Christ
- Clearly articulated sense of call to leadership in ministry
- Rule of life that includes regular/daily practices of private study and prayer; regular interaction with a Spiritual Director
- Clearly articulated sense of gifts and use of those gifts

History of Ministry

Does this person have:

- History of being used by God to lead others to Christ
- Teaching experience: taught Bible Study, Sunday School, etc.
- Pastoral experience: visitation of sick, bereaved, lapsed, etc.
- Administrative experience: Vestry/Mission Council, stewardship, etc.
- Program experience: youth ministry, Sunday School program development, etc.

Education

Does this person have:

- Associate's Degree (diocesan minimum requirement for permanent diaconate)
- Bachelor's Degree (diocesan minimum requirement for priesthood)
- Graduate level degree

Traits

Does this person have experience as a:

- Theologian: Someone who makes connections between faith and life
 - Makes connections between Scripture and our lives
 - Makes connections between liturgy and mission
 - Makes connections between theology (an understanding of God) and contemporary society
- Entrepreneur: Someone who sees possibilities and takes risks
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Recommendation from Rector or Priest-in-Charge*

(to be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the Explorers' Retreat)

I certify that the Explorer _____

- Has been a member of the Episcopal Church for at least two years and
- Has been in serious conversation with me for a year about his/her call to ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church.

Based on my discussions with this Explorer and my observations of his/her life and ministry, I support him/her attending the Diocesan Explorers' Retreat.

Name _____
Rector or Priest in Charge

Signature _____ Date _____

**Note that the Rector (or Priest-in-Charge) will have a separate opportunity to endorse (or not endorse) the Explorer to become a Postulant. Also note that if a parish doesn't have a rector or priest-in-charge, the senior warden may sign this Explorer's Retreat recommendation.*