



## DIOCESE OF NIAGARA THE DIACONAL DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION PROCESS

*Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

*Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, 'Samuel! Samuel!' And Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'*

1 Samuel 3:7-10

God calls to each of us (often persistently) and asks us to use our gifts in some form of ministry in the world. Normally, those called to the office of deacon will have a ministry outside the parish primarily serving those on the margins of society and outside the institutional Church (approximately 80% of their time). Their secondary vocation (approximately 20% of their time) will be spent in the parish where they may assist in the Eucharist and help enable lay ministry. While the parish will pay for any expenses incurred and provide funds for education, their work in the parish is unpaid. They will not be in charge of congregations or parishes. Part of an individual's discernment and testing of a call to ordained ministry as a deacon in the Diocese of Niagara is participation in the church's discernment and formation process set out here.

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Under normal circumstances, a candidate for Holy Orders passes through a four-stage process before ordination as a deacon. The stages are:

The Inquiry	A person in the early stages of vocational discernment prior to initial interview, will take part in meetings with their Rector/Priest-in-Charge; the Director and/or Deputy Director of College of Deacons & Director of Human Resources; and the Bishop.
The Applicant	A person who has submitted an application for Holy Orders, having met with the Bishop and others identified in the Inquirer's stage. The process will formally be started during this stage and the applicant's Regional Archdeacon will be informed.
The Candidate	A person who has been approved for candidacy with the Diocese of Niagara by the Bishop, upon receipt of a recommendation from the Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee.
The Deacon	A person who takes part in the governance of the Church, in the carrying out of its mission to serve all people, particularly those who are poor, sick, lonely or are otherwise on the margins of society.

**At no time during the candidacy process does the diocese guarantee ordination to an applicant/candidate. Applicants/candidates should be aware that this process may take two to three years.**

The requirements for each phase of this process will normally be completed before a person advances to the next stage. Before making any formal application for training towards ordained ministry, the person is advised to allow sufficient time for the inquiry stage and

application process. [A consultation, seeking guidance as to suitable training resources, with the Director of Human Resources is in order if an inquirer or applicant wishes to avail themselves of opportunities for formation or formal training which may present themselves prior to the completion of the inquirer or applicant stages.] Those interested in ordination to the Diaconate in Niagara should contact their Rector. The Diocese, through the Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee and other resource-persons, expects to take an ongoing role in the Candidate's formation beginning early in the process.

## The Inquiry

1. The person expressing interest in a vocation to the diaconate will share with their Rector their understanding of being called to ordained ministry, and the Rector assists in further discernment of the nature of the call (e.g., parish or other ministries). This discernment takes place over a period of time (minimum three months to one year), during which specific ministry in a leadership context is undertaken (teaching, hospital, social justice, pastoral) with direct supervision by the Rector or another professional. The inquirer will be required to meet with the Director/Deputy Director of the College of Deacons during this time.
2. The inquirer and their Rector are to meet with the Bishop.
3. The Director/Deputy Director of the College of Deacons, or designate, is invited by the Rector to give an orientation of the ministry of deacons and the process of discernment to parish council.
4. Regular participation in the life and worship of the home parish in the Anglican Diocese of Niagara for at least three years prior to application.
5. Education requirements will be the equivalent of a Certificate in Christian Studies which will include courses in Old Testament, New Testament, theology, Anglican church history, and pastoral care/counseling/active listening. Other courses may be recommended by the Director of Human Resources with the advice of the Director of the College of Deacons. The education requirements may be pursued throughout the process.
6. Following the parish council orientation, a recommendation of the parish's Rector and parochial committee referring the inquirer for initial interviews with the Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee is submitted. (See Recommendation of Parochial Committee Form.)
7. Those wishing to apply for ordination may request the application form from the Director of Human Resources.  
The application submission should include:
  - Application for Ordination form duly completed and signed by both the applicant and Rector/Priest-in-Charge;
  - Responses to five questions on page seven of the application;
  - Copies of applicant's baptismal and confirmation certificates;
  - A current Police Record Check which includes a Vulnerable Sector Check;
  - A copy of a current Ontario Driver's Licence; and
  - Copies of completed diplomas and course transcripts for relevant educational achievements.

## The Applicant

1. The Applicant will provide a copy of their Application for Ordination to their Rector for their signature. The Applicant will submit the signed application to the identified diocesan liaison.
2. The Rector will inform the Regional Archdeacon and the parish of the Applicant's process of discernment and Application for Ordination.
3. Interviews are arranged with the Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee.
4. The applicant becomes a candidate upon the decision of the Bishop, following the completion of an initial set of interviews with a positive determination by the Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee. The Candidate will then receive a letter from the Director of Human Resources regarding their candidacy and any recommendations for formation with a copy to their Rector and the deacon Mentor identified by the Bishop.

## The Candidate

1. The Candidate will meet with the Director of Human Resources, their Rector, and Mentor following receipt of their candidacy letter to prepare and clarify a plan for ongoing discernment, preparation and formation. Thereafter the Candidate will meet with this group once a year to review progress in their training, spiritual discipline and practice of ministry. Issues for growth identified by the Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee should be addressed at this time.
2. The Candidate will meet not less than bi-monthly with their assigned deacon Mentor. It is intended that these meetings will continue throughout the candidacy process and for the first two years of ordained ministry.
3. Candidates are required to have a Spiritual Director upon acceptance as a Niagara candidate. Candidates will meet with their Spiritual Director regularly, ideally once a month. Spiritual Directors can be found through divinity colleges or Spiritual Directors International (<https://www.sdicompanions.org/>). The Diocese of Niagara does not endorse any particular Spiritual Director. The cost associated with spiritual direction is the responsibility of the candidate.
4. A Parish Discernment Committee is formed and will continue to meet until completion of the Parish Commendation.
5. Reporting Expectations: It is the Candidate's responsibility to ensure that the Director of Human Resources receives reports/transcripts from their college/university throughout the process, which will continue until the successful completion of the required courses.
6. Prior to the second Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee interviews:
  - the Parish Commendation for Deacons is submitted;
  - a draft job description (using the Diocesan Ministry Job Description Template for Deacons) for the deacon's ministry is submitted to the Director of the College of Deacons and Director of Human Resources for review and initial approval. Once initial approval is granted the job description is submitted to the Candidate's parish

corporation for its approval. Final approval of job descriptions must be granted by the Bishop; and

- all academic requirements have been successfully completed.

7. Second interviews are arranged with the Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee.
8. With a positive determination by the Diocesan Diaconal Discernment Committee, the Candidate is recommended to the Bishop for ordination. The Candidate will then receive a letter from the Director of Human Resources regarding the Bishop's decision concerning their candidacy and any recommendations for ongoing vocational development with a copy to their Rector, Mentor, and Regional Archdeacon. Additional interviews may sometimes be required.
9. After completion of the second interviews and upon receiving the Bishop's approval, the Candidate will meet with the Director of the College of Deacons to discuss ordination and orientation to the College of Deacons.

### **The Deacon**

1. Prior to ordination, the ordinand will attend a pre-ordination retreat.
2. All Deacons are required to attend a Volunteer Screening and Safe Church seminar not later than the first anniversary of ordination.
3. Deacons are non-stipendiary. However, all deacons may annually submit budget requests for vestry consideration for expenses they incur. Parishes shall be asked to consider reimbursing the following as allowable budgeted expenses:
  - mileage and other expenses incidental to the performance of their ministry and diocesan-required conferences, including but not limited to Clergy and Licensed Lay Workers' Days and Conferences, other conferences and continuing education;
  - an annual honorarium of a nominal amount; and/or
  - any other specific payments as agreed to by the Deacon, the Parish, and the Bishop.

### **Reapplication**

Applicants who are not chosen from their initial interview to be a candidate with the Diocese of Niagara will be directed to their Rector/Priest-in-Charge. Applicants may reapply after a period of 24 months. The reapplication requires a cover letter with resume indicating significant changes/developments to support beginning this process again.

### **Appeal**

Candidates who have been declined later in the process may appeal to the Bishop. The Bishop may affirm the decision or review the decision - a process which may include more interviews, further training or additional experiences. The Bishop's decision is final.