

DIOCESE OF NIAGARA

PARISH PROCESS OF DISCERNMENT

Parishes with members interested in ordination to the diaconate, who have met with the Bishop and been encouraged in their discernment, have a special role to play in members' discernment of their call. The home parish has a pastoral responsibility in the discernment, nurture, and support of the parishioner exploring this call.

Leaders of a congregation may play an active role in recruiting the applicant they wish to endorse. In other cases, the applicant will have been the first one to sense a possible call and will have asked the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and leaders for help in discerning its validity. It should always be one of mutual discernment in which the applicant and the congregation seek to discover God's will.

In some cases, it will become clear that there is no call to ordained ministry but rather to some form of lay ministry. In other cases, the call to ordained ministry will become clearer during the discernment process. Whatever the outcome, the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and the congregation's leaders need to be ready to support the person and particular care is given to someone whose personal sense of call is not confirmed by their home parish. During this initial stage, a meeting of the applicant, the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and the Director of Deacons is arranged.

If the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and/or the home parish do not support having a deacon or this potential candidate, then this will end the process.

Parish Process

This begins after the applicant has met with the Director of Human Resources and the Director of Deacons and has submitted an application for ordination to the Diaconate.

Parish Discernment Committee

A committee of four to six parishioners is appointed by the Rector/Priest-in-Charge to meet with the applicant several times (three to six times suggested). This group, which should include at least one member of Parish Council, will help the applicant clarify the nature of their call and support them in their process of discernment and formation. The Committee Chair or the Parish Council representative on the Committee will report to Parish Council and will take any enquiries back to the Committee for further exploration. It is recommended that the Committee meet with the Directors of Deacons and/or the Director of Human Resources, to be made aware of the diocesan process and the expectations associated with it.

The Committee Chair and the Rector/Priest-in-Charge will confer regularly during the parish's process to ensure that it is moving forward in a supportive and constructive manner. The application form will be shared at the parish level with the Rector/Priest-in-Charge and Parish Discernment Chair only and will be treated as a confidential document by these parties.

On the recommendation of the Parish Discernment Committee and the Rector/Priest-in-Charge, the applicant's request for vestry approval will be shared with Parish Council in advance of an annual vestry meeting (or special vestry meeting called for this purpose), seeking the encouragement of the Parish Council for a motion to be presented at vestry.

The home parish must vote two thirds in favour of said motion at a vestry meeting. If the motion carries, a Parish Commendation Form will be submitted to the Director of Human Resources with a copy to the Director of Deacons. The Parish Commendation does not guarantee ordination.