



## DIOCESE OF NIAGARA PROCEDURE AND REQUIREMENTS REGARDING THE CANDIDACY PROCESS FOR PRIESTHOOD

*Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, 'I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.' When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, 'Moses, Moses!' And he said, 'Here I am.'*

Exodus 3:1-4

God calls to each of us and asks us to use our gifts in some form of ministry in the world. Part of discerning if your call is to ordained ministry in the Diocese of Niagara is your participation in the candidacy process.

Under normal circumstances, there are five stages in the process leading to ordination as a priest. The stages are:

Inquirer	A person in the early stages of vocational discernment prior to initial interview. Meeting with the Bishop.
Applicant	A person who has completed or is completing parish discernment ministry and has been invited by the Bishop to submit an application.
Candidate	A person who has been approved for candidacy with the Diocese of Niagara by the Candidates' Committee and the Bishop.
Transitional Deacon	A person ordained as a deacon and who intends to become a priest.
Priest	A person who takes part in a distinctive ministry appointed by the Bishop for the spiritual care and leadership of parish communities.

The requirements for each phase of this process will normally be completed before a person advances to the next stage. Before making an application for theological training towards ordained ministry, the person is advised to allow sufficient time for the initial inquiry stage. Those interested in ordination in Niagara should contact the Bishop for a meeting early in their discernment process and have a subsequent meeting with the Director of Human Resources, preferably before applying to theological college. The Diocese expects to take an ongoing role in the candidate's formation beginning early in the process.

The Diocese may on occasion choose to shorten the candidacy time, e.g., if a candidate has been approved by another diocese or if a candidate has completed/is completing their post-baccalaureate theological training.

**At no time during the candidacy/postulancy process, can the diocese guarantee ordination to an applicant.** The Anglican Church of Canada prohibits ordination unless a job is available to the ordinand. On occasion, a candidate may be asked to interview with other Bishops and will receive references to enable them to do so.

## The Inquirer

1. Those who are members of parishes within the Diocese of Niagara are encouraged to express their interest in a vocation to ordained ministry to their parish priest, exploring their understanding of being called to such ministry. The parish priest 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 and will involve an intentional ministry placement usually in their home parish.

Those who are coming to the Diocese of Niagara from another diocese or denomination will participate in a similar intentional ministry placement in a parish within the Diocese of Niagara whenever possible. This placement is essential for such persons in order to familiarize candidates with parish and diocesan culture.

All such placements will involve an extended (minimum of four months to one year) experience of a range of parish ministries (teaching, preaching, hospital, social justice, pastoral, etc.) with the direct supervision by the parish priest. The potential applicant should meet with the rector and a parish team (consisting of two wardens and two other lay people) regularly to discuss the placement experience and how it reflects on their call. This parish discernment team will provide feedback in the form of a parish commendation. The parish should also receive the document entitled Ordination Prerequisites and the Competencies for Ordination to the Priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada as important background information for their deliberations. If the commendation is favourable, the inquirer will be invited to apply for ordination.

No financial support is available from the diocese during this period.

All inquirers are required to meet with the bishop prior to making an application.

2. Inquiries may find resources available on the diocesan website. The documents are:
  - Competencies for Ordination to the Priesthood in the Anglican Church of Canada
  - Ordination Prerequisites
  - Procedures and Requirements Regarding the Candidacy Process

The **annual application deadline is March 1<sup>st</sup>**. Applications will include:

- Application for Ordination form duly completed and signed (available to an inquirer following receipt of the Bishop's recommendation)
  - Responses to five questions on page seven of the application
  - Copies of applicant's baptismal and confirmation certificate
  - Current Police Record Check which includes a Vulnerable Sector Check
  - Copy of applicant's Drivers Licence
  - A current résumé
3. Inquirers, applicants, and candidates are expected to have a spiritual director and to work regularly (ideally once a month) with that person, reflecting on their life in prayer and their understanding and articulation of their call to ministry. Having a spiritual director is mandatory and is at the directee's expense. Spiritual directors can be found through the diocese, divinity colleges, or Spiritual Directors International ([www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)). The Diocese of Niagara does not endorse any particular spiritual director.

## **The Applicant**

1. Once the Application for Ordination and Letter of Commendation have been submitted, the documents are assessed. Applicants will be either invited to the Applicant Interview Day or otherwise directed.
2. The Applicant Interview Day takes place in the spring and includes two sets of interviews, preparation and delivery of a five-minute homily, and participation in a discussion group. Present at this day is the Bishop, Director of Human Resources, Chaplains to Ordinands, and Candidates' Committee members. This committee will meet to debrief the interview day and each applicant and makes recommendations to the Bishop concerning continuation in the diocesan discernment process. Each applicant will receive a Candidates' Committee Report. Those recommended for candidacy will receive guidance as to ongoing steps for discernment and formation.

## **The Candidate**

1. A chaplain is assigned to each recommended applicant, now a candidate, as the person to whom they will turn for pastoral care and conversation throughout the process, meeting a minimum of two times a year. The chaplain is a member of the Candidates' Committee but is not asked to report to it. This relationship will end with the candidate's priesting or their withdrawal from the ordination process.
2. A mentor is also assigned to each candidate. The mentor acts as an interpreter of the process, and "coach" throughout the process, meeting every other month. The mentor is a member of the Candidates' Committee and is asked to report to it. The mentor will be informed by the diocese at major decision points in the process, so as to be able to support the candidate.
3. Field work placements and a full-term parish internship (minimum of three months) which are required both by theological colleges and the Diocese will be made in consultation with the Director of Human Resources and with the college's Field Education Supervisor.
4. Each candidate is required to write a letter to the Bishop semi-annually (Advent-November 30 and Pentecost-May 15) to indicate how they are progressing in their training, spiritual life and practice of ministry. Issues for growth identified by the Candidates' Committee should be addressed in the letter.
5. Once an applicant has been approved for candidacy, they will be registered for assessment by the Advisory Committee on Postulants for Ordination (ACPO) with respect to demonstrated evidence of a call, charisms, and character for priestly ministry.

At the request of the diocesan Bishop, the candidate will attend a regional conference of the ACPO for vocational assessment and direction regarding suitability for continuation in training and formation for priestly ministry. The ACPO recommendation is not mandatory for ordination but is normally expected. There are occasional situations when an ACPO recommendation may request that a candidate postpone theological training for a period of time or may make other significant recommendations. ACPO usually takes place in the spring (April/May) and fall (October/November). Partners are not invited to this conference.

6. The Diocese of Niagara has a mandatory vocational assessment requirement for all candidates. The cost of the assessment is borne by the diocese. With the written permission of the candidate, the vocational assessment report is shared with the Bishop and the Bishop's designate.
7. After being recommended by ACPO and a positive vocational assessment report, the candidate is now eligible to receive diocesan bursaries.
8. Candidates are expected to participate, along with the Candidates' Committee, in two annual Working Group meetings – fall (October/November) and winter (March). These meetings consist of a plenary and small group discussions.
9. The Candidates' Committee debriefs after working group meetings to make recommendations as to whether candidates are to continue in the diocesan discernment process. The feedback from these meetings will also be helpful to the Bishop in determining the readiness for ordination.
10. Reporting Expectations: It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that the Director of Human Resources receives reports/transcripts from their college, field education/parish placements and internships throughout the process.
11. A basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)/Supervised Pastoral Education (SPE) (or approved equivalent programme) is strongly recommended and may be required where available. The final reports (supervisor's and candidate's) must be submitted to the Director of Human Resources. A meeting with the Director of Human Resources always follows the completion of the CPE/SPE unit. Applications for subsidies to reimburse tuition costs for CPE/SPE may be available either through the diocesan theological students' budget or an individual Leadership Grant.
12. Candidates, and partners where applicable, will be invited to attend annual events with the Bishop, Director of Human Resources, Chaplains to Ordinands, and Candidates' Committee.
13. Candidates, in the final stages of their schooling and discernment process, will be invited to a Candidate Interview Day usually held in September. The day includes one of interview, preparation and delivery of a five-minute homily, and participation in a discussion group. Present at this day is the Bishop, Director of Human Resources, Chaplains to Ordinands, and Candidates' Committee. Candidates are also required to provide an updated resume. The feedback from this day is helpful to the Bishop in determining the readiness for ordination.
14. Candidates deemed ready for ordination meet with the Bishop and the Director of Human Resources to discuss any available ministry positions in the Diocese of Niagara. A person will only be ordained if there is a position available.

### **The Transitional Deacon**

1. Prior to ordination, a *Si Quis* is proclaimed in the parish(es) which have provided a recommendation for candidacy and is submitted to the Bishop's office by the Rector of that parish certifying that there was no formal objection made.
2. The potential ordinand is required to attend a pre-ordination retreat.
3. Newly ordained clergy must participate in the post-ordination training program, Starting Well. Attendance at other programmes (such as New 2 Niagara) may also be mandated.
4. The new clergy meet regularly with their appointed supervisor for ongoing evaluation and spiritual growth. The Bishop may consult with the supervisors.
5. New mentors may be assigned for at least a two-year period.

### **The Priest**

1. Prior to ordination to the priesthood, the individual, the supervising rector and the churchwardens will evaluate the individual within the ministry setting and with reference to the individual's ministry covenant. Upon successful completion of this evaluation, the Bishop makes a decision as to whether or not the candidate is to be invited to present themselves for ordination.
2. At that point, a *Si Quis* is proclaimed in the parish(es) in which the transitional deacon is serving and is submitted to the Bishop's office by the Rector of that parish certifying that there was no formal objection made.
3. The ordinand is required to attend a pre-ordination retreat.

### **Reapplication**

Applicants who are not recommended to proceed in the ordination discernment stream in the Diocese of Niagara following their initial interviews will be directed to their parish priest. Applicants may be given leave to reapply after a period of 24 months. The reapplication requires a cover letter with resume that would indicate that there have been 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 is the final arbiter for these decisions.

### **Other Matters**

In consultation with the Bishop and Director of Human Resources, the candidate is free to discuss employment possibilities elsewhere in the Church.

It is expected that theological students will be responsible for the cost of their training. Limited grants are available from the diocese and candidates may apply for grants prior to August 31 of each year on the prescribed form available.