

Priestly Formation Process in the Diocese of Rupert's Land

This is an outline for those interested in the “mainline” process for those seeking to be formed to be ordained as priests in the Diocese of Rupert's Land. Somewhat different processes are in place for those whose ordained ministry will be in the context of indigenous ministries and/or in the context of a team-based Local Collaborative Ministry.

The entire process takes place within a blanket of prayer and discernment as we seek always God's will for our Church and for each individual whom God has called and gifted for ministry.¹

Initial Discernment

- You begin to sense a call to ordained ministry, perhaps through the affirmation and encouragement of others.
- Begin to have informal conversations with your parish priest, family, and friends about this sense of calling.
- With your home parish priest, call together a Parish Discernment Group who will meet with you for five to twelve months using a process for discussion, the “Parish Discernment Guidelines” document, available through the Bishop's Office. Continue to have ongoing conversations with your parish priest. This process is intentionally flexible so that it can be shaped to meet your needs.
- In some cases, a preliminary conversation with the Diocesan Ministry Developer or the Bishop may be desired.

Becoming a candidate...

- When you feel you are ready to move ahead, complete and submit the ‘information form’ (aka ‘green form’) to the Bishop's Office.
- Your home parish priest working with the parish discernment group completes a Letter of Commendation which is available from and submitted to the Bishop's Office.
- You will be invited to meet with the Bishop for conversation about your vocation.

Becoming an ‘aspirant,’ one who aspires to priestly ordination...

- If you are recommended to proceed to the next step of the discernment process, you will be asked to prepare written material which is reviewed by the members of the Diocesan Discernment Coordinating Team, who will forward it to the Priestly Ministry Team (PMT) as they feel it is appropriate.
- Meet with a panel (usually three people) who are members of the PMT. This interview is generally an hour long. There may be more than one panel interview if PMT feels that

¹ Please note that the process can be terminated at any stage, either by the individual or by the Bishop. It is also possible for individuals to take a ‘leave of absence’ from the process for a time where necessary.

would be helpful. The panel report is shared with all PMT members, who make the recommendation to the Bishop about proceeding.

- You will be invited to meet with the Ministry Developer. You will learn at this point about the PMT's recommendation for the next steps in your discernment.

Becoming a postulant...

- At the Bishop's recommendation, attend a weekend-long discernment process called the Advisory Committee on Postulants for Ordination, or ACPO. ACPO is held annually with candidates and assessors from other dioceses of the Province of Rupert's Land so that you will meet applicants from across the prairies. Over the course of the weekend you will have a number of meetings with ACPO assessors who are seeking to discern whether they believe God is calling you to priestly ministry. ACPO is held in various locations, usually in May, and the costs of your participation will be covered. You will receive a recommendation and feedback to assist you in the next stages of your journey. You will know the results of the ACPO weekend before you leave to return home, and the recommendation report is shared with your Bishop.
- Following your ACPO weekend, meet with the Bishop. At this time you will be informed whether you are being formally accepted as a postulant. If this is not the case, further discernment will be recommended.

As a postulant...

This is the stage of more intentional formation for ordained ministry. Formation consists of three interwoven components: knowledge, practical training, and spiritual development. While there is limited bursary assistance available from the Diocese and the national Anglican Foundation, the costs of these formation programs ultimately rests with the postulant. It is intended that these three components take place simultaneously through the postulancy period (although it is not uncommon for individuals to have completed some theological education when they begin to discern a call to priestly ministry).

During your postulancy you will be assigned a liaison person from PMT. You will want to meet with your liaison at least twice a year during your postulancy (although feel free to reach out more frequently). Your liaison will be updating PMT on your growth, and will be there for you if you have any questions about the process. They are not intended to be a coach, mentor or advocate.

At this stage you will be asked to provide Child Abuse Registry and Police Records Check documentation, and you will be asked to take part in a psycho-sexual assessment with a professional psychologist.

You will meet regularly with the Diocesan Ministry Developer to review your academic, practical, and spiritual formation. At this time you will begin to plan for your field placement for the coming year and discuss learning goals and how to meet them.

The length of your postulancy will depend on the training and experience you bring. For those who begin this process without any formal theological education, you can expect to spend three

years or more in formation; how long will depend on whether you are completing studies full-time or part-time (see below).

Note that from time to time there may arise issues in the church, or in your own life, that may require some flexibility with the requirements noted below. Should substantive issues arise during the course of your postulancy (family or personal issues, financial, spiritual), please don't hesitate to be in touch with your liaison, the Ministry Developer or the Bishop. We are here to support you in this journey.

Knowledge

- Complete a course of formal theological education, normally a Master of Divinity degree but other academic routes may also be acceptable. This will be discussed with the Diocesan Ministry Developer. Variation from an M.Div. program requires formal approval by the bishop in consultation with PMT. Studies can be full-time or part-time, on campus or by distance education, or some combination thereof; speak with the colleges to explore your options.
- Some options for theological education include:
 - Master of Divinity degree (or equivalent) at an Anglican-affiliated theological college: Currently in Canada, these are the Vancouver School of Theology, Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Wycliffe and Trinity Colleges (at the Toronto School of Theology), Emmanuel - St. Chad in Saskatoon, Huron College at the University of Western Ontario (London, ON), St. Paul's University in Ottawa, Queen's College at Memorial University in St. John's, NFLD and Montreal Diocesan Theological College. Several of these institutions offer distance education options. There are also many Episcopal seminaries in the U.S.A.
 - Master of Arts in Christian Ministry or Master of Divinity degree at Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, supplemented by the Anglican studies courses offered there through St. John's College.
 - Master of Divinity degrees (or equivalent) at non-Anglican affiliated colleges (including Providence Theological Seminary south of Winnipeg, and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon), supplemented by Anglican studies.
 - The joint Master of Theological Studies program offered through the Centre for Christian Studies in Winnipeg and St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon, supplemented with appropriate Anglican studies content.
 - Additionally, or as a refresher if your theological education was some time ago, course work and learning circles at the Centre for Christian Studies
- Whatever formal education route is taken, studies will need to include demonstrable competence in the following areas. If these requirements are not covered by your theological college's program, you will need to meet them in another way. This might include taking courses at other institutions (either for credit or not), guided reading courses, or participation in courses sponsored by St. John's College. Speak with the Diocesan Ministry Development for guidance; she will be tracking your theological studies as you progress.

- Biblical studies, both Hebrew Bible and New Testament
- Theology: core Christian doctrines and how they have been received and developed within Anglicanism
- Christian History: including Anglican history, globally and within Canada
- Anglican Liturgy: including Anglican spirituality and preaching
- Indigenous studies: including the churches' roles in Indian Residential Schools and response to the Truth and Reconciliation report, and Indigenous spiritualities
- Contextual theology: missiology, ecclesiology, interfaith and ecumenical teachings and practices, leadership/congregational development

Practical training

- Participate in field education, normally three eight-month field placements (see separate field education document for details). In some cases the first field placement may take place in your home parish and the third during your diaconal year. Placements and their timing will be negotiated with the Diocesan Ministry Developer, the Bishop, and your theological college (where applicable), and with the support of PMT.
- Complete one basic unit of Clinical Pastoral Education (see www.uwinnipeg.ca/theology/docs/cpe-brochure.pdf). CPE provides academic credit that can generally be used towards your theological degree; speak with your academic advisor. Other pastoral care training may be acceptable, to be negotiated with the Diocesan Ministry Developer and approved by the Bishop in consultation with PMT.

Spiritual formation

- It is critically important that this time of postulancy be a time of deepening your relationship with Christ. Pay particular attention to your prayer life, beginning to (if you do not already) live by a rhythm of morning and nighttime prayer, meditation, and reading of Scripture. An annual overnight retreat is an excellent practice. (An annual retreat gathering all postulants in the Diocese is an expectation.) The Bishop has an expectation that postulants and clergy will use the Daily Office (morning and/or evening) and readings from the daily office lectionary (in *The Book of Alternative Services* and at <https://lectionary.anglican.ca/>).
- Field placements will mean that you will be removed from your home parish for significant periods of time. You will want to be attentive to finding ways of gathering with supportive Christian community (who may be classmates, friends, and/or members of your home parish with whom you wish to stay connected). You may want to continue to be in touch with your home parish priest or another mentor for support, prayer, and ongoing vocational conversations.
- If you don't yet have a spiritual director, it is recommended that you consider finding one. This person will meet with you at times set by the two of you to assist you in your spiritual journey. (See <http://www.rupertsland.ca/ministry/spiritual-directors-in-the-diocese-of-ruperts-land/>).
- Sometimes formation for ministry (and the practice of ministry) surfaces personal issues that need some attention. It is not uncommon for postulants, and priests, to work with a

counsellor or therapist from time to time. Doing so can greatly help in our level of self-awareness, which is a great asset in ministry.

Becoming an ordinand for (transitional) diaconal ordination...

- As your formal training draws near to a close, you will be invited to meet with the Bishop to discuss your ordination to the transitional diaconate. This invitation will be issued after the annual check-in meeting with the Diocesan Ministry Developer, who will inform the bishop when she feels you are approaching readiness for ordination. Most often this takes place within one year of completing your theological education.
- You will prepare and submit written materials to PMT; questions will be provided by the chair of PMT.
- You will meet with a panel of (usually three) members of PMT for a pre-ordination interview, with the aim of assessing your readiness for ordination as a transitional deacon. All members of PMT will review your written materials and the panel's report of your meeting, and will make a recommendation to the Bishop.
- Meet with the Bishop to hear whether you are moving to ordinand status, and discuss a date for your ordination as a deacon.
- Complete a pre-ordination retreat. (Details will be discussed at that time.)

As a (transitional) deacon...

- The Diocese of Rupert's Land does not have paid curacy positions although occasionally transitional deacons are able to find paid ministry positions. During your diaconal year (which may be three to twelve months long) you will function as a deacon in the church. You may complete your final field placement in this year, and there may be course work and/or other education to be completed during this time. Work with the Diocesan Ministry Developer to help you make the most of this period.

Becoming an ordinand for priestly ordination...

- As your diaconal period draws near to a close, you will be invited to meet with the Bishop to discuss your experience as a deacon and your readiness for ordination to the priesthood.
- You will prepare and submit written materials to PMT; questions will be provided by the chair of PMT.
- You will meet with a panel of (usually three) members of PMT for a pre-ordination interview, with the aim of assessing your readiness for priestly ordination. PMT will review your written materials and the panel's report of your meeting, and will make a recommendation to the Bishop.
- Meet with the Bishop to hear whether you are being recommended for priestly ordination at this time, and if so, a date for your ordination as a priest.
- Complete a pre-ordination retreat. (Details will be discussed at that time.)
- When a priest is ordained, a formal placement in parish ministry is required. The Bishop will work with you and the parishes to strive for a good fit. Your placement may be stipendiary or honorary depending on factors such as the shape of your vocation and the availability of a suitable paid vacancy. Your ability to be flexible as to geographical

mobility may play a role in the timing of finding a paid ministry position. If no paid position is immediately available you may need to rely on other employment as a source of income for a time.

This journey is a process which involves input from a variety of persons who will guide, form, assess and help you along this path. Sometimes, ordination is not the final outcome, but the discernment process is in place to help you and the Church grow and form disciples in Christ in whatever form their ministry may take, priestly, diaconal or lay.

Vocabulary

Some words and phrases you may hear during your formation process...

Covenant: the field placement learning contract agreed to by the postulant, priest supervisor and the diocesan ministry developer. The covenant should shape all ministry in which the postulant engages during the field placement.

Aspirant: a person who has applied to become a postulant but has not yet been approved.

Postulant: a person who has been approved for ordination in the future. Note that being a postulant is not a guarantee of eventual ordination.

Ordinand: a person who has received approval for imminent ordination.

PMT: The Priestly Ministry team, formerly known as *DDGOM* (Diocesan Discernment Group on Ordained Ministry), comprised of clergy and lay people from around the Diocese of Rupert's Land. PMT meets regularly to track progress of individuals seeking priestly ordination and oversee the process.

Liaison: a postulant's link person to the Priestly Ministry Team. The postulant and liaison meet periodically to keep lines of communication open, to keep PMT up to date on the postulant's progress and to answer any of the postulant's questions about the process.

Deacon (vocational): a person ordained to a particular ministry of servanthood, seeking to serve Christ in the poor, weak and vulnerable on behalf of the church, and bringing the needs of the world to the attention of the church. Vocational deacons are generally not paid for their work and come under the direct jurisdiction of the bishop.

Deacon (transitional): a person who has been ordained a deacon, as above, who will eventually be ordained a priest. (This progression from ordination as a deacon to ordination as a priest is part of our Anglican heritage, shared with other "catholic" churches, and ensures that priestly ministry is grounded in service to others.)

M.Div.: Master of Divinity, the master's level professional degree most often required prior to ordination as a priest. Many M.Div. programs require field placements, and so some students will be seeking to satisfy both school and diocesan requirements in their field placement.

B.Th.: Bachelor of Theology, an undergraduate level degree that, with approval, may be used in place of the above

CPE: Clinical Pastoral Education, a program run through institutions (usually hospitals but sometimes jails) in which participants learn pastoral care skills as well as self-awareness. It is generally required prior to ordination as a priest.

ACPO: The Advisory Commission on Postulants for Ordination. This discernment process is run through the ecclesial Province of Rupert's Land (a grouping of dioceses in western/northern Canada), and includes an assessment weekend where applicants receive a recommendation that they become postulants (or not). Often participants are also given feedback on areas for work, and

these areas may form part of a student's learning covenant. (Note that there are two additional kinds of ACPO assessment: ACPO/D for those discerning a call as vocational deacons and ACPO/L for those discerning a call to ordination as members of a Local Collaborative Ministry team.)