

**MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROCESS IN THE  
DIOCESE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS**

A TIMELINE FOR THOSE DISCERNING A CALL TO DIACONATE

**PRE-APPLICATION**

<i>Form</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
	If a person senses a call from God to discern a vocation to ordained ministry, s/he <b>MUST</b> be a confirmed adult communicant in good standing and a member of a parish or faith community in the Diocese of Western Massachusetts before being nominated for Postulancy by the Vestry and Rector of a congregation. As of January 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2016, anyone interested in discerning a call must complete the Loving the Questions (LTQ) program and participate in a small community of discernment (LTQ). (Late summer registration deadline, consult Commission on Ministry page on Diocesan website for registration deadline and application form.) Rector's recommendation is required for all persons applying to attend LTQ/Community of Discernment. If accepted, the person in discernment (PID) begins LTQ/Community of Discernment in September-October. [Note: LTQ and the discernment work of the Community of Discernment can be done in sequential years, but no application for ordination can be made until <i>both</i> are complete.] LTQ/Community of Discernment runs from fall through spring.	Late summer
	A person seeking such nomination <b>SHOULD</b> be in regular spiritual direction with a director who is not the person's rector, be tithing or moving toward tithing, and be engaged in lively Baptismal ministry which helps to "interpret the needs, concerns and hopes of the world to the church" BCP 543.	
	The person will meet with the parish priest over a period of time (for a minimum of six months) to discuss and continue discerning the perceived call. A small group of parishioners may be involved in this discernment at the rector's discretion.	
	<b>Inquirers meetings</b> for the PID, their Rector, and senior warden (and other clergy and vestry members who wish to learn about the diocesan process leading to ordination), will be held in <b>MAY</b> or <b>JUNE</b> as warranted. Anyone who wishes to enter the ordination process, and his/her priest, must attend one of these sessions. The PID must also have completed the LTQ/Community of Discernment processes before attending Inquirers meetings. If s/he is seeking ordination, s/he signs a waiver available from the LTQ leader that permits leaders of the small Community of Discernment to give their observations to the bishop and the chair of the Commission on Ministry (COM). S/he must also seek support from her/his vestry and rector (or priest-in-charge). [Note: written observations from the Community of Discernment and formal written support of the rector and vestry are required.]	May/June
	When the parish priest feels confident that the discernment process should continue the priest asks the vestry of the congregation to nominate the person to enter the process for Holy Orders. If the vestry nominates the person, the priest helps the Nominee begin the application process with the Diocese.	

**APPLICATION / PRE-POSTULANCY**

<i>Form</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
D-1 D-2 D-3 D-4	The Nominee prepares the application packet, to be submitted to the Bishop's office. See Title III Canon 6.2 and Forms D-1 through D-4. Payment for the psychological evaluation must accompany the evaluation and will be returned if the nominee does not attend the evaluation. (The evaluation cost is split by thirds among the applicant, parish, and diocesan office.) With the vestry's endorsement noted above, the PID applies for postulancy. The psychological, background check can be requested, and a medical examination can now be scheduled. (Note: this should be done by the July 1 <sup>st</sup> next following the PID's nomination by her/his rector and vestry.) If the PID is not already in spiritual direction, s/he begins is now. <b>Deadline for applications (including psychological evaluation) is September 30<sup>th</sup>.</b>	Sept 30 <sup>th</sup>

The Commission on Ministry (COM) meets with applicants for pre-postulancy screening in the autumn next following the PID's nomination. Immediately following that meeting, the COM makes its recommendation to the Bishop regarding Postulancy. See Title III Canon 6.3(b). After a decision has been made, the Bishop will notify the Nominees by letter. The Bishop's office will arrange for applicants to meet with the Bishop to discuss his/her decision. Those accepted for Postulancy will discuss plans for formation with the Bishop and Director of Diaconal Formation. If the Bishop does not make the Nominee a postulant, the Nominee's Rector will meet with the



Form	Process	Deadline
	<b>ORDINATION</b>	
	In <b>JUNE</b> - with the Bishop's consent, ordination as Deacon takes place ordinarily at Christ Church Cathedral, Springfield. [Note: Candidate may not be ordained until s/he has secured a position in ministry acceptable to the bishop, at the bishop's discretion.]	

## ROLE OF RECTOR IN THE MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROCESS

Be alert for those who may have gifts and a call to ordained ministry.

Be aware of the challenges of the ordination process and of finding employment at the end of the process. Help the inquirer understand the significant financial cost of preparation.

Be certain that the inquirer knows the importance of staying open to whatever the outcome of the discernment process may be. Help him/her embrace the fact that God and the church may say "no" to ordained ministry and "yes" to lay ministry and that both are crucial ministries in the church.

Meet with the inquirer until it can be determined whether or not there are grounds to carry the discernment process forward. The book Listening Hearts, available through Morehouse Publishing, is recommended as a resource.

Encourage the inquirer to attend LTQ and participate in the Community of Discernment as required by the diocesan ordination process effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016.

Assist the inquirer in obtaining the nomination of the vestry.

Write a letter to the Bishop, at the appropriate time, using the Rector's Response form as a guide and recommending the inquirer.

After writing the letter to the Bishop, the Rector turns over the role of discernment to the Diocesan Discernment Process, Vestry, and Commission on Ministry.

The Rector does not play the role of advocate for the Nominee but rather is available as pastor and spiritual guide. The Rector's support will be important in helping the Nominee find God in the ups and downs of the process.

Instruct the Vestry in its role throughout the process.

If the Nominee is not affirmed in a call to ordained ministry by the Diocesan Discernment Committee and the Commission on Ministry, the Rector will be crucial in helping the Nominee discover new opportunities for lay ministry.