

Diocese of Niagara Parish Process of Discernment

Parishes with members interested in ordination to the vocational diaconate 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 require/support a potential candidate, then this will end the process.

Parish Process

This begins after the applicant has met with the Executive Officer 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 suggested). This group, which should include at least one member of Parish Council, will help the applicant clarify the nature of their call. The Committee Chair will report its findings 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 Executive Archdeacon, to be made aware of the diocesan process and the expectations associated with it.

The Committee Chair and the Rector/Priest-in-Charge will meet regularly during the process and the Parish Council representative(s) on the Committee will update the Parish Council at its meetings.

The application form will be shared at the parish level only 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 will be submitted to Parish Council who will vote to allow the presentation to go forward, to the annual Vestry meeting.

Before a person can be admitted as a candidate for the diaconate, the home parish will have voted two thirds in favour at the annual Vestry meeting and will have submitted the Parish Commendation Form to the Executive Officer and Director of Deacons. The Parish Commendation does not guarantee ordination.