

Covenant between the Bishop and Diocese of Colorado and Candidates for the Diaconate

The Bishop and Diocese and _____ hereby enter into a covenant for the purpose of supporting _____'s response to a call to serve God as a Deacon in the Episcopal Church.

Admission to Candidacy for the Diaconate represents the Diocese's affirmation of a call. Therefore, the stage of Candidacy is not primarily focused on discernment of a call, but on responding to that call. The Diocese, through the Canon to the Ordinary, the Executive Administrator, the Standing Committee, the Commission on Ministry, the Board of Examining Chaplains, Shepherds, and others takes on the role of working with Candidates to ensure that they are well-prepared and equipped for their ministry and are confident in their call.

Spiritual Health

Candidates are expected to attend Sunday worship in their sponsoring congregation, to meet regularly with a spiritual director and shall attend the annual Holy Orders Retreat, typically held in July every year. Since all facets of wellness are related, Candidates are also expected to work on maintaining and improving mental, physical, social, and emotional well-being. This work is a most appropriate subject for the formation weekends.

Communication

In order for this collaborative process to be of most benefit to individuals and the Church, all involved must be discreet in the sharing of personal information. Diocesan officials (those people and groups listed in the first paragraph) will not share outside the process information about Candidates. On the other hand, for this process to be the most supportive to everyone, the Diocese requires—and officials and Candidates must expect—a free flow of information within and between these groups and individuals. The Diocese recognizes the confidential nature of the relationships with Rectors/Vicars and with spiritual directors and will respect that confidentiality.

Candidates will contact their assigned Shepherds at least once a month for the purpose of building a supportive and accountable relationship, relating their progress and verifying their participation in all component areas of the formation process, and providing self-evaluation of their current status and goals.

Candidates for the Diaconate will write to the Bishop each Ember tide. These Ember Day Letters are to keep the Bishop informed about formation and life in general. Either the Bishop or the Canon to the Ordinary will reply to these letters, and they will be filed in the Executive Administrator's office.

Financial Costs and Support

In addition to other expenses, such as books, retreat costs, travel costs, etc., the Diocese assesses an annual fee for participation in the Candidacy process. The fee will be set each year at a level that will balance the need to defray costs while keeping the financial burden on Candidates as low as possible (\$1,000 in 2006). The Bishop and Commission on Ministry expect Candidates and sponsoring congregations to each pay half of this fee.

In general, the Bishop desires that sponsoring congregations financially support their Candidates for the Diaconate. The Bishop may have limited funds available as well for financial support and will assist in every way possible to lessen the financial burden of responding to this call. The Bishop expects Candidates to be faithful and responsible in their financial management, to use any financial support received to maximum benefit, and to seek assistance and advice when needed.

Education and Formation

The Board of Examining Chaplains will assign a Shepherd to each Candidate to work collaboratively on a comprehensive plan for education and formation. Some components of this program are compulsory, others can be modified to better fit the specific situations, backgrounds, and experiences of individual candidates. The Diocesan process is divided into three components:

- **Academic Preparation:** This is normally accomplished through satisfactorily completing a series of notebooks covering required academic areas, thereby demonstrating proficiency. Modifications to this plan may be proposed by candidates in consultation with their shepherds and are subject to approval by the Board of Examining Chaplains.
- **Diaconal Formation:** This formation is done in a facilitated group setting wherein candidates have the opportunity to work on individual formational challenges and goals with group support and accountability. Candidates must satisfactorily participate in a minimum of six weekends before they will be approved for ordination. Candidates must also participate in at least one weekend each year of their candidacy. The facilitator will schedule three weekends each year.
- **Practical Training:** These courses are all required. Shepherds will certify completion of practical training courses, but the coursework in practical training is not evaluated. The required courses include, but are not limited to: Title IV Training; Anti-Racism Training; Sexual Misconduct Prevention; Eucharistic Visitor Training; Preaching; and the Liturgical Role of the Deacon.

Other Items

- Candidates for the Diaconate in this Diocese are considered, by virtue of their status in the Holy Orders process, to be licensed for the following ministries: Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, and Catechist (as outlined and defined in Canon III.4—“Of Licensed Ministries”). In other words, Candidates are authorized to take any role in the liturgy appropriate for the laity. They are not authorized to take roles that are rubrically assigned to a deacon or assisting priest (see page 354 in the Book of Common Prayer).

Specifically, they shall not proclaim the Gospel, make the invitation to Confession, prepare and clean up the Altar, or give the dismissal. Candidates are encouraged to try different liturgical roles during this time.

- Candidates shall not exercise pastoral leadership of a congregation but rather carry out these ministries as a part of their formation under the supervision of an Episcopal Priest, Seminary faculty, CPE supervisor, or other appropriate official.
- Candidates shall not preside at weddings, funerals, baptisms, or other public, pastoral offices. They may assist a priest at such services.
- Emergency baptisms shall only be performed when a Priest or ordained hospital chaplain cannot be reached in a timely manner. Candidates may very well be required to exercise pastoral judgment in urgent situations, and the Diocese expects them to err on the side of good pastoral care. (The point is, do not perform a baptism in the hospital simply because a CPE program expects you to. If there is time to find an ordained person, do so and use your best pastoral judgment.)
- Candidates shall not exercise the ministry of anointing with oil for healing. If anointing is pastorally appropriate, they should engage a Priest to do so. As with emergency baptisms, Candidates are to err on the side of good pastoral care in this area.
- Candidates shall not serve as: members of Vestries/Bishop's Committees, delegates to Diocesan Convention, deputies to General Convention, members of the Standing Committee, Commission on Ministry, Board of Examining Chaplains, or the Committee on Spiritual Direction. If serving in any of these capacities at the time of admission to Candidacy, they shall resign.
- Candidates shall not wear clerical collars of any sort at any time.

Deployment

The Bishop will assign newly-ordained Deacons to one or more ministries. Deacons assigned to a congregation act under the authority of the Rector, Vicar, or other leader exercising oversight in all matters concerning the congregation. The Bishop reserves the right not to ordain someone unwilling to accept these assignments. The Bishop redeploys Deacons according to the mission needs of the Diocese.

Conclusion

The Diocese deeply desires that Candidacy for the Diaconate be seen as a partnership that will bring to the Church the very best, most-prepared, most-confident deacons possible. All the officials in this process approach this work with deep seriousness, joy, and prayer. Candidates are encouraged to make the most of every opportunity for formation and learning. They are also encouraged to abide by the motto, "when in doubt, ask." The Shepherds and Executive Administrator are the primary

points of contact for any question that may come up, and they would rather be consulted ahead of time than to address a difficulty later.

Candidates are called to a wonderful ministry, and all those involved in the process promise to hold them in prayer and support them in every way possible.

Candidate's Signature

I have read the above and had opportunity to ask questions about this covenant. I pledge to honor this covenant and work faithfully in my formation to become a Deacon in the Diocese of Colorado.

COM Chair's Signature

On behalf of the Bishop and Diocese, my signature represents a pledge by all those involved in the Holy Orders Process to support, encourage, and equip the Candidate for ministry as a Deacon in the Diocese of Colorado.
