

**ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE IN
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ARKANSAS**

(Revised August 2022)

ORDINATION TO THE DIACONATE

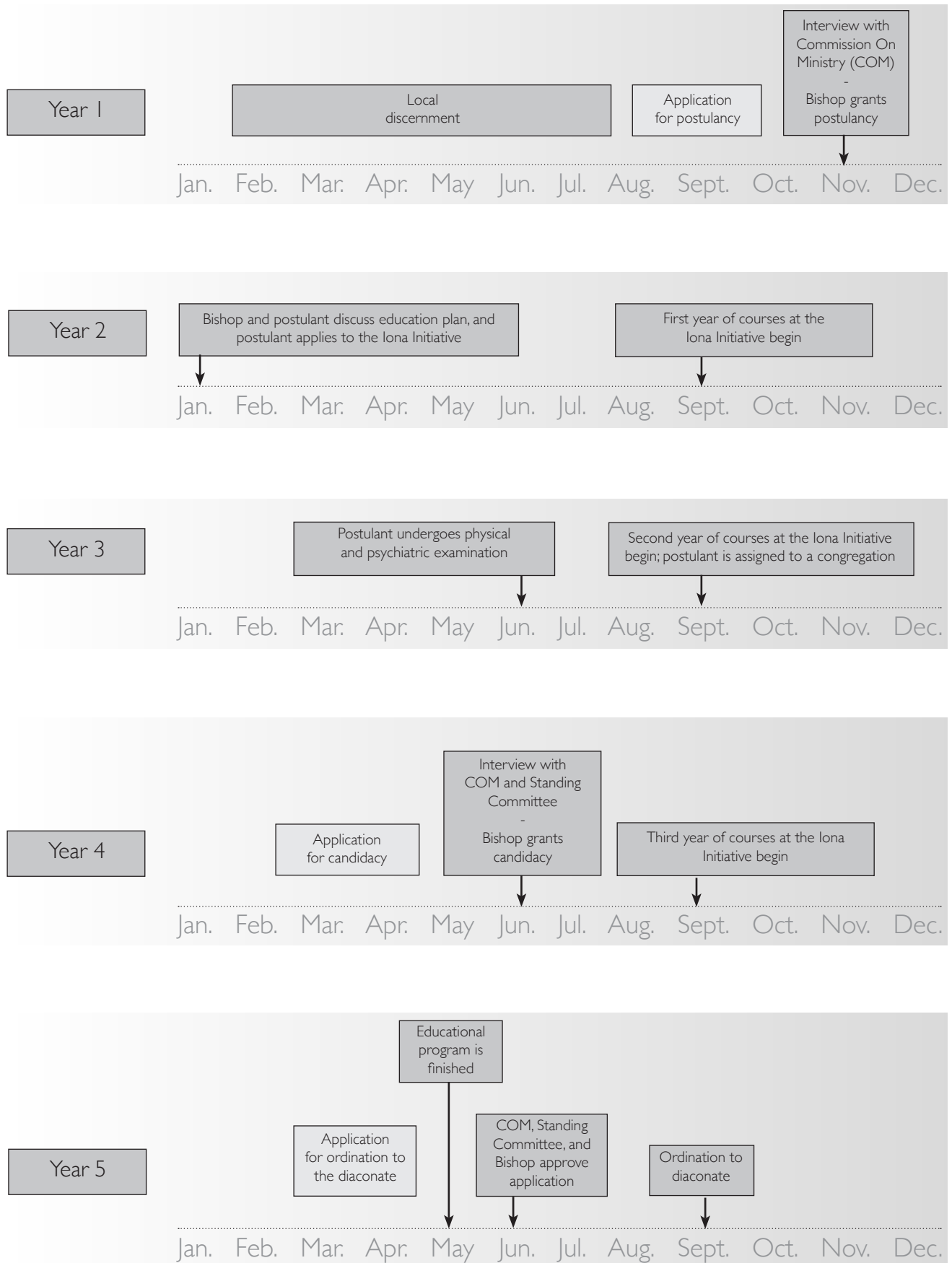
The church calls people to a special ministry of servanthood directly under their bishop. Deacons are to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.

Individuals are discerned to be called to ordination by the bishop (taking into account the recommendation of the Commission on Ministry), the congregation from which they come, and the Standing Committee, in addition to their personal discernment that they are called to ordination.

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| THE ORDINATION PROCESS | 3 |
| Discernment, Nomination, and Postulancy | |
| Education | |
| Candidacy | |
| Ordination to the Diaconate | |
| THE COST OF EDUCATION | 7 |
| APPLICATION FORMS | 8 |

THE ORDINATION PROCESS

In consultation with the bishop, this timeline may be adjusted based on an individual's situation.



Discernment, Nomination, and Postulancy

“A confirmed adult communicant in good standing may be nominated for ordination to the Diaconate by the person’s congregation or other community of faith.” (III.6.2)

NOTES

A person interested in Holy Orders should begin conversations with the priest in charge of that person’s local congregation. That person and the priest would then meet with the bishop, who would then approve the formation of a discernment committee to ascertain the validity of the person’s call. This committee, typically made up of parishioners from local congregations usually meets for six to eight months, at which time it gives its report to the person’s local vestry. *

- The discernment committee submits a report to the vestry. **(Form E1)**
- The vestry nominates the person for ordination. **(Form F1)**
- The person accepts the nomination and applies for postulancy. This application includes a spiritual autobiography or timeline, completed during work with the discernment committee, and transcripts of academic work. **(Form F2)**
- The nominee meets with the Commission on Ministry, which then makes a recommendation to the bishop regarding postulancy. **(Form F3)**

Upon receipt of the recommendation, the bishop determines whether or not to continue the ordination process and grant postulancy. If the decision is to proceed, meetings with the postulant then take place to plan for the required training.

“Postulancy is the time between nomination and candidacy and may initiate the formal preparation for ordination. Postulancy involves continued exploration of and decision about the Postulant’s call to the Diaconate.” (III.6.3)

- A medical examination, psychological evaluation, and background check will be conducted sometime between nomination and candidacy. **(Form E2)**

* The individual in the ordination process is responsible for completing the application forms and the forms necessary for the medical examination and psychological evaluation **(Form E2)**. All forms, including the discernment committee manual, are available for download: <http://episcopalarkansas.org/ordination>.

Education

The canons of The Episcopal Church require that, “each Candidate shall be prepared in and demonstrate basic competence in five general areas: academic studies including, The Holy Scriptures, theology, and the tradition of the Church; diakonia and the diaconate; human awareness and understanding; spiritual development and discipline; and practical training and experience” (III.6.5f).

Canons require training in the following areas as well:

- Prevention of Sexual Misconduct
- Mandatory Reporting Laws
- Anti-Racism Training
- The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church

Postulants will attend the Iona Initiative. The curriculum of the Iona Initiative is designed to provide students proficiency in the canonical areas. Time is also devoted to community building and spiritual formation. The curriculum is three years, consisting of six semesters--ten weekends (Friday evening through Sunday morning) each year.

Each weekend at the Iona Initiative is structured to engage the student in both academic and practical education. During year one, for example, students study the Bible, learn to use different methods of Biblical criticism, and also study topics such as clergy vesture and parish polity.

“Each Postulant or Candidate for ordination to the Diaconate shall communicate with the Bishop in person or by letter, four times a year, in the Ember Weeks, reflecting on the Candidate’s academic experience and personal and spiritual development.” (III.6.5h)

The Ember Days are traditionally observed on the Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays after the First Sunday in Lent, the Day of Pentecost, Holy Cross Day, and December 13.

NOTES

Candidacy

“Candidacy is a time of education and formation in preparation for ordination to the Diaconate, established by a formal commitment by the Candidate, the Bishop, the Commission, the Standing Committee, and the congregation or other community of faith.” (III.8.4)

NOTES

Postulants and Candidates are expected to remain in communication with their sponsoring clergy and communities of faith during formation. It may be appropriate for a postulant or candidate to meet with the vestry of his or her community of faith prior to the vestry submitting a letter of support.

- The postulant applies for candidacy. **(Form G1)**
- The vestry of the sponsoring congregation submits a letter of support. **(Form G2)**
- The postulant meets with the Commission on Ministry **(Form G3)** and the Standing Committee **(Form G4)**, which review evaluations of the postulant’s educational work, and attest to the continuing formation of the postulant.

The Commission on Ministry makes a recommendation to the bishop regarding candidacy and the Standing Committee submits its approval. Upon receipt of the recommendation and approval, the bishop may grant candidacy.

Ordination to the Diaconate

The bishop always makes the final determination of whether or not ordination occurs following the completion of the education process.

- The candidate applies for ordination to the diaconate. **(Form H1)**
- The vestry of the sponsoring congregation submits a letter of support. **(Form H2)**
- The Commission on Ministry **(Form H3)** and the Standing Committee **(Form H4)**, review evaluations of the postulant’s educational work and make recommendations to the bishop about the candidate’s preparedness for ordination. The candidate is not expected to attend this meeting.

THE COST OF EDUCATION

Participating in the Iona Initiative requires a commitment of both time and money. Participants agree to attend classes in Little Rock one weekend each month (Friday evening through Sunday afternoon, September through June), as well as participate in reading and writing assignments between classes. During the latter part of their training, participants will be assigned a congregation in which to serve as a lay chaplain.

The cost of education and preparation for ordination includes tuition costs for the classes, housing, and transportation to and from the class meeting site, textbooks, and vestments. **The tuition for the academic year is \$2,000. Other expense amounts include approximately \$200 for textbooks, \$700 for vestments, and the cost of accommodations for the two weekend nights each month that the student is in Little Rock.** Students are expected to have internet connections in order to participate in on-line discussions between classes.

The costs of education and preparation for ordination should be shared by the student and the sponsoring congregation.

NOTES

* FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call The Rev. Canon Jason Alexander at the diocesan office at 501-372-2168
or email him at jalexander@episcopalarkansas.org.

Application for Postulancy
Title III, Canon 6, Section 2(b)



To the Right Reverend Larry R. Benfield
Bishop of The Diocese of Arkansas

I HEREBY accept nomination for ordination to the Priesthood and make application to be admitted by you as a POSTULANT FOR HOLY ORDERS.

1. a. My full name is _____
b. I was born on _____
2. I have resided in the Diocese of Arkansas since _____
3. I was baptized in _____ Church, _____,
on _____ by _____
4. I was confirmed in _____ Church, _____,
on _____ by the Right Rev. _____, Bishop of _____
5. I have () have not () previously applied for admission as a POSTULANT FOR HOLY ORDERS. (If the answer is positive, state full details)

6. I am moved to seek HOLY ORDERS because

7. Education:

- a. Full transcript of all academic work is completed and attached to this application.
- b. Highest level attained _____
- c. Degrees earned, if any _____
- d. Areas of specialization _____

8. My spiritual autobiography has been () will be () submitted.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

[Nominee]

* Provide your sponsoring congregation's vestry with **Form F1** so it may formally indicate its support for you to pursue Holy Orders . It and all other forms may be downloaded from **<http://episcopalarkansas.org/ordination>**.

Application for Candidacy
Title III, Canon 6, Section 4(a)



To the Right Reverend Larry R. Benfield
Bishop of The Diocese of Arkansas

I HEREBY make application to be admitted by you as a CANDIDATE FOR HOLY ORDERS.

1. I was admitted as a Postulant in the Diocese of Arkansas on _____
2. I have never before:
 - a. applied for admission as a CANDIDATE FOR HOLY ORDERS in any Diocese;
 - b. been refused admission as a CANDIDATE;
 - c. ceased to be a CANDIDATE in any Diocese, except: (if any exception is made, give full details)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

[Postulant]

* Provide your sponsoring congregation's vestry with **Form G2** so it may formally indicate its support for your continuation in the ordination process. It and all other forms may be downloaded from <http://episcopalarkansas.org/ordination>.

Application for
Ordination to the Diaconate
Title III, Canon 6, Section 6(b)

To the Right Reverend Larry R. Benfield
Bishop of The Diocese of Arkansas

I HEREBY make application to be ORDAINED A DEACON under Canon III.6.

1. I was admitted as a Candidate in the Diocese of Arkansas on _____
2. My date of birth is _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

[Candidate]

* Provide your sponsoring congregation's vestry with **Form H2** so it may formally indicate its support for your ordination to the diaconate. It and all other forms may be downloaded from <http://episcopalarkansas.org/ordination>.

