

## **The Episcopal Church in Southeast Florida**



### **Bishop's Expectations on the Reception of Ordinands, Seminarians, and Clergy from Other Churches**

The Bishop's Office frequently receives enquiries about the possibility of ministry in the Episcopal Church, and more especially in this diocese, from ordinands, seminarians, and clergy in other Churches. Based upon our considerable experience and following wide consultation, these Expectations are the guidelines which the Bishop directs all clergy and lay leaders who are involved in Christian formation in these circumstances to observe and follow carefully. Failure to abide by these Expectations risks the possibility of deep hurt to potential candidates and harm to our ecumenical relationships.

#### **The confirmation or reception of ordinands, seminarians, and clergy**

The confirmation or reception into the Communion of this Church of those who are in the ordination process of, or who have been ordained in, other Churches is an extremely delicate matter.

As a matter of practice, the Bishop expects to be informed immediately if an ordinand (or someone who has been in an ordination process, and is no longer), a seminarian, or a clergyperson of another Church approaches a member of the clergy of this diocese for confirmation or reception.

The Bishop has a specific agreement with the bishops and judicatories of the other Churches of our region that he will be open and transparent with them should he be approached by an ordinand, seminarian, or clergyperson of their Church, Communion, or denomination.

The Bishop will need to know as soon as possible all the relevant details in writing regarding the potential candidate's circumstances with respect to the ordination process of the person's current Church or the candidate's status as an ordained person in his/her Church, including the names and contact information of the potential candidate's current bishop (or equivalent judicatory), religious superior (if the person is the member of a

religious order or society), immigration status, and any other relevant information that may be helpful to him. A full list of required documents is in Appendix A to these Expectations.

It must be made clear to the potential candidate that before any decision can be made about whether s/he may be confirmed or received, the Bishop will need to speak directly with their current bishop and/or superior, seminary dean, and anyone else who may have knowledge of the potential candidate.

While the Bishop understands that there may be the need for confidentiality in an initial conversation with a potential candidate, there will always come a time, fairly quickly, when a conversation with the ecclesiastical authority of the person's current Church is entirely appropriate, before the Bishop can agree to confirm or receive the person.

Potential candidates for confirmation or reception must be helped to understand that the integrity of their Christian life, let alone their possible future in the Episcopal Church, depends in part on a good and appropriate ending to their present status in their current Church. It is the responsibility of potential candidates to ensure that their relationships with their current ecclesiastical authorities are regular and canonical, particularly if pension payments and other benefits are involved. The Diocese of Southeast Florida can take no responsibility for a failure on the part of anyone leaving another Church to conform to the proper processes of leaving that Communion or community.

It will also be crucial for the parish clergy to emphasize to potential candidates for reception or confirmation from other Churches who are ordained or may have been in an ordination process in another Church that the discernment at this stage is not whether s/he might be called to ordained ministry. The right discernment here is whether or not the enquirer is called to live his or her Christian life as an Episcopalian. It is entirely possible that a member of the clergy, an ordinand, or seminarian may indeed never exercise ordained ministry in the Episcopal Church. It is absolutely crucial that this is made clear from the outset. At this stage the discernment is about whether the potential candidate will be happy and fulfilled living his or her Christian life as an Episcopalian, acknowledging that this will take time and commitment. There should be no conversation with potential candidates for confirmation or reception, or commitments made, about discernment or ordination, or even about entry into the ordination process.

Depending on the outcome of conversations with the potential candidate's current Church, the Bishop will make a determination as to whether he is able to confirm or receive a particular candidate. Potential candidates should be helped to understand that this particular aspect of the Bishop's discernment may take some time. In the meantime, the enquirer is welcome to worship in the congregation, but may not exercise any ministry or display him- or herself as an ordained person.

Ordinarily, potential candidates who have been under canonical discipline, or who have not been recommended for ordination for serious reason, or who may be a cause of concern to their current authorities, or to the Bishop, will not be confirmed or received. They will be encouraged to remain in their current Church or Communion. For all enquirers a

background check will be done, and the enquirer will be expected to give authorization for this.

Should the Bishop feel able to confirm or receive an enquirer who has been an ordinand, seminarian or clergyperson of another Church, it will be done in collaboration with the candidate's current ecclesiastical authority and community.

Once the Bishop has confirmed or received a clergyperson from another Church in the Episcopal Church, the Bishop expects that person to live as an Episcopal layperson, and not to continue to dress or function as an ordained person, or to use clergy titles. This is not meant to deny a previous ordained ministry, but to acknowledge that this ministry has ended, that a new relationship with the Episcopal Church has begun, and that there is no assumption that the person will necessarily exercise ordained ministry in this Church.

The Commission on Ministry will establish additional guidelines for ordinands, seminarians, and clergypersons who have been confirmed or received into this Church and who may subsequently enter the ordination process in this diocese. Ordinarily, the enquirer will be expected to live as an active layperson for at least three years after confirmation or reception before there can be conversations about discernment.

In addition to observing these Expectations carefully and immediately informing the Bishop's Office, we note that almost every instance of ordinands, seminarians, and clergy from other Churches enquiring about the Episcopal Church is unique. Should you have any questions or concerns about a particular individual, please speak with the Bishop directly and at the earliest opportunity.

## **Steps in the Process**

When an ordinand, seminarian, or clergy person of their Church, Communion, or denomination approaches a congregational leader (whether a priest, deacon, or lay leader):

- The congregational leader is to meet with the person, and offer a pastoral conversation.
- The congregational leader is to inform the Bishop's Office immediately.
- The congregational leader is to work with the person to collect the relevant documents that are necessary for the Bishop's Office to enquire about the person's status and current/previous ministry.
- The congregational leader is to be clear that the conversation is not about ordained ministry, but about whether the person will live a fulfilled Christian life as an Episcopalian in our Anglican tradition.
- The congregational leader may welcome the person to worship with the community as appropriate, but not to function in any way.
- After examining the particular case, the Bishop will consult first with the congregational leader, and if appropriate, meet with the congregational leader and the enquirer.
- Should there be no impediments in the enquirer's current or past life in discernment or ministry, the Bishop will discuss with the congregational leader the appropriate steps forward.
- Should there be challenges that cannot be addressed, or other problems or impediments, the Bishop will recommend that the enquirer remain in his or her current Church and find ways for healing and reconciliation in that community.

## **Form COM-8**

### **Required Documents Check List**

**Please do not send originals of any documents.**

**For the purposes of this review, clear photocopies are acceptable.**

**All documents not in English require an accompanying accurate translation.**

- 1) Full name and contact details of the enquirer. A form for these details and the details of the next two items is Appendix 3B.
- 2) The name and full contact details of the enquirer's current bishop or ecclesiastical authority. If the enquirer is a member of a religious community, in addition to the bishop, the name and full contacts of the superior. If the enquirer has been in discernment or training or has been ordained in more than one Church, the contact details of all current and former ecclesiastical authorities must be included (Appendix 3B).
- 3) Full name(s) of spouse and children (if applicable) (Appendix 3B).
- 4) Evidence of baptism and confirmation.
- 5) Evidence of status in the enquirer's current Church as an ordinand, seminarian, or ordained person.
- 6) Evidence of the end of the enquirer's status in the current Church (laicization, dispensation, or other official documents).
- 7) Copies of university and seminary transcripts and evidence of completion of required formation.
- 8) A signed authorization from the enquirer allowing the Bishop to consult with the enquirer's current and past superiors (Appendix 3C).
- 9) A declaration from the enquirer that he/she has not been subject to discipline in his/her current or previous Church (Appendix 3D).
- 10) A statement from the enquirer about the reasons for wishing to leave his/her current Church and become an Episcopalian.

**Form COM-9**

**Seekers Coming from Other Churches**

*Form to be completed by Enquirer*

**Introductory and Contact Information**

Legal Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth (mm/dd/yyyy): \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I preferred to be called: \_\_\_\_\_

Former Spouses' Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Children's' Names and Dates of Birth:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Names and Relationships of Other Dependents:  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Occupation:

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Name and Address of Current Employer:

**Religious Affiliation**

*Please attach copies of Baptism, Confirmation, and Ordination certificates, or official evidence of these rites. Please do not send original documents. Please also include (if applicable) any evidence of release and removal from your previous ministry.*

Date, place, and Church of Baptism:

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Date, place, and Church of Confirmation:

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Dates, place, and Church of previous Discernment for Ordination:

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Date, place, and Church of previous Ordination(s):

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Date of Official Dispensation from Previous Ordination:

Name(s) and Contact Information of Previous Bishop/Ecclesiastical Authority/Religious Superior:

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*Please include the names and contact information of all relevant persons.*

### **Education History**

*Please attach transcripts of college and seminary education (if applicable)*

Highest Level of Education (Please circle):

High School/GED

Bachelor's Degree

Some College

Master's Degree

Doctoral Degree

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates, place, and Church of seminary education:

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### **Personal History Statement**

*Please attach an autobiographical statement, to include (but not be limited to) a consideration of the reasons why your ministry in your previous Church or denomination has come to an end and why you are seeking to be confirmed or received into the Episcopal Church. Please be specific about the reasons why you have left or been released from the ministry of your previous Church or denomination.*

## Form COM-10

### Authorization to Contact Current/Previous Ecclesiastical Authority

*By completing this form and submitting it to the Bishop's Office, I hereby authorize the Bishop or his representative to contact the Ecclesiastical Authority of my current/previous Church and to conduct any enquiries about my current/previous ministry as the Bishop may see fit.*

*I understand that by completing this form there is no guarantee that I shall be admitted to the ordained ministry of the Episcopal Church, and that the decision about these matters rests with the Bishop alone.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Form COM-11**

**Declaration from Enquirer**

**Attestation Regarding Previous Ecclesial Discipline**

*I, \_\_\_\_\_, attest that I have never been subject to ecclesial discipline under any previous denomination, faith tradition, or church. I have not been subject to disciplinary action by any supervisor, Bishop, or ecclesial authority in my past. I have separated from my previous denomination, faith tradition, or church in good standing.*

*Further, I agree to have my record as clergy person, seminarian, or candidate examined by the Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Southeast Florida to verify that the above statement is true. This record may include written documents, electronic documents and correspondence with members and leaders of my previous denomination, faith tradition, or church.*

*If clarification or further details are required, please attach a separate document explaining the situation as exhaustively as possible.*

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_