

Responsibilities of a Presenting Priest in the process of discernment and formation for Ordained Ministry

The Presenting Priest is the Rector, Interim Rector or Priest in Charge of the congregation of which the person in discernment is a member. If there is no Rector, Interim Rector or Priest in Charge, an Associate or Assistant Rector may fulfill this role or a Priest of the diocese who is acquainted with the person in formation and with the parish may fulfill this role. A Deacon may fulfill this role under extraordinary circumstances, as long as there is also a Priest involved in the process who can sign the necessary letters of Vestry support.

Whenever a letter of support of a Vestry is required, the letter must be signed and dated by at least two-thirds of all the members of the Vestry, at a meeting duly convened, and by the Rector or Priest-in-Charge of the Parish, and attested by the Clerk of the Vestry. Should there be no Rector or Priest-in-Charge, the letter shall be signed by a Priest of the Diocese acquainted with the person in discernment and the Parish. [Canon III.5.2(c)].

The Presenting Priest moves the person in discernment from one step of the process to the next. The specific steps and the specific roles of the Presenting Priest are as follows:

Discernment Retreat – The Presenting Priest writes a letter or e-mail to the Canon to the Ordinary recommending that a member of the congregation attend the retreat. This typically follows a conversation between the Priest and the person who is experiencing what may be the inklings of a call. At this early stage, the Priest simply attests that the aspirant would benefit from attending a retreat. The Priest is not asked to state whether he or she believes the Aspirant is called nor to provide a reference or recommendation. Presenting Priests may ask that an invitation to attend a retreat be sent to anyone he or she believes would benefit, whether that person has inklings of a call to ordained ministry or lay ministry.

Parish Discernment Committee – After attending a Discernment Retreat, we ask the Aspirant spend six months or so in prayer and reflection. If, after that time, the Aspirant continues to sense a call to ministry, whether lay or ordained, he or she speaks with the Presenting Priest. If the Presenting Priest supports the Aspirant in continued discernment, the Presenting Priest writes a letter or e-mail to the Canon to the Ordinary asking that a Diocesan Spiritual Discernment Facilitator be appointed to work with the Priest and Aspirant in setting up a Parish Discernment Committee. The Committee meets with the Aspirant for a time to discern with him or her in community. The Presenting Priest is not a member of the Committee and does not attend meetings.

The Application Process – After the work of the Parish Discernment Committee is complete, the Aspirant may meet with the Presenting Priest to share what he/she experienced. If the Aspirant senses a call to ordained ministry, either as a deacon or as a priest, and would like to apply to enter the formal process of discernment and formation, he or she must speak with the Presenting Priest. If the Presenting

Priest supports the Aspirant in continued discernment, the Priest writes a letter or e-mail to the Canon to the Ordinary asking that a member of the appropriate Committee (Committee on the Diaconate or Committee on Priesthood) be appointed as a contact person to assist the Aspirant in the process of applying for Postulancy.

Postulancy – Before Postulancy may be granted, the Presenting Priest signs the Vestry letter of support. The Priest also writes a letter of recommendation. The Presenting Priest accompanies the Aspirant to the Postulancy interview, along with the Aspirant’s spouse, if applicable, and one or two people from the Vestry, Discernment Committee or congregation.

Candidacy – Before Candidacy may be granted, the Presenting priest signs the Vestry letter of support. The Priest also writes a letter of recommendation. The Presenting Priest does not accompany the Postulant to the Candidacy interview.

Ordination to the Diaconate – Before a Candidate may be ordained as a deacon, the Presenting Priest signs the Vestry letter of support. The Priest also writes a letter of recommendation.

Ordination to the Priesthood – Before a Deacon may be ordained as a Priest, the Presenting Priest signs the Vestry letter of support. The Priest also writes a letter of recommendation.