



Paths to Discipleship: Discernment and Formation

This guide is intended to give a brief overview of discernment and formation in the Diocese of Virginia.

Just as Disciples study and follow Jesus Christ, each section provides an overview of how those in discernment and formation prepare themselves through study and practice. Visit the [Vocation and Call page](#) and subpages for more details.

Discernment

Stages of Discernment

1. **The Discernment Retreat:** weekend in community with other seekers, begin to develop and hone tools for discernment
2. **Exploring the Church:** following the diocesan guide, self-guided expansion of perspective of the Church and what it means to serve
 - a. Submit Exploring the Church report and resume, assignment of a Discernment Facilitator
3. **Parish Discernment Committee (PDC):** facilitated, prayerful small group conversations to discern and refine the seeker's call, giving space to wrestle with difficult questions
 - a. Presenting priest requests appointment of a contact from the Committee on Priesthood/the Diaconate.
- 4a. **Apply for postulancy,** with guidance from committee contact person
- 4b. **Explore lay formation** with presenting priest, diocesan offices, others

The Laity

Formation for Lay Discipleship

- Education for Ministry (EfM)
- Continuing education: VTS, CDSP, Bexley Seabury
- M.A. at VTS or online M.A.
- Spiritual direction

Opportunities for Lay Discipleship

- Lay professional: communications, youth ministry, administration, finance, diocesan staff
- Diocesan governance, [committees](#)
- [Lay positions](#) in the Episcopal Church
- [Lay positions](#) in the Diocese of Virginia

The Diaconate

About the Diaconate

- Servant leadership, ordained community organizers.
- Interpret to the Church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world.
- Move the Church to use their gifts to meet those needs.
- "A minister of the whole Church:" leaving your home parish.
- Normally non-stipendiary.

Formation for the Diaconate

- Postulancy
- Spiritual direction and therapy

- The St. Phoebe School for Deacons
 - Academics offered through the *Center for Anglican Learning & Leadership at Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CALL at CDSP)*.
 - In fall, winter and summer, students can expect to take two online courses through CALL at CDSP. Each course runs about seven weeks. Students can expect 2-3 hours of work per course, per week.
 - Courses are asynchronous, meaning there's no set class time each week—students fit the work in to their own schedule for that week.
 - Spiritual & Relational: Students engage in daily prayer and enrich their spiritual discipline through engaging with the Virtual Chapel of St. Phoebe. Three retreats and quarterly liturgical events focus on spiritual support and prayerful grounding in diaconal ministry.
 - Practical: Parish internships offer practical, hands-on experience with mentor deacons in a host parish setting during the final year of study. During parish internships, students meet to discuss their experiences and encourage each other's growth.
 - Spiritual, Relational and Practical formation are facilitated by the Local Formation Director, the Rev. Dr. Sarah Kye Price.
 - Cost: Projected at \$600 per quarter
- Misc.: Ember Day Letters, canonical exams, other required training

The Priesthood

About the Priesthood

- An enthusiastic preacher of the Gospel with an authentic personal faith.
- Sacramental leader, grounded in the BCP.
- Generalist: Pastor, preacher, teacher, change and conflict manager, administrator/delegator/strategist.
- “A minister of the whole Church:” involves moving.

Formation for the Priesthood

- Postulancy
- Spiritual direction and therapy
- Academic Formation:
 - M.Div. from Episcopal seminary (normative)
 - Seminaries attended by DOV postulants in recent years: Virginia Theological Seminary (Alexandria), Berkeley Divinity School at Yale (CT), Sewanee's School of Theology (TN), Seminary of the Southwest (TX), and Church Divinity School of the Pacific (CA, 4-year, low residency).
 - Anglican Studies or Reading for Orders
 - For postulants with M.Div. degrees or ordained in other traditions
 - Cost: Consult seminary websites and financial aid offices
- Practical Formation:
 - Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), typically during the summer between 1st and 2nd year of seminary
 - Four semesters/12 credit hours of field education (field ed), typically during 2nd and 3rd year of seminary
 - Full-time summer internship (Mid-Atlantic), typically during the summer between 2nd and 3rd year of seminary
- Misc.: Ember Day Letters, General Ordination Exams (GOEs), other required training (e.g., Anti-Racism, Misconduct Prevention, Alcohol Abuse Awareness)

