



Postulancy Application: Checklist and Need-to-Know Diaconate and Priesthood

Aspirants are required to read this guide in full and should share this information with their presenting priests. Included in this guide:

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Scheduling and Deadlines

Aspirants should begin applying for postulancy at the end of the formal discernment process, with the recommendation of their presenting priest. It may be appropriate for seekers to begin writing their Personal History and Reflections (PHR) during discernment, as the PHR needs to be written 4+ months before the postulancy interview. However, it is imperative that discernment is not rushed in order to make postulancy application deadlines.

Please note that we *must* be in possession of the entire application **at least four weeks in advance** of the interviews. This includes psychological and marital evaluations.

Timing the psych and marital evals: Aspirants are asked to provide a copy of the PHR (item #2) to the psychological and marital evaluators in advance of an appointment. Psych and marital evals can take 60 days to complete. (However, the committee contact does not need to review the PHR prior to it being submitted to the psych clinic.)

Path to the Postulancy Interview

- **4+ months before interview:** Write Personal History and Reflections, which must be submitted to psych eval clinic prior to evaluation. It takes most working adults several months to complete the PHR.
- **3+ months before interview:** Begin psych/martial eval process, as it can take up to 60 days.
- **1+ month before interview:** Entire application due.

Submitting: Who and How

- **Send to:** All documents should be sent to Vicky Bickel (vbickel@thediocese.net).
 - Email attachments are preferred in all instances save the college transcripts, which should be sent to the diocesan offices directly: The Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, c/o Vicky Bickel, 110 West Franklin St. Richmond, VA 23220.
- **Piecemeal or All-at-Once:** With the exception of #1 (below), documents can be submitted as each piece is ready, or all together as one application.
- **Please send regular updates** via email to Vicky Bickel to let her know when to expect the application, due four weeks before the interview. The aspirant may also want to CC their committee contact and Ed Keithly.

- **Copies:** Aspirants must keep copies of all documents in their own file.

Postulancy Application Checklist (and details)

All forms and instructions can be found [here](#) (priesthood) or [here](#) (diaconate), except for the list of approved psychological evaluation clinics. Contact [Vicky Bickel](#) with any questions.

1. Initial Application to Commission on Ministry

- Please send a copy of this application to the canon's office at the beginning of the application process.

2. Personal History and Reflections (PHR):

- *Timing:* Should be completed before psychological evaluation and initial meeting with contact person. The aspirant can/should schedule a date to meet with the clinic and contact person (separately) before the writing is complete. How long an aspirant takes to write the PHR depends on the time they can devote to it, but most find this takes a few months to write.
- *Contact review:* The aspirant's committee contact will provide feedback on the PHR before the aspirant submits the PHR to [Vicky Bickel](#). All other pieces of the application can go directly to Vicky. (However, the contact does not need to review the PHR prior to it being submitted to the psych clinic.)

3. Copy of the completed psychological examination and an evaluative letter

- Email [Vicky Bickel](#) for a list of approved clinics. This list cannot be found online.
- The cost of the psych and marital evaluations varies from about \$800-1000, depending on whether a marital evaluation is required. The aspirant should request his/her own cost estimate from the eval clinic. See note on timing of psych eval and PHR above.
- The diocesan budget doesn't provide funds to supplement the cost of the psych eval. The canons of the Episcopal Church prescribe that a parish nominating someone for postulancy also pledges to support that person financially. We recommend that parishes express this support by covering part/all of the cost of the psych eval.

4. Copy of marital evaluation, if applicable

- Using same clinic as psychological evaluation.
- Engaged or partnered applicants should also receive a marital evaluation.

5. Copy of the background check

- Contact [Vicky Bickel](#), who will begin this process for you. We recommend initiating this background check soon after the committee contact person is requested.

6. Copy of the completed medical examination

- Using online form. The aspirant may go to any physician they like.

7. Official transcripts: All undergraduate and post-graduate transcripts, not high school.

8. Copy of resume

- The resume should be adapted to suit the audience rather than written in the vernacular of the aspirant's current professional.

9. A letter of support from the applicant's presenting priest

- Guidelines for this on pg. 4 of this document. The aspirant should request a copy for his/her records. The letter can be addressed to Bishop Goff and sent to [Vicky Bickel](#).

10. Letter of support from the applicant's congregation or other community of faith

- Using the online form letter, committing the church to pledge to contribute financially to the applicant's preparation and involve itself in the applicant's preparation for ordination. As show of that financial support, we recommend the parish commit to pay the cost of the psychological evaluation.
- We recommend that the Vestry consider/sign this letter at their meeting 2-3 months before the postulancy interview.

11. Recent photograph, JPEG or PNG file.

12. Evidence of Baptism: E.g., copy of Baptismal certificate or parish register.

13. Copy of Confirmation Certificate or other evidence of confirmation in the Episcopal Church.

Role of the Contact Person

1. **Review PHR:** The committee contact will review the aspirant's PHR and offer feedback before it is submitted—aspirants should send the contact person a copy before the first meeting. However, the aspirant and presenting priest should reach out to the contact person once assigned to find a time to meet after the PHR is complete.
2. **Confirm Interview:** An aspirant's contact person to the Committee on Priesthood or Committee on the Diaconate must confirm that the aspirant is ready to interview for postulancy. Applicants should be in regular contact with their contact person.
3. **Shepherd the Aspirant:** The contact will get to know the aspirant, answer questions, and offer guidance. While the contact reviews the PHR, aspirants should send updates and questions on the other pieces of the application to Vicky Bickel or Ed Keithly. The aspirant, not the committee contact, is responsible for providing updates to the diocesan office.

Applying to Seminaries (Priesthood Track Only)

Aspirants should be aware of seminary application deadlines and apply based on the seminary's timeline, not the postulancy application timeline. This is in order to avoid being delayed for a year or lose out on scholarship/grant money—aspirants expecting to begin seminary in the same calendar year that they interview for postulancy should be especially sensitive to this.

An aspirant may not commit to a seminary before having a conversation with Ed Keithly, Vocational Development Minister, and/or Bishop Goff about where she/he will attend. If you have questions about which seminaries you might apply to/attend, contact Ed.

Example: An aspirant interviewing with the Committee on Priesthood in March 2020 and hoping to begin seminary in fall 2020 should apply to seminary concurrently with her postulancy application.

Presenting Priest Letter Guidelines

What might go in the recommendation letter from the presenting priest:

- Aspirant's place in the church community now, what ministries she/he takes part in.
- What the priest sees as the aspirant's gifts and how the aspirant is suited to the priesthood or the diaconate.
- What type(s) of ministry the priest could see the aspirant doing if ordained.
- Hardships the aspirant experienced (e.g., divorce, trauma) and how the aspirant responded to the hardships
 - The priest doesn't necessarily need to probe the aspirant to find out about these things, but if the priest has been a pastoral presence during times of famine, the letter is a good place to talk about how the aspirant dealt with those things.
- Anything that makes the aspirant's journey unique.
- Growing edges of the aspirant. The assumption is that the presenting priest is fully supportive of the aspirant. If there is ambivalence, the presenting priest should name that and discuss why she/he and the parish are putting the aspirant forward for postulancy.

Typically letters are about a 1-1.5 pages single-spaced. The letter should be addressed to Bishop Goff.