

Glossary of terms

The following definitions may prove useful as you participate in the discernment process of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Rhode Island. Please bear in mind that this list is not exhaustive.

Aspirant - A person who is exploring a sense of call.

Call - A sense or feeling that one is drawn or sent to do God's work.

Candidate - A person who, with the approval of the Commission on Ministry, Standing Committee, and Bishop, has progressed through Postulancy toward ordination to the diaconate or transitional diaconate and priesthood.

Canon to the Ordinary (CTO) - Provides counsel to the Bishop. With the Bishop and the Chair of the Commission on Ministry, the Canon oversees the ordination process and works with the clergy and laity of the diocese.

Canons - *The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church* are the laws of The Episcopal Church that must be followed during the process toward ordination to the priesthood. You can [download a free pdf of *The Constitution and Canons*](#) from The Episcopal Church or [order a printed copy of the book](#).

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) - A form of theological education that takes place in academic classrooms as well as in clinical, community care, geriatric and rehabilitation, workplace, and congregational and parish-based settings. CPE includes in depth study of both the people who receive care as well as the CPE participant, as a giver of care. CPE involves the practice of ministry and the reflection thereof with supervisor and peers.

Commission on Ministry (COM) - Advises and assists the Bishop in matters of ministry for all baptized persons, including the design and oversight of the ongoing

process for recruitment, discernment, formation for ministry, and assessment for readiness.

Deacons/Diaconate - Deacons serve directly under the authority of and are accountable to the Bishop. The Bishop, after consultation with the Deacon and the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight, may assign a Deacon to one or more congregations, other communities of faith or non-parochial ministries. Deacons assigned to a congregation or other community of faith act under the authority of the Member of the Clergy or other leader exercising oversight in all matters concerning the congregation.

Discernment - A process during which a perceived call is evaluated by a larger circle of people.

Congregational Discernment Team (CDT)- This lay-led Team's task is to assist in the discernment of God's will for the Aspirant through a series of meetings with the Aspirant. The Team submits a formal report to the Aspirant, the Bishop, and the Aspirant's priest and Vestry or Bishop's Committee.

Ember Days - Three days which occur four times a year: the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday after St. Lucy's Day (Dec. 13), Ash Wednesday, the Day of Pentecost, and Holy Cross Day (Sept. 14). The name comes from the Latin title *Quattuor tempora*, meaning "four times."

Ember (Day) Letters - Letters written to the Bishop four times a year and that reflect on personal development and situation as well as academic and field experience. The Canons prescribe that Ember Day Letters are required of all Postulants, Candidates, and Transitional Deacons. The Bishop may also request them of Aspirants and Nominees.

Field Education - A supervised practicum in ministry in which the student engages in and reflects on ministry. Field Education is often based in a parish, but also may be an agency or chaplaincy.

Financial Responsibilities - The commitment of financial resources necessary for preparation for ordination, including a pledge of canonically required contributions of financial support when a faith community nominates a confirmed adult communicant in good standing for ordination, dedication of financial resources by the Nominee, and financial support from the diocese. The degree of financial support from each source will vary by circumstance.

General Ordination Examinations (GOEs) - A set of proficiency exams in the canonically required areas of study including:

1. The Holy Scriptures.
2. History of the Christian Church.
3. Christian Theology.
4. Christian Ethics and Moral Theology.
5. Christian Worship according to the use of the Book of Common Prayer, the Hymnal, and authorized supplemental texts.
6. The Practice of Ministry in contemporary society, including leadership, evangelism, stewardship, ecumenism, interfaith relations, mission theology, and the historical and contemporary experience of racial and minority groups.

Holy Orders - The ordained ministries of bishops, priests (presbyters), and deacons.

Canonical provisions concerning ordination to these three orders are equally applicable to men and women in the Episcopal Church.

“In the Process” - A person who is “in the process” is formally working towards ordination as a deacon or priest under the sponsorship of a parish, a diocese, and a

bishop. At all times, the person in process is examining and discerning his/her/their vocation.

Liaison - The member of the Commission on Ministry that acts as the person in process's 'point person' and who communicates regularly with the person in process. The Liaison is available to answer questions regarding the individual discernment process for each person in process.

Mutual Discernment - The process of discernment may begin by the Aspirant contacting the clergy, the clergy speaking first to the Aspirant, through members of the congregation speaking to the Aspirant or the clergy, or any combination of the above. The journey towards ordination is one of shared, mutual discernment—the Spirit speaking both within an individual and within the congregation—throughout the process.

Nominee - A person recommended by the Discernment Team and nominated as a confirmed adult communicant in good standing by one's faith community to the Bishop and the Commission on Ministry.

Placement - A specific context for ministry approved by the Bishop.

Physical Examination - Required examination by a physician of the Nominee's choice, at the Nominee's expense. The report of the exam must be received in the Bishop's office before the interview for Postulancy. If the original physical examination was performed more than 36 months prior to the anticipated date of ordination to the Diaconate/Transitional Diaconate, the exam must be repeated at the expense of the Nominee and a report of the repeat exam must be submitted to the Bishop's office.

Postulant - An individual who has obtained the Bishop's approval to begin the formal diocesan process of discernment for ordination to the diaconate or transitional diaconate and priesthood.

Psychological (or Psychiatric) Examination - An examination by a psychologist or psychiatrist appointed by the Bishop is required prior to postulancy. A follow-up exam and report will be needed if the original examination was performed more than 36 months prior to the anticipated date of ordination to the Vocational Diaconate/Transitional Diaconate. See Financial Responsibilities section regarding the cost of this exam.

Spiritual Autobiography - The story of significant events, people, and places that have influenced one's relationship with God. It is a resource for connecting one's life story with the story of the people of God.

Spiritual Director - A trained and usually certified person, lay or ordained, with whom one communicates on a regular basis concerning his/her spiritual life. A Spiritual Director listens and, when appropriate, responds by giving "direction" which may include spiritual advice, help with discernment, suggested reading or action, or a question to ponder.

Standing Committee - Council of advisors to the Bishop required by the Canons of The Episcopal Church. The Standing Committee interviews the Postulant prior to Candidacy and reviews paperwork prior to ordination to the diaconate and priesthood. Approval of the Standing Committee must be received before Candidacy, ordination to the Diaconate, and ordination to the Priesthood.

Training - Preparation for ordination shall include canonically required training regarding:

1. Prevention of sexual misconduct. (Safe Church)
2. Civil requirements for reporting and pastoral opportunities for responding to evidence of abuse.
3. *The Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church*, particularly Title IV thereof.
4. The Church's teaching on racism.

Transitional Diaconate - Transitional Deacons are ordained and serve in the manner of all deacons, but for a set term (minimum of six months) before being ordained to the Priesthood.