



Diocese of Toronto
Anglican Church of Canada

Selection and Formation for Ministry as a Priest in the Diocese of Toronto



EVERY CHRISTIAN IS CALLED TO MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH.

At baptism, every child of God promises to proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, to strive for justice and peace, and to safeguard the integrity of creation. Some Christians however are called by God and the Church to be set apart for a ministry of Word and Sacrament. The determination of a call to priestly ordination is not just a personal discernment but a corporate responsibility of the whole community of the faithful. This brochure outlines how that process unfolds in the Diocese of Toronto.

I welcome your interest in a possible future as an Anglican priest. It is a wonderful vocation! But whatever your call to ministry, whether lay or ordained, we in the Diocese of Toronto are grateful for your gifts and talents given to the glory of God and the building up of God's Church.

+ *Andrew Toronto*

The Right Reverend Andrew Asbil
Bishop of Toronto

THE CANDIDACY PROCESS in the Diocese of Toronto normally runs on a three-year cycle. Persons who hope to be ordained within the following three years are welcome to apply for admission as a postulant. Each spring the Postulancy Committee selects a specific number of postulants from among the applications received. These postulants then enter a two-year period of supervised formation for ministry.

The committee takes many factors into account in the selection of postulants. Personal suitability is essential. Applicants are assessed for their authenticity, their sense of call, exemplary moral character, vibrant and maturing faith, and demonstrated leadership ability. In addition, the committee is seeking postulants who will help the diocese to meet the challenging needs of the Church, and who will balance out both the strengths and weaknesses of our current pool of clergy and postulants. Taken together, these factors sometimes necessitate difficult choices among gifted applicants.

The diocese may exercise discretion in shortening the period of postulancy as, for instance, in the case of candidates who have already been approved by another diocese. In any case, the minimum period of postulancy will not normally be less than one year.

INQUIRY AND APPLICATION

INDIVIDUALS WHO BELIEVE themselves called to the ministry of a priest should make contact with the Executive Officer to the Bishop of Toronto. They are encouraged to meet with their area bishop. A preliminary interview will be arranged. Inquirers who expect to complete the academic requirements for ordination sometime in the next three years may be invited to make formal application for admission as a postulant. Because the process of application provides the diocese its primary opportunity for the discernment and affirmation of priestly vocation, the screening involved at this stage is extensive. The application includes:

- a formal interview with the applicant's parish priest,
- the completion of an application form,
- the names, addresses, and phone numbers of three referees, and
- the submission of four essays on prescribed topics.

Based on the information provided by all applicants, the Postulancy Committee will select several people to be interviewed, usually in late spring. The number of postulants needed will be chosen from among this group. Confirmation of postulancy is subject to a criminal reference check and the submission of such medical certificates as may be required. Applicants who are not chosen to be postulants will be redirected to their own pastor for further counsel. Those who have been interviewed may also ask for specific feedback from the Executive Officer. Applicants who are redirected may reapply at their discretion, to a total of three times.

POSTULANCY

POSTULANCY NORMALLY LASTS TWO YEARS, and is devoted to conscientious formation for ministry. During this period, the postulant establishes several mentoring relationships, and his or her progress is monitored by a small Working Group of the Postulancy Committee. Each postulant is asked, or assisted, to establish a relationship with:

- a primary pastor (who may or may not be the parish priest),
- a spiritual director,
- a postulant's advisor (a member of the Postulancy Committee, who becomes the postulant's primary liaison with the diocese),
- a working group of the Postulancy Committee,
- a parish support group (who will help identify areas for growth, and provide opportunities to address them), and
- the area bishop (postulants are asked to meet annually with the bishop in whose area they are functioning).

During postulancy, most candidates will complete a degree at an accredited theological institution. Arrangements will also be made for postulants to attend an ACPO (Advisory Committee on Postulants for Ordination) screening weekend.

The costs of theological education are borne by the individual. A limited amount of diocesan and college bursary assistance is available to postulants; application is made through the theological college. Please note that the stipend for beginning clergy is extremely modest; for this reason, applicants are strongly encouraged to ensure the affordability of any debt they expect to owe beyond ordination.

ORDINATION

A POSTULANT BECOMES AN ORDINAND when the Bishop decides, in consultation with the Postulancy Committee, to proceed to ordination. Status as an ordinand is conditional upon the availability of a placement deemed appropriate by the Bishop, and the mobility of the postulant.

Normally, the College of Bishops will approve a list of postulants who are available for selection as assistant curates.

A short list of such postulants will be provided to approved supervising parishes, who will interview prospective assistant curates. Ordination is contingent upon selection by an interviewing parish.

ROLE DESCRIPTIONS & DEFINITION OF TERMS

Inquirer/Applicant

- An inquirer is anyone who inquires about the possibility of being ordained in the Diocese of Toronto.
- An inquirer becomes an applicant when he or she completes all aspects of a formal application to be selected as a postulant. (The components of formal application will be determined from time to time by the Postulancy Committee.)

Postulant

- Postulants are those applicants who are chosen by the Postulancy Committee for further formation and preparation for ministry.
- One is normally a postulant for two years.

Ordinand

- A postulant becomes an ordinand when the Bishop decides to ordain him or her. By canon, the Bishop is required to seek the concurrence of the Postulancy Committee in such decisions; by custom, ordination is contingent upon such additional factors as the availability of an appropriate placement, and the mobility of the postulant.

Intake Interviewer

- The intake interviewer is the Executive Officer or a senior member of the Postulancy Committee.
- The intake interviewer undertakes initial interview with applicants: gathers preliminary history, explains process, and offers an application form if appropriate.

Primary Pastor

- The primary pastor is named by the applicant as the person to whom he/she will turn for pastoral care and conversation throughout the process.
- The primary pastor is not a member of the Postulancy Committee, and is not asked to report to it (although an inquirer is free to choose the primary pastor as a referee).
- The primary pastor need not be the inquirer's parish priest.
- The primary pastor will be informed by the diocese at major decision points in the process, so as to support the inquirer or postulant.
- Applicants who move to postulancy will have an opportunity to reconfirm or change primary pastors.

Spiritual Director

- The spiritual director is chosen by the postulant, who provides the name of the selected person to the diocese.
- The diocese will provide assistance in the choice of a suitable spiritual director for postulants who need help.
- In some cases the spiritual director will also serve as primary pastor.
- The spiritual director is not a member of the Postulancy Committee, and is not asked to report to it.

Postulant's Advisor

- The postulant's advisor is an ordained member of the working group to which a postulant is assigned during the period of formation.
- The postulant's advisor is the person with whom a postulant maintains contact between meetings of the working group.
- The postulant's advisor acts as an interpreter of the process, and "coach".



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