Rector Involvement

Dear Rectors,

We are grateful that the Lord is using you to raise up those aspiring to ordained ministry. The Ordination Preparation Process in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese begins with you and the members of your parish. One significant aspect of discernment for the individual, and you, is to which order, Deacon or Priest, the individual is called. Please do not assume one over another without careful consideration. As you prayerfully discern an Aspirant’s call for ministry, whether ordained or not, and to which order, we ask God to bless you with wisdom and discernment. If you determine that the Aspirant is not called to ordained ministry, we trust you will help that individual discover his/her unique place in the Body of Christ.

We expect that each Aspirant will be able to clearly articulate the message of ***the Gospel***. For example, in a casual setting such as a coffee shop or grocery store, our expectation is that they would “always be ready to give an account for the hope that is in them, and with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15). The Bishop expects every Aspirant to teach ***the Catechism***. This could be in a Confirmation class, a Newcomers’ class, or just having them find a friend whom they could lead in a study of the Catechism. Also, we encourage you to be involved in the part of the process we describe as their “Unique Place in the Body of Christ.” This includes an exploration of ***spiritual gifts***, as well as passion, personality, experience, etc. and how these may blend together to guide the person toward their unique place in the Body.

In summary form, here is what you as Rector need to do:

1. The initial expectation is that the Aspirant is a member of your church and has been around long enough (**at** **least one year**) for you to observe his/her character, ministry, leadership, and servanthood to the extent that you are willing and able to conduct a Careful Inquiry with the individual.
2. Feel free to contact the Canon for Leadership to discuss your role in the process.
3. Send an initial email to the Canon for Leadership and Bishop indicating your affirmation of the Aspirant’s call, paying attention to the list of considerations found on page 9.
4. Conduct your Careful Inquiry of the Aspirant until you are able to fill out the report (p. 17) with confidence and thoroughness. We expect this Careful Inquiry normally to **take six months to a year to complete**. It is not helpful for you to be unsure of someone’s suitability for ordained ministry and send them along in the process, hoping that they will be turned down on the diocesan level. Guidelines for this inquiry, along with questions we hope you will be able to answer as part of the report form, are attached.
	1. Please review the Good Samaritan Parable Reflection with Aspirant (Appendix C, pages 28-30). This assessment enables a healthy dialogue with the Aspirant regarding the gifts they display and alignment with the appropriate order (priest or diaconal minister).
	2. Please review the Lifeway Online Assessment (cf. top of page 11) with her or him (codes are available from the Canon for Leadership).
5. When complete, please send your Report of Careful Inquiry to the Bishop and Canon for Leadership via email; the Aspirant will then request a meeting with the Bishop. The Aspirant will submit a 1-2 page reflection on that meeting to the Canon for Leadership.
6. After the Aspirant meets with the Bishop, you will form a **Parish Discernment Team** (PDT) which will thoroughly explore with your Aspirant his/her call to ministry. See the suggested guidelines and report forms for the PDT (see pages 16-22).
	1. The Parish Discernment Team is made up solely of **lay members** of the church. Working under the guidance of, but relatively independently of, the Rector/ Vicar, they provide the lay endorsement of the Aspirant.
	2. Each PDT member must sign the same theological statement as that of the Aspirant (see Appendix B). It is helpful to do this early on in the process so as to not lose members along the way.
	3. Assign a PDT Chair of your choice. You should meet initially with this person to guide him/her as to what it means to lead the PDT, and be available during the process to encourage and advise the Chair. The Chair will meet with the Parish Liaison from the diocese, who will advise them in this process.
	4. Ask 4-6 other individuals to serve on the PDT, the majority of whom will be the Rector’s choice. You may ask the Aspirant to submit a name of someone to on the PDT. It is strongly suggested that the members of the PDT be active members of the congregation who:

 - Have a lively faith in Jesus Christ which they can articulate.

 - Have a heart for the mission of the Church.

 - Pray regularly and agree to pray for the discernment process and the people in it.

 - Are able to listen carefully to God and to others.

 - Have the gift of discernment.

If the Aspirant is a woman, choose parishioners who are not opposed to the ordination of women. The job of the PDT is to discern a call to ordination. This is not the time for female Aspirants to have to defend themselves over against people with a different theological understanding.

* 1. In most cases the Rector will want to meet initially with the PDT (as well as with the Chair and the Liaison) to discuss the discernment process.
	2. There is not a specific number of meetings with the PDT, however we recommend six, though that is flexible based on your needs. We want them to meet long enough to be able to give a thorough report, which we expect usually to take about six months. For some Aspirants that will take more time than others. It is the Bishop’s suggestion that the PDT Chair report to the Rector following every meeting to determine whether their work has been completed. The PDT Chair and Rector should consult with the Parish Liaison to finalize their work and submit the report.
1. The Rector’s Careful Inquiry and the PDT Report will be given to the Vestry for their consideration. See the Vestry Recommendation Form (p. 23).
2. Give thought, with your Vestry and Finance Committee, as to what kind of prayer, financial, and practical help you will be able to give your Aspirants as they move forward. Please consider the following:
3. The cost of the Discernment Process is around $2100 (application, Oxford Document Check, Psychological Exam, Church Planting Assessment, and Sexual Ethics and Boundaries training). Beyond that, there are the costs of Theological Education, whether a 3-year residential degree program or an alternative suggested by the OPT and approved by the Bishop. There will be times when the Aspirant incurs expenses beyond those listed above, such as travel and lodging to required interviews and examinations.
4. The Diocesan Budget will cover 1/3 of the costs, the Aspirant will cover 1/3, and the supporting congregation will cover 1/3. In order to streamline reimbursement, the congregation will receive an invoice for 2/3 of the cost once the Aspirant becomes a Postulant ($1400). The Postulant should reimburse the parish for 1/3. Please discuss with the individual/diocese any payment plans that may be necessary.
5. Stay in touch with your Aspirant throughout their process. Consider visiting him/her during theological formation. We will ask each person to send their quarterly Ember Day Letters not only to the Bishop and Canon for Leadership, but also to you. (For a description of Ember Day Letters, see description under Postulant Work.)

It is most helpful if you have a good understanding of the process in the Gulf Atlantic Diocese. We have streamlined the process as much as possible, while still being thorough. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact us. Thank you for your ministry, for encouraging and equipping the saints for the work of ministry and for building up the Body of Christ.



God bless you,

The Venerable Jessica Jones, PhD

Archdeacon & Canon for Leadership

archdeacon@gulfatlanticdiocese.org

Suggested Guidelines for the Rector’s Careful Inquiry

Although the discernment process for ordained ministry begins the moment the question first arises in conversation between a potential Aspirant and another follower of Jesus, the process formally begins with the Rector’s (or Vicar’s) Careful Inquiry. This consists of time spent with the Aspirant (and spouse or fiancée, if applicable) to discern the person’s suitability for and calling to ordained ministry.

During your time spent together, here are a few of the areas that might be helpful to explore:

1. Have him/her tell you their story about God’s work and leading in their life.
2. Can he/she clearly and casually share their testimony, as well as the message of the Gospel?
3. Who or what has shaped him/her as a person?
4. Would you describe the Aspirant as a person of stable character?
5. Inquire as to Aspirant’s physical and emotional health – How does this person take care of himself/herself?
6. What is the main source of authority for the person’s moral behavior?
7. To what extent has the person been shaped by individual and corporate devotional disciplines?
8. Is the person reasonably well acquainted with the Bible and the Prayer Book?
9. What might be brought to light when a background check is conducted?
10. Who or what exemplifies what ministry is all about for the Aspirant?
11. How does the Aspirant understand the church in relationship to his/her concept of ministry? Does this ministry have to be ordained to be effective?
12. Spend sufficient time exploring both the Diaconate and the Priesthood, not prematurely assuming one or the other. See the resources on the Diocesan Ordination web page, including the Parable Assessment.
13. In what ministries is the Aspirant presently involved? In what ministries would this person like to be invited to share?
14. What would happen if the discernment turns out that ordination is not the best setting for this person’s ministry?
15. Is the Aspirant capable of acquiring the needed body of knowledge and skills for the ministry under consideration?
16. Does this person exhibit an openness to growth, change and life-long learning?

See also the areas to address in the Rector/Vicar Report on the following page.

As a reminder, the Parable Assessment Tool can be a valuable introduction to discussions about calling, and may be helpful in determining the particular order to which the applicant feels called.

Rector Report of Careful Inquiry

*THIS FORM IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE*

Date:

Aspirant’s Name:

Your Name:

Church:

Church Address:

Phone Number(s):

Email Address:

1. How long have you known the Aspirant?
2. Summarize your discernment process with the Aspirant.
3. Who first raised the issues of Holy Orders? What were the circumstances of his/her call? When was this call affirmed by both the Aspirant and the Rector?
4. In what kind of ministerial activities have you or other leaders observed the Aspirant?
5. Describe your observation of the Aspirant’s experience in church settings, commenting on
	1. Matters of integrity
	2. Emotional strength
	3. Confidence
	4. Personal and intellectual maturity
	5. Relationships
	6. Spiritual maturity
	7. Ability to share the Gospel
	8. Ability to teach the Catechism
6. What do you see as the Aspirant’s spiritual gifts and talents? How has the Aspirant used these in the parish setting?
7. Comment on strengths and weaknesses you have observed. List areas of growth for the Aspirant to achieve before ordination.
8. How might the Aspirant’s home environment affect his/her ability to prepare for ministry?
9. Can you with confidence recommend this person for ordained ministry? If yes, to which order **and why**? If not, why not?

Please submit by email:

The Venerable Jessica Jones, PhD

Archdeacon & Canon for Leadership

archdeacon@gulfatlanticdiocese.org

Guidelines for the Parish Discernment Team

*These Guidelines should be reviewed together by the whole Team at their first meeting.*

The task of the Parish Discernment Team (PDT) is to assist the Rector and Vestry in discernment of God’s will for Aspirants who feel called to ordained ministry. Historically, the laity helped affirm the call to ordained ministry in a effort to prevent clergy orders from being a self-selected body. For this reason, discernment, accomplished in the context of the Aspirant’s home church with lay peers, is of critical importance.

Each member should commit to:

* Pray for yourself, the other committee members, and the Aspirant
* Read the Aspirant’s materials and be prepared at committee meetings
* Attend all committee meetings
* Respond in a timely fashion to communications from the committee Chair
* Commit to confidentiality

An Aspirant will have already indicated to the Rector whether they sense the call to ministry as a deacon or as a priest. As the PDT, you will either:

* “Affirm” the Aspirant’s call to ordained ministry
* “Affirm with conditions” or
* “Not affirm at this time”

If you are not able to affirm a call to ordination, it is our hope that the PDT will continue to work with the former Aspirant until you, and the Rector, have helped him/her find the unique place in the Body of Christ that the Lord has prepared in advance for this person to do.

The task of discernment is truly an awesome responsibility, especially as it has direct implications for future decisions of another’s life. This work should be undertaken with a humble awareness of the privilege it is to participate in what God is doing in someone else’s life, and in the life of the Church. The PDT is not an advocacy group, nor a support group. Likewise, the discernment process is not a job interview. Instead, its goal is to hear from the Lord about the future direction of the Aspirant’s life and speak truth in love through the leading of the Holy Spirit, whether that is an “Affirm,” an “Affirm with conditions,” or a “Not affirm at this time.” Please ask yourself if you are willing and able to give the Aspirant, your fellow churchgoer, whichever of these three determinations is deemed appropriate.

Your recommendation will be given consideration by the Vestry of your parish, who along with the Rector, will decide whether or not a person should continue in the process toward ordination.

The composition of the PDT, including designating a Chair, is the prerogative of the Rector. The Chair will meet with The Diocesan Parish Liaison to guide them in this process. Each person on the PDT will sign the Theological Statement that our Aspirant is asked to sign early in the process (see Appendix B). If the Aspirant is a woman, the Bishop asks that the PDT members be open to the ordination of women as this is not the arena for her to have to address or defend that issue.

The PDT should be aware that this work is intensely personal for the Aspirant and will be most effectively conducted in an atmosphere of trust and respect. PDT members will assure the Aspirant of the confidential nature of this work, help the Aspirant grow in his/her self-understanding, where he/she is gifted and where grace needs to be sought. The PDT may request the Aspirant develop and complete a ministry project in the parish, especially if he/she has not been deeply involved in the life of the parish. With concurrence of the Rector, the PDT may also request to receive copies of the written work the Aspirant is doing for the Diocese.

There is no set number of meetings required for the PDT, though we see this taking four to six months in most settings. The first and final meeting with be alongside the Diocesan Parish Liaison to help guide the process and the writing of the Report. The Aspirant’s spouse or fiancée, should be invited to attend some of the sessions with the PDT (usually Session 4). After the second meeting, and after every meeting thereafter, the PDT Chair will communicate with the Rector. The Rector and PDT Chair will determine when the work of the PDT is finished. The PDT Chair will complete the evaluation. This document and the signed theological statements will be sent to the Diocesan Office along with the Vestry Recommendation.

Parish Discernment Team Report Form

*THIS FORM IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE*

The following is to be completed by the Chair of the Parish Discernment Team (PDT), though every member of the PDT should have a copy with which to work.

Aspirant’s Name:

Parish, Location:

Names of PDT Members and email address (denote who served as Chair):

Date of all PDT meetings:

Did each PDT Member sign the Theological Statement (see Appendix B, p. 27)? Attach copies of each to this Report.

Key Objectives to be Reported on:

 Session 1: PDT with Liaison [INTRODUCTION]

* Logistics
* Theological Statement
* Forms
* Purpose
* Questions about Diaconal Minister / Priest

Session 2: PDT with Aspirant [CALLING]

* Background
* Personal faith, testimony
* Education
* Calling to ordained ministry (pastoral focus and purpose for pursuing ordained ministry)
* Character

Session 3: PDT with Aspirant [MINISTRY]

* Experience in church
* Gifts
* Experience in ministry
* Interpersonal relationships in the church
* Experience in leadership
* Articulating the Gospel

Session 4: PDT with Aspirant & Spouse [SUPPORT SYSTEMS]

* Current household
* Family of origin
* Support systems (including those pertaining to prevention of moral failures)
* Dealing with Conflict

Session 5: PDT with Aspirant [SPIRITUAL LIFE]

* Devotional life
* Passions
* Protection against burnout
* Hopes for future
* Reflections/questions from previous sessions

Session 6: PDT with Liaison [CONCLUSION]

* Forms
* Report
* Questions

Signature of PDT Chair: Date:

Please submit completed work by email:

The Venerable Jessica Jones, PhD

Archdeacon & Canon for Leadership

archdeacon@gulfatlanticdiocese.org

Vestry Recommendation of the Aspirant

Date:

The Vestry of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name and Location of Church)

believes that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Name of Aspirant) is being called by God to ordained ministry as a

* Vocational Deacon
* Priest

in God’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church and commends him/her for further discernment by diocesan leadership.

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Senior Warden (Printed Name) (Signature)

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Junior Warden (Printed Name) (Signature)

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Rector (Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

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(Printed Name) (Signature)

*THIS FORM IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE*

Please scan and submit this form by email:

The Venerable Jessica Jones, PhD, Archdeacon & Canon for Leadership

archdeacon@gulfatlanticdiocese.org

Appendix B

 Theological Statement

*THIS FORM IS AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD AT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE*

I have read, understand, and endorse

1. The [Constitution of the Gulf Atlantic Diocese](https://www.csmedia1.com/gulfatlanticdiocese.org/the-constitution-canons-for-gad-approved-11-6-2021.pdf) and
	1. The mission of the diocese: *To proclaim the transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ in every facet of our faith and life.*
	2. The strategy of the diocese: *To Encourage Missional Initiatives and Planting of Congregations; To Strengthen Existing Parishes and Ministries; To Identify, Train and Deploy Missional Leaders.*
2. The [Constitution of the Anglican Church in North America](http://archives.gulfatlanticdiocese.org/files/policies/parish/ACNA%20CURRENT%20C%20and%20C%20-%202019.pdf)
3. The [Jerusalem Declaration](https://www.gafcon.org/about/jerusalem-declaration)

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Name

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Copies of the three documents listed above may be found on the Gulf Atlantic Diocese Website.

Please return signed form by scanning and emailing to:

The Venerable Jessica Jones, PhD

Archdeacon & Canon for Leadership

archdeacon@gulfatlanticdiocese.org