**GUIDANCE FOR INCUMBENTS/PRIESTS & VOCATIONS ADVISORS**

**Re: CANDIDATES FOR ORDAINED MINISTRY**

It is important that a candidate is first referred to the PDO by a formal letter or an email from an incumbent / priest. An *Initial Enquiry for Vocational Discernment Form* is completed, available from the PDO. This begins the process as outlined in the SEC’s *Discernment Process for Ordained Ministry*, appended here and online.

The PDO directs the Candidate to a Vocations Advisor and this is the first step in the process for the candidate. The incumbent should offer a candidate with confidence, after careful discussion. If a candidate is referred too soon or without enough reflection, it can cause problems later, for a non-recommendation for training becomes increasingly painful for the candidate the further along the process they are. It is important to note that whilst the Discernment Process for Ordained Ministry begins locally, and has a later provincial stage, it is the candidate’s sponsoring incumbent/priest and their local charge that must remain pastorally and prayerfully supportive throughout. Some thought should be given locally as to the support the candidate will receive. The Vocations Advisor will meet the incumbent, the candidate, and the candidate’s partner/spouse/family throughout the local process ensuring this support.

**Core Values**

The values held by everyone involved within the *Discernment Process for Ordained Ministry* have been agreed by the Bishops, PDO, Vocations Advisors, Assistant Directors of Ordinands, Discernment Meeting personnel and Advisory Selection Panel personnel. Incumbents and Candidates are to share in these core values of Hospitality, Honesty and Integrity. Throughout the process, informed by prayer and pastoral sensitivity, all involved shall offer welcome, kindness, and respect.

**Core Beliefs**

In Jesus the Kingdom of God came among us.

All members (of Christ’s body) are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the church and for service of the world to which Christ is sent.

We have confidence in God, in the Church, in each other and in the *Discernment Process*.

**Early Stages of Discernment**

Below are some suggestions to help the Incumbent and the Vocations Advisor in the early stages of discernment about the candidate’s possible call to the ordained ministry.

1. **Is the candidate the sort of person who might be called to ordained ministry?**

***Personality*:** works well with other people and shows sensitivity and courtesy  
 can encourage and enable others  
 people turn to them for advice and help  
 is reliable and trustworthy

***Commitment*:** attends church regularly and is willing to get involved in the congregation   
 sticks with a task or obligation  
 can speak about their faith and what it means to them  
 responds creatively to conflict or disappointment

***Spirituality*:** is growing in their prayer life and understanding of Christian faith  
 connects their relationship with God to their own life and the community

1. **Are there signs that God is calling them?**

***A strong inner sense*** that God wants them to serve in this way. It may be sudden or gradual, but will always be persistent. They should be able to talk about their call.

***Recognition by others*** who are honest and know the candidate well. They may have spotted the vocation before the candidate did.

***Realism.*** Candidates should have enough self-knowledge of their gifts, strengths and weaknesses to be able to judge if their call is realistic, subject to God’s grace.

***Knowledge*** of what they are being called to. Do they know what mission and ministry in today’s world actually involves? Have they read and talked to others about it? Do they have a desire to learn and reflect; a capacity to facilitate learning.

1. **What is the SEC looking for?**

Here is an outline summary of the Criteria for Selection:

**Vocation &**  **Ministry within the SEC:** a sense of vocation to the ordained ministry; understanding what it means to be a deacon or a priest; awareness of what public ministry in the SEC involves, and its contemporary context.

**Spirituality & Worship:** evidenceof a committed and nourishing spiritual life, one that has an effect on their life and engagement with the world; committed to the sacramental life of the church while being open to new forms of worship.

**Personality and Character:** self-awareness and stability; ability to cope with change; integration of life experiences.

**Relationships:** healthy personal and professional relationships; ability to manage of conflict; potential pastoral skills.

**Leadership & Collaboration:** vision and inspiration; nurturing others’ gifts; awareness of their own leadership style.

**Faith:** understanding andcommitment to the Christian faith; ability to connect faith with life and communicate it effectively.

**Mission and Evangelism:** a strategicunderstanding of mission in contemporary culture; being a potential leader of mission.

1. **What should the Incumbent and Vocational Advisor do next?**

* **Don’t** announce a candidate’s intention to explore a vocation to ordained ministry too widely in the congregation, in case the candidate has to withdraw from the process later on; but **Do** consider on-going pastoral and prayer support.
* **Don’t** push things too fast; allow the momentum to build up gradually
* **Don’t** give the candidate “up-front” exposure, as worship leading /and or preaching requires a diocesan bishop’s authorisation.
* **Do** give the candidate some exposure to group/discussion leadership, but without raising expectations too high
* **Do** be aware of the huge impact your own story and enthusiasm (or the reverse) will have on a candidate
* **Do** contact the Diocesan Bishop (the Vocations Advisor writes a general but evidence based report related to the general categories and criteria listed above to the Bishop and PDO) with a considered recommendation of the candidate when you feel the time is right
* **Do** pray, as Incumbent and Vocational Advisor for the candidate throughout their vocational journey

1. **What is the next step for the Candidate?**

Following several meetings with the Vocations Adviser, perhaps over a period as long as 18 months, and after the Diocesan Bishop and PDO have received their report, the Candidate may follow any of the next steps.

1. Possible **ordinand**: this person is sent to see the Bishop

1. Possible **lay-reader**: This person is sent to see the Bishop

If the Bishop agrees with this pathway, the person moves on to the lay-reader selection process in the diocese.

1. Possible **Church Army** candidate: this person is sent to see the Bishop

If the Bishop agrees with this pathway, the person moves on to the Church Army selection process.

1. Ministry is within **existing congregation**: this person returns for further conversations with the Incumbent.

A variety of local ministries can be explored, that might result in authorisation/permissions being given by the Bishop/Rector.

Please note; there might be other outcomes, for example becoming a member of a religious community, or mission partner.

After the Candidate meets the Diocesan Bishop the process continues and further information about the next steps is available from the PDO.

With this document please find an outline of the *Discernment Process for the Ordained.*

Discernment process for ordained ministry

In the Scottish Episcopal Church, final decisions about selection for training and then ordination to the diaconate or presbyterate are made by the candidate’s diocesan bishop. However, the bishops involve others in the discernment process from the beginning.

Discernment in the congregation or chaplaincy

Candidates must be sponsored by their priest or chaplain, and normally will have discussed their sense of vocation with them for a time. The priest may or may not involve the Vestry (church council).

When the candidate comes to the point of formal sponsorship, a reference from their priest is required. This reference is sent to the Provincial Director of Ordinands (PDO) for the process to begin. The Province is developing the role of a ‘Vocations Advisor’ who can help to discern what kind of ministry (e.g. Lay / ordained) the candidate may be called to. The candidate will be informed of their Vocations Advisor, and about the steps involved in the process of vocational discernment by the PDO.

Discernment with the Vocations Advisor

The Vocations Advisor will have several meetings with the candidate for up to about 18 months. During this time, the candidate may be required to do reading and written work, undertake practical ministry, and broaden their Church experience. This begins the personal discernment by the candidate as well as the Church valuing and validating the gifts of the individual.

Some dioceses require candidates to engage in group discussion about discernment and their vocation with their congregation or with other candidates. The candidate will normally meet with their diocesan bishop at least once during this time but the bishop may wait for a report from the Vocations Advisor before meeting the candidate.

Discernment with the Provincial Director of Ordinands (PDO)

The process continues with the Vocations Advisor offering their report to the Provincial Director of Ordinands (PDO) and to the diocesan bishop on the candidate’s progress, related to general categories and criteria for discernment. The diocesan bishop interviews the candidate and offers their own reflection to the PDO about the candidate’s progress. The PDO meets the candidate and decides the next most helpful step for the candidate. (The PDO is appointed by the College of Bishops and advises them directly). The individual may be advised to return to the Vocations Advisor to aid personal development or the discernment of an appropriate ministry other than ordained ministry. Further elements of discernment may be included by the PDO, with reference to the diocesan bishop, before the candidate may be considered suitable for ordained ministry. The next stage is for the candidate to meet a regional Assistant Director of Ordinands.

Criteria for Selection and Discernment Curriculum

The Criteria for Selection provide a framework and tool for the Discernment Process, Selection Panels, and the Scottish Episcopal Institute’s (SEI) Formation Outcomes for ordinands. Conversations and reports are shaped around the Criteria. It is important for candidates to engage with the Criteria from an early stage. Candidates are to provide evidence for having fulfilled each Criterion. The Discernment Curriculum does not have the rigidity of a “course” but should be viewed as “accumulating a portfolio”. Candidates are asked to undertake suggested reflections and activities. Details of the Criteria for Selection and the Discernment Curriculum are available from the PDO.

Discernment with the Assistant Director of Ordinands (ADO)

An Assistant Director of Ordinands (ADO), with local ministry and mission expertise, assists the candidate through several meetings with the elements for further discernment. A Registration form is completed with the candidate, and the ADO makes evidence-based recommendations in a report based on the Discernment Curriculum to the diocesan bishop and PDO, as to whether the candidate progresses to a formal Discernment meeting, or not. The diocesan bishop reminds the candidate’s priest of their ongoing pastoral responsibilities to those individuals whose discernment suggests vocational options for discernment other than ordained ministry.

Discernment Meeting

The PDO is responsible for those candidates who are to attend a Discernment Meeting, consisting of two lay people and one clergy person from the Province. After interview, recommendations are sent to the PDO, and copied to the Bishop, about the candidate proceeding to an Advisory Selection Panel, or taking further time with the ADO to address identified issues. The diocesan bishop meets with the individual, in consultation with the PDO, to discuss the next steps. Personal or family circumstances can change significantly during the time of the whole vocational and discernment process so it may be possible for a recommendation to be made that the individual is not called to ordained ministry.

Advisory Selection Panel

The Advisory Selection Panel, receiving the required reports and references from the PDO, is made up of experienced clergy and lay advisers, sometimes with a group of candidates. The Panel involves interviews, written work, and presentations. The PDO writes a full report of the Panel, based on the Advisors’ written reports, for the candidate’s diocesan bishop. Candidates may be recommended for training, not recommended, or conditionally recommended.

Final decisions

The candidate’s diocesan bishop decides what the candidate will do next on the basis of the various recommendations. In practice, they almost always follow the recommendations of the Panels.

At this stage, the candidate may begin training and formation with the Scottish Episcopal Institute A final decision as to whether the candidate will be ordained is made at the completion of their Initial Ministerial Education, usually lasting three years.