



The Episcopal Diocese of Olympia

The Episcopal Church in Western Washington

www.ecww.org

Postulancy Glossary

A glossary of terms related to postulancy and formation in the Diocese of Olympia

Postulancy and the pursuit of holy orders and ordination has a special language of its own. This glossary will define many of the terms you hear as you navigate the process.

Applicant/Aspirant: A person in the process of formally applying for holy orders either to the diaconate or the priesthood. Sometime also referred to as a *nominee*.

BACOM: The Bishop's Advisory Conference on Ministry or BACOM is a retreat for those who have applied for holy orders hosted by the Commission on Ministry. BACOM is held the second weekend of December at Camp Huston and include group activities, conversation, and interviews with the Commission on Ministry. Invitations to attend BACOM are extended solely by the bishop.

Baptismal convent: Where Christians publicly avow our belief in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and make a series of promises of how we will, with God's help, strive to live as Christians. Episcopalians renew their Baptismal Covenant at every Baptism and several other times during the liturgical year.

Bishop: An ordained minister who carries on the apostolic work of leading, supervising, and united the church. Our Catechism defines the ministry of the bishop, "represent[ing] Christ and his Church, particularly as an apostle, chief priest, and pastor of a diocese; guard[ing] the faith unity, and discipline of whole Church; proclaim[ing] the Word of God; act[ing] in Christ's name for the reconciliation of the world and the building up of the Church; and ordain[ing] others to continue Christ's ministry" (BCP 855). The current Bishop of Olympia is the Right Reverend Gregory H. Rickel. *See also, priest, deacon.*

Board of Examining Chaplains (BEC or Ex-Chaps): A body, composed of lay people and ordained ministers appointed by the bishop charged with certification of competency for priests and deacons. *See also, General Ordination Exam, competency.*

Candidacy: A step in the process towards ordination. Candidates are eligible for ordination pending the completion of canonical requirements.

Canons: The laws of the church. There are national church canons (The Episcopal Church Constitution and Canons) updated after each General Convention and Diocesan Canons, updated after annual diocesan convention. For those seeking ordination or reception, please refer to TEC Canons III.5 (Of the General Provisions Respecting Ordination), III.6 (Of the Ordination of Deacons) III.8 (Of the Ordination of Priests), or III.10 (Of the Reception of Clergy from Other Churches). They are available on the Holy Orders/Vocation website.

Clergy Leader: The priest, whether it be a rector, vicar, or priest-in-large that is the leader of a congregation.

Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE): An accredited program of education, frequently done in a hospital setting, which focuses on discovering and formatting pastoral style, abilities, and psychological and spiritual well being in circumstances when practicing pastoral care for others. CPE is required for both priests and deacons and must be completed before applying to candidacy.

Commission on Ministry (COM): A canonically established body, comprising of both clergy and lay people, appointed by the bishop, which assists the bishop in determining needs, recruitment, selection, and training of persons for, ordained ministry. Members of the COM also serve as liaisons to postulants and candidates in the process of ordination.

Competency: Certification for those seeking ordination to the priesthood demonstrating proficiency in the seven areas dictated in the Canons (Title III.7.5a) as determined through the use of General Ordinations Exams (GOEs). The seven areas are: the holy scriptures, church history, including the ecumenical movement, Christian theology, Christian ethics and moral theology, studies in contemporary society, including racial and minority groups, liturgies and church music, and the theory and practice of music. Competency for those seeking ordination for the diaconate is certified by the Diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains using Diaconal Competency Exams. In both cases, the Board of Examining Chaplains determines certification.

Deacon: Ordained ministers that represent Christ and his Church, particularly as a servant of those in need; and to assist bishops and priests in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Transitional deacons are called to be priests, and serve at least six months as transitional deacons before ordination as a priest; vocational deacons do not seek ordination to the priesthood, are icons of servant ministry in the Church and in the world by ministering in Christ's name to the poor, the sick, the suffering, and the helpless. Vocational deacons are also said to find trouble and bring it back to the church.

Diaconal Competency Exams: A set of five exams developed and administered by the Diocesan Board of Examining Chaplains to certify competency for persons seeking ordination to the vocational diaconate. The five competencies evaluated are: scripture, traditions of the church, theology and ecumenism/interfaith relations, ethics and community concerns, and exegesis and preaching.

Discernment: A time of reflection to test, clarify, and evaluate a perceived call to ministry. Discernment is a step in the process towards holy orders, it is a continual life long process, and should not merely be treated as a means to an end. The diocese has established guidelines on expectations for discernment.

Ember Day Letters: Quarterly letters written to the bishop which provide an opportunity for reflection about academic, personal, and spiritual experiences. They are required for all postulants and candidates. Days are the first Sunday in Lent, Pentecost, Holy Cross Day, and the third Sunday of Advent (commonly St Lucy's Day). There is a mnemonic for remembering Ember Days: Lenty, Penty, Crucy, Lucy.

Field Education: A time spent “in the field” either at another congregation or a social services agency to learn more about how congregation run, hone one’s ministry, or engage in the world through diaconal ministry.

General Ordination Exams (GOEs): A comprehensive examination of the seven areas of canonical competency of persons seeking ordination to the priesthood written and administered by the General Board of Examining Chaplains. GOEs are administered in January. To see previous GOE exam questions visit <http://www.episcopalgbec.org/>. See also, *competency, diaconal competency exams*.

Laity: A non-ordained order of ministry derived from the Greek word λαός, or *laos* meaning “the people.” Though non-ordained, lay people still ministers by virtue of our baptismal covenant.

Liaison: A member of the Commission on Ministry assigned to a postulant/candidate to serve as guide through the process.

Master of Divinity (M.Div): A graduate degree conferred upon seminarians, usually after three years of study.

Postulancy: The first step towards ordination. Both those seeking ordination to the priesthood and diaconate enter postulancy. Those “in” postulancy are called *postulants*.

Priest: An ordained minister called and trained to assist the bishop in the governance, missionary, pastoral, preaching, and sacramental work of the Church. All priests serve for at least six months as transitional deacons before ordination to the priesthood.

Secretary for Vocations: The staff person at the Diocesan administrative offices, located at Diocesan House, or D House, responsible for assisting those in the process towards ordination. Paperwork, questions about the process, and other issues should be directed to the current [Secretary for Vocations](#).

Adapted, in part, from the Diocese of El Camino Real.