

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma



Priests and Deacons for the Jesus Movement

*Are you being called to Holy
Orders in the Episcopal
Diocese of Oklahoma?*



*“Follow me, and I will make you
fish for people.”*

When Jesus called his first disciples (many of them ordinary, hard-working people who made their living catching fish), he said to them: *“Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.”* (Mark 1:17)



Today, this exciting ministry continues in the Diocese of Oklahoma, where we are committed to what our Presiding Bishop calls **“the Jesus Movement.”** In practical terms, this means fishing for people by **servicing our neighbors, building relationships, and sharing the Gospel.**

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, priests and deacons help equip their brothers and sisters to follow Jesus, transform communities, and change lives.

“Here I am, Lord; is it I, Lord?”

If you are reading this, then perhaps God has been leading you to explore a possible vocation as a priest or deacon.

This is not the only way to respond faithfully to Jesus, nor is it necessarily an easy path. For those God calls to the ordained ministry, however, it can be a **meaningful and fulfilling** way to say “yes” to our Lord Jesus Christ.



As we raise up women and men to serve as priests and deacons in the Diocese of Oklahoma, we are looking for **spiritually mature Christians with passionate faith, committed to following Jesus in the Episcopal Church.**

Ideal applicants have a **track record of faithful lay ministry** and the **gifts and experience to build Christ-centered community with all sorts and conditions of people.**



They have **demonstrated personal integrity** and the **courage to be honest and vulnerable** about where God is working in their lives.

They are open to the **ministry of evangelism**, including sharing their personal stories of meeting Jesus and having their lives changed.

Like the first disciples, they are humble people of prayer and action, who draw strength from their faith, put Jesus and his Movement first, and respond to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

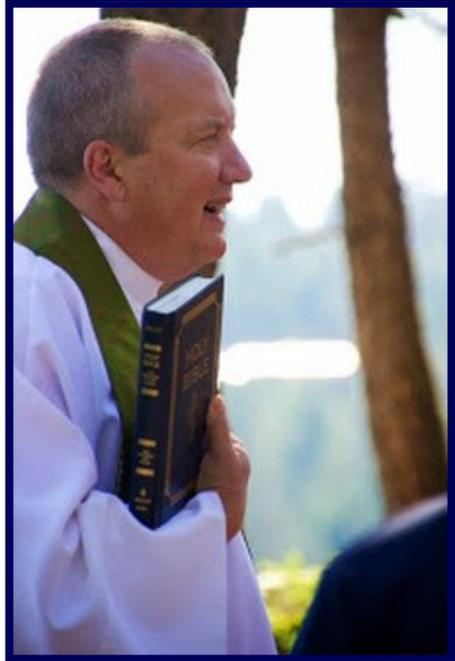
They are motivated by gratitude for God's grace and genuine love for God and neighbor.

The Ordained Priesthood

God calls *priests* to serve as **pastors, priests, and teachers.**

(BCP, p. 531)

As **pastors**, they accompany and guide the People of God through the joys and sorrows of life. As **priests**, they preside at worship, celebrate the sacraments, and offer prayer and forgiveness in the Name of Jesus. As **teachers**, they boldly proclaim the Gospel of salvation and instruct others in the Christian faith and life.



Most often, together with the Bishop and lay leaders, they **oversee the life and ministry of local congregations.**

Every aspect of a priest's ministry is meant to be **collaborative.**

A priest finds the **center of his or her ministry in the Holy Eucharist**, the sacrament of the ongoing presence of Jesus with his People. By the grace of the Holy Spirit, the priest **helps gather and equip a community of disciples of Jesus**, who are willing and able to share his Gospel with others.



Jesus calls his priests from all walks of life.

People from various backgrounds (from fisher folk and carpenters to business and community leaders, to educators, first responders, members of various helping professions, and beyond) come with life experiences that he can use for priestly ministry.

In the Diocese of Oklahoma, we have two different formation tracks for the ordained priesthood.

Both are intended to provide priests with appropriate spiritual, academic, and practical formation, so that they may help the whole Body of Christ respond faithfully to his call to fish for people. **Following is a description of each track.**

Seminary-trained Priests:

Leave behind other occupations to devote themselves to full-time, stipendiary ministry, either as Rectors and Vicars or as Assisting Clergy in larger congregations. They are typically formed in three-year, residential seminaries. This means relocating outside Oklahoma for the period of formation and may involve considerable expense.

When possible, these priests come back to serve an initial curacy (an internship with an experienced priest) in



the Diocese of Oklahoma and often continue to serve here afterwards, but their ministry may also take them to other dioceses.

Bi-vocational Priests:

In addition to their priestly ministry, either continue in secular employment or are otherwise financially self-sufficient.

They are formed locally, at our Iona School for Ministry, which meets one weekend per month at St. Crispin's.

They pay a modest tuition, the cost of which is ordinarily shared equally by the student, the diocese, and the sponsoring congregation.

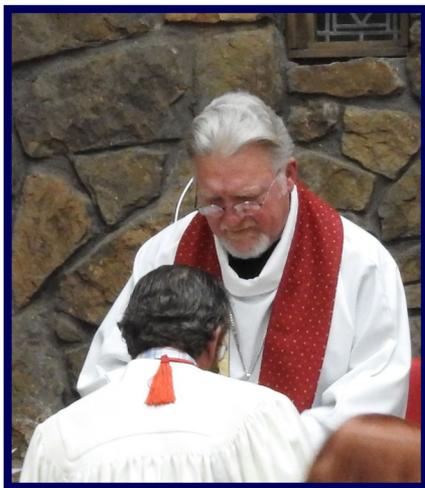
IONA School of Formation



The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

Bi-vocational priests serve congregations that would not otherwise be able to have a sacramental and pastoral presence.

They engage in part-time ministry, receiving the same rate we pay for supply (or substitute) priests for Sundays, plus reimbursement for expenses, and doing other ministry on a non-stipendiary basis.



These priests are raised up to meet local needs at the forefront of the Church's mission in rural places, small towns, and other underserved areas, and they are expected to serve in the Diocese of Oklahoma throughout their ordained ministry.

The Diaconate

God calls deacons **“to serve all people, particularly the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely.”** (BCP, p. 543) If priests gather us together as followers of Jesus and equip us for our ministries, deacons send us out to serve **“the least of these.”** (Matthew 25:40)

In so doing, they encourage us to live out our baptismal promises to **“seek and serve Christ in all persons”** and **“strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.”** (BCP, p. 305)



As with priests, the ministry of deacons is collaborative to its core. Deacons are supposed to involve the whole Body of Christ in ministries of service.

The liturgical roles of the deacon (assisting with the Sacraments and proclamation of the Gospel, setting the Lord's Table, and sending his People out into the world) are meant to embody the servant ministry of Jesus and encourage that ministry in others.



Deacons exist to **set our hearts on fire for the works of mercy and justice** and to **make sure we respond to the needs of those who are poor, exploited, or excluded.**

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, deacons help their brothers and sisters to respond to ALL people without exception, following the teaching and example of Jesus.

In the Diocese of Oklahoma, deacons are formed at our **Iona School for Ministry** with a similar curriculum to the one we use to form bivocational priests. Spiritual, academic, and practical formation occurs in community. Some of



the practical sessions are different, since the deacon's ministry is focused especially on equipping God's People for ministries of service and advocacy.

Jesus calls his deacons from all walks of life.

People from various backgrounds (from fisher folk and carpenters to business and community leaders, to educators, first responders, members of various helping professions, and beyond) come with life experiences that he can use for diaconal ministry.

Exploring a Possible Call to Ordained Ministry: How to Begin

God's call to us often begins in our heart, where God's Spirit and our spirit meet in the dialogue of grace and freedom.



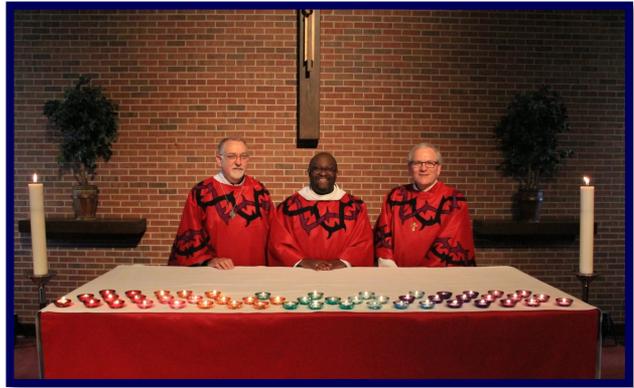
Sometimes, we hear the call of Jesus during public worship or personal devotion, or we hear him through the Holy Scriptures, the

experience of serving others, or some turning point in our spiritual journey. At other times, our first glimpse of a possible vocation begins when others come to us, asking whether we have ever considered ordination.

Often, a sense of God's call for our lives has been brewing for some time before we can express it in words.

From there, **this sense of vocation begins to be tested and refined in community.**

Initially, we do so in prayerful conversation with our families, other



people we trust, and the clergy who serve our local congregation. If they confirm our sense of call, we may feel led to initiate a more formal conversation with the Bishop and the various groups of people from around our Diocese charged with advising him.

The first step in formal discernment involves an application to enter the Aspirancy Program, a community that meets once per month from September to March and is co-facilitated by an experienced priest and deacon. This is meant to be a time of prayer, learning, and exploration. For some, it may help identify the particular order for which they wish to discern a possible vocation.

To be eligible to enter Aspirancy, the applicant must have been a confirmed communicant in good standing in a congregation of the Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma for at least one year and have the support of his or her Rector or Vicar, as well as the Vestry or Bishop's Committee.

At the conclusion of the Aspirancy Program, applicants may be invited to attend BACAM (usually a Saturday at the beginning of April).

BACAM is a day-long meeting for intentional discernment, where the Aspirants are interviewed by the Bishop and the members of the Commission on the Ministry. Ultimately, the Bishop (with the advice of the Commission on



Ministry), is charged with making the decision about who will be admitted as a Postulant for Holy Orders. Those who become Postulants enter into an ongoing period of spiritual, academic, and practical formation with additional prayerful discernment along the way.

Applications for the Aspirancy Program are due May 31st of each year. In order to be considered, we must also receive a letter by May 31st from the applicant's Rector/Vicar/Priest-in-Charge, as well as an endorsement by the Vestry or Bishop's Committee of the sponsoring congregation.

In order to secure the endorsements in time, and because the application involves many questions that require prayerful and thoughtful answers, it is helpful to begin work no later than February. (Informal conversations with the priest will ordinarily have taken place much earlier.)



Materials are available on the
Diocesan website: www.epiok.org

Questions can be directed to the Diocesan Office via email
at HolyOrders@epiok.org or via phone at (405) 232 - 4820.

Applications should be submitted in writing and sent to:

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

Attn: Holy Orders

924 N. Robinson

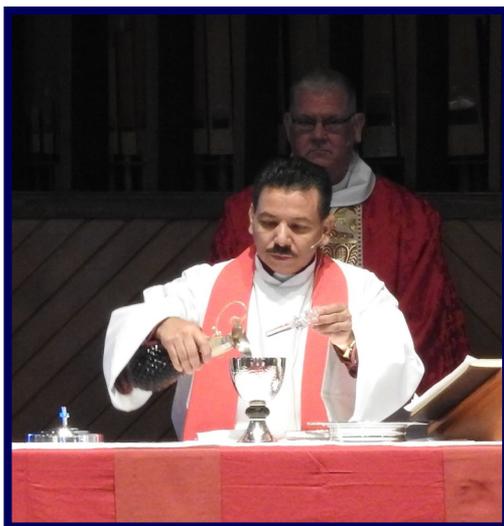
Oklahoma City, OK 73102



At every stage of the Holy Orders process, the people involved try to listen prayerfully and with great care to the applicants, to each other, and to the Holy Spirit.

Their task is to help their brothers and sisters to discern God's particular call for their lives. God is always calling us to follow Jesus through the gifts and promises of Holy Baptism. **The question is never whether we are called to serve God, but HOW.**

Our goal is to help each person respond to God's call in a way that will put his or her gifts and experience to good use in helping to advance the Jesus Movement.



If you are feeling led to discern a possible call to ordained ministry, please know that we are grateful for the gifts you are offering for the Church's discernment.

Please pray for the mission of the Church in Oklahoma, and in every place. Please pray that God may raise up priests and deacons to help us follow Jesus together.

**May we be faithful
to his call to go out
and make disciples.**

**May we fish for
people, share the
Gospel, and change
the world:**



O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



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