



Anglican Diocese of
Canberra & Goulburn

ANGLICAN DIOCESE

OF CANBERRA & GOULBURN

A guide to the Process of Discernment, Candidature, Training and
Formation for Ordained Ministry.

October 2025

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introduction



Through our baptism and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we are called to serve him and others by using the gifts God has given us through the Holy Spirit. These gifts are meant to be used to the glory of God to make him known in the world and to build his church.

Within the context of the ministry of all the baptised, some Christians are set apart for a particular life in the purposes of God. The Anglican Church has historically held the threefold order of ministry of bishop, priest and deacon. No one can enter these orders unless an inner movement by the Holy Spirit is confirmed by an outer call of the Church.

The Bishop of Canberra & Goulburn has specified the following criteria for men and women contemplating ordained ministry in this Diocese.

An applicant must:

- have a personal faith relationship with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and be prayerfully committed to growing in both Christian maturity and character;
- be above reproach in their personal and family lives and well respected in their community. If married the relationship should be stable

and be an example to the flock of Christ;

- be able to demonstrate a commitment to the mission of God and a passion to grow and sustain faith communities confident in Christ, giving evidence of a desire to share the faith with those who are not yet Christian;
- have a strong background of active ministry in an Anglican parish or faith community where they have demonstrated leadership initiative, love and service that is designed to build others up in Christ;
- have the capacity or the potential to reflect carefully on Scripture and think theologically in order to connect God's revelation with the needs of contemporary people in both Church and society; and
- honour the diversity of Anglican expression in the Diocese and be prepared to listen respectfully and learn from others.

The discernment process in the Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn is designed to test an individual's calling and suitability for one of the ordained ministries needed to advance the mission of God in the twenty-first century.

the discernment process

The ordination discernment process progresses through three stages designed to test, then confirm and finally prepare those offering for ordained ministry to take up their calling. It seeks to balance flexibility of application with a clear and rigorous process by which a three way conversation between enquirer, God and the church can take place.

Enquiry

The **first step** in an enquirer's journey of discernment is to discuss their sense of call with their ministry unit leader and some key lay leaders in the congregation where they belong and are already exercising their gifts in Christian ministry. The enquirer must prayerfully weigh any advice from these sources. The enquirer's next step may only be taken with their affirmation, encouragement and support.

The **second step** is to make contact with the Diocesan Director of Ordination for a preliminary interview

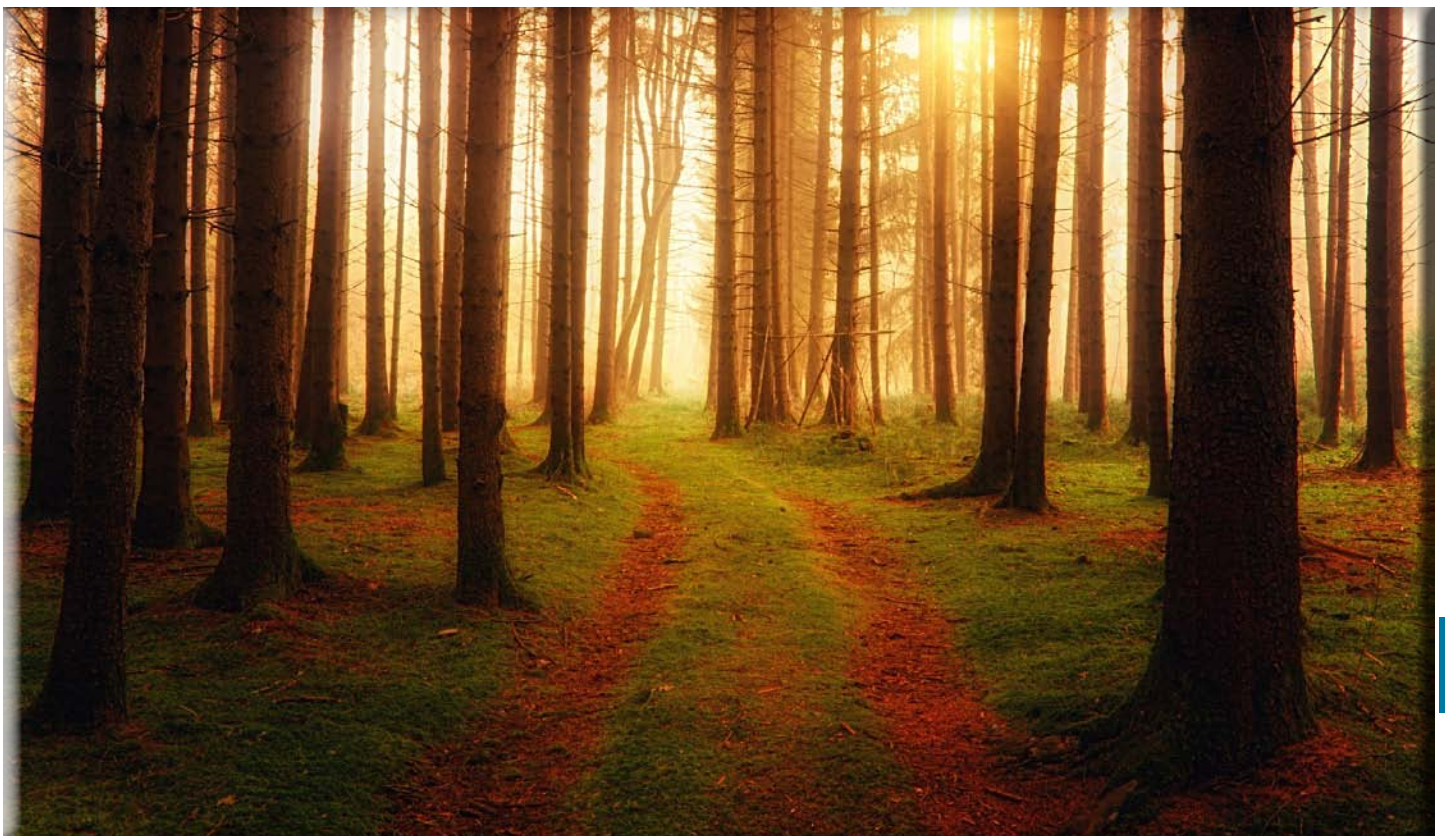
to ascertain general suitability and to explore whether it is realistic to proceed further. This interview and the Director of Ordination's enquiries involve two sets of checks:

- Checks are made that the person is committed to Christ and the Christian faith, has some ministry and leadership experience in the Anglican Church, has some sense of God's call to ministry, has the support of spouse (as appropriate) and ministry unit leader, and has some understanding of the ministry order being explored.
- Because church workers, in particular ordained people, must be above reproach as is required in the Diocesan Code of Good Practice, enquirers are required to complete a confidential Safe Ministry Check and National Police Check. Enquirers working in the ACT are to provide (if necessary apply for and obtain) a Working With Vulnerable People number/expiry date. Those working in NSW are to provide

(if necessary apply for and obtain) a Working With Children Check number / expiry date.

The **third step** is to engage in initial theological training at St Mark's National Theological Centre.

The Director of Ordination will provide a reading list of possible discernment resources.



Becoming an Applicant

Having attended an interview with the Director of Ordination and having then expressed an intention to continue in the discernment process, the enquirer is then required to complete additional checks.

- A Clergy Support Form and a Parish Support Form are required to indicate an enquirer's suitability.
- Enquirers are asked to provide, on prescribed forms, a medical self-report and a report from a medical practitioner.
- Enquirers are required to complete a life sketch and submit themselves to Psychological Assessment at Diocesan expense.

The Director of Ordination will assess all these checks and, if they are found to be satisfactory, will invite the enquirer formally in writing to complete an *Application for Ordination – Part A*. This constitutes a formal request for an enquirer to become an Applicant.

If however the Director of Ordination finds grounds for concern or identifies the need for further work, this will be discussed with the enquirer and an appropriate remedy pursued if at all possible. In some cases the recommendation may be that the enquirer should continue ministry and training as a lay person.



Discernment as an Applicant

The enquirer, now having the status of Applicant, is invited to complete a number of discernment process exercises:

- reflect prayerfully on suggested resources and write a short report: and
- complete a supervised ministry reflection exercise.

Applicants will be invited to participate in 20 Formation sessions over two years.

These Formation sessions will cover topics and activities such as:

- preaching practice and critique
- liturgy and Anglican service leadership
- verbatim pastoral reflections
- leadership
- diocesan governance and structures
- spiritual aspects of ordained ministry
- conversations about the applicants' personal growth and learning.

Once all exercises have been successfully completed and after receiving any reports on ministry unit placements and from St Mark's National Theological Centre, the Director of Ordination will review an

Applicant's progress with that person. If progress is satisfactory the Applicant may be invited to complete the Application for Ordination – Part B. In this, Applicants nominate two referees and are asked to supply:

- evidence of current Safe Ministry Training accreditation, and
- evidence of baptism and confirmation or reception into the Anglican Communion.

The Director of Ordination will obtain written reports from each of the two nominated referees and will review these together with the information supplied in the Applicant's *Application for Ordination – Part B*.

Once satisfied with these documents, the Director of Ordination may extend a formal invitation to participate in focused conversations with the Bishop's Vocational Advisors on issues related to the Bishop's criteria:

- Current ministry and ministry attributes,
- Personal values and relationships, and
- Spiritual life and theological wisdom.

If there are any issues raised in the reference material, progress may be delayed pending resolution of such issues or may even be stopped.

After an Applicant has participated in a full round of the focused conversations, and after taking advice from all Vocational Advisors involved in those conversations, the Director of Ordination makes a recommendation to the Bishop.

The recommendation will take one of three approaches:

- A recommendation for ordination candidature, subject to the satisfactory completion of the relevant theological and ministry formation required by the Diocese;
- A recommendation that ordination candidature be not granted at this time but an applicant may be invited to another series of

focused conversations in the future;

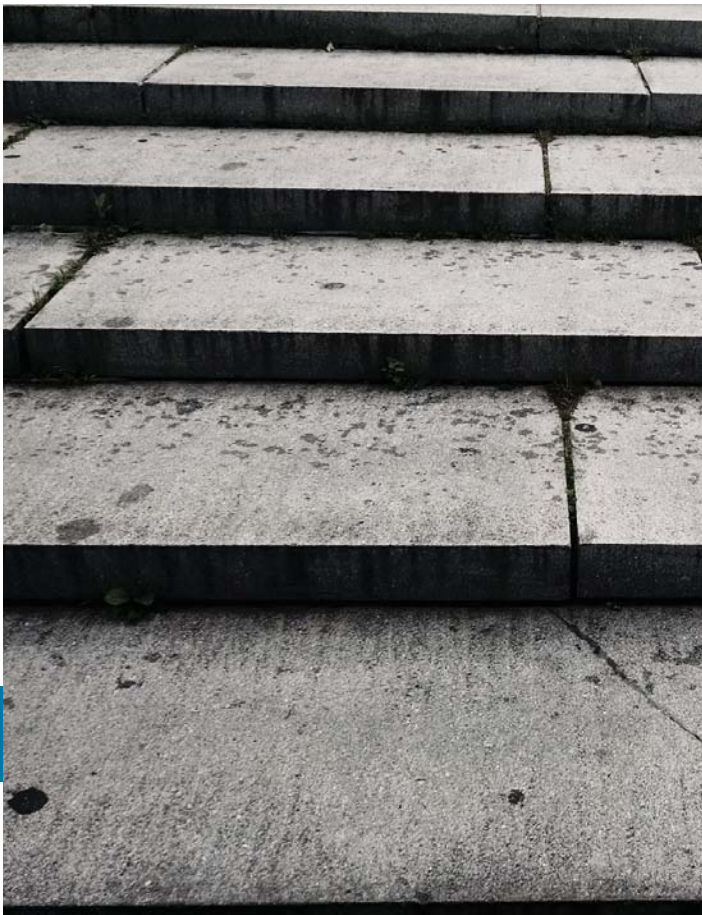
- A recommendation that lay ministry rather than ordained ministry may more appropriate.

Whatever the Bishop's decision, the Applicant will be invited to meet with the Bishop to discuss the decision. In each case a letter will be offered recording the outcome.

Confirmation of Candidature

A person who is confirmed as a Candidate will be asked to sign a document which acknowledges the conditions of Diocesan candidature, including:

- Candidature is not a guarantee of ordination but is a period of further testing while completing theological and ministry formation at St Mark's National Theological Centre and in supervised ministry placement(s).
- In view of the stress in the Ordinal on godly conduct there is a continuing commitment to observing the Diocesan Code of Good Practice.
- The Diocese cannot guarantee that Candidates will be deployed in stipendiary positions in the Diocese.
- Either the Candidate or the Diocese may discontinue candidature at any stage.



Preparation of a Candidate for Ordination

The confirmation of ordination candidacy opens the way for a period of preparation for ordination which may be shorter or longer depending on whether the theological and ministry formation is complete.

The Director of Ordination will make sure the Candidate understands the 'nuts and bolts' of what needs to happen including:

- ensuring canonical fitness through the historical means of the public reading of a *Si Quis*, the receipt of Letters Testimonial and by making the necessary Oaths and Declarations;
- participation in an Ordination Retreat; and
- preparing for the Ordination Service.



training and formation process

Candidates for ordination in the Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn need to be theologically equipped for the task of leadership in God's mission and church in this Diocese. St Mark's National Theological Centre (St Mark's) remains the Diocese's preferred training institution for both theological study and practical ministry formation.



Theological Formation

The Distinctive Diaconate

Applicants require a minimum of either a:

- Diploma of Theology from CSU and the Formation program, and additional training where possible;

OR

- Graduate Diploma of Theology from Charles Sturt University CSU and the Formation program, and additional training where possible.

Certain core subjects and electives are required within both courses if you intend to pursue ordination, and these can be discussed with St Mark's.

The Priesthood

Applicants require a minimum of either a:

- Bachelor of Theology from CSU, plus the Formation program and additional training where possible;

OR

- Master of Arts (Theological Studies), plus the Formation program and additional training where possible.

Certain core subjects and electives are required within these courses if you intend to pursue ordination, and these can be discussed with St Mark's or the Director of Ordination.

All Applicants

Applicants are strongly advised to discuss their subject choices with the St Mark's faculty to ensure all bases have been adequately covered should they be selected as ordination Candidates. St Mark's will give advice about CSU enrolment procedures.

Applicants with prior theological qualifications will need to have that learning assessed by the Director of Ordination or their nominee, against the Diocesan requirements for ordination Candidates.

These applicants may well be required to complete further study but wherever possible it will count towards a further degree.

Ministry Training

In general, the Diocese requires all ordination Candidates to complete the two-year Ministry Formation Program before they are ordained, as discussed above. Only Applicants (not Enquirers) may be invited to participate in the Formation sessions.



Ordination Candidates need to seek the approval of the Director of Ordination for any supervised ministry placements.

Newly-ordained clergy build on their knowledge and skills in an ongoing ministry development program.

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Anglican Diocese of Canberra & Goulburn

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