

Appendix D1

Criteria for Ordination to the Diaconate

This appendix is for use by all who are involved in the discernment process. The criteria outlined here should be kept in mind throughout the entire process, and will be in evidence in several of the other appendices.

In assessing suitability for ordination to the diaconate, the church considers the character, skills and knowledge of candidates. These are sometimes described as “character, charisms, and content,” or as proficiencies of the “heart, hands and head.” The church seeks enquirers who show promise of developing these necessary qualities, and an evident affinity for the ministry of a deacon. Deacons inhabit the liminal space between the church and the world. Their role is that of witness to the world, service to those at risk or in need, and of interpreting the needs, concerns and hopes of the world to the church. The deacon is actively engaged in such ministry, and leads others in the church community to do the same.

- 1. Diaconal Identity:** We seek a person whose day-to-day ministry and commitments are already compellingly diaconal in nature. We seek a person who is practised in the ways of both the church and the world, and who is committed to the wellbeing of both. We seek a person with a growing understanding of *diakonia* within the mission of the church, and who can imagine how such *diakonia* could play out in their own church context.
- 2. A pattern of spiritual practice rooted in a diaconal, Christ-centred, Anglican approach to spirituality:** We seek a person who is working with a “Rule of Life,” is regular in the Daily Offices, faithful in their participation in the Eucharist, and active in the practice of personal and intercessory prayer. We seek a person who pays attention to their interior life, and has initiated a relationship with a qualified spiritual director. We seek someone who can articulate how their spirituality relates to the vocation of a deacon.
- 3. Personal awareness and understanding:** We seek a person whose presence grounds, encourages and inspires others. We seek a person who is working on self-awareness and who nurtures authentic and productive relationships with others. This includes: an openness to and respect for differing social and cultural communities in church and society; understanding and having the ability to communicate emotions; and being attuned to the impact of one’s presence, words and actions on others. We seek a person who responds appropriately to conflict, and who has the emotional resilience to persevere and remain in relationship with others when situations get difficult.
- 4. Community engagement:** We seek a person who demonstrates knowledge of their local community, and eagerness to learn more about contemporary issues. We seek a person who shows sensitivity to human suffering and injustice, and who is committed to interpreting to the church the needs, concerns and hopes of the world.
- 5. Rootedness in the biblical narrative:** We seek a person who has an awareness of the sweep of the biblical narrative, its content and themes, especially those foundational to diaconal ministry. We seek a person who is aware of the authority of scripture as understood in the Anglican tradition, and who can articulate some of the challenges put to scripture in our contemporary context.
- 6. A gatherer and builder of community:** We seek a person who is gifted in gathering diverse people into a community and then building and developing that community over time. We seek those who

can help groups of people collaborate around shared values and a sense of purpose. We seek those who can assist others to identify and develop their gifts and skills in service to God, the church, and especially the broader community.

7. **A leader who both carries authority and can live productively in relationship to others in authority:** We seek a leader who is comfortable exercising a style of leadership that is both relational and carries authority. We seek someone who, having made ordination vows, acknowledges the authority and responsibility that others (ordained or lay) carry in relationship to them, and can nurture productive relationships with them.
8. **A listener who loves to learn:** We seek a person who is committed to lifelong learning. We seek a person who sees God as moving and active in scripture, tradition and reason, who is open to learning from other disciplines, and from the wisdom of the community. We seek people who learn from their experience of both success and failure.
9. **A good steward:** We seek a person who practises self-care of body, mind and spirit, and who nourishes the important relationships in their life. We seek someone who is committed to stewardship of the created order. We seek a person who gives generously of their time, talent and treasure in gratitude to God.