

Revision Date - December 3, 2016
Source - Bishop's Office
Committee – Diocesan Council

Policy for the Community of Associate Parish Priests

PREAMBLE:

The process to discern a call, the journey to ordination, and the relationships between the rector, parish and discerner are at the very core spiritual and prayerful, open and transparent.

This policy is designed to be a “Living Document”. It is hoped it will not be carved in stone but will continue to be changed and updated as the needs of our parishes, regions and the Diocese continue to evolve. Especially as we continue to **“Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the church.”**

We ground this policy and process:

- in the belief that all of our ministry callings are from God,
- in an openness to the leading of what the Holy Spirit has to say to the church,
- in the diocesan vision to create and sustain Christ-centered, mission-minded-ministering communities of faith, and
- in a belief that an associate parish priest is a valuable resource to assist a parish (or region) in achieving their vision of a healthy congregation.

The Marks of a Healthy Congregation as adapted by our Synod from the Alban Institute are:

IDENTITY: Our congregation knows who they are before God;

VISION: Our congregations know what they are called to do;

STEWARDSHIP: Our congregation has the resources and leadership necessary to carry out its calling;

WORSHIP: People experience the power and energy of the Gospel in their worship and life together;

OUTREACH: The activities of our congregation make a discernible difference in individual lives and in the world around us.

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION: Our congregation has the ability to transform conflict into positive energy for the Gospel.

DEFINITION

An Associate Parish Priest is a person who

- has received a call to ordained ministry
- is self supporting
- has been affirmed by their parish
- has a mature, articulated faith grounded in knowledge, skills and attitudes which are fully manifested in both private and personal life.
- is able to articulate and share their experience of God
- has developed and continues the practice of spiritual disciplines that ground their journey with God
- has completed the course of study required by the Diocese.
- has been assessed by representatives of the Diocese and deemed ready for Holy Orders.
- will respect and be guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of the bishop
- affirms the doctrine and discipline of the Anglican Church of Canada and meets the Bishop's expectations for clergy
- has been ordained by the Bishop
- has entered into a covenant with the incumbent and the parish and/or region to provide a supplementary and supportive ministry.
- recognizes that this ministry embraces a lifelong commitment to learning, service, and the pursuit of justice, and that this ministry is perceived as a form of leadership in these regards
- covenants to ongoing continued education throughout their ministry.
- understands that as a priest in the diocese there is an expectation that all priests will gather as the College of Clergy. Recognizing the reality that some of our Associate Parish Priests are still employed and may not be able to take the time off. It is a courtesy to send regrets to the Bishop.
- understands participation in gatherings of the Community of Associate Parish Priests and ongoing continued education events take precedence over parish, regional and diocesan ministry.

VOCATIONS COORDINATOR

Position Purpose: to coordinate the Discernment and Formation Program for the Community of Associate Parish Priests and to walk alongside the individuals, their parish and rector and/or region from the outset of their journey, through to retirement and beyond.

CALL AND DISCERNMENT

The Diocese recognizes and affirms that for the people of God, the discernment of call and formation for ministry in the service of God is an ongoing way of life, by virtue of the waters of baptism. It recognizes and affirms the changing needs in our regions and that Associate Parish Priests, while identified for ministry in their own parish, may need to be open to the call of the Spirit to meet the needs at a regional level.

The call may be first perceived by:

- an *incumbent* who perceives spiritual gifts in an individual in the parish.
- an *individual* in the parish who experiences something they would like to explore. That something may be a nudge from God, a stirring of the heart or mind, a sense of being called to something more.
- a *parish* that knows who they are before God and has a vision of what God is Calling them to live out in God's World.
- The call may also come from a *region* that knows who they are before God and has a vision of a new way of meeting those needs.

This policy recognizes that all ministries are rooted in a CALL from God to meet a need in God's World.

The discernment process is tied to outcomes and readiness to proceed rather than being tied to a particular time frame or number of meetings with the Vocations Coordinator.

Discernment focuses on our '*experience*' of God as opposed to our '*knowledge*' of God. It is a time of becoming more aware of God's presence and activity in our life. It is a time for developing strong spiritual disciplines that enhance our relationship with God. It is a process of '*becoming*'. It is not about the '*doing*'. It is a time to resist making that leap to what this experience means. What am I supposed to do? It is about taking time to bask in the experience. It is about considering more deeply what we see, hear, feel, touch, taste in our experience of God.

It is not always easy to enter such a '*sacred space*' and find words to describe it that will not minimize the felt experience. But this is the work of discernment. It is how we recognize the difference between our ego and the voice of God. It is from this sacred space and in this sacred space that we ground ourselves, our call, our ministry and become a witness to God's redemptive action in this world.

Discernment includes the parish, the incumbent, the discerner and the vocations coordinator. Mature spiritual and emotional discernment and formation is the foundation and strength of the entire process. It is vital that everyone in this process remain open to be led by the Holy Spirit in a variety of directions that may or may not embody a call to Associate Parish Priest.

A *parish* that knows who they are before God and has a vision of what God is calling them to live out in God's World may already have done a great deal of discernment to this point and now may be looking for the resources required to live out their call. If it was the incumbent or an individual discerning a call the parish would then enter into a process to discern who they are and what they are called to be in this world and what are the resources needed to live out their call.

The *incumbent* would discern if they are being called to a shared team ministry. They may already have the gifts and skill set required or God may be calling them to develop a skill set and to move into this type of ministry.

The *individual* will enter into a discernment process that will wrestle with the call itself, to determine if it is to ordained ministry as an Associate Parish Priest, Deacon or as a Rector, or possibly even to a more specific lay ministry that may require specific training. This process also wrestles with '*who*' God is calling the individual to *become*. The call may be to become more by deepening our emotional, spiritual and cognitive intelligence to live out the ministry we are already living.

The discernment process also calls for the *incumbent* and the *individual* to discern together the nature of the ministry they are being called to share.

The *incumbent*, *individual* and *parish* will also come together in the process at various points to discern the ministry they are being called to share. They may also have to look beyond parish boundaries and discern if the Spirit is calling upon them to offer ministry assistance at the regional level.

When an *individual* in the parish experiences a nudge from God, a stirring of the heart or mind, a sense of being called to something more they would meet with their rector to share what is happening. It may be the individual is becoming more conscious of God's presence in their daily living.

When the rector and individual discern there may be a call to a new ministry (i.e. ordained or lay) they may discuss this with *the wardens and then maybe with Parish Council* to have a discussion about the nature of the ministry to which God is calling the individual and the parish.

THE DISCERNMENT PROCESS

If the Rector, Parish Council and individual wish to pursue a self-supporting ordained ministry stream, they will prepare a “Letter Regarding an Enquiry about Participation in the Discernment Process for Ministry in the Community of Associate Parish Priests”, (appendix 1) and forward it to the Bishop. If the Bishop concurs, the Bishop will then contact the individual to schedule a meeting and/or refer the individual to the Vocations Coordinator.

The Vocations Coordinator will contact the enquirer and set up an appointment. When the enquirer desires to enter the program they will be given:

1. Release of Information Appendix 2
2. A Form of Declaration Appendix 3
3. Information to assist in the Discernment Process Appendix 4

The discerner will be expected to take part in a Discernment Weekend Event.

The Vocations Coordinator will contact the Rector to arrange a time during regular Sunday worship (that would include members of the Parish Council/ Church Councils) to review the program for the Community of Associate Parish Priests in light of the current needs of the parish. This includes parishes with existing Associate Parish Priests, as the needs of a parish evolve and the gifts of individuals differ.

Following the initial presentation and at a time that is convenient to parish life and that will maximize the potential for a good turnout of parishioners, an external facilitator may go to visit the parish to facilitate a discernment dialogue in circle, focused on surfacing peoples’ thoughts and feelings about the program itself (this is not about the person discerning). This process will be open to all members of the parish and mandatorily include the individual, incumbent and parish and church councils.

The parish and the discerner will be provided with resources and trained facilitators to assist them in their readiness to enter into this program.

These resources may include:

- A Vocations Team will work together with the Vocations Coordinator to provide the parish with the resources and pathways necessary for the process of discernment and formation at each phase of the journey. Those who make up the Vocations Team will have different specialized knowledge, skills and professional experience in areas including but not

limited to: discernment of call; education for ministry; conflict transformation; congregational development; family systems dynamics; facilitation of dialogue; team ministry; healthy organizational life; human resources, etc. Team members will be provided with the additional resources that they need to assist and strengthen the individuals and parishes involved in the process. The Vocations Team will be provided at the beginning of the process and will stay in place until the process comes to its conclusion. This may include resources provided by the VSST for Healthy Congregations, VSST for Building Healthy Leadership and/or the Parish Vitality Coordinator.

- a suggested reading list encompassing different embodiments of lay and ordained ministry, the dynamics of congregational life and healthy communications and conflict competence in dealing with difference.
- Assistance to develop a support group who will journey with the incumbent and the discerner, offering constructive feedback and support.
- Assistance to develop a Relational and Behavioral Covenant that covers the discernment, formation and education process up to Ordination.
- The Vocations Coordinator in consultation with the Bishop may appoint a person, to identify any areas in the history of the parish or region where there has been a crisis/ conflict, will conduct a Healthy Congregational Life Assessment. This will include an exploration of the following:
 - Have any such circumstances been handled well or poorly?
 - Is there any work that needs to be done in order to reconcile any past wounding experiences before the process goes further?
 - Have there been difficult personalities/people that have motivated divisiveness, controversy, strife or anxiety? Has this been addressed?
- The individual, incumbent and parish will demonstrate to the Vocations Team that the parish is healthy and that the chances for division arising in the parish as a whole will be very unlikely should the continued process guide the individual and parish in a direction that does not embody ordination in the Community of Associate Parish Priests.
- The parish will be reassured that the Vocations Coordinator and relevant members of the resource persons will continue to work with the individual, incumbent and parish in their process of discernment, regardless of the call being to ordained or lay ministry.

DIOCESAN VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE: (DVAC)

This conference assesses the readiness of discerners to enter into the training program for the Community of Associate Parish Priests. It does not guarantee ordination.

Discerners will go to the Diocesan Vocational Assessment Conference when they have:

- perceived a call to be a priest in their home parish and desires to continue to be self-supporting
- been affirmed by their parish
- demonstrates a mature, articulated faith and attitudes, which are fully manifested in both private and personal life
- The ability to articulate and share their *experience* of God
- developed and continue the practice of spiritual disciplines that ground their journey with God
- recognized the need to deepen their faith and attitudes in on going formation and education both before and after ordination

PROCESS AS A POSTULANT

When a person is recommended by the Diocesan Vocational Assessment Conference to proceed and the Bishop agrees they will become a postulant.

The work of a postulant continues the process of discernment and the spiritual disciplines developed during the discernment phase.

The vocations coordinator will meet with the rector and postulant to begin the process of developing a covenant. While there are specifics to this covenant there will be variances in each case based on the needs in the parish and the postulants' particular call.

The current education program is the Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies (GTCS) at the Atlantic School of Theology. This is a ten credit program that has been designed to fit our needs. The cost of the program will be covered for postulants. Any courses taken prior to becoming a postulant will not be covered.

Education Requirements: Appendix: 5

The postulant is required to attend all gatherings of the Community of Associate Parish Priests. These gatherings take precedence over parish, regional and diocesan ministries.

Currently there are three one day continued education events a year. These are typically held April, May and June. The weekend after Remembrance Day alternates biannually with the community gathering with rectors and spouses.

It is important for rectors to plan for coverage for both the postulant and themselves for the biannual gathering with rectors. Rectors will also provide emergency pastoral coverage for themselves to attend their biannual weekend.

The dates for these events are sent out in January to ensure sufficient time to book the dates. The November event is usually the weekend after Remembrance Day.

The postulant will also take part in a formation program with other postulants.

The time commitment for a postulant is 10 – 12 hours per week. This will include time for AST course work, gatherings of the community and formation gatherings, spiritual disciplines, and spiritual direction.

This is a time for the postulant to discern what ministries they have been involved with that they will be letting go of in order to attend to the requirements of the program.

PRE ORDINATION REVIEW (POR)

This review assesses the readiness of postulants for ordination.

Discerners will go to the Pre Ordination Review when they have demonstrated:

- a perceived a call to be a priest in their home parish and desires to continue to be self-supporting
- and been affirmed by their parish
- a mature, articulated faith and attitudes, which are fully manifested in both private and personal life
- the ability to articulate and share their *experience* of God
- the practice of spiritual disciplines that ground their journey with God
- the need to deepen their faith and attitudes in on going formation and education after ordination

- integration of the completed course of study required by the Diocese
- an attitude of respect for and will be guided by the pastoral direction and leadership of the bishop
- affirmation of the doctrine and discipline of the Anglican Church of Canada and meet the Bishop's expectations for clergy
- this ministry embraces a lifelong commitment to learning, service, and the pursuit of justice, and that this ministry is perceived as a form of leadership in these regards
- recognition that as a priest in the diocese there is an expectation that all priests will gather as the College of Clergy. Recognizing the reality that some of our Associate Parish Priests are still employed and may not be able to take the time off. It is a courtesy to send regrets to the Bishop
- understanding that participation in gatherings of the Community of Associate Parish Priests and ongoing continued education events take precedence over parish, regional and diocesan ministry.

When a person is recommended by the Pre Ordination Review Committee to proceed and the Bishop agrees they will be ordained.

The Vocations Coordinator will meet with the ordinand and rector to update their covenant.

ON GOING DISCERNMENT

This policy recognizes the need for Discernment after the decision to be ordained. It is a life long process. The vocations coordinator remains available to the community at any time during their ministry to assist in shifts in ministry when needs change and through to and beyond the decision to retire.

ASSOCIATE PARISH PRIEST FROM ANOTHER PARISH OR DIOCESE

When an Associate Parish Priest relocates to a new parish they will need to spend time in the parish to get to know this parish and to be known by them before the discernment process on the part of the rector, parish and associate begins. The parish may or may not discern a need for an associate. A license to a new parish is not automatic.

When an Associate Parish Priest from another diocese seeks Permission to Officiate they must meet all of the requirements in this policy before being granted permission.

DEPLOYMENT

This guideline began with a core value stating: “We ground the process and ourselves in the knowledge that all of our ministry callings are from God.”

The section on Call and Discernment stated: “The Diocese recognizes and affirms the changing needs in our regions and that Associate Parish Priests, while raised up in their own parish, may need to be open to the call of the Spirit to meet the needs at a regional level.”

With this foundation it follows that vocational discernment, spiritual formation, education and deployment are all tied to our call to ministry. The vocational discernment, identity and spiritual formation and the education are therefore the foundation of a covenant in ministry. This is to be drawn up between the Rector, the Ordinand, and the Supporting Parish(s) in conjunction with the Vocations Coordinator before deployment commences. All parties to the covenant are to be well informed of both the responsibilities and the limitations of this ministry.

When this program began deployment was to be within the parish that affirmed the candidate.

As it has been lived out, associate parish priests have been deployed to other parishes within the region and to roles that go beyond a supplementary and supportive role. For example: paid services to other parishes. While there are specifics to this covenant there will be variances in each parish based on the needs in the parish and the ordinands’ particular call.

We also recognize a person’s call from God may shift and change over time just as needs may change in the parish and as the individual grows into a deeper relationship with God, self and other. However, at the heart of this call is the discernment, formation and education that is developed for the supplementary and supportive ministry of an associate parish priest.

It has been practice for some Associate Parish Priests to provide occasional help with sacramental ministry in nearby parishes. Any deployment that falls outside of the covenant between the associate parish priest, their rector and parish requires the approval of their Archdeacon. The Archdeacon will in turn advise the Bishop/Vocations Coordinator and when necessary consult with the Bishop.

All requests for assistance from an associate parish priest in another parish must be made to the Rector of that parish. Should an associate parish priest be invited directly they are to refer the caller to the rector with whom they have a covenant.

In all cases the associate parish priest must be free to discern whether such a ministry relationship is faithful to his or her call, work, family and leisure. The primary connection and prayerful support of all associate parish priests remains with his or her home parish and rector.

Fees

It is recognized that the need for associate parish priest varies throughout the diocese. In some regions the need extends throughout the region and in others it is centered within larger program parishes. It is not necessary for the supporting parish to request compensation for the services rendered by their associate parish priest, but it may very well be appropriate at times to do so. Fees for services are to be paid the parish or region to offset their costs for maintaining the program.

Occasional Help:

Occasional help is understood to be no more than three times a year. No change to a covenant would need to take place if this is truly an exception to the norm. When the rector and the associate parish priest and the Archdeacon agree the associate parish priest is to be paid for travel based on the travel rate outlined in the Occasional Services Policy.

Recurring Help:

Requests for assistance from an associate parish priest on a recurring basis, such as ongoing coverage for vacation will require further discernment, with the parish. In this case the Archdeacon is to be brought into the process and a revision to the covenant will be required. When the rector, the associate parish priest and the parish agree to this arrangement any fee for the occasional service is to be paid to the supporting parish to assist in covering the costs of education and ongoing formation for their associate parish priest. Mileage will be paid directly to the associate parish priest in these situations.

Cooperating Congregations:

This is an arrangement that will be entered into when multiple parishes in an area may desire to share the services of an Associate Parish Priest.

Regular, scheduled sharing of the ministry of willing rectors, the associate parish priest and the parishes is another scenario. In this case the Archdeacon will work with all parties involved as well as obtaining approval from the Bishop. A covenant will be developed between each of the parishes involved, the rectors, and the associate parish priest. In this arrangement any fee for the occasional service is to be paid to the supporting parish to assist in covering the costs of

education and ongoing formation for their associate parish priest and mileage will be paid directly to the associate parish priest.

RETIREMENT

When a parishioner is identified for ordained ministry as an Associate Parish Priest the parishioners know them as a member of the congregation and must now begin to know them as a priest. This is a different process than when they have a new rector. They arrive knowing they are a priest and begin to know them as a person.

The reverse of this process must also happen with retirement. When an associate parish priest begins to discern retirement it is appropriate to have a conversation with the rector and the bishop before making any announcements.

Upon retirement the parish will now need time to recognize the retirement and get to know the associate parish priest as a member of the congregation in the pew.

As with the stipendiary priests it will be important to take six months before asking for a letter of permission to officiate. It is again a very important time of discernment for both the associate parish priest and the parish. The vocations coordinator is available to assist you with your discernment.

It is important to remember a priest is a priest always. Retirement does not mean they stop being a priest. The six months of letting go of the manner in which you have exercised ministry is a time to listen to what form of ministry God may be calling you to in this season of your life.

We close this policy as we began:

Openness to the leadings of the Holy Spirit is essential throughout all phases of this program.

This policy is grounded in listening to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church. It is designed to be a "Living Document". It is hoped it will not be carved in stone but will continue to be changed and updated as the needs of our parishes, regions and the Diocese continue to evolve. Especially as we continue to **"Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the church."**

Equally we are all 'Living Human Documents' not carved in stone but will continue to change and evolve as **we continually "Listen to what the Spirit is saying to us."**

Appendix 1

**Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
Letter Regarding an Enquiry about Participation in the
Discernment Process for Ministry in
The Community of Associate Parish Priests/Deacons**

To: C.A.P.P. Vocations Coordinator

_____ has discussed with the Rector/Priest in Charge his/her perception of a call to ordained ministry in the Diocese.

- We, the undersigned clergy and laity of the Parish of _____ have met with *him/her* and have come to the following consensus:
- We have reviewed the Policy for the Community of Associate Parish Priests, 1.1.21 and we commend this person to the discernment process.
- We are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit to discern if this call is to ordained ministry as an Associate Parish Priest or to another form of ministry in the church which may be to Stipendiary Priestly Ministry, the Diaconate, or a more specific lay ministry.

Use as much space below as you require to explain and support the parish’s position and to offer any information that might assist the Diocese in the discernment process. Please initial each page and sign on the final page.

Incumbent

Lay member of Congregation

Warden

Lay member of Congregation

Warden

Inquirer

Date

**Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
Release of information**

I, _____ apply to enter the process of discernment and training for ordained ministry in the *Anglican* Church in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. I understand this process involves many people.

I, hereby, give permission for the C.A.P.P. Vocations Coordinator, and those appointed by the Diocesan Bishop, at her/his discretion, to share any and all information received by him/her concerning me, with any persons involved in, or responsible for, my assessment, training and formation as a candidate for holy orders.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

The Rev. Marilyn Newport
C.A.P.P. Vocations Coordinator

Appendix 3

Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island
A Form of Declaration

I, _____, have received the Policies:
Sexual Misconduct: #2.1.17(2011) adopted by the Diocese on November 24, 2011,
Diocesan Safer Church #1.1.25(2015)
Community of Associate Parish Priests # 1.1.21

Policies received on: _____

I have read and understand these policies and I will abide by them.

Signed this _____ day of _____, _____.

Signature: _____

Received by: _____

The Rev. Marilyn Newport
C.A.P.P. Vocations Coordinator

Date: _____

Appendix 4

DIOCESE OF NOVA SCOTIA AND PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

INFORMATION TO ASSIST THE MINISTRY DISCERNMENT PROCESS

I, hereby, apply to enter the Ministry Discernment Process in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Name _____
Last First Middle

Address _____
Street City/Town Prov. Postal Code

Telephone # _____
Home Work Cell

E-Mail _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____
D/M/Y

CHURCH BACKGROUND

Baptism: Date _____ Parish _____
D/M/Y Name/Place

By whom baptized? _____

Confirmation/Reception in the Anglican Church:

Date _____ Bishop's Name: _____

Parish _____ City/Town _____

Current Parish: Name _____ City/Town _____

How long have you been a member of this congregation? _____

How long have you lived in the Diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island? _____

In what other parishes/congregations have you been a member?

Name	City/Town	Denomination	Dates
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Have you attended university? _____ If yes, where? _____ Date _____
 Degree completed _____

WORK EXPERIENCE

Name/Address of Employer	Position	Employment Dates

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

Have you done any theological education? _____
 If so, where, in what area and in what subject? _____

Are you currently registered at a theological college? _____
 Which? _____ How many credits have you completed? _____

PREVIOUS INTEREST IN MINISTRY

Have you ever previously applied to be admitted as a Postulant or Candidate for Holy Orders in this or any other diocese? _____
 If yes, give particulars (when/where) _____

Have you ever made application for Holy Orders to another denomination? _____

If yes, give particulars (when/where) _____

Have you ever been ordained by any other Christian denomination? _____

If yes, give particulars (when/where) _____

REFERENCES

Please attach three references with this document. At least one from your work experience.

VOCATION

The discernment process seeks to discern what need in the parish, region or diocese God is calling you to meet. Whether it is to lay or ordained ministry that you are being called it is to a ministry that requires relationships built on trust.

1. Please share your experience in building relationships of trust and any learning you have discovered along the way.
2. Is there any particular emphasis or special area of interest in which you might exercise ministry?

(Please include on separate attachment)

SIGNATURE

DATE

Appendix 5

EDUCATION

Graduate Certificate in Theological Studies (GTCS)
Program for The Community of Associate Parish Priests

Courses are available on line, in classroom, summer two week intensive programs.

Courses:

BF 1001	Biblical Foundations: Hebrew Bible	On line/ In Class
BF 1002	Biblical Foundations: New Testament	On line/ In Class
TF 1000	Theological Foundations	On line/ In Class
PF 1001	Pastoral Foundations	Summer/In Class
PF 1002	Preaching Foundations	Summer/In Class

ST/CH 2107 Anglican Theology: Roots and Branches On line/ In Class

ST/CH 3106 Sacramental Action: The Anglican Narrative On line/ In Class

The preferred method for this course is in class. However it will be possible for a distance/directed study program for those who are assessed to be able to do this type of study. Another option would be distance/directed study with four on site class sessions for colleague formation and instructor interaction, and correspond with the instructor and each other in group emails and by skype as needed.

There are two practicums with a variety of options.

SMP: Supervised Ministry Practicum On-Line

SFE: Supervised Field Experience In Class

Clinical Pastoral Education

One elective based on the particular ministry to be offered in each parish.