



The Commission on Ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Western Michigan

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Formation for the Diaconate in the Diocese of Western Michigan

Recommended by the Commission on Ministry and Approved by the Bishop on Jan 14, 2015

Once someone has been granted Postulancy, it is appropriate to begin preparing for your program of formation for ordained ministry. The program outlined below is the program all postulants to the Sacred Order of Deacon will go through. You may have prior training in one or more areas, but your gift to your fellow learning community will only be enhanced.

Community Formation: Your Postulant Cohort

Near the end of each summer, all first-year postulants to the diaconate gather for a daylong retreat that they may begin forming their own community. The Bishop will appoint a presbyter to serve as Chaplain to the community and a deacon to serve as Mentor to the community. The cohort will gather formally twice a year during the time of formation, but will also be together during the classes at Coppage–Gordon and at other formational experiences.

Academic and Practical Formation: The Coppage–Gordon School for Ministry

Academic and practical formation takes place through a three-year local program jointly run by the Dioceses of Michigan and Eastern Michigan. It is based on the Iona Initiative, a collaborative project for local formation developed by the Seminary of the Southwest in conjunction with the Iona School for Ministry of the Diocese of Texas. The curriculum includes academic modules on Holy Scriptures, church history, and theology as well as a variety of class sessions on spirituality, liturgy and music, and the theory and practice of ministry. Classes for Year One involve priest and deacon postulants studying together. In Years Two and Three, liturgy and practice of ministry classes are split between orders.

The program's format seeks to make formation as convenient as possible by condensing the class times into ten retreat weekends per year. Your postulant cohort from our diocese will likely carpool together to the sessions. Participants from all dioceses gather on Friday evenings and attend class and participate in worship on Saturday and Sunday. Each retreat will also provide time for the group to develop community across diocesan boundaries. Occasional workshops on specialized topics may be scheduled at other times. All the courses are taught or facilitated by people who have completed some form of advanced theological studies. Several of the instructors also serve as active clergy in the Dioceses of Michigan and Eastern Michigan.

The cost of the program is \$3,500/year which covers tuition and overnight accommodations for two nights and six meals for each of the ten sessions. The cost of books and other materials is not included in this fee. The diocese may subsidize a portion of this cost—the Bishop can let you know the options for that. *The next session begins in the fall of 2015, with all retreats held at the Colombiere Retreat Center in Clarkston, MI. For more information, contact the Rev. Dr. Valerie Fargo, Director of the Coppage–Gordon School for Ministry at the diocese (989-752-6020), at home (989-839-9462), or through e-mail (vfargo@eastmich.org).*

Diaconal Leadership Formation: The Gamaliel Institute

In your second year of formation, your cohort will go through the National Leadership Training offered by the Gamaliel Institute. This seven-day residential training presents the concepts and tools an effective leader needs. It affords a person the opportunity to reflect on his/her present and future potential roles in the public arena. In your third and final year, your cohort will go through the three-day specific Gamaliel training for clergy, learning tools, concepts and methodologies for becoming effective in balancing the demands of their own institutions with issues of justice and community concerns.

Our Mission, rooted in the Episcopal tradition, is to worship God, to follow Jesus Christ, to grow together in the Holy Spirit, and to serve the world.