

## Commission on Ministry of the Baptized (COMB) Organization

The COMB will be reorganized for more extensive work in education, formation, oversight, and evaluation of ordained and licensed lay ministries of the diocese. Since not all ministry is the same and since each particular ministry has its own appropriate form of education and formation, the COMB will become an umbrella commission for specialized and particular ordained and lay ministries of the Diocese of the Rio Grande.

The COMB will also form specialized committees that will provide education, formation, oversight, and evaluation of specialized ministries within the diocese. These committees will focus on the distinct needs of each of these categories: the vocational diaconate, bi-vocational priests, licensed lay ministries, and continuing education for ordained clergy. Because each of these ministries, apart from the traditional route to ordination to the priesthood by attending a seminary, have needs directly related to their particular vocational situations, the committees will specialize their approach to formation and education based upon the particularities of each vocation both ordained and lay.

The COMB will work in concert with a reorganized Board of Examining Chaplains, which will also be structured to address the particular educational requirements of the different roads to ordination. The Board of Examining Chaplains will work with seminary-trained postulants and candidates, and this board will work in concert with the COMB. The Diaconal Board of Examining Chaplains will work with vocational deacons and work in concert with the Committee of Vocational Diaconate of the COMB. The Bi-vocational Priest Board of Examining Chaplains will work with bi-vocational priests and work in concert with the Committee on Bi-vocational Priesthood of the COMB.

Representatives from the COMB, the various Boards of Examining Chaplains, and the Standing Committee will be involved in the aspirancy program. The COMB will be divided into three groups, each one attending one of the aspirancy retreat weekends. Those representatives will be involved in the evaluation of candidates for ordination, assist in the supervised ministry year, and make a recommendation to the bishop regarding an aspirant's suitability and vocation to ordained ministry. At the completion of the aspirancy year, those aspirants approved by the bishop will submit the required papers for application to postulancy, and will appear before the COMB.

The COMB will continue to meet quarterly as they have in the past. Each member of the COMB will be involved in the work of the COMB as well as with the work of one of the sub-committees (below) of the COMB. The additional committees will be led by members of the COMB, but they may invite others to join their committee who have specific expertise in formation and education for their particular purposes. These sub-committees of the COMB will probably

need to meet more regularly, especially at the beginning of their formation (probably once a month). The sub-committees will report to the COMB at every meeting.

The COMB and the sub-committees will engage in a yearly self-evaluation by taking stock of their mission and their effectiveness in accomplishing their mission. These evaluations will also include suggestions for change, areas of improvement, and affirmations of successful work. These self-evaluations should also include those who have participated in the sub-committee's programs.

#### The Commission on Ministry of the Baptized (COMB)

The COMB as a body will have primary responsibilities for regular candidates for the priesthood who must earn a Master of Divinity degree at a seminary approved by the Bishop. The COMB will begin their work after the year-long aspirancy program has been completed by the aspirant and after the bishop approves their advancement to postulancy. The assumption is that once granted postulancy, after the year of aspirancy, that barring any unforeseen or unanticipated problems they will proceed to ordination with the assistance of the COMB. That means that the COMB will begin their involvement with postulants proceeding to seminary. The specific duties of the COMB are the following:

1. The COMB will assist the postulants in their study by mentoring, guiding, and assisting the postulants and candidates as they equip themselves to serve as priests of the church.
2. The COMB will assign a mentor who will stay connected to the postulant throughout seminary education. The mentoring of postulants and candidates should be regular (at least once a month) and consistent so that there is constant communication between the postulant or candidate and the COMB mentor.
3. The COMB will also assist the postulant or candidate to find a suitable spiritual guide (if the postulant or candidate does not already have one).
4. The COMB will also assist the postulant or candidate to find the funding for their education from parishes, deaneries, the Bishop Frey Fund, and scholarships.
5. The COMB will gather postulants and candidates for a yearly retreat for times of mutual prayer and support.
6. The COMB mentor will certify that the candidate has fulfilled the required training in prevention of sexual misconduct, civil requirements for reporting and pastoral responsibilities in responding to evidence of abuse, and the church's teaching on racism.
7. The COMB will advise the bishop regarding the candidates preparation and suitability for ministry when the postulant moves toward candidacy, and again when the candidate moves forward toward ordination to the transitional diaconate.
8. The COMB will train parish discernment committees.

9. The COMB will also assist the clergy in regular self-evaluation of their various ministries. This may be done through special programs such as CREDO, or through other means that will assist clergy in the evaluation of their skills and identify areas for future growth, education, and formation. The system of self-evaluation should take place every three years.

#### Committee on the Transitional Diaconate (CTD)

The Committee on the Transitional Diaconate will be responsible for the education and formation of transitional deacons as they prepare for ordination to the priesthood. Since the transitional diaconate is normally one year (canonically at least six months), the CTD will develop an educational and formational program that should last one year. The CTD will also include transitional bi-vocational deacons.

#### Committee on Vocational Diaconate (CVD)

The Committee on Vocational Diaconate will be responsible for the education and formation of vocational deacons using the Iona Initiative begun for the Episcopal Church by the Diocese of Texas. The specific requirements for this committee are the following:

1. After discernment in the parish and successful completion of the aspirancy program and admission to postulancy, the CVD will mentor the students for the vocational deacons while they attend the three-year Iona program.
2. The CVD will provide the canonical recommendations to the COMB and to the Bishop for candidacy and ordination. The COMB will accept the decision of the CVD without further scrutiny.
3. After ordination, the CVD will consult with the Bishop about a proper placement and ministry site for deacons. When the site has been selected by the Bishop, the CVD will assist the deacon and Rector/Vicar of the ministry site to create an agreement that outlines the scope and direction of the ministry. This agreement, when completed, will be signed by the deacon, Rector/Vicar, and the Bishop.
4. The CVD will evaluate the deacons through a personal visitation in their ministry on a regular basis (not less than once every three years) with special attention to ministry outside the parish, liturgical functions, preaching, and attendance at continuing education events. After the visitation and the evaluation, the CVD will discuss the evaluation with the deacon and suggest areas for further study, prayer, and growth.
5. The CVD will organize regular and required continuing education for vocational deacons (at least two programs a year).
6. The CVD will provide a deacon mentor to newly ordained deacons (for at least one year after their ordination) and will develop a two-year program of continuing formation for vocational deacons after their ordination.

#### Committee on Bi-vocational Priesthood (CBP)

The Committee on Bi-vocational Priesthood will be responsible for the education and formation of bi-vocational priests using the Iona Initiative begun

for the Episcopal Church by the Diocese of Texas. The assumption is that bi-vocational priests are functioning in a profession requiring advanced training (Masters degree or beyond) in their fields, and living in an area where the parish is part-time and unable to have regularly administered sacraments. The specific requirements for this committee are the following:

1. After discernment in the parish and successful completion of the aspirancy program, the CBP will mentor the students for the vocational deacons while they attend the three-year Iona program.
2. The CBP will provide the canonical recommendations to the COMB and to the Bishop for candidacy and ordination. The COMB will accept the decision of the CBP without further scrutiny.
3. After ordination, the CBP will consult with the Bishop about a proper placement and ministry site for the bi-vocational priest. When the site has been selected by the Bishop, the CBP will assist the priest in creating an agreement that outlines the scope and direction of the ministry. This agreement, when completed, will be signed by the priest, Wardens, and the Bishop.
4. The CBP will evaluate the bi-vocational priests through a personal visitation in their ministry on a regular basis (not less than once every three years) with special attention to pastoral ministry, ministry outside the parish, liturgical functions, preaching, and attendance at continuing education events. After the visitation and the evaluation, the CBP will discuss the evaluation with the priest and suggest areas for further study, prayer, and growth.
5. The CBP will organize regular and required continuing education for bi-vocational priests (at least two programs a year), and these bi-vocational priests will be required to report to the CBP about the continuing education in which they have participated.
6. The CBP will provide the newly ordained bi-vocational priest with a priest mentor for a period of three years for continuing formation and practical advice.
7. Bi-vocational transitional deacons will work with the Committee on Transitional Diaconate (CTD) for their formation toward priesthood.

#### Committee on Licensed Lay Ministries (CLLM)

The focus of the CLLM is on training for the specific canonically licensed ministries of Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Evangelist, Catechist, as well as religious orders for men and women in the Episcopal/Anglican Church. The CLLM will be responsible for education and formation in these licensed ministries with special attention to the pastoral dimension, the required actions they perform, and the limits on what these licensed lay ministers may perform in their parishes. The specific tasks of this committee are:

1. The CLLM will define the parameters and limits of each of these ministries, the liturgical aspects of each of these ministries, and the pastoral dimensions of each ministry.

2. Since licensing will require attendance (except in the first year) at an educational program, the CLLM will design and implement educational programs appropriate for licensed ministries.
3. The CLLM will certify that the candidate has fulfilled the required training in prevention of sexual misconduct, civil requirements for reporting and pastoral responsibilities in responding to evidence of abuse, and the church's teaching on racism.

#### Committee on the Continuing Education of Ordained Clergy (CEOC)

Canon III.9.1 stipulates that the Bishop and the COMB shall "require and provide for the continuing education of Priests and keep a record of such education." And Canon III.7.5 requires the same for deacons. The CEOC, working closely with the Bishop and the Bishop's School for Ministries, will oversee the provision and documentation of continuing education for ordained priests and deacons. The CEOC will focus primarily on spiritual, intellectual, and professional continuing education. The specific responsibilities of the CEOC are the following:

1. The CEOC will arrange two or three continuing education programs annually for priests and deacons around subjects of import to the Diocese of the Rio Grande.
2. The CEOC will inform clergy of continuing education opportunities taking place outside the diocese at Episcopal seminaries, national church programs, retreat centers, and other institutions that would qualify for their continuing education.
3. The CEOC will educate clergy about the canonical requirement for continuing education.
4. The CEOC will develop a form for priests and deacons to report their continuing education, send out the form, gather them, and report to the Bishop regarding the breadth and depth of continuing education of priests.
5. The CEOC will work with parishes to insure that parishes budget for regular clerical continuing education according to the diocesan policy and that they will also budget for clerical sabbatical leave every seven years.
6. The CEOC will approve the expenditure of diocesan continuing education funds for ordained clergy.