

Ordination

In the Episcopal Church, there are three ministry roles for which candidates are ordained through the laying on of hands by a bishop: **bishop**, **priest** and **deacon**. Together these constitute Holy Orders, and in the Anglican tradition are considered sacramental in nature.

The **bishop**, *episcopus* (in Latin, “overseer), symbolizes the unity of the church, serving as chief priest, pastor, prophet and teacher. Bishops in the Anglican tradition are considered to be part of the apostolic succession: their ministry is derived from an unbroken succession dating to the first apostles. The sacramental rites of confirmation and ordination are reserved for bishops alone. Diocesan bishops exercise jurisdiction over a diocese, serving as chief pastoral officer and chief executive.



Deacons are ordained to a ministry of service, particularly to the poor, the weak, the sick, and the lonely, and are charged to interpret the needs and concerns of the world to the church. Candidates for priesthood in The Episcopal Church generally must first be ordained deacons and serve a minimum of six months in that ministry before ordination to the priesthood.

Priests (or presbyters) share in the administration of the church with the bishop, proclaim the Gospel, administer the sacraments and declare absolution. They are authorized to administer all sacraments other than confirmation and ordination.

All three offices of Holy Orders are open to both men and women. According to The Episcopal Church Title III ministry canons, no one can be denied access to ordination because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age.

Each diocese has a [Commission on Ministry](#) that oversees the ministry discernment process for congregations and their members seeking direction in their ministry discernment, whether for Holy Orders or as lay persons. Lay persons may be licensed for ministry as Pastoral Leader, Worship Leader, Preacher, Eucharistic Minister, Eucharistic Visitor, Evangelist, or Catechist.