



The Bi-Vocational Priesthood The Episcopal Diocese of Texas

In the past several years, the Church has been faced with a growing need for clergy leadership in smaller congregations and in churches with unique challenges and circumstances. Studies indicate that most congregations with an average Sunday attendance of 30-75 find it difficult to fund the services of a full-time priest. Congregations with an average Sunday attendance of fewer than 30 are accustomed to utilizing supply and part-time Priests-in-Charge. For some very small congregations even this can be a financial stretch.

Begun in 2004, the Bi-Vocational Priesthood Program gives the Diocese of Texas the ability to provide for the needs of its smallest churches. Bi-Vocational Priests are called to the priesthood but have independent means of income, including retirement or other professions. The results of the Bi-Vocational Priesthood Program have been encouraging. The placement of Bi-Vocational Priests has resulted in new vitality and growth for many congregations that would otherwise not have been able to sustain a dedicated clergyperson.

The Iona School for Ministry has developed a three-year local program of preparation that provides comprehensive training for Bi-Vocational Priests. The program includes extensive academics and practicum. The Commission on Ministry has formed the Committee for Bi-Vocational Priests, which assists in identifying and selecting persons with evident gifts and fitness for this ministry. Characteristics include:

A Bi-Vocational Priest

- A call to Holy Orders as a priest, but a career change may be unrealistic
- Healthy in mind, body, and spirit
- Ability to articulate a relationship with Jesus Christ
- Proven leadership skills and aptitudes
- A record of effectiveness in their personal and professional lives
- Exhibited leadership in their parish/mission
- Capacity to financially support themselves
- Should not expect financial support from the church they serve or from the Diocese of Texas
- Ability and willingness to commit to a three-year formation program at the Iona School for Ministry

Initial Requirements for Individuals Pursuing Admission to the Program

- Letter of support from a priest
- Completion of application process including psychological and medical exams and background screening
- Interview process
- Acceptance by the Executive for Ministry as a postulant

Requirements for Ordination

- Satisfactory completion of academic and practicum work required by the Iona School for Ministry
- Satisfactory evaluations from the Iona School for Ministry, the Committee for Bi-Vocational Priests, Examining Chaplains, and Standing Committee of the Diocese of Texas

Those who have completed the rigorous three years of preparation at the Iona School for Ministry in the Bi-Vocational Priesthood track have been ordained into the full order of priests of the Episcopal Church. There is no differentiation in the ordination of a person prepared at the Iona School for Ministry and any seminary of the Episcopal Church. Each has the full privileges and responsibility of the priesthood. However, the Iona School graduates understand that they will not be fiscally compensated for their work as priests in the Diocese of Texas.

Responsibility of the Church Receiving an Iona Student

Students at the Iona School for Ministry who are beginning their 2nd year in the Bi-Vocational Priesthood track are placed in small congregations. Each situation is unique. It is the decision of the Bishop of Texas to determine the exact status of the incoming 2nd year Iona student who will serve a particular congregation. Some students will enter as Pastoral Leader Interns serving under the mentorship of an in-place priest who is either Rector or Priest-in-Charge. Other students will enter into a congregation as Pastoral Leader and Head of Congregation with an off-site mentor priest chosen through the Office of the Bishop. In this latter situation supply clergy continue to serve these congregations on an occasional basis to celebrate the Eucharist. Supply clergy in these cases are designated "Sacramentalists."

In each situation where an Iona student is placed, the Vestry or Bishop's Committee must sign Letters of Agreement that include an agreement to pay mileage and church related business costs for the assigned student. There is also an agreement as to the number of hours the student will work for the church. All of these matters are thoroughly reviewed with the Canon to the Ordinary who represents the Bishop.

In addition, any congregation that is a parish of the Diocese of Texas must agree to revert to mission status in order to receive an Iona student.

Usually, Iona students remain for many years in their assigned placements after their Iona graduation and ordination, when they become Vicars of their respective congregations.

The Diocese of Texas has ordained 27 Iona graduates who have served or currently are serving as Bi-Vocational Priests in the following congregations and ministries:

All Saints', Cameron
All Saints', Crockett
*All Saints', Hitchcock
Christ Church, Matagorda
Good Shepherd, Tomball
Holy Innocents', Madisonville
Sam Houston State University - Campus Ministry, Huntsville
St. Augustine of Hippo, Galveston
St. Bartholomew's, Hempstead
St. Christopher's, Austin
*St. James', Taylor
St. John's, Carthage
*St. John's, Columbus
St. John's, Marlin
St. John's, Palacios
St. John's, Sealy
St. John's, Silsbee
St. Joseph's, Salado
St. Luke the Evangelist, Houston
St. Luke's, Livingston
*St. Martin's, Copperas Cove
St. Matthew's, Henderson
St. Michael & All Angels', Longview
St. Paul's, Freeport
*St. Paul's, Orange
St. Paul's, Pflugerville
St. Peter's, Lago Vista
St. Thomas', Rockdale
*Trinity, Anahuac

*currently have Iona students placed as Pastoral Leader or Pastoral Leader Intern
(as of 03/20/2013)