

## The General Board of Examining Chaplains

The General Board of Examining Chaplains was created in 1970 with the adoption, by the 63rd General Convention, of Canon III.7. The Canon (amended 1973) charges the Board with the following primary responsibilities, stated here in brief: (1) to prepare at least annually a General Ordination Examination, and conduct, administer, and evaluate performance in the same; (2) to report promptly, in writing, upon individual performance in the examination to each Candidate's Bishop and to the Dean of the Seminary the Candidate is attending; and (3) to report upon the Board's work to the House of Bishops and to each regular meeting of the General Convention.

In preface to this report to the General Convention, the Board's perception of its mission should be stated. The Board sees its function as a serving ministry to the whole Church, one part of the larger ministry concerned with the identification, education and training, ordination, deployment, and professional development and support of persons for ministry. Many persons and agencies are pastorally and administratively involved in this total ministry, in which the Board has the specific area of responsibility set forth in the Canon. The Board defined its philosophy about that area, in the context of the larger ministry, under the leadership of its first chairman, the late Bishop Stephen F. Bayne, in a statement adopted on October 15, 1971.

"The Board sees its task as that of assessing the candidates' competence to fulfill the minimum expectation which the Church has the duty to require, in the seven areas set forth by the canon, and to do this in such a way as to be most helpful in their future development.

"The examinations for which we are responsible seem to us clearly to be part of the whole process of the recruitment, training, deployment and development of the clergy. In this context, the Board cannot see its work in isolation from that of the Bishops, the Diocesan Commissions on Ministry . . . , the seminaries, and other training agencies of the Church. . . .

"The Examinations will endeavor to cover the areas required by the canon in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary way, and will not seek to duplicate the examinations of seminaries . . . . The examinations will not be designed to test primarily a candidate's accumulation of information, but, rather, his ability to reflect, investigate, interpret, and apply his training, together with his own faith and commitment, to the demands of the ministry. In this process, the academic competency of the student will be revealed, examined and evaluated . . . .

"The Board proposes to link together the seven fields of study in comprehensive, integrating Examinations, designed to measure a candidate's understanding of the various academic disciplines and his ability to relate such knowledge to professional practice . . . ."

The present Board affirms this philosophy, and has functioned in a manner consistent with it during the 1977-1979 triennium. Holy Orders belong to, and are for, the whole Church. Through the Board itself, and through the examinations prepared and administered by the Board, the whole Church is enabled to participate in assessing certain qualifications of those persons who believe themselves called to Holy Orders. The nature and extent of this participation merit brief comment. The Board is representative in its own membership, since, by Canon, it is made up of Bishops, Presbyters and lay persons, and must include such functional representation as seminary faculties and Presbyters with pastoral cures. The Board is officially represented on the Council for the Development of Ministry. Two Board members (the Very Rev. O. C. Edwards and the Rev. Donald Bitsberger) are members also of the Board for Theological Education. The election of Board members is reserved to the House of Bishops, with confirmation by the House of Deputies, a canonical reservation that is consistent with the specific and particular function of the Episcopacy with respect to Holy

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Orders. However, nominations to the Board, and the reading and evaluation functions that are of the essence of the examination process, are within the province of any Church member or group.

The Board's report of its work during 1977-1979, and of its objectives for the next triennium, follows.

### **The General Ordination Examination**

Eight examinations, 1972-1979, are now of record. Tables 1 and 2, appended, show statistics of examinations administered and of examination results. The examination process was described in the Board's report to the 1976 Convention. It now seems timely to recall and amplify the Board's conception of the intent of the examination, and the considerations influencing its design.

The experience of each examination has informed and refined the design of the next one, but the basic thrusts have remained consistent. Thus far, the examination is designed for, and aimed at, the Candidate for Holy Orders who participates in a three year seminary curriculum leading to an academic theological degree. The Board knows there are other canonical "tracks" of preparation. But, to paraphrase the statement from Bishop Bayne quoted above, the Board believes its mandate is to test the academic readiness of the Candidates, whatever their programs of preparation, for their vocation in Orders, and to evaluate their abilities to integrate and communicate their knowledge and practice in a style and manner that are "understanded of the people of God". Accordingly, the examination has both objective and essay content, and is evaluated, in respect to Candidate, Readers, and Board Chaplains, in a cloak of anonymity. Each essay examination, identified only by a number, is read by two Readers who, after their individual reading, meet, share impressions, and jointly prepare an evaluation in terms of the so-called canonical areas, the subject matter fields specified by Canon III.5.1(a). For each area, the Candidate must be rated Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory, or Insufficient Evidence (from performance on the examination) for Evaluation. The Readers' narrative evaluations explain the reasons for the ratings. These evaluations are then reviewed by at least two Board Chaplains, who consult as necessary with the Readers in the interests of clarity, consistency and the substance of each evaluation. In some instances, this consultation results in changes or modification of ratings.

The objective part of the examination, a multiple-choice test entitled "The History, Literature and Vocabulary of the Christian Tradition" was prepared by the Board in consultation with the Educational Testing Service, and was instituted in 1975. It tests whether Candidates are knowledgeable in some detail about the content of subjects studied in theological education. The results of this part of the examination are reported in percentiles, and are not known to the Readers evaluating performance on the essay questions. The Chaplains at the several area evaluation meetings have the percentile rankings for reference, as they certify evaluations, when Readers find significant deficiencies in performance or insufficient evidence to assess adequacy in a canonical area.

### **Reports of performance on the examination**

Certified reports of performance by canonical field, and copies of evaluations, are sent to Candidates and to their Bishops and Commissions on Ministry. Canonical certificates are sent to the Deans of the several seminaries the Candidates are attending.

The intention of these reports should be understood. The Board is not making a judgment, it is providing information. The Board conceives its role not as one of approving or disapproving Candidates for Ordination, but rather as one of gathering

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**Table 1**  
**THE GENERAL ORDINATION EXAMINATION**  
**Examinations Administered, 1972 - 1979**

	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1972-79
Candidates examined:									
Essay examination	169 <sup>1</sup>	263 <sup>1</sup>	210	218	252	300	295	318	2025
Objective examination <sup>2</sup>				216	262	307	314	321	1420
Dioceses represented <sup>3</sup>	59	70	69	60	73	69	76	74	90
Readers participating	90	130	106	108	128	150	150	160	

**Notes:**

1. The figures for Candidates examined in 1972 and 1973 may not be entirely accurate. Each year some of those registered do not actually take the examination.
2. The objective examination was instituted in 1975. Some Candidates take the objective, but not the essay examination; some take the essay, but not the objective examination.
3. These figures indicate the number of Dioceses certifying Candidates for examination by year. Not all participating Dioceses have Candidates every year. All but three of the ninety-three domestic Dioceses now use the General Ordination Examination. In addition, from time to time, Candidates have been examined for Liberia, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and the Convocation of American Churches in Europe. Each year there are several Candidates not having sponsoring Bishops who are admitted to the examination upon recommendation of their Seminary Deans.

data and information that can assist Bishops, Standing Committees and Commissions on Ministry in their decision-making about the readiness of their Candidates. Another side of this role is an educational and pastoral responsibility to assist Candidates, their Bishops and their seminary faculties (through the several Deans) in enriching preparation and training for the ordained ministry. Thus the reports incorporate, to the extent possible, the recommendations called for by Canon III.7.2(c). Further, the Board encourages, and urges, the Candidates and their Bishops to utilize the examination experience and the evaluations as tools for building continuing programs based in both need and interest. Such programs, serving both individuals and groups, may develop into a lifelong commitment within the ordained vocation.

In sum of its orientation as it reports upon work in this triennium, the Board sees examinees as potential Deacons and Priests for the whole Church, and sees the examination/evaluation function in that context. To state the position another way, the Bishop and the Diocese make the decisions about Ordination. The whole Church, through this Board and other agencies, evaluates Candidates against the background of the whole Church, and gives assessments to Bishop and Diocese to aid them in their decision-making.

### **Objectives for the 1980-1982 triennium**

The Board carries on a continuing evaluation of its work. This evaluation is in part internal, from Board members' own assessments of needs and performance. In larger part it is external, from comments sought and received from Candidates, Bishops, Commissions on Ministry, seminary faculties, *et al.* The objectives here stated for the next triennium are formulations of the Board's canonical responsibilities, illuminated by experience and evaluation.

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### 1. The General Ordination Examination

#### 1.1 Continue to analyze experience with the examination, and undertake indicated refinements and improvements, including:

1.1.1 Redesign the objective examination, the present test having been in use for 5 years. This will be done with professional consultation, and with consideration of experience with the present version.

1.1.2 Sharpen issues posed for interdisciplinary treatment in the essay portion of the examination.

#### 1.2 Improve the reading and evaluation processes of the examination:

1.2.1 Develop, in consultation with the Bishops, a comprehensive panel of Readers for the examination. The aim is to draw systematically into participation qualified Readers, clergy and lay persons, with a range of age, experience, insight that is representative of the whole Church. Examples are retired persons, including Bishops, members of Diocesan Commissions on Ministry, and lay and ordained persons in the earlier stages of their ministries.

1.2.2 Develop systems for information and guidance of Readers, with special attention to improving consistency among Readers in their evaluations. Readers of the 1979 examination were provided with a manual of guidance written by a Board committee chaired by the Rev. Dr. Boyce Bennett of the General Theological Seminary. The Readers affirmed this aid, and it will be continued, and expanded in content.

1.2.3 Experiment with alternative forms of Readers' conferences (area evaluation meetings). This objective signifies stewardship concerns, both human and financial. The Board must be a faithful steward of the time and energies of its Readers, as well as of its funds; area meetings must be designed in consideration of both obligations. A related concern is that the membership of the Board itself be geographically representative, so that Chaplains are reasonably available at the locations around the country, coast to coast, where the examination is administered and where evaluations are written and reviewed.

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**Table 2**  
**THE GENERAL ORDINATION EXAMINATION**  
**Examination Results, 1977-1979**

	Percentages of all Examinations Evaluated		
	1977	1978	1979
Satisfactory in all fields	64%	59%	55%
Unsatisfactory in one or more fields	36%	33.3%	29%
"No opinion" in one or more fields because of insufficient evidence to assess adequacy	13%	12.5%	27% <sup>1</sup>

Note: These percentages will not add up to 100%, because some Candidates were both unsatisfactory in one or more fields, and showed insufficient evidence in one or more. Also, some Candidates may not be found unsatisfactory in any field, but may show insufficient evidence in one or more.

1. The canonical certificate form included a separate "no opinion" space for the first time in 1979. Its inclusion may have been an influence in the increase in the percentage of examinations with fields recorded as "no opinion".

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### 2. Theological Education

Continue the accumulation of information, from the results of the examination, having apparent relevance to the characteristics of theological education; share this information with the Board for Theological Education and with seminary Deans.

### 3. Research

A study aimed at determining the predictive value of the examination, i.e. if there is a relationship between performance on the examination and subsequent experience in the active ministry, is in preliminary design. The objective is to complete the design and proceed with the research project. It will be undertaken in consultation with other agencies in the Council for the Development of Ministry.

### 4. Funding Policy

Consult with the Bishops about a standing policy for the funding of the Board, the examination system, and related Board activities. The aim is to clarify the basis for the sharing of examination costs by the Bishops and the General Convention appropriation.

### Funding the Board's Activities

Financial statistics for 1977-1979 and budget estimates for 1980-1982 are shown in Table 3, appended to this report. As the data show, the Board has been dealing with both an increasing workload and increasing costs. Costs of all components of the Board's work - postage, printing, paper and materials, travel and subsistence of Board members and Readers of the examination - have increased materially over the years of the Board's activity.

Funding requests for the next triennium are based upon estimated costs of the examination system, and the Board's activities directly related to that system. This is to say that the objectives stated above do not have the effect of increasing Board costs. They are stated for the purpose of showing projected emphases of the recurring work of the Board. One exception is the research project, but necessary financial support for that project will be sought elsewhere. Two assumptions are made in the budget estimates. One is that inflationary pressures will continue, and estimated increases are thus built into the funding request. The other assumption is that authorization will be continued to assess a fee for the examination of Candidates certified for examination by the Diocesan Bishops.

### Acknowledgments

The Rev. Dr. Emmet Gribbin continues to serve the Board, and the Church, as Administrator of the General Ordination Examination. This role has many dimensions - organizational, logistical, pastoral and informational - and he manages all of them with quiet deftness and the grace of humor. The insights and qualities he brings to his complex assignment are significant factors in sustaining clarity and objectivity in the whole process of the examination, and in maintaining sensitivity to the Candidates and their anxieties. He serves also as Executive Secretary of the Board. The Board is deeply grateful to him for his contributions in both capacities, and to the Bishop and the Diocese of Alabama for sharing his time.

Following the death of Bishop Bayne, the office of the Board was moved from New York City to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, for reasons of responsible management and stewardship. The Board thanks the Rector, Vestry and people of Christ Church, Tuscaloosa for the office space made available to Dr. Gribbin over these years.

From the time the Board began to function, it has been consistently affirmed at each

**Table 3**  
**The General Board of Examining Chaplains**  
**Report to the General Convention 1979**

	Financial Statistics 1977-79				Budget Estimates 1980-82			
	1977 Actual	1978 Actual	1979 Budgeted	1977-79 Total	1980	1981	1982	1980-82 Total
<b>Expenses</b>								
Board Expense	\$16916.	\$12331.	\$18720.	\$ 47967.	\$20850.	\$21325.	\$22500.	\$ 64625.
Meetings								
Administration								
Secretarial								
assistance								
Reading Expense	25750.	26258.	34510.	86518.	36000.	40000.	42500.	118500.
Conferences								
Honoraria								
Other Expense	9871.	7829.	5180.	22880.	7150.	7675.	8000.	22825.
Office								
Printing								
Copying								
Postage								
<b>Total expense</b>	<b>\$52537.</b>	<b>\$46418.</b>	<b>\$58410.</b>	<b>\$157365.</b>	<b>\$64000.</b>	<b>\$69000.</b>	<b>\$73000.</b>	<b>\$206000.</b>
<b>Funding</b>								
Examination fees	\$15425.	\$17005.	\$23100.	\$ 55530.	\$24000. <sup>5</sup>	\$25500. <sup>5</sup>	\$27000. <sup>5</sup>	\$ 76500.
@ \$50.		@ \$60.	@ \$75.		@ \$80.	@ \$85.	@ \$90.	
Convention Budget	32000.	32000.	35330.	99330.	40000.	43500.	46000.	129500.
446. <sup>1</sup>				446. <sup>4</sup>				
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$47871.<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>\$49005.<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>\$58430.</b>	<b>\$155306.<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>\$64000.</b>	<b>\$69000.</b>	<b>\$73000.</b>	<b>\$206000.</b>

- Notes: 1. Miscellaneous income of \$446.    2. Overdraft of \$4666.    3. Surplus of \$2595.  
 4. The difference between total expense and total funding, 1977-79, of \$2071 is the overdraft for 1977 less the surplus for 1978.  
 5. Estimated income from fees, 1980-82, assumes fees paid for 300 Candidates.

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regular meeting of the House of Bishops. Additionally, many Bishops have been helpful, through their suggestions, challenges and criticisms, in making the Board's work better. The Board is in their debt, as it is also to the seminary communities for their open and helpful cooperation in an intricate process.

Finally, the Board thanks the hundreds of Readers who expend much energy, and take much time from busy lives, to assist the Church in a vital area of mission and ministry.

Respectively submitted,

The Rt. Rev. William B. Spofford, Jr.  
Chairman, The General Board of  
Examining Chaplains

### Members of the General Board of Examining Chaplains

*Bishops:*

The Rt. Rev. Donald J. Davis  
The Rt. Rev. William E. Sanders  
The Rt. Rev. William B. Spofford

*Presbyters:*

The Rev. FitzSimons Allison  
The Rev. William H. Baar  
The Rev. Donald Bitsberger  
The Rev. Robert Estill  
The Very Rev. William Hale  
The Rev. Herman Page  
The Rev. L. Bartine Sherman

*Members of Faculties:*

The Rev. Boyce Bennett  
The Rev. Robert Cooper  
The Rev. William Green  
The Rev. Holt Graham  
The Rev. Boone Porter

*Lay Persons:*

Dr. Marylu Fowler  
Dr. William Gaines  
Dr. Wellborn Hudson  
Dr. Cecil Patterson  
Dr. George Shipman  
Mrs. Margaret Sloan

*Consultant:*

The Rev. Jerre Feagin

*Administrator:*

The Rev. Emmet Gribbin

### Resolution #A--48

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the following amounts be appropriated from the General Convention Assessment Budget for the General Board of Examining Chaplains:

\$ 40,000 for 1980

43,500 for 1982

46,000 for 1982

**\$129,500 for the Triennium**

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### Resolution #A-49

*Resolved*, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the authorization for the General Board of Examining Chaplains to charge a fee not exceeding \$100 per candidate for the General Ordination Examination to be continued for the next triennium, with the provision that candidates for whom the fee is not paid, but who are otherwise qualified, shall also be examined.