



EMBER DAY LETTERS

Ember Days were originally seasonal times of prayer and fasting and have evolved as times set aside to pray for the ministers of the Church (see *The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 18, 256-257). It has been the custom of the Episcopal Church for persons in the ordination process (postulants and candidates) to communicate with their bishop at “Embertide” about the process of their formation.

There are four Ember Weeks, one for each season of the year. Ember Days are in December (the Third Sunday of Advent), March (the first full week of Lent ~ *not* the week of Ash Wednesday), June (immediately following Pentecost) and September (following the Feast of the Holy Cross on September 14th).

I look forward to your Ember Day letters and remind you that they are **required by canon** of every postulant and candidate for Holy Orders. From time to time, I ask those ordained to the transitional diaconate to continue submitting Ember Day letters. If, for some reason, you have trouble in the preparing your letters, let me know ~ we can work on a solution together. Please send your Ember letters to me via email, and copy my Executive Assistant, Barbara Martin.

As to the content of your Ember Letters, I am interested in your reflections about your life in the four traditional areas of formation:

- ✓ *Spiritual*: prayer, worship, spiritual direction, retreats, spiritual practice
- ✓ *Personal*: family, wellness, health, self-care, financial circumstances
- ✓ *Vocational*: including ministries in which you are currently engaged and your own developing sense of the call to which you have responded
- ✓ *Academic*: your education, academic adjustment, training and other study, including private reading.

Tell me about your experiences. How did it affect you? What growth did you experience? How did it make you feel? “Unpack” it a bit for me so I can see you through your writing. You may include other material that will provide me a ‘snapshot’ of your life and work, for example: sermons, papers, or brochures describing your participation in programs.

I will respond to your letter promptly with my own reflections and comments. At least once a year, you are welcome to substitute an “Ember Visit” for a letter. This will allow us time together to pray and talk face-to-face. Barbara Martin, my Executive Assistant, keeps my calendar and will be happy to help schedule an appointment at a mutually convenient time. Of course, I am available to you at other times if need be ~ be in touch with Barb and she will make the necessary arrangements.

Your communications with the Commission on Ministry, your Commission on Ministry companion, your sponsoring rector/congregation, and with the Standing Committee are different from Ember Day letters to the bishop. It is important you maintain contact with them as they specify during your journey towards ordination. Your COM companion and sponsoring priest can be helpful resources in managing those expectations.

May God bless you! It is a joy to be your bishop, and to journey with you as you learn, grow, pray, and prepare for ordination. Please be assured of my prayers and know that I stand by you as you wrestle with the challenges of formation and experience the deep satisfaction of answering God’s call to ministry.

Faithfully,

Bishop Steve

I agree to fulfill my responsibility to be in touch with the Bishop on Ember Days as outlined above.

Signature of the Postulant

Date