

A GUIDE FOR PARISHES IN SEARCH

Responsibilities

The Bishop's Office Provides

- Periodic Consultation by the Deployment Officer
- Written materials/resources
- Identification of supply and/or interim clergy
- Recommendation of Search Consultant to work with the Search Process
- Other guidance needed for successful transition to new leadership
- Bishop will contact Senior Warden on a regular basis.

The Parish's Responsibilities

- Wardens and Vestry are formal canonical leadership during vacancy.
- Choosing the best course of action for search
- Giving specific and clear mandate to Search Teams -- **A minimum of 2 candidates must be presented to the vestry by the search team.**
- Clear and ongoing communication with the congregation during search
- Ongoing, two-way communication with the bishop's office

Steps in the Search Process

Preliminary

1. Wardens inform Bishop's Office of vacancy
2. Exit Interview with the former rector/vicar
3. Wardens and Vestry meet with Bishop and/or representative from the Bishop's Office

Vacancy Options

1. The Traditional Search as outlined below
2. An Abbreviated search with a short list
 - a. Parish completes self study—phase 1 found below
 - b. The Deployment Officer develops list of -6 names that have been approved by the bishop.
 - c. The search committee conducts its work, as it normally would – see “Discernment Journey” below.
 - d. If a rector is not called – the congregation may ask for more names or choose one of the other search options.
4. Appointment of rector by the Bishop – following a period of self-study
5. Priest-in-Charge
 - a. Appointed by the bishop with the approval of the vestry.
 - b. Following long tenured rector
 - c. Following a period of instability or conflict
 - d. Other forms of ministry explored
 - e. A time to develop financial support
 - f. Parish to focus on development rather than focusing on search
 - g. Period of one to five years
 - h. Priest-in-charge may be selected to be the rector

- i. If the Priest-in-Charge does not wish to be called as rector or the vestry chooses not issue a call, a search, abbreviated or conventional, ensues.

Traditional Search

1. Bishop's Office names a priest trained in interim ministry
 - a. Appointed by the bishop – confirmed by the vestry
 - b. Term—usually one year or until search is concluded
 - c. Cannot under any circumstances be a candidate for rector
 - d. An intentional ministry of sustaining the ministry of the congregation
 - i. Review the past, assess the present, envision the future
 - e. A period to reflect and to project
2. Consultant or facilitator assigned to the parish (optional)
 - a. The parish is responsible for the fees paid to the consultant
3. Rather than appoint a Search Committee which limits involvement to a dozen or so people, form Search Teams as outlined here:

Survey Team: Duty – Self Study / Information gathering

Team develops survey instruments and small group sessions such as Appreciative Inquiry or focus groups. These surveys and groups give parishioners ample opportunity to contribute to the development of parish's present identity, its goals and priorities and the clergy skills and experience needed for the future. *(See Self Study below)*

Team implements surveys and group discussions and collates data.

Skills needed:

Group facilitation and listening skills

Experience in surveying and collecting data.

Ability to consolidate data from several sources.

Statistics experience helpful

Profile Team: Duty - Analysis and dissemination of information gathered through self-study.

Team takes information from Survey Team, analyzes it, and puts it into the form and categories required by the Clergy Deployment Office (CDO) as well as on parish's web site Search Process pages. Further work involves putting both history and survey information into a well-written and illustrated narrative form to be posted on the web page.

Skills needed:

Data analysis

Writing

Photography

Community Team: Duty - Information gathering and writing.

This team gathers information, both statistical and environmental to present candidates with an attractive picture of what it would be like to live and minister in this community. Should include information on housing, schools, recreation, and work opportunities for spouse. Narration to be posted on parish web site.

Skills needed:

Knowledge of state and local area (Real Estate, schools, employment, recreation, etc.). Research, Writing.

Screening Team: Duty - match clergy applicants with required experience, pastoral skills and interests as expressed in the Parish Profile. Conduct telephone interviews of references and candidates. Conduct interviews to compile short list to be given to Vestry.

Skills needed:

Ability to set aside personal agenda for the sake of prayerful discernment.

Good listening skills.

Willingness to attend scheduled discernment training (*See addendum. It is strongly urged that this training be required for participation.*)

Interviewing experience.

- a. Parish members submit names with choice of team.
 - b. Vestry appoints teams comprised of representative 8 to 12 members
 - c. includes at least one vestry member
 - d. Wardens serve ex-officio (no vote)
4. Vestry establishes timeline, including approximate duty length of each search team, and budget for search
 5. Vestry Commissions the Search Teams

Phase 1: The Self-Study Phase

1. Questions to be asked:
 - a. What kind of community is this parish? (Who are we? Who is our neighbor?)
 - b. What kind of parish have we been in the past?
 - c. What new shape is God calling us to become as community of faith?
 - d. How can we as a parish realize this vision of the future?
 - e. What kind of leadership is needed for us to be faithful to the work to which God is calling us?
2. Forms that the Self-Study takes:
 - a. Vestry and Search Team retreat
 - b. Informational interviews within the congregation and community
 - c. Written surveys and questionnaires
 - d. Searching parish archives
 - e. Researching demographic information
 - f. Reviewing past history, written and verbal, with older members
 - g. Focus groups for envisioning future through imaginative and creative exercises
3. Goal: self-discovery and self-definition

Phase 2: The Search Phase The Discernment Journey (see Discernment addendum below)

1. Profile Team completes profile based on Self-Study information. Vacancy is listed in the Positions Open Bulletin with the National CDO
2. The Parish Profile is used to solicit names of potential candidates from the National Church Deployment Office, The Bishop's Office, vestry, members of the parish.

3. This may be a time to run ads in the “The Living Church” (414.276.5420) as well as “Episcopal Life.” Classified.
4. **The bishop reviews all names suggested and an approved list is given to the Screening Team.**

Resources which may be used at this point in the process may be ordered through the Church Deployment Board at (212) 922-5250: “Interviewing in the Calling Process”, “Caring for Clergy in the Calling Process” and “Prayer in the Calling Process”. These are handy 16 page booklets. Episcopalservices.com is the web site for unofficial deployment service within the Episcopal Church.

5. Screening Team Contacts prospective Candidates

Each prospective candidate is contacted formally by mail, asking of his or her interest in the position. Information on the parish and community is sent to each prospect that replies in the affirmative. A Church Deployment Office personal profile and resume’ are requested from each candidate. All information concerning the candidates is kept within the confines of the Screening Team.

6. Screening Team narrows the approved list to include the top candidates – probably four to six priests. Candidates who are not to remain on the candidate list are notified immediately. Initial inquiry is made, for each remaining candidate, through the Bishop and the Deployment Officer to his/her counterparts in the other diocese for those candidates who are not from Colorado. Diocesan screening covers the candidate’s possible history with

- Sexual Misconduct and presence of misconduct training
- Financial Misconduct
- Substance abuse
- Mental Health and stability of family life
- Divorce
- Ecclesiastical discipline
- Basic Ministry Skills
- Involvement with the Diocese
- General health

(The search team is not to contact any candidate on their list until that person has approval from the bishop. Also, please allow one month to complete the screening process after the list has been presented to the bishop)

An initial background form is sent from the Bishop’s office to the candidates being visited.

*Prior to any visits being made, the Senior Warden shall meet with the Canon to the Ordinary to review the salary and benefit package that will be offered to the perspective rector.

7. Visits

The Screening Team may schedule visits with selected candidates on the candidates’ home ground. It is recommended that this visit be made on the weekend. Clergy should be called ahead of time and an appointment made for a Saturday or Sunday afternoon

and/or evening interview. The team should take the priest (and spouse if applicable) to dinner so that they can get to know both of them. The Screening Team may spend the night in the town or city where the priest is located and will attend all services on Sunday morning.

8. Screening Team submits names to Vestry

The screening team submits 1-3 candidates to Vestry who will arrange for the clergy person (and spouse if applicable) to visit the parish, tour the city and meet with the vestry (not the parish as a whole). These visits are to be done during the week (not on Sunday for the liturgies) if at all possible. **In the same visit, arrangements are made for out-of-state candidates to meet with the bishop.** The parish pays expenses for those invited to visit. All candidates visited by the screening team, but not selected to visit the parish, are notified immediately.

9. Local Interview/Decision Making

From the list, 2 or more, candidates are recommended by the Screening Team, the vestry elects a Rector and notifies the Bishop; it would be appropriate for this call to be confirmed in writing. **Upon completion of the formal comprehensive background check (paid for by the parish) the bishop gives the Senior Warden permission to issue the call.**

Phase 3: Confirmation

1. Clarifying Terms of the Call

The wardens, and (if needed) the Deployment Officer meet with the rector elect to work out the terms of the call leading to a Letter of Agreement, which is reviewed and acknowledged by the bishop. Then a public announcement is made. News releases would be appropriate.

2 Mutual Ministry Review after six months

When the new Rector has been in place for six months a Mutual Ministry Review is to take place with a facilitator to look at expectations, ministry and goals with the Rector and Vestry. ("Living into Our Ministries: The Mutual Ministry Cycle Resource Guide" is available from the Fresh Start Program Office. Phone number 865.588.0674)

General Considerations:

Staff members may not serve on any of the committees in the search process although they may be used as a resource.

The clergy leaving the parish may not be involved in the search process in any way.

Clergy who serve as interim-rector may not be called as rector.

The Canons require an annual audit be done each year and submitted to the Diocese not later than September 1 for the preceding year. **An audit must be completed for the most recent year end prior to a call being issued for a new rector/vicar.** However, it may not be practical to complete an audit for the prior year during the first quarter of a new year. Accordingly, in those cases where a call is issued in the first quarter of the year, the Bishop may waive the requirement

for submitting an audit for the immediately preceding year providing that an audit in good form was timely submitted as last required by the Canons.

Discernment

Throughout a search process, people tend to get anxious. The question “Do we have a new rector yet?” comes often, and tension rises. People have strong opinions as to what kind of rector should lead the parish, and often the strongest voices are the ones who have the most influence. But there is another way.

The journey of discernment is not just a matter of resume analysis, preference and argument. It’s not a matter of finding someone who is adequate to the task. It is not a matter of special interest groups being in control. Discernment is about prayerful listening. Going through the interim process and calling a rector is always done best when done with care and discernment rather than hurry and compromise. In God’s good time, good things will come

The following is from *Grounded in God*, (Suzanne Farnham et al., Morehouse Publishing).

“Discernment is a prayerful, informed, and intentional attempt to sort through the voices within to get in touch with God’s Spirit at work in a situation and to develop a sense of the direction in which the Spirit is leading.”

“Discernment beckons us to be still and listen with the ear of our heart. It draws us into alignment with God. The goal of our discernment efforts is to find the mind of Christ.”

“Discernment is more than saying prayers that ask God to guide us in a rational consideration of matters. It is a mode of prayer that involves opening our entire selves to the working of the Holy Spirit.”

Discernment... “bids us to let go of preconceived ideas so that we can be open to new possibilities with a readiness to view things from new perspectives.”

The task of discernment is different from the tasks of interviewing and employing. You are not in the process of “hiring a priest,” you are in the process of discerning in prayer the person who can best lead the ministry of your parish and equip its people for their own ministries. After all the self-study, research interviews and analysis has been done, there is a call for deep listening. This takes care and time. Consider this prayer written by Thomas Merton (and adapted for groups) which can be used to help focus those who are charged with the task of calling a rector to your parish. You may find it helpful in your personal life discernment and decision-making.

God, we have no idea where we are going. We do not see the road ahead of us. We cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do we really know ourselves, and the fact that we think we are following your will does not mean that we are actually doing so.

But we believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And we hope we have that desire in all that we are doing. We hope that we will never do anything apart from that desire.

And we know that if we do this you will lead us by the right road, though we may know nothing about it. Therefore, we will trust you always though we may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. We will not fear, for you are ever with us, and you will never leave us to face our perils alone.

Discernment Training Workshop

A workshop is available for your Screening Team and Vestry which will assist in the journey of discernment during the search process. It focuses on the art of deep listening, Christian consensus (not unanimity), and community. It is highly recommended that all those involved in the final screening and selection of a rector participate in this 3-5 hour workshop. *“Discernment beckons us to be still and listen with the ear of our heart. It draws us into alignment with God. The goal of our discernment efforts is to find the mind of Christ.” (Grounded in God)*

Welcoming New Clergy

An article heavily adapted for local use from an article by Judy Stark at the Cathedral Church of St. Peter, St. Petersburg, Florida.

Wear your name tag. A priest once said that as his new congregation lined up to shake his hand on the way out of church the first few weeks, he could see them all removing their name tags. Why? Because the table on which they kept their nametags was just beyond the priest at the back of the church, and they were accustomed to leaving them on that table as they walked out the door. Please, wear your tags, and not just the first week but every week.

Introduce yourself every time you meet your new rector (or members of his family) for the first few months. And please don't embarrass your rector by testing after a week or two: "OK, Father, what's my name?" Each parishioner has to memorize only one new name. He/she has to memorize far more – the whole parish!

Walk right up to the Rector at coffee hour and say hello. Don't wait for him/her to "work the room." Introduce yourself, and say something about yourself" where you work, who's in your family, what you do around the church.

Invite your new clergy family for dinner. Moving is stressful, and the hospitality of provided meals or invitations to dinner is essential in helping your new rector and family make the transition as easily as possible. And there is no better way to get to know someone than over a meal. To help them get to know your town, consider giving a gift certificate to your favorite local restaurant. Got spare tickets to a sports event, a concert, and a play? Invite your new clergy family! Anything that indicates you have a personal stake in this new relationship.

Remember how change feels. We all went through a period of grieving after the former rector left. Remember that priests in a new parish go through the same process. "Any clergy family coming into your constellation is coming in mourning for their old place," a diocesan executive once said. In just a few weeks, they've had to turn their lives upside down: say a sad goodbye to a loving, supportive parish where they have a deep spiritual and emotional investment, and begin all over again.

What can you do to help your new rector deal with this period of grief? Be aware that it's happening. Don't overreact to fond comments about a former parish; it doesn't mean he/she wishes to be back there or

doesn't like the new parish. Give the rector an opportunity to talk about his/her former life, share that history, and talk about the things he/she loved there. The new ministry needs to be celebrated, but the relationships and people from the past, and the fact that your rector has had a loss, need to be validated too.

Extend the same courtesy to the clergy family. Your new clergy family requires some special care and feeding; make sure that some "welcome" events are specifically arranged for them.

All the parties shouldn't be cocktails and dinner for adults. If your new priest has children in the family, a barbecue or pool party where they can meet others with young people will help them feel more at home. Be aware, too, of the changing role of the clergy spouse. Spouses may have their own careers, and may not be available to serve on lots of parish committees, guilds or ministries. They may have their own ideas about where they can be most effective and how much time they can commit.

Your parish has been without a permanent full-time rector for a long time, and many people would like life to quickly settle back down to normal. People want a sense of security. They want to get things pigeonholed right away so they feel stable. Congregations don't like to feel unsettled. They have a need to tie things down early on. They want to feel, 'We're going back to our regular life now.'

Not so fast

It can take three to six months for a priest to start to find out what the real need of the parish is and how one can best fill that need. It's important to understand that you can't really come to any hard and fast conclusions about what a new priest is going to do until he or she has been there for a year.

New clergy need time to find their way in a new parish, get to know what's important to the congregation and decide how their ministry can be more effective. During this time, they say, here's what they need from their congregations. These are the greatest gifts parishioners can give them to empower their ministry and help them be the spiritual leaders their parishes want and need.

Take it easy. One priest recalled being asked to step in, early on, when the lay leader of a prayer group called in sick. Word spread "that I was one of those charismatic pray-ers," the priest recalled. The same priest was asked to fill in at the last minute at a Vacation Bible School story hour, and lots of parishioners assumed, erroneously, that the priest would be taking over the children's ministry.

Don't make assumptions about who the new rector really is. Give everyone time and space to discover each other. God might want everybody to be a little different and grow!

In his book *New Beginnings: A Pastoral Startup Workbook*, Roy M. Oswald says, "Clergy new to their congregations should spend six to nine months being little more than a lover and a historian"-getting to know everyone, finding something they can love in each member of their new parish family, and learning the church's history, "the ghosties who walk the corridors," as one priest put it, and "everybody's little secret codes," another said.

Hold your fire. "Just because the rector suggests you move the sacred vase in the parish hall doesn't mean disrespect, a priest in Florida said." "It just means he doesn't know the history." Don't assume he's deliberately running roughshod over beloved traditions.

If you wonder why your new rector did such-and-such, or what she meant in saying thus-and-so, don't gossip and speculate. Try this revolutionary approach: Ask!

Focus on what's important. You didn't hire a clone of your previous rector or the interim. Accept the fact that the new person is going to be different. Clergy all do their altar work differently, they all have different preaching styles, and they all like to wear their vestments a little differently.

You have to figure out what is essential to the faith and what is just stuff-extraneous personal preference.

Comparisons with the previous priests are not always helpful, priests say, whether that predecessor is The Late Great Father (someone you loved) or Her Wretchedness (someone you didn't). "It can get tiring and really isn't very productive," one priest said, to hear over and over again that "I always loved it when the interim rector did this" or "I always hated it when she did that." Or "I remember when Fr.... used to ..."

At the same time don't be afraid to talk about your former clergy. They are part of your history and the church was formed by their contributions.

Remember: Your new priest is only human. New priests do not come equipped with a magic wand they can wave to resolve a parish's problems. Congregations need to be reasonable in their expectations, understand that one person cannot fulfill every need, and realize that the solutions to a congregation's problems lie within the congregation itself.

No priest should be greeted, on Day One, by a parishioner who barges into the office, to-do list in hand and agenda on his/her mind, and announces, "Here's what my committee wants to see done, and we need an answer on this right now." ("It actually happens," one priest said.)

The congregation is only human, too. It's very typical, Roy Oswald says, for parishioners to worry, "Will he like me? Will I have as good a relationship with this rector as I did with her predecessor, or maybe even a better one? What if he doesn't like me?" Acknowledge that anxiety, take it easy and realize that one-on-one relationships with the new priest will work themselves out over time.

Remember too that you have friends you've known for years whose thoughts and deeds you wouldn't presume to predict (and if you did, you'd likely be wrong). Humbly acknowledge that you're not such a perfect mind reader that you know, after a week or a month, exactly what your new priest means, or intends, or thinks about every possible subject.

Let your new priest lead. Roy Oswald says some parishioners play this game: "They threaten to leave the parish, and take their pledge with them, unless the new priest promises to always, or only, or never behave in a certain way, use certain prayers, conduct the worship service in a particular manner. (Oswald's advice to priests" You can't please everybody; some people will leave; others will be attracted by what the new priest does.")

Another priest said "You can't let people hold the vision of the church hostage with their presence and their pledge." Priests need to be willing to say to those who threaten to leave: "Is this really what this place means to you, that at the first sign you're not getting your way, you're going to leave?"

You've called a leader, now let him/her lead. You are actually marrying someone. Allow yourself to fall in love with your new priest, and just love him/her and the clergy family, whatever that means to you. Just love.