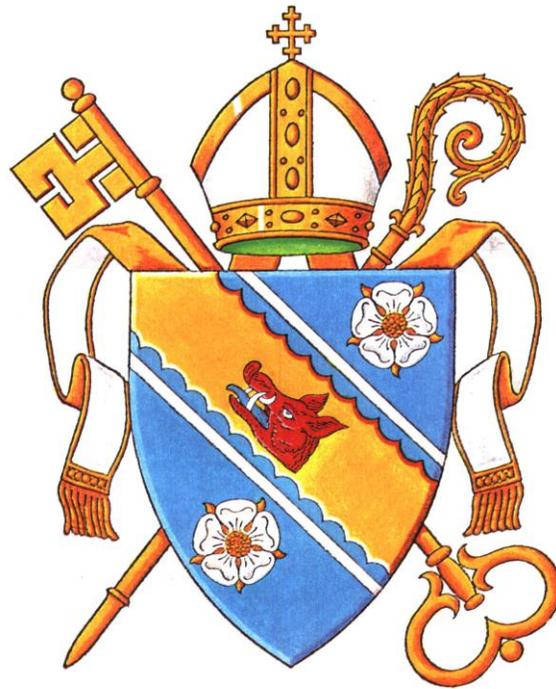


DIOCESE OF GEORGIA

# Transition Handbook



A Guide for Vestries  
& Search Committees

*Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist 2016*

Trust in the slow work of God.  
We are, quite naturally, impatient in everything  
to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.  
We are impatient of being on the way  
to something unknown, something new,  
and yet it is the law of all progress  
that it is made by passing through  
some stages of instability—  
and that it may take a very long time.

Your ideas mature gradually—let them grow,  
let them shape themselves, without undue haste.  
Don't try to force them on,  
as though you could be today what time  
(that is to say, grace and circumstances  
acting on your own good will) will make them tomorrow.

Only God could say what  
this new spirit gradually forming within you will be.

Give our Lord the benefit of believing  
that His hand is leading you,  
and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself  
in suspense and incomplete.

—*the Rev. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955)*

## **Introduction**

While not a perfect fit with the search process which also needs some definite actions and attention to schedules, the words of Teilhard de Chardin above are offered here because trusting in God and remaining calm and open are essential during a time of transition in the clergy serving as head of a congregation.

Discerning the call of a new priest to serve as rector or vicar is an act of prayer. Consciousness that one is doing a holy thing for the good of the whole congregation and the sacrifice of personal agenda are the two essential qualities in all those involved in the decision. The single most important factor in the time of transition is the steady calm of the wardens and chair (or co-chairs) of a Search Committee. That steady calm based on abiding trust in God will do much to guide a congregation through a time of discernment. For some specific suggestions for group prayer and reflection, see *Prayer in the Calling Process* ([http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/Prayer\\_in\\_Calling\\_Process.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/Prayer_in_Calling_Process.pdf)).

This document summarizes the policies and practices of the Diocese of Georgia from the time a priest first meets with the Bishop to discuss retirement or a new call through the selection of the new rector or vicar. As you go through this process, know that you are not alone. The Bishop and the Canon to the Ordinary of the Diocese will assist you along the way. As you go through the search process, we will also be praying for your congregation by name at Eucharist services held at Diocesan House in Savannah.

*“Don’t worry about anything, but pray about everything.  
With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God.  
And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”  
—Philippians 4:6-7*

## **Phase I – Separation and Planning**

### **Notice of a Transition**

The transition process begins when the rector or vicar meets with the bishop and they determine together when the announcement to the vestry and congregation will be made. As lay leaders of your congregation, know 30-60 days notice is sufficient and a longer notice is usually neither needed nor desirable. Congregations tend to become restless or uncomfortable with long goodbyes.

The date will need to be set the Canon to the Ordinary to visit the parish to preach, preside at all Sunday liturgies and meet with the congregation. This will usually be in the first weeks following the clergy’s departure. With that date set, you can put off the work of finding a new rector or vicar and take the two months to bid farewell to the current priest.

### **Saying Good-bye**

Whether the rector is leaving because of retirement, a call to another parish, or even because of differences with the parish, the elements of the separation process remain the same. Much of the energy of the parish during this time should be devoted to saying “good-bye.” Even in those instances where relations between priest and parish have been less than harmonious, it is always possible to find things that have been good, things to be grateful for, and things to celebrate while acknowledging any conflicts or challenges. It is important that the separation be graceful because a parish that does not feel good about the departure of its former rector or vicar is handicapped in establishing a relationship with the new priest taking on that call. Working with the wardens and vestry, the Canon to the Ordinary can offer suggestions to help the parish arrange a leave-taking that affirms the past and lays the groundwork for the future.

An exit interview should be scheduled. Sample material for conducting an exit interview can be found in *Beginning Ministry Together: The Alban Handbook for Clergy Transitions* by Roy Oswald, James M. Heath and Ann W. Heath, available from the Alban Institute.

The outgoing priest, no matter how much he or she is beloved, must not be part of the planning process. It is a natural thing for clergy who have been planning activities for years to want to continue to be helpful, but they must not try to plan a future of which they cannot be a part. It compromises the parish’s transition process by preventing people from dealing with the loss of relationship.

In the case of retirement, good-bye is good-bye. The mere presence of the retired rector has a negative effect on the new rector-parish relationship. That relationship must be nurtured without interference, intentional or otherwise. Retired clergy are to absent themselves from their former parish for at least two years, and may return as members of the congregation *at the discretion of the new rector*. (See the Appendix II Guidelines for Clergy Transitioning from a Congregation). Any exceptions to this nationally standard practice must be negotiated with the Bishop directly.

It is not appropriate for assisting or any adjunct clergy to serve as the interim rector. The issue is whether a key member of the staff of the former rector can facilitate the congregational dynamics that lay the groundwork for the new rector. If it is the desire of the vestry for an assisting minister to continue as an assistant during the interim, the canons require this be approved by the Bishop under such conditions as the Bishop and vestry may determine [Canon III.9.3(c)].

### **An Audit**

An annual audit of parish finances is required by Canon of the Episcopal Church (I.7.1.f) and policy of the diocese. In addition, an audit is especially appropriate in the transition of leadership. This is protection for both the outgoing and incoming clergy. It is the responsibility of the vestry to have an audit completed within six months of the rector's departure and to have the audit and any letter to parish management issued by the auditor and the vestry's response to such letter on file with the diocesan finance office.

No call will be issued for a new rector or vicar until the audit is completed and reviewed by the diocesan office together with the vestry's written response to it. It is best to get this task underway right after the priest's departure. For congregations with an annual budget of under \$500,000, this need not be a professional audit. Instead, the Diocese of Georgia recommends an audit swap whereby small committees (often three persons) from neighboring parishes review one another's books. This provides an outside source giving a fresh look at the finances and also comes at no cost to the congregation. Contact the Canon for Administration for guidelines on conducting the audit.

### **The Senior Warden's Role**

Once the departing rector leaves, the senior warden has a number of responsibilities during the interim period. With assistance from the Bishop as well as that of the Canon to the Ordinary, the senior warden and vestry must make arrangements for the conduct of worship and for pastoral care until an interim rector begins. While they should be supported in this by the vestry, it is not appropriate to divert their attention and energy to a "mini-search" for interim or supply clergy.

Until there is an interim rector or priest-in-charge, the senior warden is the "ecclesiastical authority" of the parish and signs transfers, requests for licenses, and other documents normally signed by the clergy. This authority is administrative rather than pastoral.

Arrangements for supply clergy or the interview and call of an interim rector are to be done by the wardens. *The interim period will very likely be twelve to eighteen months* and sometimes more unless a shorter search option is chosen by the vestry and approved by the bishop as noted below. The wardens will secure the services of an interim rector, who will provide continuity during the interim period. The Bishop will assist in these arrangements through the Canon to the Ordinary.

### **Calking an Interim Rector or Interim Vicar**

An Interim Rector or Interim Vicar will be selected to pastor the congregation during a search. This person is hired by the vestry in consultation with the Bishop's Office (who can provide candidates). This search generally gets underway soon after the priest announces that he or she is leaving.

The term "interim rector" is used for those clergy who come into a congregation for an agreed transition period and who are by virtue of that role not available to become the

rector or vicar. An Interim serves according to a Letter of Agreement. The Interim is the “Rector in the Interim” with the rights and responsibilities normally accorded to the Rector with the exception of tenure. Normally they have been trained and are experienced in the ministry of transition. The terms and conditions under which an interim rector is called may vary with local circumstances but generally the responsibilities include the conduct of public worship, the continuation of pastoral ministries, support of programs, and whatever else contributes to the maintenance of the normal parish program.

Of particular importance, the interim rector is trained to facilitate the developmental process of an interim period, to assist a parish to evaluate its mission and ministry, to make any needed changes in parish administration or program, and to help the parish prepare for the arrival of a new rector. This work is done in consultation with the wardens, vestry, and other parish leaders.

There are five developmental tasks during this time of transition:

1. Coming to Terms with History,
2. Clarifying Identity,
3. Raising up New Leadership,
4. Renewing the Relationship with the Diocese, and
5. Welcoming the New Rector.

The interim rector is rector in all matters excepting tenure. All clergy doing interim ministry in this diocese will be trained or in training. The duties of an interim rector include presiding at meetings of the vestry and supervising, hiring and firing staff. *Compensation must be comparable to that paid to the new rector for comparable responsibilities.* The appointment of an interim rector must be approved by the bishop since he or she is an extension of the bishop’s ministry just as a rector or vicar is an extension of the bishop’s ministry.

*“The human mind may devise many plans,  
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.”*

—Proverbs 19:21

**Preparing for the Search** The vestry lays the groundwork for the search itself, and establishes a search budget. The budget will include the costs of producing the parish profile, the costs of visiting candidates, the expense of visits to the parish by the candidates, relocation expenses including meals and lodging if needed, background checks, and incidentals that might include such expenses as postage, the reimbursement of costs for telephone interviews. As the needs of the parish become better defined, the vestry appoints and charges a search committee to whom responsibility for identifying prospective clergy is delegated. The search committee is appointed *after* an interim rector is in place.

The search committee may include vestry members, but ought to represent the breadth of the parish in terms of age, occupation, and diversity. It is often desirable to have a youth member or two, but such members must be sixteen years of age in order to vote.

The vestry must decide on a range of compensation and the benefit package that it will offer the new rector. Reviewing the most recent Priest Salary Survey in the Reference Library at the diocesan website is instructive in setting compensation. The Canon to the Ordinary can be of assistance in suggesting salary levels in comparable parishes, and evaluating other portions of the package such as housing and other allowances. When the

Bishop has given permission to elect, a call has been accepted, and all negotiations are completed, the Bishop gives final approval to the compensation package.

One book, which will assist with all of the above search tasks, is *Calling Clergy: A Spiritual & Practical Guide through the Search Process* by Elizabeth Rankin Geitz (Church Publishing), and Charles R. Wilson’s helpful 70-page book *Search*, ([http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/CDO\\_Search-Updated\\_Version.pdf](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/CDO_Search-Updated_Version.pdf)) and other materials here: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/library/office/transition-ministry>

### **Communication**

Communication with the parish is essential. Some announcement, perhaps a minute in length, should be made at all services frequently, so that any information that can be shared with the congregation is announced briefly in worship. In times when nothing is changing, make sure that the monthly newsletter, weekly email, or other communications lets the congregation know where the search is in general (such as posting that you are working on the profile, or making on-site visits to candidates). While the content of the deliberations and the names of nominees are confidential, it is important to communicate on a steady basis the progress of the process—even if that means simply informing the congregation that the committee will not be meeting for three weeks.

Parishioners must be assured that the interim period is being well managed and that progress, however seemingly invisible, is being made. Otherwise, the parish may feel that “nothing is happening.” It is essential that the vestry and the search committee maintain good communication with the parish and each other throughout the interim period.

In addition to short verbal announcements, weekly or monthly notices in the Sunday bulletin or regular newsletter could announce something along these lines: “The search committee has had four meetings and is currently working on a narrative profile for nominees.” Or, “The search committee is reviewing a list of names approved by the Bishop.” If new members are elected to the vestry in the course of the search process it is important to bring them up to date on the status of the process.

*“Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds,  
not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some,  
but encouraging one another.”  
—Hebrews 10:24-25*

## Phase II – Congregational Assessment

### The Canon Meets with the Congregation

As soon as possible after the departure of the rector, ideally on the following Sunday, the Canon to the Ordinary will be the preacher and celebrant at your Sunday services. This gives an opportunity for the parish to participate in a theological reflection upon the challenges and opportunities of an interim period and to share questions and concerns. This provides the Canon an opportunity to share with the parish the bishop's policies for filling clergy vacancies and the reasons for those policies. The Canon may also meet with the vestry to assist in future plans if that has not already happened.

### Congregational Assessment

A critical task of the Search Committee is to assess where the congregation is now and what, therefore, is needed from the Rector or Vicar as the congregation moves forward. This is aided greatly by an initial parish meeting in which members of the congregation express their views and their wishes. This meeting is especially helpful as members get to hear one another before any survey is taken. At this meeting, you can give the congregation an overview of the process as well as giving room for them to share their hopes.

One means of accomplishing this task of self study, which the Diocese highly recommends, is to survey the congregation by means of contracting with Holy Cow Consulting to use their Church Assessment Tool, or to use a similar consulting service. The Church Assessment Tool is a congregation-wide survey that has proven to be a highly effective means of hearing from the members of the parish. We further recommend that you contract with them to have Russ Crabtree conduct an online meeting as a follow up to your receiving the data. This is well worth the relatively low cost (usually under \$1,000 for the assessment and the feedback session) in order to get the pulse of the congregation during this time of transition. No congregation, however, is required to use this assessment. More is found online at the Holy Cow website (<https://holycowconsulting.com/cat/>).

If this or a similar tool is not used, it will be necessary for the Search Committee to create its own survey, collect and collate the data. In all cases, there must be a means to hear from every member of the church in this time of transition. After the survey results are in, a second parish meeting needs to be scheduled so that everyone hears back from the survey at a time and place when questions can be answered and additional comments heard before work begins on the Parish Profile and completing the OTM Community Portfolio.

Once the report is received and the follow up meeting has occurred, a parish-wide meeting can share what the Search Committee heard with the whole congregation. That meeting is an additional opportunity to hear feedback. It is also important as the members will see that they have been listened to by their Search Committee.

*Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your whole Church,  
and so guide us in this parish during our time of self-study and search  
that we shall grow in our commitment to one another and to the cause of your Christ,  
and may come to choose a faithful pastor to join us  
in our ministries in our parish, community and diocese;  
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

## The Parish Profile

With the guidance of the Canon to the Ordinary, a descriptive booklet about the parish and the community may be prepared. This booklet is called the Parish Profile. This task is the responsibility of the search committee. The profile is used to introduce prospective candidates to the parish and the local community. Topics addressed in the profile may include mission or identity statement, a history of the parish, a description of the Diocese of Georgia, the community where the parish is located, parish programs, distinctive features of the parish, finances and stewardship, facilities, staffing, key statistics (membership, worship attendance, etc.), goals, and desired characteristics of the next rector.

The profile will generally include but is not limited to:

1. Parish history (including a timeline of key points)
2. Parish Demographics
3. Community Demographics
4. Understanding of mission and ministry of the parish
5. Details on parish life including an overview of:
  - Christian education
  - Worship
  - Outreach
  - Stewardship
  - Pastoral care
  - Parish life/events
  - Future opportunities
6. Rector (or Vicar) profile
7. Diocesan profile (Appendix II in this document)
8. Goals & Objectives the Parish Hopes to Achieve in the Next Two to Four Years.
9. Financial history for three years
10. Current Budget and Financial Statement of the Parish
11. List of Search Committee Members

While the parochial reports of the congregation will assist with this task, the profile should contain information and ideas collected from parishioners for the search. This is one of the primary benefits of the search process as members get together and talk aloud about their shared life and vision. The profile is a unique picture of your congregation, its ministry and vision, at this point in time and is not to be based on a revision of a previous profile.

The Canon to the Ordinary can assist the Search Committee in designing a process that will provide both an accurate description—including candid presentation of parish issues and limitations—and lively parish dialogue. While one naturally wants to put the best foot forward, this is the time for honesty and clarity. You will be entitled to an honest assessment from potential clergy on their strengths and weaknesses. The tone is set in the honesty found in the profile.

Do not short-change this process as the benefit of the profile process goes well beyond making a recruitment tool to use to attract the right priest. Engaging parishioners

thoughtfully in discernment about God’s will for their community of faith is much more important than the profile produced by that dialogue. The process should result in a vision emerging and shared goals are named. This is important work and takes time and energy.

A draft of the profile must be reviewed and approved by the bishop personally, prior to approval by the vestry, and while there is still opportunity for additions and corrections to be made. The profile is the first impression many candidates have of the congregation and should be developed with broad congregational input. When completed, the document should be made available in PDF format on the congregation’s website and an electronic copy is to be sent to the Canon to the Ordinary.

### **OTM Portfolios**

The Office of Transition Ministry (OTM) is the office within the Episcopal Church Center responsible for maintaining and updating active “portfolios” of individuals and congregations. These include:

- **OTM Personal Portfolio:** A searchable form completed by an individual seeking employment in the Episcopal Church. It identifies educational background, work history, skills and experience, etc. It may also contain links to social medial of the individual’s choosing. Data on the Portfolio is “self-reported” and does not require the approval of any diocesan authority.
- **OTM Community Portfolio:** A searchable form completed by the Search Committee and approved by the Vestry that summarizes the needs and desires of the parish. The form is usually completed with the assistance of the Canon to the Ordinary or a Consultant and is sent to Diocesan House who uploads the information to the OTM database.

While a Parish profile is not required for all searches, an OTM Portfolio is essential as this goes into the denomination’s database for searches. You will note that the questions answered by individual priests are identical to those answered by congregations so that the work spent on creating your Community Portfolio will assist the Search Committee members in reading through the clergy responses to the same questions in the Personal Portfolios.

### **Start Being the Congregation You Dream of Becoming**

Even as the profile is published and shared within the congregation, work should begin on the vision offered by the profile. Start living into being the congregation you dream you can become. This will be the most attractive quality imaginable for potential clergy and it allows the lay leadership to begin setting the tone and the whole congregation to set about the work, so that the ordained leadership comes to help reach that vision forged in dialogue.

*“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.  
In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”  
—Proverbs 3:5-6*

## **Phase III – The Search**

### **Search Options**

In consultation with the bishop, the vestry decides which search option will be used and communicates this in a charge to the search committee. The decision is entirely practical, and made in terms of how ready the parish is, and how much time, money, and energy the parish is able to put into the search. This decision is not, however, for the parish to make alone, but in consultation with and approval of the Bishop.

### **Option #1 Full Search**

After the completion of the parish profile, the search committee completes the parish search request form and forwards it to the Canon to the Ordinary. While the request is processed, the search committee will ask for nominations from the congregation. All names will be forwarded to the Canon. The opening will also be published online with the Office of Transition Ministries making the listing searchable by all Episcopal clergy.

The opening will be listed for a period of no less than a month to allow candidates to learn of the position. The Canon to the Ordinary will do initial background checks on all candidates who express an interest in being considered and before presenting them to the Bishop for approval. Those names will be given to the search committee for consideration. When the search committee has narrowed its list to those candidates being brought in for interviews, appointments with the Bishop need to be made and formal background checks must be done if one is not already on file in the diocesan office (as with clergy moving within the Diocese).

### **Option #2: A Short-List Search**

It is also possible, that after the completion of the OTM Portfolio and a parish profile (if one is created), the search committee may request a short list of candidates from the Canon to the Ordinary (approved by the Bishop) specifying the number of names desired. The Diocese then compiles the names from a variety of sources, and determines the names given to the committee based on the parish profile. The search committee will then follow the steps as outlined above. This can help cut the time and cost of a full search for congregations that request this variation on the search process. This second option is currently the most common form of search in the Diocese of Georgia.

### **Option #3 Nomination of a Single Candidate by the Bishop**

This option is considered only when the Bishop can be convinced that the parish does not have the resources necessary to do the search or believes it cannot agree on a candidate. With this option the bishop is asked to take full responsibility for the search of a new rector or vicar. The parish will still engage in congregational self-study and preparation of a parish profile to assist the Bishop in this selection, but the choice of the single nominee rests with the Bishop.

When such an appointment is made, the following standards are the norm for the relationship between the parish, the priest-in-charge, and the bishop:

1. One or more names of clergy for the position of priest-in-charge are offered by the bishop. Names may be suggested by the vestry but are subject to the approval of the bishop.
2. The bishop will appoint the priest-in-charge with the approval and consent of the vestry. The priest-in-charge will exercise the canonical duties of a rector subject to

- the ordinary authority of the bishop.
3. The priest-in-charge and the parish enter into an agreement for a period of at least one year, but usually two. (This can be extended by the bishop if appropriate.)
  4. The letter of agreement between the parish, the priest-in-charge, and the bishop will follow the diocesan guidelines for such agreements including termination provisions.
  5. After eighteen months, a Mutual Ministry Review is conducted and the parish and priest may request together that the priest be made rector. Ordinarily such a request is granted. Information on a Mutual Ministry Review is found in the Reference Library section of the Diocese of Georgia website ([www.gaepiscopal.org](http://www.gaepiscopal.org)).
  6. If, at the time of the Mutual Ministry Review, it is decided by either the vestry or the priest in charge, not to offer or accept a call, the priest in charge becomes the interim for the 12 to 18-month long search for a new rector or vicar.

### **Relevant Policies**

There are certain policies of the Bishop that must be kept in mind concerning possible candidates for the position of rector regardless of which option is chosen.

1. *An interim rector is not to be considered as a candidate for rector.* This norm must be made clear in the letter of agreement. An interim, like John the Baptist, is preparing the way for someone else, and thus, like John the Baptist, has the job of perhaps shaking things up more than the one coming after would do.
2. Normally, a former assistant, curate, or adjunct priest will be approved by the bishop for consideration only after he or she has been gone from the parish for a period of *no less* than two years.
3. A parish must have its financial affairs, bylaws and annual reports in order. Before the bishop will approve a call, he may request a member of the diocesan Finance Committee to conduct a review, and offer recommendations if necessary. Sadly, there have been occasions when a priest has been called with promises that the parish could sustain a full-time rector when that was not the case.
4. All finalists must be approved by the bishop following a personal interview. This is normally done during the candidate's visit to the parish for a personal interview with the search committee.
5. All finalists must have an official background check. The background check covers employment history, legal and criminal problems, and a credit report, so that a rector or vicar does not come to a parish with problems following close behind. The diocesan office will conduct this check.

### **The Search Committee**

The search committee is appointed by the vestry, and, again, is to be broadly representative of the congregation. The size of the vestry is usually a good indicator of an appropriate size for this committee. It is important that there be widespread agreement on the part of the vestry in the selection of search committee members. It is *never* appropriate for a member of the parish staff to serve on the search committee, or to be assigned to assist the search committee. Members of the staff will report to the new rector, and should not be privy to the materials or deliberations of the committee. The vestry should have sufficient confidence in the search committee that it could accept its recommendation for one candidate to be called by the parish as this search process is concluding.

**The search committee must maintain strict confidence about the candidates being considered.** For them to do otherwise is to risk great damage, both to the candidates and to their parishes. The search process is one of discernment, not politics, and this work cannot properly be done unless strict confidentiality is maintained. Confidentiality protects the integrity of the faithful discernment of both priest and parish. The vestry must respect this, and adhere to it as the nominees come to them for consideration, as well. Their congregations also do not and should not know until the decision is made.

It is very harmful if a search committee member “leaks” information to anyone in the parish including a spouse or other family member. It is also important to provide for the security of Search committee files.

It is important that the vestry give a charge to the search committee, which includes the need to pass along only one name to vestry. The search committee members must all agree to support the candidate given to the vestry once that person has been chosen, even if he or she was not a particular member’s first choice.

The Search Committee was charged to find the rector. The vestry does not second guess their work or repeat their process, but must become familiar enough with the candidate’s credentials and personality to decide whether or not to accept the nomination made by the search committee. By the time the search process is complete, the search committee will know a great deal about the finalists, much of it subjective knowledge that cannot be communicated readily or easily to others.

### **Always Consult the Bishop About All Candidates**

The canons require that the Bishop approve the candidate and give the vestry permission to elect that person. In order to prevent disappointment, all potential candidates are screened in the diocesan office before being considered by the search committee. Thus everyone knows they are working with candidates who will be able to serve if chosen.

The screening being done at this point is a “red flag check” in which the Diocese will be checking with all previous dioceses to make sure there has never been inappropriate behavior on the part of the priest. This is done by the Canon to the Ordinary speaking with Canons in previous dioceses, who are required to share confidential information that should eliminate a priest from consideration. The Church has experienced enough turmoil from clergy creating problems in one area going on to serve in another. The red flag check is to avoid those problems from occurring in the future.

**There is no litmus test** The Bishop does not require that potential candidates share any of his personal views on matters involving legitimate difference of opinion. Candidates need not be “high” or “low.” Candidates must assure the Bishop that they will live within the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church, but these are the rather spacious boundaries of orthodoxy rather than a given, more narrow, position. All candidates must also promise to be colleagues with all of the clergy, which means attendance at all clergy events unless excused by the Bishop personally.

### **The Work of the Search Committee**

The search committee will work with the Canon to the Ordinary in creating a Community Ministry Portfolio posted on the website of The Episcopal Church’s Office of Transition Ministries. This is the online job listing routinely searched by priests across the church seeking to discern their next call. Submit this information to the vestry for approval prior to

posting the listing. (This is a document different from the narrative parish profile, but its' completion is informed by the latter.)

The Search Committee will receive from the Bishop's office a list of candidates to be considered. These candidates and those who have indicated interest or been nominated from any other source (such as through members of the congregation), after initial screening by the committee, should be sent a copy of the profile from the Search Committee. The Diocese will assist in getting electronic copies of any candidates complete Personal Ministry Portfolio from the Office of Transition Ministries. This is their materials which correspond to the parish's listing.

*“Almighty God, giver of every good gift: look graciously on your Church,  
and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector for this parish,  
that we may receive a faithful pastor,  
who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”*  
—BCP, p. 818

### **Phase IV – Interviews and Decision**

As you read on page one, the search is a spiritual process, an act of prayer. The committee working in such an atmosphere usually finds the search process a spiritual gift. Remember to pray regularly for discernment. Search Committee members should pray for candidates by name once aware of them. Ask for God's will for that priest, whether it is with your congregation or not. Keep prayer central to the search process.

#### **Initial Interviews**

The Search Committee will typically start with phone or online interviews (using technology such as Skype or WebEX) and shorten the list of candidates prior to visiting the candidates in their current parish environments.

The search committee chair should call the candidate and arrange an interview at a time convenient for all parties. Let the candidate know how much time to block out for the interview and what time you will call. When scheduling two calls on the same evening, allow time to review the first interview before moving to the second.

To the degree possible, the entire search committee should be present for all interviews. When scheduling interviews in different parts of the country, pay attention to time-zone differences. Allow at least forty-five minutes for the call. All committee members should review copies of the candidate's applications materials beforehand.

Before the call is made, each committee member should think of questions that he or she would like to ask. Rather than asking open-ended questions about hypothetical situations, ask how the candidate has handled ministries and issues in the past. Past behaviors are the best indicator of future behaviors. Develop a single list of questions so that each candidate is asked about the same topics. Depending on each candidate's profile and answers to his or her questionnaire, you might have several additional personal questions for each candidate. Decide who will start the call, make introductions, and ask the first questions. Watch your time closely. One person should be in charge of the conversation. Let

each committee member ask at least two questions. A list of potential questions is included below, followed by some possible questions from the candidate that the committee should be prepared to answer. Develop more questions based on the candidate's application materials, your church's strengths and weaknesses as determined by the self study:

- What is your passion in ministry (preaching, teaching, pastoral care, social justice)?
- How do your gifts fit with this passion?
- What challenges do you see facing The Episcopal Church's efforts to evangelize in South Georgia and how would you help us face those challenges?
- What is your greatest hope for the next congregation you serve?
- Tell us about your spiritual walk.
- Tell us about your call to ministry.
- How do you achieve personal growth in your ministry?
- How have you challenged your congregation?
- What style of worship do you enjoy?
- What expectations of your vestry have you had?
- How have you handled disagreements?
- Describe your greatest strengths and abilities.
- What are your greatest weaknesses?
- How would you describe your leadership style?

In preparing for the interview, remember that you will be asked questions also. Below are several possible questions candidates may ask.

- Why are you interested in me as a candidate?
- What role do you expect my family to play in your church?
- What concerns need to be addressed in the congregation and the community?
- What significant events and people have shaped your church?
- What is your vision for your congregation?

It is important to know what you cannot ask. These include questions about age, physical characteristics, disabilities or chronic illnesses, and national origin. You may already have this information in the candidate's profile, but only if he or she has voluntarily added it. The candidate may mention it in an interview, but federal laws govern what cannot be asked of any candidate. Your transition minister can help with interview legalities.

Allow time for the candidate to ask any final questions. Before ending the call, let him or her know what happens next and when you will make contact. Committee members should take notes during and after the call, recording enough information about the call to be able to reflect on the interview later when the field is being narrowed. Each member should note significant impressions. Be in touch with the candidates soon after each interview to thank them for their time and to name when to expect to hear from you next.

Sometimes, after the initial interview, the committee will decide to do another round of interviews. The congregation should share its financial reports for recent years at this

point. Candidates will also be informed of the financial compensation package and appropriate work and benefit considerations as set by the vestry with approval of the Bishop.

### **Visiting the Candidate's Church**

1. Maintain maximum uniformity among your field visits. Develop a definite plan of questions to be asked, with only modest modifications, of each candidate.
2. Assign a team leader to each candidate to coordinate a field visit. The team leader will be responsible for communicating with the candidate and arranging all the details of the field visit. The team leader should contact the candidate by phone, followed up by a letter, to confirm the date and schedule of the team visit, which should include as many of the following as possible:
  - a. informal time with the candidate (and spouse); perhaps over a meal
  - b. attendance at candidate's Sunday worship, *keeping a low, unobtrusive profile*
  - c. time with the candidate in the candidate's daily environment
  - d. formal interview with the candidate
3. Take full advantage of your visit in the candidate's congregation to gather full impressions and materials
  - a. allow time during the field visit to walk around the candidate's workplace neighborhood in advance of meeting the candidate.
  - b. ask for copies of any current materials available that reveal aspects of the candidate's ministry, such as service leaflets, newsletters, the sermon you heard, most recent parish annual meeting report, and brochures on parish programs or policies.
4. Observe the courtesies that invite candidates to remain in conversation with you. In particular...
  - a. pay for all expenses involved in field visits
  - b. make clear the remaining steps in your process; leave the team leader's address and phone numbers with the candidate, and tell the candidate when she or he may next expect to hear from you.
  - c. team leader writes a thank you note to the candidate immediately upon return from field visit.
5. The visiting team writes a complete report of the field visit.
6. One week after the field visit, the team leader calls the candidate to discuss whether the candidate remains interested in the position and to outline next steps.
7. When all field visits are completed, along with their written reports and referencing, the Search Committee decides upon final candidates to invite to the parish for a visit.
8. Search Committee Chair writes to all candidates who did not make the final list to thank them for their participation in this process.
9. Notify the Canon to the Ordinary of the final candidates.

### **Parish Visits**

Next the Search Committee will invite the remaining short-listed candidates (and spouses, when applicable) to the parish for interviews with the entire Search Committee. This time should include a personal interview, a tour of the parish and surrounding community as well as social time. Candidates may not be asked to “audition” with a sermon and conducting a worship service for the congregation. Doing so turns the work of the search committee over to the congregation as a whole. Not only will this make consensus more difficult, it hampers the ministry of the new rector (once selected) to have dissatisfied members say “I wish we had hired the other one we heard.” Suffice it to say that experience has taught that having multiple candidates come to celebrate and preach is a practice to be avoided. During the visit, you should also put candidates and their spouses in a hotel, rather than hosting them in a member’s home.

Courtesy between priest and parish who are seeking God’s will includes timely replies, and honesty in responses. This is a requirement of the Search Committee which respects every priest with whom the committee comes in contact. Once any candidate who has been contacted by the Committee is eliminated, that person should be contacted with some brief description of why they were removed from consideration. An important part of the Search Committee’s work is good routine written communication with all priests being considered.

### **Discernment**

Discernment is the practice of seeking to identify God’s will and then moving with spiritual openness towards it. Bishop Scott Benhase points to the Ignatian approach to discernment as quite helpful spiritual practice. What follows is a brief summary of that practice.

First, we seek to clarify the discernment. To do that we need to state the issue as clearly as possible. To use an example from outside the search process, imagine the issue could be stated as, “I don’t like my current job. The Acme Company has offered me a job in Starbridge. I do not know if I should take it. I do not want to live in Starbridge, but it is a great job offer. Clarify the issue even further, e.g., I don’t know whether to accept the new job in Starbridge or not.” Faithful discernment comes as we get clear on what the real issue is. As related to the search process, this clarity is why the early steps in identifying the parishes gifts and needs is so important.

Second, we begin to pray for the grace of objectivity, what Ignatius called detachment. We want to be able to say: “Thy will not mine be done” and mean it. We want to avoid having a preference for a particular outcome and wanting God to agree with it. Here we seek openness to the new thing God may be doing. This can be seen in a search process where someone who began the search with a given idea of what the new rector must be like, lets go of that fixed notion to see how God is leading the congregation to a new place at this time.

Third, write the discernment as a choice on a legal pad in two vertical columns: We hire the Rev. Pastor; We do not hire the Rev. Pastor. Do this for each of the persons on a short list after all of the interviews are completed. Over the next few days, write under each column thoughts, feelings, and beliefs that occur to you about the two choices. It might help by asking yourself: What will be gained in choosing one of these? What will be lost in that choice? How could each choice benefit others? How could each disrupt the lives of others?

What excites you about each? Next, pray over what you have written and then wait without trying to rush to discernment. This is an individual exercise by the search committee members leading toward the discernment to be shared with the group.

Fourth, bring this discernment to the search committee meeting and share with one another the individual discernment.

Fifth, reach a tentative decision and live for a couple of days as though you had made one choice, then live a couple of days as though you had made the other choice. In each instance, prayerfully ask God for confirmation of the choice. As you pray, pay attention to experiences of fluctuating peace and agitation and do not allow any anxiety you experience to force the discernment. Take note if moving toward a particular conclusion brings a sense of peace, consolation, and rightness. This is a strong indicator it is of God.

Finally, come together for a final decision. While no process of discernment is perfect, so we must work through such discernment always with less than perfect clarity. The above practice works toward faithfulness even, as St Paul reminds us: “we look through a glass darkly.”

### **Consensus**

It is a wonderful thing when there is an “aha” moment and one candidate is the obvious consensus choice. This epiphany may arise out of the Ignatian discernment described above. This is not always possible, and sometimes the decision will be for some people one of “can I live with this person as rector?” It is desirable that everyone be able to sign on to the candidate nominated to the vestry. If that is not possible, the vestry needs to know the number (not names) of people who could not support the priest whose name is being put forward.

Ideally the vestry will also be able to come to consensus, broadly construed. If that is not possible, the search has probably failed, and the Bishop should be informed and perhaps the search committee should be asked for another name, which would, of course, require a new search.

When the vestry has made a decision, the senior warden telephones the Bishop to give notice of the intent to elect. Unless some last-minute issue has arisen, the Bishop will immediately authorize the vestry to elect and call the candidate. A Letter of Agreement is then signed with copies to the diocesan office, who will need to approve of the wording of that agreement.

*O God of unchangeable power and light:*

*Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery;*

*by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation;*

*let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up,*

*and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection*

*by him through whom all things are made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord;*

*who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.”*

—BCP, p.528

## **Phase IV – The Transition to the New Priest**

### **Another Farewell**

Before the new rector, vicar, or priest-in-charge arrives, plans are made with the interim for then ending of that relationship. As much notice as possible is given, so that the interim rector can get to what is next in her or his ministry. Salary and coverage of insurance and pension benefits are to continue for no less than one month after the end of the interim priest's ministry in the congregation. These terms are to be covered in the initial Letter of Agreement.

### **Preparing for the new priest's arrival**

The following will assist in the new rector being able to settle in both quickly and well:

- Have the rector's office cleaned, including the drapes and carpet where appropriate
- If there is a closet, see that it is emptied, cleaned out, and has some hangers
- If there is a storage closet, have it cleaned out
- Have desks, shelves and cupboards emptied, and wiped down, and windows and windowsills washed
- Have a set of keys ready that will include a master key, keys to the main office, staff offices, and the sacristy
- Prepare a folder that includes the following information:
  - Current membership list and the most recent pictorial directory if there is one
  - A roster of vestry members
  - A copy of the budget and minutes of (at least) the last three vestry meetings
  - A directory of ministries if there is one
  - Letters of Agreement of current staff members
  - A schedule and list of the duties of office volunteers
  - A copy of any policies, procedures, or personnel guidelines
  - A copy of the bylaws
  - The last two or three issues of the parish newsletter, weekly news bulletin and Sunday service leaflet
  - A roster of active committees
  - A copy of the diocesan customaries, from the Bishop's office
  - A map of the area
  - If there is an ECW or other guilds or groups (including the Altar Guild), provide a description of their activities and meeting schedule and their expectations of the rector.
  - Supply key dates of upcoming parish events and what is expected of the rector if you know it.
- Assemble any passwords the rector will need such as those to a computer, security system, or special accounts. To access the General Convention website, the UEID (Universal Episcopal Identifier) is needed along with a PIN number. This is used for parochial reports among other things.
- Any parochial liturgical customary or instruction manual for Eucharistic Visitors, acolytes, altar guild, chalice bearers, lectors and intercessors along with current Sunday schedules
- Offer to provide a tour of the building
- If the rector has a spouse, people need to offer to help get him or her situated in the community, perhaps help with employment matters, and general assistance.

### **Welcome**

A committee or several committees will be responsible to assist the new rector in relocating, moving-in, and finding his or her way around the new parish. A reception ought to be held after the first Sunday service. The wardens will want to thank the Search Committee at that reception.

The new rector, the interim, and any search consultant will meet shortly after the rector's arrival. The bishop, the Canon to the Ordinary, or the senior warden might set up this meeting, the purpose of which is to pass on any information that might be useful to the rector and to offer support. This meeting is to be listed in the contracts with the consultant and interim priest. A day-long vestry meeting or a weekend vestry retreat should be considered as way of getting the new rector and the vestry all on the same page as the new ministry begins.

### **Celebration of New Ministry**

As the new rector is preparing to arrive, he or she consults with the Bishop and together they find a time for the celebration. It is normally held on an afternoon or evening so that other clergy and lay people from the diocesan community can attend. Text to use in creating the bulletin for this service is found in the Reference Library at the diocesan website.

### **Mutual Ministry Review**

Our diocesan standard for Letters of Agreement includes an annual Mutual Ministry Review among the Wardens, Vestry, and other staff, where the performance of the leadership (lay and ordained) is evaluated in a spiritual and practical way. Information on this process is found in the Reference Library at the diocesan website.

*“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread and the prayers....  
And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”  
—Acts 2:42 ,47b*

**A Note of Thanks:** Each of us stands on the shoulders of those who have gone before. This document is not a wholly original work, but borrow freely from the transition materials of other Episcopal dioceses, most notably the Dioceses of Southeast Florida, Bethlehem, Atlanta, Arkansas, and Washington. The end product however, is tailored to the policies of this diocese with new material added to that created by the above sources. We are thankful to the dioceses whose work helped shaped the document you hold.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix I – An Overview/Checklist

#### Initial Vestry Tasks

- Wardens and Vestry meet with Canon to the Ordinary (or Bishop)
- Decide with Bishop on which of the three search options is appropriate
- The vestry selects the Search Committee, and appoints the Chair (or co-chairs)

#### Initial Search Committee Tasks

- Prepare the Parish Profile
  - Gather parish data
  - Parish written survey
  - Focus groups
  - Open parish meetings
  - Parish statistics and budget information
- Prepare Profile booklet
  - Get approval of profile by vestry and diocesan office
  - Publish profile
  - Send profile (usually as a PDF) to parishioners and the diocesan office
- Fill out OTM Community Portfolio and submit to Canon to the Ordinary
- Solicit names from parish, diocesan office, and OTM.

#### Vestry Tasks During the Search

- Set the salary/compensation package (the Diocese can provide resources to assist)
- Complete an audit of the congregation's finances

#### Search Committee Evaluates Candidates

- Evaluate and rank candidates and send names to Diocesan office for screening
- Send parish profile and questions (for written answers) to all applicants and nominees to determine interest in applying
- Select candidates for telephone interviews and thorough screening  
*notify diocesan office of the names being considered*
- Select no more than five candidates for visits in their parishes  
*visit made by 2-3 Search Committee members*
- Bring finalists to parish for meetings with Search Committee  
*notify the diocesan office of those being brought in at this stage*

#### Search Committee and Vestry Selection

- Select finalist by consensus and submit name to vestry *notify the diocesan office of the name and make sure a background check is on file and gain Bishop's approval of the final nominee*
- If the vestry approves the finalist, the Bishop is asked to issue the call

## Appendix II - Guidelines for Clergy Transitioning from a Congregation

*Diocesan Council approved the following guidelines at its February 6, 2016 meeting:*

Saying goodbye and letting go can be difficult. Doing both well insures a healthy transition in the interim period and later to the leadership of the new priest. The following guidelines, though often difficult for both priest and congregation, provide a context for healthy transitioning.

The priest must:

1. Remove all personal belongings from the church, including books and vestments.
2. Give to the Wardens all parish keys, usernames, passwords, lock combinations, and congregational belongings in his or her control.
3. Give the discretionary fund and any other funds in his or her control to the Wardens.

The priest will inform the vestry and congregation that he or she will:

1. Not serve members of the congregation pastorally, and he/she will be clear with them that his/her pastoral relationship with them has ended.
2. Not be available to officiate at weddings, baptisms, funerals or other services at the former congregation except by specific invitation of the interim priest or the new priest, and then only for a weighty cause. Participation, even attendance, at such services is at the discretion of the interim priest or the new priest.
3. Not attend any social activities of the congregation unless invited by the interim priest or the new priest. After the new priest has been in place for a full year, the priest who had departed should still extend the courtesy of requesting permission from the current priest.
4. Not have discussions of concerns about the congregation with its members. He/she must refer such discussions to the interim or new priest.
5. Not attend regular worship during the interim period and for at least one year after the new priest has arrived. Should the departing priest wish to attend his/her former congregation after that one year, the priest should contact the Bishop for permission.
6. Disengage from participation in and control of all parish-based social media platforms.

These guidelines recognize that during the tenure of a pastoral relationship genuine and lifelong relationships are often formed and that the departing priest can and should maintain those friendships. The departing priest, however, must make a clear distinction between her/his pastoral identity and her/his identity as a friend. The priest must establish appropriate boundaries around pastoral identity. The departing priest must recognize that her/his continued participation in the congregation's life may cause pain rather than help the congregation develop further vitality.

**Guidelines for Departing Clergy's Family:**

The family of the departing priest who may have engaged in ministry in the congregation, and in some cases, may even have been employed by the congregation, now has to deal with this new reality. It can be painful for them to let go because of their ministry and friendships in the congregation. The best practices of the church inform us that family members need to withdraw from all congregational ministries, paid or volunteer. Family members must also refrain from criticism of the vestry, staff, interim or new priest and avoid being drawn into any triangulation with congregants.

Questions related to the above Guidelines are to be addressed directly to the Bishop's Office.

### **Appendix III - Diocese of Georgia Information for Parish Profiles**

*Search Committees may create their own text with information about the Diocese of Georgia or may use the following:*

Among the settlers arriving with Georgia founder James Edward Oglethorpe in 1733 was a clergyman from the Church of England. The Diocese of Georgia was established in 1823 and by 1907 had grown so much that it was divided geographically and the Diocese of Atlanta was created.

Today, the Diocese of Georgia spans the southern portion of the state from the rolling farms and piney woodlands in the west to the marshes and coastlands in the east. We are home to 70 parishes and missions diverse in size, theology, liturgical style, wealth and race. Forty-one congregations hold parish status, and the remaining 29 are missions. We also maintain several chapels throughout the Diocese. Thirty of our congregations are located within 20 miles of cities with populations of 40,000 or more, and the other 40 congregations are situated in suburbs, county seats, and rural towns.

Our current bishop, the Right Reverend Scott Anson Benhase, was consecrated in January of 2010. Approximately 150 clergy are canonically resident in the Diocese of Georgia at any given time. Included in the active clergy are more than 30 non-stipendiary vocational deacons, who serve in the Diocese under the guidance of the Bishop. Most of the clergy in the Diocese serve in parishes and missions; some serve as school, hospital and hospice chaplains or in other non-parochial ministries expressing their special gifts.

Priests of the Diocese of Georgia are expected to participate in convocational clericus meetings (monthly through most of the year), clergy conferences and the diocesan convention. Clergy are also called upon to serve on various diocesan boards, committees and commissions as part of their service to the larger church.

### **Appendix IV - Applicable National Canons**

Note in reading through these canons that as the Diocese of Georgia will work with you to pre-approve candidates, the process will be more streamlined than it first may seem. The Canons cited below are from the 2015 edition.

#### **Canon III.9.3.(a), (b), and (c)**

#### **Of the Appointment of Priests**

##### **Sec. 3.**

##### **(a) Rectors.**

- (1) When a Parish is without a Rector, the Wardens or other officers shall promptly notify the Ecclesiastical Authority in writing. If the Parish shall for thirty days fail to provide services of public worship, the Ecclesiastical Authority shall make provision for such worship.
- (2) No Parish may elect a Rector until the names of the proposed nominees have been forwarded to the Ecclesiastical Authority and a time, not exceeding sixty days, given to the Ecclesiastical Authority to communicate with the Vestry, nor until any such communication has been considered by the Vestry at a meeting duly called and held for that purpose.
- (3) Written notice of the election of a Rector, signed by the Wardens, shall be forwarded to the Ecclesiastical Authority. If the Ecclesiastical Authority is satisfied that the person so elected is a duly qualified Priest and that such Priest has accepted the office to which elected, the notice shall be sent to the Secretary of the Convention, who shall record it. Race, color, ethnic origin, sex, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, disabilities or age, except as otherwise specified by these Canons, shall not be a factor in the determination of the Ecclesiastical Authority as to whether such person is a duly qualified Priest. The recorded notice shall be sufficient evidence of the relationship between the Priest and the Parish.
- (4) Rectors may have a letter of agreement with the Parish setting forth mutual responsibilities, subject to the Bishop's approval.

##### **(b) Priests-in-Charge.**

After consultation with the Vestry, the Bishop may appoint a Priest to serve as Priest-in-Charge of any congregation in which there is no Rector. In such congregations, the Priest-in-Charge shall exercise the duties of Rector outlined in Canon III.9.5 subject to the authority of the Bishop.

##### **(c) Assistants.**

A Priest serving as an assistant in a Parish, by whatever title designated, shall be selected by the Rector, and when required by the Canons of the Diocese, subject to the approval of the Vestry, and shall serve under the authority and direction of the Rector. Before the selection of an assistant the name of the Priest proposed for selection shall be made known to the Bishop and a time, not exceeding sixty days, given for the Bishop to communicate with the Rector and Vestry on the proposed selection. Upon resignation by the Rector, death of the Rector, or in the event of the dissolution of a pastoral relationship between the Rector and the Vestry, an assistant may continue in the service of the Parish if requested to do so by the Vestry under such conditions as the Bishop and Vestry shall determine. An assistant may continue to serve at the request of a new Rector. Assistants may have a letter of agreement with the Rector and the Vestry setting forth mutual responsibilities and containing a clearly articulated dissolution clause, subject to the Bishop's approval.

## **Appendix V – Applicable Diocesan Canons**

Title II

CANON 3

### **Call for Rector or for a Priest to an Ecclesiastical Position Within the Diocese**

- Section 1. No priest shall be called as Rector of any Parish in the Diocese without previous conference between the Vestry of the Parish and the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in reference to the Cleric's fitness. See Title IV, Canon 1.
- Section 2. No priest shall enter upon any ecclesiastical position within the Diocese until having had obtained the written permission of the Bishop, or, if there be no Bishop, of the Ecclesiastical Authority.

CANON 4

Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship

A Rector canonically elected and in charge may not resign from the Parish without the consent of the Vestry thereof; nor may a Parish or Vestry remove such Rector against his or her will except as provided by the Canons of the General Convention.

## Appendix VI - Sample Liturgy for Commissioning the Search Committee

This liturgy may be reproduced for the Church Bulletin.

*The congregation being seated, the celebrant stands in full view of the people. The sponsors and candidates stand facing the celebrant, who says these or similar words:*

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus, we are all baptized by the one Spirit into one Body, and given gifts for a variety of ministries for the common good. Our purpose is to commission these persons in the Name of God and of this congregation to a special ministry to which they are called.

*The Celebrant asks the Wardens:* Are these persons you are to present prepared by a commitment to Christ as Lord, by regular attendance at worship, and by the knowledge of their duties, to exercise their ministry to the honor of God, and the well-being of his Church?

*Warden(s):* I believe they are.

The Celebrant says these or similar words to the candidates for the Search Committee: You have been called to a ministry in this congregation. Will you as long as you are engaged in this work, perform it with diligence?

*Candidates:* I will.

Celebrant: Will you faithfully and reverently execute the duties of you ministry to the honor of God, and the benefit of the members of this congregation?

*Candidates:* I will.

### THE COMMISSIONING

*Warden(s):*

I (we) present to you these persons to be admitted to the ministry of the Search Committee.

*Celebrant :* Let us Pray.

O Eternal God, the foundation of all wisdom and the source of all courage: Enlighten with your grace the Search Committee of this congregation, and so rule their minds, and guide their counsels, that in all things they may seek your glory and promote the mission of your Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.

In the Name of God and of this congregation, I commission you as Members of the Search Committee in this Parish. Applause is appropriate. The service continues with the usual opening for the Holy Eucharist.

## **Appendix VII - Prayers for the Search Committee and Its Work**

It makes a difference that search committee meetings begin and end with prayer, both formal and informal, in being open to the presence of the Holy Spirit. Free-form prayers can be offered for the members of the search committee, the Vestry, the interim, people in leadership during the interim process, candidates, the parish family, and the Diocese. Leadership can be rotated; members may want to bring to the group prayers they have found especially helpful.

Many search committees have found it helpful to compose a short prayer, which is said together at meetings and by the entire congregation during corporate worship. It can be printed in the bulletin.

See also the Book of Common Prayer pp. 816 - 818, for Prayers for the church or the following prayer from the Book of Common Prayer:

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path we may not stumble, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.