

EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF GEORGIA

Transition Handbook



A Guide for Vestries
& Search Committees

September 2026

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.

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.

How a clergy search differs from a secular hiring process

Many who serve on a search committee arrive with real experience hiring for a job — in business, medicine, education, or another field. That experience is valuable, and much of it transfers well: organization, fairness, attention to detail. But calling a priest is not the same as hiring an employee, and a few key differences are worth naming clearly from the outset, so the process makes sense as you move through it.

Discernment vs. Hiring

A secular search asks, “Who is the most qualified candidate?” A call process asks, “Who is God calling to walk with this particular community, at this particular time?” Those questions can have different answers. A gifted, well-qualified priest may not be the right fit for your parish in this season — and that is not a failure of the search, nor a mark against the candidate. It is simply discernment doing its work.

Confidentiality protects, rather than conceals

In a secular hiring process, information often flows freely once a decision is made. In this process, confidentiality exists to protect candidates who are discerning a call while still serving faithfully in their current parish, and to protect your own congregation’s ability to discern without pressure, rumor, or premature judgment. What may feel like secrecy is, in fact, care — for everyone involved.

Note: Discernment for a priest may not end with an outcome in which they leave their existing parish for yours. It may be that at some point in the process the Spirit confirms they are called to remain in place — and thus, confidentiality is essential.

This is not a race against other employers — but timing still matters

Clergy searches do not typically involve competing “offers” the way secular hiring does. But clergy are often discerning more than one possibility at a time, and an open-ended process with no sense of timeline can lead a strong candidate to settle elsewhere simply because they never learned where things stood. Clear, honest communication about pace — even without a hard deadline — respects candidates and your own process alike.

Background and reference concerns

Issues that arise in a secular hiring check often end a candidacy outright. In this process, it is the Bishop’s office that conducts initial diocesan-level reference checks, as well as the more formal background checks later in the process. Some information from these checks is genuinely disqualifying, and for privacy reasons those details will not be shared with the search committee. Other concerns — such as immigration complexities, theological leanings, or a past conflict in a previous parish — do not automatically disqualify a candidate, and may or may not be shared with the committee, depending on relevance and pastoral judgment. Whether and how much to disclose is always at the Bishop’s discretion, with the goal of truth and wisdom for all involved. This practice exists to protect candidates from having private, sensitive matters — such as

health, family, or past personal struggles unrelated to fitness for ministry — become public within a congregation.

Consensus matters more than a vote

A secular hiring committee can often move forward on a majority decision. Here, because this is a spiritual and relational commitment for the whole congregation, the search committee and vestry are asked to seek genuine consensus, even when that takes longer than a vote would.

None of this is meant to make the process more complicated than it needs to be — only to help you enter it with the right expectations. Where you find yourself thinking, “In my own workplace, we would just...”, that is often exactly the moment to pause and ask what this process is inviting you into instead. The Canon to the Ordinary is available to talk through any of this at any point along the way.

“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 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 with 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 time 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 to capture anything the priest who is leaving wants to share as the vestry moves into a transition. This is often done by the wardens.

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 denominationally standard practice must be negotiated with the Bishop directly.

If it is the desire of the vestry for an assisting minister to continue to serve the congregation after the Rector's leave-taking, 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 or financial review

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 \$650,000, 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 during the transition period. 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, priest-in-charge, or new rector, 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 transition 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.

During the Interim Period

If necessary, an Interim Rector will be selected to pastor the congregation during a search. It is important to note that not all parishes will require an Interim Rector. Many parishes will be able to search for their next priest while working with supply clergy and having some lay-led services. Parishes needing an Interim are typically those in transition after a long-term rectorate or those who need substantial time to evaluate mission and ministry, make any needed changes in parish administration or program, do significant work on finances, or mediate a conflict. 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.

Regardless of whether or not an Interim Rector is called, 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 human mind may devise many plans,
but it is the purpose of the Lord that will be established.”
—Proverbs 19:21

Vestry Work Begins

Search and Call Budget Development

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 expense of visits to the parish by the candidates, relocation expenses including meals and lodging if needed, background checks, and incidentals.

Clergy Compensation Plan and Budget

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.

Search Committee: Selection and Appointment

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. If an Interim Rector is called, the search committee is appointed after an interim rector is in place.

Appointment: The search committee is appointed by the Vestry. In the same way as the Vestry is trusted by the parish to provide leadership, the Search Committee is to be trusted by the Vestry to carry out all aspects of the search process.

Composition: The committee 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 to vote. If the vestry desires, a member of the vestry may serve on the search committee as a liaison. After the Search Committee is formed, the vestry will need to develop a clear "Charge" for the work of the Search Committee. This charge includes the number of final candidates the committee is to submit to the Vestry, as well as a deadline for that submission.

Note: the Search Committee recommends. It is the Vestry that has the canonical authority to call the next Rector (with Bishop's Consent). The Bishop appoints a Priest-in-Charge.

Sample Charge from the Vestry to the Search Committee

We, the Vestry of _____, desiring to call a Rector, do hereby delegate to our Search Committee the task of recommending a Candidate (or Candidates) to the Vestry
We hereby charge to the Search Committee:

- The Committee consists of only those so-named by the Vestry.
- There shall be (1,2,or 3) final candidates presented to the Vestry .
- Confidentiality regarding candidates will be maintained throughout the search process.
- At least (1 -2) vestry representatives will serve as liaison members of the Search Committee
- Candidates will be presented to the Vestry no later than dd/mm/yyyy
- The Committee shall conduct the search within the Vestry-approved budget
- The Self-Study materials will form the basis of the criteria
- The Committee will regularly communicate with the congregation as to the status of the search
- The Committee will reveal the names of Candidates only to the Vestry
- Once the Call is issued and accepted, the Committee will take an active role in assisting the new priest and his or her family as they settle into the community
- If these criteria cannot be met, the Vestry may reorganize or dissolve the Search Committee.

Communication throughout the Search Period

Communication by the Search Committee and possibly the Vestry (as appropriate) throughout the search process with the parish is essential. Communication lowers the anxiety level within the congregation a challenge often perpetuated by transitions. Frequent and Clear Communications keep the congregation involved and helps to convey progress and a search timeline. 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 interviewing candidates). While the content of the deliberations and the names of nominees are strictly confidential and never shared until a call is made, 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 candidates.” 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 Priest-in-Charge as the congregation moves forward. 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 receive your interpretation via an online meeting with both the vestry and the search committee. 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 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, and 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 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 Episcopal Church's Vocation Hub Profile. 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 description of the parish and the community may be prepared. This 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 Priest in Charge) profile (The Priest we Seek)
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 profile 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 and vestry, 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.

Vocation Hub Profiles

The Episcopal Church's Vocation Hub hosts online profiles which assist in transition ministry. These include:

- Vocation Hub Candidate Profile: 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 media of the individual's choosing. Data on the profile is "self-reported" and does not require the approval of any diocesan authority.
- Vocation Hub Position Profile: 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 the diocesan office who uploads the information to the Vocation Hub.

While a Parish profile is not required for all searches, a Vocation Hub profile 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 Position Profile will assist the Search Committee members in reading through the clergy responses to the same questions in the Candidate Profiles.

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 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).
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. 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.
3. 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.
4. All finalists must have an official background check. The background check covers employment history, legal and criminal problems, a credit report, and social media, 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 and meeting notes.

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 whenever possible and letting the Bishop know in advance of any schedule conflict.

“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 Zoom) and shorten the list of candidates prior to in-person interviews. The search committee chair should email or 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.

Develop a single list of questions so that each candidate is asked about the same topics. 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. Depending on each candidate’s profile 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 and your church’s strengths and weaknesses as determined by the congregational survey or assessment:

- 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, sexuality, 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. The Canon to the Ordinary can help with interview legalities.

Allow time for the candidate to ask any final questions. Before ending the call, let them 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 online 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.

In-Person Interviews

The Search Committee will invite the remaining 2-3 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 shall 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. However, the Search Committee may invite the candidates to lead only the committee in Morning or Evening Prayer

with a sermon, if so desired. During the visit, you should also put candidates and their spouses in a hotel, rather than hosting them in a member's home. During the in-person visit there may be an informal gathering with members of the Vestry, simply so they can put a face to a name when the search committee nominates a candidate.

All finalists must be approved by the bishop following a personal interview done via Zoom or phone call. This needs to be done before the Search Committee selects the final name to share with the Vestry. This meeting can be arranged by contacting the bishop's Executive Assistant.

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 and Nomination: Search Committee

Discernment is the practice of seeking to identify God's will and then moving with spiritual openness towards it. This process is designed to be prayerfully undertaken.

Begin with a prayer for the work you are about to do, and pray that the Holy Spirit will be among you. Pray for clarity, that God's will for your congregation will be made clear. This process involves prayerfully envisioning the life of the congregation under the leadership of each priest. It is not helpful to compare and contrast different candidates.

For EACH Candidate: write the name of the first priest on the board or flip chart.

Begin with a prayer of thanksgiving for the priest and his or her ministry, and what they have contributed to your discernment process.

1. What does this priest bring that we knew we are looking for? (Write the answers on the board as people share them or have each person write down their thoughts and pass them forward)
2. What are the bonus "gifts" this candidate will bring to our parish that we did NOT expect, but are now excited about? (Write the answers on the board as people share them or have each person write down their thoughts and pass them forward)
3. What are the things we know we need that this priest will not provide? Make a list, then ask how those needs will be met if the priest doesn't meet them. (God will provide all you need, if not all you want, so you just want to be clear how the needs will be met if this priest is called.)
4. What does this candidate need to be his/her best? Can we provide it? (It is important to know that have listened to the priest and are prepared to do your part in this relationship)
5. Pray again for this priest by name.
6. Take a five minute break.

Return to the top and start the process again with the next priest candidate.

When you have prayerfully considered each candidate, you may find the clarity you need about whom to call. If not, begin again with each one until clarity emerges.

Levels of Consensus

6. I can say an unqualified yes to this decision
5. I find the decision acceptable
4. I'm not thrilled, but I can live with it
3. I do not fully agree and need to register my view, but I won't block it
2. I do not agree and need to stand in the way of the decision
1. I feel we have no clear sense of unity in the group

Note about Consensus: It is a wonderful thing when there is an “aha” moment and one candidate is the obvious consensus choice. 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.

Nomination by the Search Committee

Once a recommendation based on consensus is determined, it is recommended that the Search Committee draft a letter to the Vestry nominating the candidate for call. This will include the candidate's Resume. This letter should outline the criteria for the next rector as outlined in the profile, and should include a brief explanation why this candidate meets those criteria and is the candidate the search committee chose.

Discernment and Call Decision: Vestry

The vestry will receive the Search Committee's recommendation letter and meet as a body thereafter. Ideally the vestry will also be able to come to consensus, broadly construed. If that is not possible, the Bishop should be informed and perhaps the search committee should be asked for another name, which would, of course, require a new search. It is important to note that an inability to reach a consensus is not a failed search, but a process which has led the search committee and/or vestry to see that there is more work to be done. The search will begin anew, with the parish profile re-posted and new applications accepted.

When the vestry has made a decision, the senior warden (or vestry designee) will accomplish the following:

1. Write the Bishop (email suffices) or a telephone call to the bishop “to give notice of the intent to elect.” Unless some last-minute issue has arisen, the Bishop will authorize the vestry to elect and call the candidate.
2. Contact the selected candidate to offer the call and confirm acceptance verbally. If the call is accepted, any final candidates not selected should be contacted by the Senior Warden, to inform them of the decision and thank them for participating in the search process. A written follow up email/letter to all candidates is suggested.
3. The Canon to the Ordinary will assist with coordinating announcements of the call for both parishes.
4. The Canon to the Ordinary will assist the vestry with drafting a Letter of Agreement and obtaining signatures of the Selected priest, Wardens, and Bishop.
5. A “Celebration of New Ministry” service will need to be arranged by contacting the Bishop's Executive Assistant.

6. After the call is made, consent given, and start date arranged, the vestry should publicly thank the search committee for their service.

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

If there is an Interim Rector, plans are made for the ending of that relationship before the new rector or priest in charge arrives. As much notice as possible is given, so that the interim rector can get to what is next in their 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
 - Setup a tour of the building and grounds
 - If the rector has a spouse, people need to offer to help get them 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 their 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. 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, they consult with the Bishop and together they find a time for the celebration. Text to use in creating the bulletin for this service is found in the Resource 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.”

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 borrows 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 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 or congregational assessment
- ☐ Open parish meeting
- ☐ 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 Vocation Hub Position Profile and submit to Canon to the Ordinary
- ☐ Post position

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 to all applicants and nominees to determine interest in applying
- ☐ Select candidates for online interviews and thorough screening notify diocesan office of the names being considered
- ☐ 1 Bring 2-3 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 notified and approves the call

Appendix II - Guidelines for Clergy Transitioning from a Congregation

Diocesan Council approved the following guidelines at its February 6, 2016 meeting and they remain in effect:

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 63 parishes diverse in size, theology, liturgical style, wealth and race. We also maintain several chapels throughout the Diocese. 1/3 of our congregations are located within 20 miles of cities with populations of 40,000 or more, and the other 2/3 are situated in suburbs, county seats, and rural towns.

Our current bishop, the Right Reverend Frank S. Logue, was ordained on May 30, 2020, becoming the 11th Bishop of the Diocese of Georgia. 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 Churchwide 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 2024 edition.

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

Sec. 3. The Appointment of Priests

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.9.6 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: Of a Call for a Cleric to Ecclesiastical Employment within the Diocese

Sec. 1. Fitness of Call. No Cleric shall be called to Ecclesiastical Employment within the Diocese without previous conference between the Vestry of the Parish and the Bishop of the Diocese in reference to the Cleric's fitness. See Title IV of the Canons.

Sec. 2. Consent of Bishop. No Cleric shall enter upon any ecclesiastical position within the Diocese until having had obtained the written permission of the Bishop.

Canon 4: Of Dissolution of Pastoral Relationship

Sec. 1. Tenure of a Rector. Except upon mandatory resignation by reason of age, a Rector may not resign as Rector of a Parish without the consent of its Vestry, nor may any Rector canonically or lawfully elected and in charge of a Parish be removed there from by the Vestry against the Rector's will, except as provided by the Canons of The Episcopal Church.

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 your 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.

Appendix VIII—Resources Sample Letters

To candidates not selected

(Earlier in process, such as after initial interviews and evaluation)

Dear [Name],

Thank you for your interest in [Parish Name] and for taking the time to share your gifts and experience with our Search Committee.

We were moved by the number of thoughtful, qualified priests who came forward for this search, and narrowing that pool was genuinely difficult. After careful review, we will not be moving your name forward to the next stage of our process. This decision reflects the particular needs we've discerned for our parish at this time, not any shortcomings on your part.

We're grateful for the openness and care you brought to your application, and we wish you every blessing as your own discernment continues.

Faithfully, [Search Committee Chair Name] [Parish Name] Search Committee

Final candidates not selected

Subject: Update from [Parish Name] Search Committee

Dear [Name],

On behalf of the Search Committee, thank you for the time, trust, and prayerful discernment you gave to our process. Meeting you, hearing your story, and learning about your ministry was a gift to our committee, and we do not take that lightly.

After much prayer and deliberation, the Vestry has called another priest to serve as our next Rector. This was not an easy decision, and it reflects nothing about your gifts or your fitness for ministry — only that, in this particular season, God is leading our parish in another direction.

We are grateful for your openness with us throughout the visit and interviews, and we hold you and your family in our prayers as your own discernment continues. Please know you leave this process with our genuine respect and good wishes.

Faithfully,
[Search Committee Chair Name]
[Parish Name] Search Committee