

Calling a New Rector

The process of calling a new rector is different from searching for a corporate CEO, although it has some similar tasks. The major difference is that we are seeking to discern who God is calling to serve this congregation rather than sizing up candidates to see who is the best fit for the job. Also, being a priest is more than just a job – it is a vocation, a way of being present in the congregation and community.

The second difference is that lots of people are involved in the process. The Vestry/Bishop's Committee will assemble some or all of the following teams, each having several members:

- **Farewell Team:** plans a good farewell for the departing rector and, if there is one, the interim when he/she departs
- **Portfolio Team:** works with congregation to answer the 12 essay questions in the portfolio and helps the Vestry/Bishop's Committee decide on the criteria for a new priest; this and the website replace the former printed "profile."
- **Communications Team:** ensures that the congregation knows what is happening at each step of the process using regular announcements, bulletin notices, newsletter, etc.
- **Website Team:** ensures that the website represents the parish accurately (since that's where candidates go to learn about you).
- **Prayer Team:** prays daily for all involved and is in prayer when the Discernment Team meets.
- **Discernment Team:** reviews candidate materials, interviews candidates, and recommends the finalist to Vestry/Bishop's Committee.
- **Transition Team:** oversees the daily operations of the parish in collaboration with the interim priest.
- **Welcome Team:** organizes parish welcome activities, helps new priest find stores, schools, doctors, job for spouse, etc., introduces new priest and family to community, organizes small group gatherings for the new priest to get to know members of the congregation.

Most congregations will have an interim priest serving while the search is underway. That priest will not be eligible to be a candidate and will leave before the new priest arrives. The interim time used to be 12-18 months; it is now about nine months or less.

Candidates apply to the Bishop's office (you also can suggest candidates) where they are interviewed by the Canon to the Ordinary who seeks to identify which candidates are unqualified or have a history of problems. The Canon and Bishop will also recruit candidates and will follow up on recommendations from parishioners, fellow clergy, etc. They also do a reference check with their counterparts in the priest's home diocese.

Candidates are given to the Discernment Team which reviews each candidate's materials, conducts an online or phone interview, scours the internet for information, listens to sermons, reads articles/blogs by the candidate, does reference checks and ultimately invites two or three

candidates for a three-day visit where they will experience a worship service and education session led by the candidate as well as seeing the candidate in various settings in the church and community. The Discernment Team prayerfully selects a finalist who meets with the Vestry/Bishop's Committee—which makes the final call and negotiates a Letter of Agreement signed by the Warden and Bishop. Then, and only then, does the congregation learn about their new priest.

There are several important things all members of the congregation can do during the interim time:

- Be gentle with yourselves and each other – it is natural for a time of transition to raise lots of different feelings so this is a time to honor that in yourself and in others.
- Be more faithful in attendance and make an extra effort to connect with each other. Your church community needs you now more than ever.
- Pray. Pray for your congregation, for those involved in the search and for the candidates. Pray that God will guide everyone to discern God's will and to have the courage to do it.

Transition times can be times of growth and times of drawing nearer to God. We will have the support of the Bishop and Canon to the Ordinary during the transition phase.