

Tasks for Search Committees

Before beginning the tasks below:

Senior warden works with the bishop and diocesan transition officer to make arrangements for a search consultant.

Search Committee is organized.

Assign roles – chairs, scribe, corresponding secretary, worship chair, profile editor

Agree on decision making process – consensus, vote

Establish committee norms – e.g.: be on time, participate, “I” statements

Task 1: Parish Profile

Who are you, where have you been, where do you want to go. Information can come from: town meetings, questionnaires, small groups, selected interviews (parishioners, neighbors, age groups, new/old/young/single family members), demographics

Sections to cover:

- Mission/vision statement
- Expectations of the new rector
- Ministries/activities of the church
- *Brief* history
- Summary of survey results
- Strengths and weaknesses
- Description of parish facilities (floor plans, pictures)
- Financial status, budget
- Profile of diocese and community
- Parish organization and staff

A copy is to be sent to the bishop and transition officer for approval. After approval the profile, in hardcopy and any additional formats, may be made public. Additional copies may be made of approved profile for distribution to candidates. Consider varied formats, e.g. online, pdf, dvd.

Task 2: Communication with the Parish

This is an ongoing task.

This can be done through newsletters, announcements in church, small group meetings. The focus in these communications is the process and progress, *not* on individuals. It is important to remember that no names of candidates can be divulged. All information about candidates is confidential. Careers and reputations are at stake here.

Task 3: Search Request Form (Position Profile)

This is different from the “parish profile,” and cannot be filled out until the vestry has prepared a compensation package and the parish profile has been completed. The search consultant assists the committee in preparing the parish search request form, which is then forwarded to

the diocesan transition minister and posted online as a “position profile” through the Church Deployment Office website.

Task 4: Candidate Selection

While the parish search request form is processed, the search committee collects names from the bishop and transition minister, members of the parish and friends, and from interested clergy who apply for the position. The search committee may choose to place advertisements in publications such as *Episcopal Life* and *The Living Church*. The opening is published with the Office of Transition Ministry and in the Deployment Ministry newsletter. It will be listed for at least a month to allow as many candidates as possible to apply.

The search committee collects materials from interested clergy and evaluates each applicant based on an agreed upon system. Candidates are sorted according to assessment of evaluation and a list of people to interview is made.

The bishop and transition minister do an initial background check to assure that each candidate is a priest in good standing in his/her diocese. **Later, when the search committee has narrowed its lists to those candidates being brought in for interviews, appointments with the bishop need to be made and formal background checks done.** Overlooking this step may seriously delay the search process. The search committee contacts the diocesan transition minister to initiate the Oxford Documents background investigation.

Task 5: Interview Planning and Execution

After the first screening of candidates, the search committee conducts telephone or skype interviews, followed by further culling of the list in order to determine which candidates to visit. The ideal is to have interviews done within a six-week period.

Things to be done:

- Block out time for interviews
- Reaffirm commitment of members of the committee to be available, and maintain confidentiality
- Develop a model interview
- Prepare questions for interviews and anticipate questions by the candidate
- Prepare an interview evaluation form
- Arrange for a mock interview
- Select one person to take notes during the interview
- Be prepared to discuss next steps or dates of follow-up visits to the candidates' parishes
- At least one person on the search committee should be conversant regarding parish finances

Task 6: Parish Visits

- After phone interviews the search committee deliberates and meets to discuss which candidates to visit for a Sunday service.

- Teams usually are made up of three people with one person designated as main contact for ease of communication. It makes sense for this person to be the contact person for the candidate through the remaining part of the process.
- Specifics of visit are coordinated with each candidate. Ideally the time will include additional conversation with the candidate, formal interviews with 3-5 references chosen by the candidate, informal time, perhaps over a meal, with the candidate (and his/her family as appropriate) and at least one Sunday service at which the candidate preaches and presides, if possible.
- It is important to be discreet during the visit – don't sit together, don't interview parishioners, other than the ones chosen by the candidate, or discuss with them why you are there.
- After each visit the team reports back to the full committee using a consistent, agreed upon format.

Things to be done:

- Arrange time for interviews
- Determine the size and makeup of the visiting teams
- Reaffirm commitment of members of the committee to be available, and maintain confidentiality
- Develop a model interview and prepare a visitation schedule
- Prepare new questions for interviews and anticipate new questions by the candidate.
- Prepare packets of information to give to the candidate. These should include information about the church and community.
- Prepare an interview evaluation form
- Select one person to take notes during the interview
- Be prepared to discuss next steps

Task 7: Checking References

Before or shortly after Sunday visits, teams call references. These are people other than the ones with whom you meet during the visit.

Decide on areas/questions to be asked each reference person.

Practice interviewing the references. Be aware that references are the candidate's choices.

Task 8: Selecting the Final List of Candidates

Pray as a group and individually before beginning.

Each committee member has copies of

- Parish goals and rector responsibilities
- Interview evaluations – summarize each category
- Reports of teams visit – let teams talk uninterrupted
- Reference reports

Use agreed upon decision-making process to select a final list of candidates.

Task 9: Final Candidates Visit Parish

Invite final candidates (usually 3-4) to visit your parish and to have a final interview with the committee. During this visit it is best to have a social event at which vestry members can meet candidates informally. **It is very important to notify the diocese of final candidates promptly so that necessary background checks can be done without delaying your process.**

- Contact candidates to arrange for them to visit your parish.
- Develop a model interview.
- Prepare new questions for interviews and anticipate new questions by the candidate.
- Prepare name tags for the committee
- Prepare packets of information for candidates to take home. If this has been done during the visit to the candidate's parish consider whether or not there is additional information that would be useful or hospitable to offer at this time.
- Prepare an interview evaluation form
- Select one person to take notes during the interview
- Be prepared to discuss next steps.
- Arrange an interview with the bishop for candidates from outside the Diocese of Easton

Task 10: Parish Visit Details

Designate a host/hostess for each candidate. It would be appropriate for this to be the person assigned as contact during the visit to the candidate's parish.

The host/hostess makes sure that the candidate arrives and settles into hotel and assists with any necessary arrangements and transitions during the course of the visit.

Parish visits include both formal interview time with the search committee and informal social time with the search committee and vestry.

After the visit the search committee gathers and each member fills out individual interview evaluation sheets with no discussion.

Each person then will discuss his/her evaluation without interruption.

Comments are recorded on newsprint – someone is chosen to be the scribe.

Then follows questions and discussion about the evaluations and general comments are made.

It is very important to stay objective at this stage in the process. Be sure to stay in touch with the candidate. This is the job of the host/hostess and should be done once a week. The candidate is to be informed of the general flow of the process but is given no details.

Task 11: Vestry Approval

The search committee chairs make a presentation to the vestry. According to the charge given to the search committee, present the names (usually three) of the candidates in alphabetical order, unranked. Give pertinent information to support your choices. The vestry elects a rector.

Task 12: The Call and Letter of Agreement

The senior warden calls the chosen candidate. Be prepared for some last minute questions, especially about the compensation package. The candidate may ask for time to think about the call. Set a time limit.

The diocesan transition minister has a model/sample letter to use. The Letter of Agreement should include responsibilities of the rector and details regarding the compensation package.

The letter is signed by both wardens and has a place for the signature of the bishop and the candidate.

Forward three original copies to the bishop. The candidate should be informed that the bishop's approval will be made after the letter of agreement is signed and background checks are done.

Do not announce to the congregation the name of the candidate until all issues are resolved. When all is resolved, make the announcement on a Sunday, send out letters with a short biography of the candidate, and celebrate.

Notify the other candidates who were not called **before a public announcement** is made.

From here on, the transition team takes over.

Good job!