

Introduction to the Search Process

Getting Started

Episcopal Diocese of Michigan

January 2021

The process for calling a new rector is one of mutual discernment that is engaged by the vestry, the search committee, and the candidates in partnership with the Bishop and her staff. This important time must be carried out prayerfully and with great care. It will require a commitment of time, energy and resources. We understand that there is pressure and urgency for the search committee to find a new priest for your parish. Do not let anxiety drive this process, but rather trust that God is at work.

Time Needed

The time needed for a search process depends on a number of variables including:

- Frequency of vestry and search committee meetings
- The commitment and willingness of members to work independently in small groups
- The overall health of the parish: Including matters that may require conflict resolution or other healing processes
- Time for gathering data and then to develop a parish profile
- Delays for holiday seasons, etc.

While all of this can vary widely, the average time from the departure of a priest to the arrival of a new priest is approximately 18 months.

Best Practices

Clear Roles and Responsibilities

The interim period and search process work best when the roles and responsibilities of the vestry, interim priest, search committee, and bishop are understood and clearly committed to the parish.

Whole Church Involvement

The whole church should take part in working through the tasks of the interim period, sharing stories and experiences that contribute to the data which will comprise the parish profile.

Frequent, Open and Transparent Communication

The vestry and search committee will support healthy parish functioning through this time by communicating openly and regularly about process while maintaining strict confidentiality about candidates.

On behalf of Bishop Bonnie Perry, transition minister **The Rev. Ellen Ekevag (630-258-8882) or eekevag@edomi.org** is the lead staff member for transitions. Ellen will work with clergy and congregation through the process, from training leaders to facilitate conversation to recruiting and vetting great candidates. Clarity about this process is essential in order to ensure that it works most effectively for the vestry, search committee, parishioners, candidates and bishop's staff.

The Nature of Transitions: A Guide for Vestries

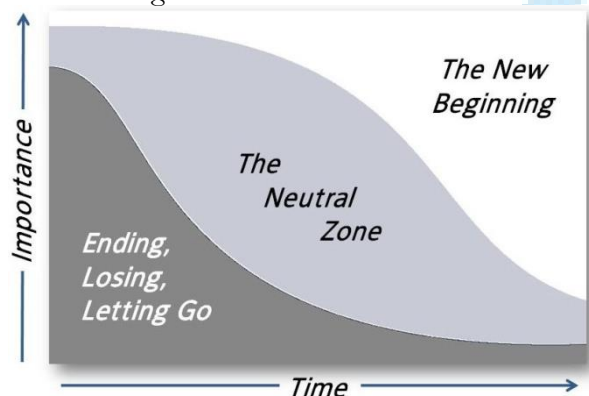
After a priest announces they are leaving, the vestry is being asked to lead during a time of transition. One reason we ask vestries to appoint a search committee, is so the vestry can focus on guiding the church through this time in intentional, faithful, and healthy ways.

Change is situational i.e. the leaving or retiring of a priest.

Transition is the psychological process of accepting and working with change

Vestry leadership during this time is about helping people move through the transition smoothly.

William Bridges Transition Model



People are at different phases at different times and so transition happens:

- Unevenly
- Concurrently
- At a person's own pace

Ending, Losing, Letting Go

Endings occur when people are first presented with change and can be a time marked by resistance and emotional upheaval. If you don't acknowledge the emotions that people are going through, you'll likely encounter resistance throughout the entire transition process even when a new priest arrives.

How vestry's can help guide people through this phase:

- Accept people's resistance and Acknowledge losses openly
- Understand their emotions and work through signs of grieving
- Listen Empathically and treat the past with respect
- Communicate openly about what's going to happen
 - Communicate More than you think and explain the process in fine details
 - Be open about the challenges of this time and what people can do to help

The Neutral Zone

This is a bridge between the old and the new. While it can be a time of anxiety, under good leadership it can also be a time of creativity, renewal, spiritual abundance, and innovation.

How vestry's can guide people through this phase:

- Model living with ambiguity and willingness to try new things
- Creativity is Key, let the creativity flow
- Set concise short-term goals and celebrate when they are accomplished to keep spirits up
- Consistency, Truthfulness, Communication, Clarity

The New Beginning

When a new priest arrives is a time of acceptance and energy, change being embraced, and building of new skills. It's also a time when you may see a renewed commitment to your community of faith and its mission. The vestry's leadership is key to the ability for your new priest to be successful. We invite vestries to continue to develop their leadership skills as they advise the new priest and lead their community of faith.

Search for a New Priest: The Big Picture

Getting Started (Vestry/Wardens)	Self-Assessment and Written Materials (Search Committee)	Search & Discernment (Search Committee)	Issuing a Call & Welcoming a New Priest (Vestry/Wardens)
<p>Plan Farewell with outgoing priest</p> <p>Schedule supply and pastoral care coverage (wardens)</p> <p>Call an Interim (wardens with vestry approval)</p> <p>Appoint a Search Committee (vestry)</p> <p>Commission Search Committee</p> <p>Website Updates</p> <p><i>End Goals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A good farewell</i> • <i>Empower Search Committee to do its work</i> • <i>Vestry work with interim and lead the church</i> 	<p>CAT Survey (church assessment tool)</p> <p>Small Group Self-Study</p> <p>Complete Written materials (Mini-profile, OTM form): Documents must be approved by vestry and bishop's staff, financial review by transition officer before posting the position.</p> <p>Update Website</p> <p>Post Position (bishop's staff does this, minimum 8 weeks)</p> <p><i>End Goals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clarity about congregation's history, mission, vision, future goals</i> • <i>Written materials that clearly express who you are as a congregation and what you seek in your next rector</i> 	<p>Interview Candidates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review written materials • Zoom interviews • In-Person Interviews (including meeting with Bishop and Transition Officer) • Vestry meets candidates but does not interview <p>Discern Finalist</p> <p>Recommend ONE name to the vestry</p> <p><i>End Goals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Discernment of Finalist to present to vestry</i> <p><i>(Do not notify other finalists until call is issued and LOA is signed by candidate and wardens)</i></p>	<p>Vestry accepts recommendation from Search Committee</p> <p>Notify the Bishop's Office request her final approval to issue the call (wardens)</p> <p>Negotiate Letter of Agreement (Wardens)</p> <p>Celebrate the work of the Search Committee vestry, and parish!!</p> <p>Plan farewell with Interim</p> <p>Welcome new Priest</p> <p>Mutual Ministry Review at 1 year mark.</p> <p><i>End Goals:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Successful, life-giving partnership between a new priest and the congregation</i>

Four C's of the Search Process

Covenant: the vestry and search committee are entrusted with the holy work of finding their congregation's next pastor, priest, and teacher. This process must be steeped in prayer from beginning to end. By appointing a Search Committee the Vestry can be freed to focus on leading the church through the transition. It is the responsibility of both the Vestry and the Search Committee to steep this process in prayer from beginning to end.

Communication: Anxiety on the part of the congregation can be reduced if the vestry and search committee communicate the search timeline and process in a transparent and dependable way. Additionally, it is crucial for the warden and search committee chair(s) to maintain frequent and clear communications with one another and with the transition officer throughout the search.

Confidentiality: The search committee must maintain strict confidence about the names of candidates being considered in the search, even with spouses and partners. To do otherwise is to risk great hurt to the candidate, your church, and other churches.

Consensus: When the time comes for the search committee to recommend a name to the vestry, we invite the group to seek consensus and we have tools to guide this process. This does not require 100% agreement. However, if there is deep division, we ask that the search committee invite transition officer to join you in a conversation to seek clarity about how to move forward faithfully for the good of the church.

Vestry Tasks Once a Priest Announces Their Departure

1. Closure with Departing Priest
 - a. Planning a good good-bye
 - b. Dealing with own grief so that you can lead the congregation through theirs
 - c. Review leave taking guide
2. Immediate Pastoral Concerns
 - a. Worship (Warden find supply priests)
 - b. Pastoral Care (emergency coverage until Interim or agreement with Long Term Supply)
3. Calling an Interim Rector or Securing On-going Supply Clergy
 - a. The transition officer will help you identify candidates and think through options
 - b. Wardens interview, hire, and negotiate contract with interim, with vestry approval
4. Appoint Search Committee 9-12 people (typically occurs after the rector leaves)
 - a. Vestry appoints Search Committee Chairs: A person or two people widely known and trusted in the congregation.
 - b. May invite nominations from congregation but vestry decides Search Committee personnel
 - Might include a current or former warden, vestry member, people held in high regard, balance newer/long-time members, younger/older (do not need someone from every demographic or every committee, but a diversity of people so everyone feels they have a representative is helpful.)
 - Want people who can work collaboratively, meet others well, communicate clearly, follow through with tasks
 - Staff/clergy should not serve on the Search Committee
 - c. Commission the Search Committee during a Sunday Service
5. Continue leading as a vestry
 - a. Keep doing what you do and let the Search Committee do its work
 - b. Tasks of interim time include: Coming to terms with history, explore identity and direction, make leadership/operational changes, renew linkages, commit to new leadership and direction.

Tasks During the Search Process

Tasks of the Search Committee

- Self-Assessment
 - Organize CAT
 - Conduct Small Group Meetings
 - Prepare the OTM Portfolio
 - Work on website updates with vestry
 - Write Parish Profile
- Search and Discernment
 - Using Profile and Written Material prepare interview questions
 - Interview candidates (Must keep confidentiality about names of candidates)
 - Review their written material
 - Phone, zoom, skype interviews
 - In-person interviews (At your church)
 - Discern and recommend One Person to be the new priest to the vestry
- At all times communicate and keep people informed without violating confidentiality

Tasks of Vestry

- Appoint Search Committee
- Commission Search Committee
- Approve the written documents: Parish Description, OTM Portfolio, Website
- Provide financial information to the Transition Officer
- Approve a financial package for the next clergy leader
- When candidates come to visit church meet the candidates in a social situation
- Call the Next Priest

Tasks of Transition Officer

- Coach/advise and meet regularly with Search Committee
- Interpret CAT to parish leadership
- Approve (with Bishop) Parish Profile and OTM
- Recruit and Vet applicants
- Other tasks as requested or needed

Search Committee Roles and Tasks

Chair(s)

Oversee work of the committee
Delegate tasks and ensure tasks are completed
Maintain needed correspondence with applicants during interview stages
Liaison to transition officer on the bishop's staff
Ensure communication with vestry
Oversee communication with the larger church

Secretary

Takes minutes of each meeting and emails them to committee members
Maintains minutes archive
Emails reminders to committee

Chaplain

Begins and ends each meeting with a prayer, bible study, or poem
Keeps Search Committee focused on process as a sacred journey (not just a job search)
Hold process in prayer throughout search timeline

CAT Organizer

Works directly with Holy Cow Consulting
Signs Congregation up for the CAT/contact person for CAT
Organizes opportunities to take CAT
Organizes and oversees communication to the congregation

Small Group Organizer

Organize Small Group opportunities
Ensures the Search Committee completes its own Small Group Work
Organizes/oversees communication to congregation
Leads Search Process of condensing notes to major themes/ideas for the profile

Mini-Profile Drafter(s)

Drafts 2 page document that is sent to the transition officer, after revisions and bishop approval is posted on the website.

OTM Drafter(s)

Drafts OTM – Search Committee might divide the 12 Essays
Incorporate revisions/recommendations of Bishop/diocesan staff and vestry

Website Updates- coordinates with Vestry

Ensures website is updated to incorporate information that used to be in a parish profile, and has omitted outdated into

Interview Organizers (often done by chairs)

Lead review of written materials provided by candidates
Zoom, Skype, Phone Interviews: Organize, set up, and communicate with applicants
On-site visit: Coordinate schedule The Rev. Ellen Ekevag, transition officer to ensure thorough planning of on-site visit including time with the bishop, leading service for search committee and vestry, and a social event for search committee and vestry to interact with candidate.

Throughout process, communication with congregation and vestry is essential, as is maintaining confidentiality for candidates.

COMMISSIONING OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

Members of the Search Committee and the Wardens come forward. The Worship Leader addresses the congregation
Sisters and Brothers 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 as members of the Search Committee.

Wardens I present to you these persons to be commissioned as members of the Search Committee of _____ Episcopal Church.

The Worship Leader asks the wardens(s)
Are these persons 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?

Wardens I believe they are.

The Worship Leader addresses the candidates
You have been called to serve this congregation as members of the Search Committee. Will you, as long as you are engaged in this work, perform it with diligence?

SC Candidates We will.

The Worship Leader
Will you faithfully and reverently execute the duties of this ministry to the honor of God, and the benefit of the members of this congregation?

SC Candidates We will.

The Worship Leader addresses the congregation
Will all of you do all in your power to support these people in their service?

Congregation **We will.**

The Worship Leader Let us pray. *(Silence)*
O Eternal God, the foundation of all wisdom and the source of all inspiration: Enlighten with your grace the Search Committee of this congregation; and so rule their minds, open their hearts, and guide their deliberations, that in their work they may seek your glory and promote the mission of your Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Worship Leader In the Name of God, I commission you as members of the Rector Search Committee of _____ Church.