

Policy on Calling a Priest



The Right Reverend Phyllis A. Spiegel, Twelfth Bishop of Utah

Policy Number: P002

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PURPOSE

This Policy details the procedures to be used when calling a priest to fill a vacancy.

Canonical Provisions Governing The Appointment of Priests

Canon III.9.3 of the Canons of the Episcopal Church prescribes the general process for the appointment of Rectors and Priests-in-Charge. In this Diocese, Canon 19.2.3 provides that “the Priest-in-Charge of a Mission shall be appointed by the Bishop following consultation with the Bishop’s Committee and the consent of the Standing Committee.”

The process for calling a Rector is further prescribed in Diocesan Canon 22.4.1, with provision for policy and procedures approved by the Bishop and Standing Committee. This policy is intended to provide the guidance appropriate to implement the Canons. It is intended to primarily apply to Parishes with Rectors, not to Mission congregations. At the Bishop’s discretion, a process like that provided in this policy may be utilized for a larger Mission congregation.

POLICY

NOTIFICATION OF AN OPENING

Within 30 days of a vacancy or the announcement of a pending vacancy in the office of rector or priest-in-charge, the Senior Warden will notify the Bishop in writing. The Bishop or person designated by the Bishop will meet with the Vestry and clergy immediately to explain the process and assist in preparation for this time of creative transition.

INTERIM MINISTRY

The ministry of an Interim Priest in charge can be especially helpful in the case of a very long pastorate by an incumbent. It is also very important to have the services of a professionally trained Interim when a congregation may be in a state of conflict or tension around the incumbent or the incumbent’s departure. Therefore, it is recommended that an Interim be obtained by the parish during all or part of the transition period. The Bishop and Deployment Officer will assist with the identification and calling of an Interim Priest-in-Charge. Any Interim Priest-in-Charge must be approved by the Bishop. The Letter of Agreement with the Interim will state the process and timeline the parish will follow in its work to call their rector.

SUPPLY CLERGY

The Bishop and/or the Deployment Office may also assist the parish in the identification and calling of supply clergy for the congregation.



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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is the expectation that the congregation will be financially responsible for the costs of the search process, just as any other congregational expense. The Diocese may assist with these costs, including the cost of supply/interim clergy, and with relocation expenses. As funds allow, the Standing Committee of the Diocese will offer housing acquisition assistance in the form of a Shared Equity Agreement or Down Payment Assistance Grant. If a congregation believes they need financial assistance from the Diocese for this process, they should make arrangements to meet with the Bishop's Office or the Deployment Officer of the Diocese, with participation and assistance of the Finance Office. Parishes requesting such financial assistance from the Diocese are expected to provide a complete budget for their search process, together with funding sources available and anticipated.

FORMATION OF A SEARCH COMMITTEE

The make up of the Search Committee needs to be sensitive about being an honest reflection of the various components of the congregation. It is the Search Committee that is responsible for doing the committed work necessary to prepare the way for a successful transition to a new ministry, including the preparation of a parish profile.

The search process may not commence until the Rector or Priest-in-Charge has vacated the office.

GUIDELINES FOR SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Experience suggests that it is best if Wardens do not serve on the Search Committee. This will permit more freedom for them to carry out their duties and responsibilities in the absence of a rector.

Seven to fifteen members, none of whom are clergy, staff members or their immediate family, will be the norm for the Diocese.

Members should be representative of the congregation with respect to age, gender expression, race, sexuality, ministries and organizations of the parish. One's length of time of affiliation with the congregation should also be considered. Of particular value to the Committee will be persons with skills in writing, computer support, group dynamics, and abilities in chairing meetings. Where possible, a separate non-voting clerk/correspondence secretary should be appointed.

Vestry members play a different role in the Search Process and should not serve on the Committee if possible.

All members must be Communicants in Good Standing, regular worshippers, and enthusiastic supporters of the on-going life of the parish.



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Each member must be emotionally mature and able to keep confidences (even from spouses) and work well in a group. Work must be completed in a timely manner.

THE PARISH PROFILE

The Search Committee will initiate a self-study/Parish Profile. This Profile will describe the membership, history, ministries, programs, budget, stewardship, physical facilities, staffing and the general feeling of the parish. The purpose of the Profile is to describe the congregation and its setting within the community and the Diocese. A reader will be able to study it and gain a good sense of the place, including the character of the community, as well as the social, cultural, religious, recreational, economic, and educational flavor of the area. The Diocese will provide a page of Diocesan History to be included in the Profile.

Additionally, the Bishop's Letter of Introduction to the Diocese, available from the Deployment Officer, is to be included in the Profile or as an attachment to the OTM Questionnaire mentioned below.

PREPARING THE PROFILE AND QUESTIONNAIRE

The task of preparing this Profile could be assigned to an ad hoc group of the Committee who might be given 30-60 days in which to accomplish the task. The draft they prepare would then be reviewed and approved by the Search Committee, and then edited and adopted by the vestry prior to being sent to the Bishop for final approval.

Experience has shown that open style 'town hall' type meetings or focus groups with a consultant facilitating, work better than written questionnaires in obtaining input for the Parish Profile.

Once the copy has been approved by the Bishop, the Profile may go to print. It is imperative that the Profile be available on the parish website and linked to the Diocesan website as soon as possible. Open positions will be advertised in the Diocesan Newsletter.

As the Parish Profile is being completed, the Deployment Officer will send a link to an online OTM (Office of Transitional Ministry) questionnaire from the Church Development Office. This needs to be completed in conjunction with the Profile so that the language regarding mission and ministry goals creates a cohesive vision. Once completed it is submitted to the Deployment Officer.

The most effective profiles and questionnaires are clear about historical challenges and current issues of growth or healing the church is working towards. Clergy are not looking for perfect churches but want to serve where their skills and ministry goals are best matched. Clarity in the Profile is essential to a healthy future.



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REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS

Once the Profile and the Questionnaire are approved by the Vestry, the search will go “live” on the OTM site. Clergy maintain a profile on this site, and matches will be sent to the committee by the Church Development Office based on a key word algorithm.

The Search Committee will obtain the appropriate form (Parish Search Request) from the Deployment Office and after completing it, return it to the Bishop and Deployment Officer.

All names are to be submitted to the Diocesan Deployment Officer. **Do not list the parish information for applications.** All applicants will be forwarded to the Search Committee once they have been cleared by the Bishop to enter the process.

In addition to the OTM site, the Episcopal News Service will advertise the posting for free for a limited period, and longer for a nominal fee. This information is available online through the ENS website.

The Search Committee should inform the congregation and other clergy in the Diocese of the timeframe during which nominations will be received from individuals wishing to suggest possible candidates. The nominee must give permission for their name to be put forward and will submit their resume and CDO Personal Profile to the Diocesan Deployment Officer.

ELIGIBILITY FOR NOMINATION

Stipendiary associate or assistant clergy of the congregation may submit their names for consideration in the search process.

Clergy serving in an interim capacity in a congregation may not have their names put forward for nomination.

If there is a Priest-in-Charge in place who the Bishop, Vestry and priest mutually agree would be appropriate for the position as Rector, the Priest-in-Charge would be considered first, prior to the formation of a Search Committee or the reception of other nominations.

TRANSMISSION OF NAMES TO THE SEARCH COMMITTEE

After culling the list of nominees from the CDO’s computer matches, self-nominated persons, and any persons nominated by members of the congregation, the Bishop or Deployment Officer will forward the most qualified people to the Search Committee.

Should the Vestry and Search Committee wish to expand the search beyond the names provided, they may petition the Bishop to do so. The Search Committee may want to elicit from the final nominees written answers to specific questions.



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NARROWING THE FIELD

When the Committee has selected up to four candidates whom they wish to interview, they will contact the Deployment Office to initiate background checks. The Search Committee may select some of its members to make “incognito” visitations to the candidates in their home parishes clarifying with the nominee how best to achieve this. They may also wish to hold Zoom interviews with a portion of the Committee present. If dividing up the work of initial interviews, recording the Zoom interview allows for all interviews to be watched by the committee, while keeping a more relational atmosphere for the nominee.

Search Committees should do searches for each candidate’s “online presence” across social media, recorded sermons, podcasts, etc. Search beyond what is listed on the candidate’s OTM.

Once the final nominees are chosen, and the Bishop has completed a review of each nominee, the names may be presented to the Vestry. The Search Committee will then coordinate visits for the candidates to come to the parish to meet with the Vestry. Interviews with the Bishop should be scheduled during the same visit.

LETTER OF AGREEMENT

With the help of the Deployment Officer and Chancellor, the Vestry and wardens will draft a Letter of Agreement to be presented to the candidates when they come for their interviews. In a parish, the wardens will meet with the candidate to present the job description and the compensation package being offered. In a mission congregation, the Deployment Officer, or other person appointed by the Bishop, will join the wardens for this portion of the interview.

The Search Committee must take care to write, as soon as possible, to those who are not being considered to thank them, and to let them know that they are no longer part of the parish’s search process.

FINAL SELECTION

The Vestry then makes its final selection and notifies the Bishop of their choice. Once approved by the Bishop, the Vestry will issue the call and the task of the Search Committee is completed. The Search Committee is encouraged to evaluate their work and celebrate their life together and the completion of their task.

ANNOUNCEMENT AND CELEBRATION

Once the call has been issued and accepted, and Letters Dimissory have been received from the former diocese of the cleric, the public announcement is made and a Celebration of New Ministry, as found in the Book of Common Prayer, is planned in coordination with the Bishop’s office.



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CONTINGENCY PLAN

In the event that the process does not result in an election or if the call is not accepted, then the Bishop and Deployment Officer will meet with the Vestry and wardens to determine how best to proceed.