

Episcopal Diocese of Washington

Parish Transition Process

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Episcopal Diocese of Washington
Mount Saint Alban
Washington, DC 20016
202-537-6555

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PARISH TRANSITION PROCESS OF THE DIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

INTRODUCTION

The calling of a new rector is a time pregnant with challenge and opportunity, a time, which if properly used, can result in important growth for the parish no matter how vital it already is. The coming and going of clergy is a normal occurrence within the diocese and the larger church. In fact, it reminds us that the congregation of baptized Christians is the only true constant in church, and that in the best of circumstances we *are* church, not just attendees at church services.

This document provides an overview of the transition process. It should be used in conjunction with the other explanations, templates, and tools available on the diocesan website.

This process is the standard for the diocese at this time, so it is worth reviewing in detail before your transition begins. However, there is no perfect process, and there is no process perfect for as many and as varied the congregations in a diocese of our size. Please work with the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care to explore this process and determine where you can customize it to meet the needs of your parish.

SEPARATION & STAGING

Announce the Departure

The transition process begins when any wind of the rector's departure reaches the congregation. Some clergy departures seem sudden and some are planned for months. Our best wisdom is that the rector not publicize his/her departure more than 90 days out. Even 60 days is sufficient and saves the parish from an awkward "lame duck" period of leadership and from the restlessness inherent in a long goodbye.

Clergy are obligated to alert the Bishop of their intentions to leave. Among the matters to be determined soon thereafter are the date of the actual departure and the date of announcement to vestry and then congregation.

As soon as – or just before – the departure is announced, the Sr. Warden should be in contact with the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care who will coach the parish through its transition.

Say 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. It is important that the separation be graceful, because a parish that does not feel good about the departure of its former rector is handicapped in establishing a relationship with the new rector.

Until the rector leaves, the *primary* tasks of the vestry are to plan the current rector’s departure, provide opportunities for people to say a worthy good-bye, and reassure congregants that the vestry is engaged and on top of the transition process. At this time and until the new rector is fully settled into his/her ministry, the vestry acts as ballast for the parish system. Parishioners will need to know that someone is at the helm, and that someone needs to be the vestry.

It is a natural thing for clergy who have been planning activities for years to want to continue to be helpful, but as soon as the rector announces his/her departure, s/he must begin to withdraw from all future planning activities. In order for the parish to deal with the loss of the relationship, congregants need to begin reminding themselves that they are the constant of church and that their future is in their own hands.

Select an Interim

In the diocese, the term “interim rector” is used for those clergy trained and experienced in the ministry of transition. The terms and conditions under which an interim rector is employed may vary with local circumstances but generally the responsibilities include the conduct of public worship, the continuation of pastoral ministries, support of programs, and whatever else contributes to the maintenance of the normal parish program.

The interim rector is a rector, with all the rights and obligations of the role. S/he is simply a rector with special training who serves a parish for a specific period of time under particular circumstances. Interims should be compensated according to the clergy salary guidelines used for long-term rectors. Interims chair vestry meetings and are responsible for hiring, supervising, and firing staff, just as their long-term colleagues are.

Interims are trained or experienced to facilitate the developmental process of the transition period. Typically, this includes assisting a parish to evaluate its mission and ministry, making any needed changes in parish administration or program, and helping the parish prepare for the arrival of a new rector. The Bishop expects this work to be done with good leadership skill, since it is work that is necessarily challenging and is being done at an emotionally sensitive time.

Absent extraordinary circumstances, is not appropriate for assisting or adjunct clergy to serve as the interim rector. The issue is whether a key member of the staff of the former rector can facilitate the congregational dynamics that lay the groundwork for the new rector. If it is the desire of the vestry for an assisting minister to continue as an assistant

during the interim, the canons require that this be approved by the Bishop under such conditions as the Bishop and vestry may determine [Canon III.9.3(c)].

As the rector prepares to leave, the vestry hires an interim. Wardens work with the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care, who in turn works with the Bishop and the Canon to the Ordinary to identify suitable candidates for Interim Rector. The vestry or executive committee then interviews those candidates and selects from among them.

Should the interim's start date lag behind the rector's departure date, wardens will need to work with the Bishop's office to arrange for Sunday Supply Clergy. This is weekly clergy support that covers Sunday services and some emergency pastoral care work but no administration or programming.

In special circumstances, a parish might decide that they cannot hire an interim. Wardens from those parishes are encouraged to contact the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care about Long Term Supply clergy or Priest-in-Charge options, both of which are available and sometimes very appropriate.

The appointment of any clergy person must be approved by the Bishop, so close communication with the Bishop's staff is critical in this time period.

Arrange for Visible Support from the Bishop's Office

The vestry will have been working behind the scenes with the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care from the time the rector began considering departure. At some point, it helps the congregation for that support to become more visible. Parishes invariably benefit from the reminder that they have the support of a larger organization while they are in transition and from the reminder that they are not the only parish in this pregnant phase.

As soon as practical after the rector's announcement, the vestry arranges for the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care to give an overview of the search process. Ideally, on the first Sunday after the rector's departure, a Canon also preaches and presents an overview of transition to the entire parish.

The Bishop's office recommends a review by the Diocesan Finance Committee. This review is not punitive – indeed, it is an option for any parish – rather, it's an opportunity for the parish to have an objective group weigh in on what rector package it can afford without stretching its finances too thin.

Create a Committee

Once the departing rector leaves, the vestry convenes a Search Committee. This committee should be 6-10 members, roughly representative of the parish in terms of demographics and program interests.

Search Committee members can volunteer or be nominated, however the parish wishes to recruit. The vestry should discern from among all the names which subset would be most gifted for the task; would work well together, and are representative of the parish.

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 must also select a Search Committee Chair. The Chair should be someone who can effectively lead a group, manage long-term processes to completion, and coordinate with the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care to get templates, tools, and coaching. Parish vestries may also discern co-chairs for the Search Committee if that would make most sense, depending on the needs of the parish.

CONGREGATIONAL SELF-EXPLORATION

Before actively starting its work, the search committee will align around its task. It will review the charge given to it by the vestry, create a budget and workplan, and center on group norms and roles. Search Committee Chairs are encouraged to contact the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care for descriptions and templates for all these items.

Establish Communication Norms

Communication with the parish is essential. While the content of the deliberations and the names of nominees are confidential, 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 complain 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. For example, weekly 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 of names approved by the Bishop.” In addition, search committee members might give oral updates during announcements or parish functions.

Engage in Congregational Self-Study

The first half of the search committee’s work is guiding the congregation through self-reflection activities. In this part of the process, the parish is encouraged to explore its history, consider its identity and whom it serves; discern the context in which it ministers; assess its needs and the needs of others to whom they minister; and assess the resources they have to offer. Ultimately, self-reflection asks the parish to consider what God is calling it to do at this time, in this particular place, and how it can serve the Kingdom in the near future.

The essential product of self-exploration is, of course, a renewed sense of identity and vision – two things that are critical for a successful new era of ministry. But there are also three tangible products of self-exploration. They are described in the following three paragraphs.

Complete the Parish Vitality Assessment

The Diocese of Washington engaged in the development of a Strategic Plan during 2019. One of the deliverables of the Plan was the identification of 3 strategic areas for intentional focus. These areas included: Revitalization, Formation, and Justice. Further, through the development of the Revitalization area, 7 specific metrics were identified to indicate the degree of vitality of a parish. As it is the responsibility of the Search Committee to present

an honest depiction of the institutional history and DNA of the parish, it is strongly recommended that the Search Committee develop a Parish Vitality Assessment addressing each of these 7 specific metrics. See Appendix IV.

The Parish Vitality Assessment is used to introduce prospective candidates to the fullness of the lifeblood of the parish. The development of the assessment is not intended and should not be a laborious, time-consuming task, but rather an intentional *space for grace* for the parish to clearly state the making of their true identity.

A draft of the assessment should be reviewed by the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care prior to its publication. The assessment will serve as a significant repository of the information required in the completion of the Office of Transition Ministries Community Portfolio as described in the following paragraph.

Complete the Office of Transition Ministries Community Portfolio

Just as our Diocese has officers assigned to oversee transition, so, too, do others. A group in the National Church helps coordinate diocesan efforts, and in doing so has created a database of both clergy and parish “portfolios.” All clergy are instructed to create a portfolio when they are ordained. Parishes create or update their portfolios whenever they enter a transition period.

The goal of the database is to capture data that will help match parishes with clergy seeking employment.

After gathering self-exploration data, the search committee is responsible for completing a form whose contents include both a financial/demographic section and a narrative section.

- The search committee will engage the vestry to complete the financials – these include things like the salary package. *It is diocesan practice that any full time parochial priest be paid at least the minimum annual compensation as determined by the guidelines approved by Diocesan Council and Convention.* Compensation guidelines are available on the diocesan website at www.edow.org.
- The search committee will work with the data gathered from the congregation to complete the narrative questions.
- The Bishop has identified 7 traits of leadership for priests functioning in the diocese. These traits should be available for review by both the Search Committee and prospective applicants to gain clarity and understanding of the expectations for clergy leadership in the diocese. See Appendix V.

Align around Task

The Search Committee Chair sends all portfolio data to the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care for actual input to the database.

Update the Parish Website

These days, the vast majority of applications for any position will visit a hiring organization's website to ascertain its character, ethos, and programs. The same is true for clergy applicants. Since potential parishioners will also visit websites and since transition is a natural era in which to "get the parish in order," the new diocesan policy is that a by-product of self-exploration be a web update.

Parishes can decide whether they want a parishioner to update the site, whether they want to engage local students to do it as a project, or whether they want to hire professional support, but websites should aim to be comprehensive, engaging, and current. The technical team at the Bishop's Office is more than happy to suggest web standards and be a first point of contact for this task. The task will need to be budgeted for and overseen by the vestry. But whoever is actually updating the site will get content guidance from the search committee who will have fresh information from the self-exploration activities.

DISCERNMENT

Post Employment Listings

Once the parish website is updated and the OTM Portfolio completed, the Bishop's office will post an employment listing on its website, with the Transition Ministries Network, and in the OTM database. Listings may be included on various social media platforms targeted for clergy for maximum visibility. Listings are typically open for 4-6 weeks. Clergy responding to those listings will be instructed to submit their applications directly to the search committee.

Discern Candidates

Once the employment listing is closed, search committee members will review their applicant pool. Typically, parishes use a four-stage review process:

1. Review applications (cover letter, resume and OTM portfolio), then determine which applicants to interview via videoconference).
2. Conduct videoconference interviews, then determine which applicants to visit (n=~8).
3. Assign teams of 3 search committee members to visit candidates in their home parishes (or other live worship experience) to hear them preside and preach and conduct an interview, then determine which candidates to bring to the hiring parish (n=~5).
4. Host candidates at the hiring parish for a tour of the environs, a meal, and an interview, then discern which finalist(s) to recommend to the vestry (n=whatever the charge required).

This process can be adjusted in parishes that get fewer candidates and/or to make use of current technologies.

During the discernment process, 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. Associates, interims and candidates on time-certain contracts might very well be seeking new employment with their parishes' full knowledge and consent. Other candidates, however, would wisely preserve their current congregation's morale by not making their job search public. It is career- and parish-damaging when search committee members leak information about candidate identity to parishioners – or even to spouses and friends.

Arrange Background, Diocesan, Reference, and Bishop Checks

Background Checks concerning sexual misconduct, criminal offenses and financial solvency, are required for clergy at any point of transition (pre-ordination, licensing, and employment) in the Diocese of Washington. Once a search committee discerns the candidates it will visit, it must send their names, email addresses, and current bishop information to the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care.

Before Search Committee visits occur, the Canon will also contact each candidate's diocesan officer to ensure the clergy person is actually licensed and performing well in his/her existing diocese.) The Canon will work with diocesan human resources officers to arrange background checks. Background checks cost approximately \$100 each, paid by the parish. During this same stage in the process, search committee members should begin reference checks.

Once the search committee has determined which candidate(s) it will submit to the vestry, it should send the list to the Bishop's office. The Bishop will phone-interview each candidate and their corresponding Bishop and share her impressions with the search committee.

Conduct Semi-Final Discernment

When the search committee has completed its interviews, consulted with the Canon and Bishop for approval of each candidate, and reached a decision, it presents final candidates to the vestry. Depending on what the vestry requested in its charge to the search committee, the committee might submit a single name, multiple names in ranked order, or multiple names in alphabetical order. The chair or co-chairs of the search committee will make the presentation of the candidate(s) to the vestry.

CALL & WELCOME

Conduct Final Discernment

Upon receipt of the search committee recommendations, the vestry arranges to re-interview the final candidate(s). This interview stage strikes some vestries as redundant, but the vestry is the hiring body, the group that must work most closely with the rector, and the group making a decision about a tenured position. It is critical that the vestry do that with first-hand knowledge of all the candidates.

Vestry interviews with the candidates typically include some social and some interview time. They could also include prayer time, though the Bishop discourages asking candidates to perform sacramental duties in the course of an interview. If the final candidates are married, spouses can be invited to visit during vestry interviews.

After those conversations, the vestry conducts its final discernment. In this session, the vestry prayerfully and with a mind toward consensus, identifies its preferred candidate. Before leaving the meeting space, the Senior warden calls the Bishop and informs her of the choice.

Make the Call

As soon as possible after the final discernment meeting (that same day or the day after), the Senior Warden contacts the selected candidate to make an informal “call.” Immediately following, the call is issued in writing and accompanied by a proposed letter of agreement that includes proposed salary, housing, benefits, allowances, vacation and continuing education, special expectations, etc.

Announce

After the call has been formally accepted by the nominee, the vestry can announce the election to the parish and the public. Though unusual, there are opportunities for the process to go astray between the decision of the search committee, the election by the vestry, and the final acceptance of the call. It is potentially embarrassing to both the candidate and the parish if premature announcements are made. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the announcement of the call be made on the same day as the candidate announces his/her departure from his/her parish.

Say Farewell to the Interim

When the call has been issued and accepted, the interim rector is notified so plans for his or her departure can be made. It is important to celebrate that ministry in whatever ways are customary to the congregation. Following the departure of the Interim rector, it is necessary to arrange for supply clergy for a period of four weeks to allow some closure before the new rector arrives.

Honor the Search Committee

The gift of the time and talent given by the search committee needs to be recognized and honored by the congregation. One way to do this is for the vestry to sponsor a reception for the search committee after the call of the new rector has been accepted.

Welcome the New Rector

When the call has been issued and accepted, it is appropriate for the vestry to appoint a transition committee to serve as a committee of welcome, to introduce the new rector and his or her family to the community, to help in relocation, and to assist in the beginning of the new ministry. The transition committee might plan coffee and dessert for small groups to assist the new rector in meeting people, provide groceries for the first week, see to it that the rector's office is ready to be occupied, or provide maps and contact information for example. (See Appendix II.)

Usually, the new rector is already employed in another parish. He or she must allow time for a responsible departure, which includes setting a date in conjunction with the bishop and vestry, for saying "good-byes," perhaps for a bit of vacation, and for packing and moving before the new ministry begins. It is often at least two months after acceptance of the call before the new rector is in place and not uncommon for a longer period of time to be required.

Celebration of a New Ministry

To schedule a Celebration of a New Ministry, please contact Cheryl Wilburn, Executive Assistant to the Bishops, at 202-537-6543. The Diocese of Washington uses a rite developed by the Rt. Rev. A. Theodore Eastman, retired Bishop of Maryland, and adapted by the Diocese of Ohio. We encourage you to invite those people who have been helpful throughout this process, including the interim rector, members of the bishop's staff, and any clergy who have served the parish during the interim period.

CONCLUSION

The new rector is in place, at last. This is, in itself, a significant accomplishment, but hopefully it is not the only benefit a parish has received from its involvement in the interim process. Much of a parish's involvement and benefit depends upon the extent and enthusiasm of participation, and that, in turn, depends upon the leadership of wardens, and vestry. Many parishes report discovery of exciting new dimensions in their ministry, an increased sense of identity and purpose, newly identified resources in lay leadership, or a new recognition of its relationship with the bishop and the wider church. May all these blessings be yours, and many more.

Finally, the Diocese will continue to provide support during the first year of the new ministry through a program called Genesis. The Bishop expects all clergy in new ministries to participate in the program. See the diocesan website for more information.

We hope this process will assist your parish during the transition, support you in the renewal of your mission, and help you to discern the person called to join you in the next stage of your journey in Christ.

APPENDIX I

WHO'S WHO IN THE INTERIM PERIOD

BISHOP

The bishop has ultimate responsibility for the ministry of all congregations in the Diocese. In the interim process the bishop advises wardens at the outset of the interim in person or through the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care; assigns diocesan resources to assist in the process; approves all candidates; and approves the election of a rector in a parish.

WARDENS

The senior and junior wardens are the chief lay officers of the parish, responsible for many of the affairs of the parish in the absence of the rector. When an opening occurs or is imminent, the senior warden notifies the bishop and maintains communication with the Canon for Leadership Development and Congregational Care throughout the process. The senior warden (in his or her absence, the junior warden) is responsible for obtaining interim or supply clergy, presides at the election of the rector and communicates that election to the bishop, negotiates on behalf of the parish with the newly called rector, and assists the new rector as his or her new ministry begins.

VESTRY

The vestry chooses the Search committee, prepares the budget for the search process, and formulates the charge to the Search committee. The vestry assists the parish in participating in the process and, when the process is complete, elects the new rector.

CANON FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND CONGREGATIONAL CARE

This officer is the bishop's deputy for dealing with parishes in the interim process. The officer assists the vestry in appropriate closure of the out-going priest's ministry; assists the wardens and vestry in planning the interim process; assists in the search for an interim rector or interim supply clergy; coordinates with the national Office for Transition Ministries; investigates and consults with the bishop about prospective candidates; provides resources and training for interim consultants and interim rectors; provides resources for the search committee, vestry and wardens; keeps the bishop informed of the progress of all searches; assists in the final call and in the negotiation of a letter of agreement with the new rector; and finally, assists in the start up of the new ministry.

INTERIM RECTOR

In the Diocese of Washington the term "interim rector" is reserved for those trained and experienced in the ministry of transition. The terms and conditions under which an interim rector is employed may vary with local circumstances but generally the responsibilities include the conduct of public worship, the continuation of pastoral ministries, support of programs, and whatever else contributes to a normal parish program. The interim rector is

specially trained to assist a parish to evaluate its mission and ministry, to make any needed changes in parish administration or program, and to help the parish prepare for the arrival of a new rector. This work is done in consultation with the wardens, vestry, and other parish leaders. In the Diocese of Washington, the interim rector is rector in everything but tenure, including the supervision of the parish staff. The interim rector presides at meetings of the vestry. 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 is an extension of the bishop's ministry. An interim has the full powers and authorities of a rector.

PRIEST-IN-CHARGE

A priest-in-charge is another contractual designation of clergy. In challenging circumstances, a priest-in-charge is appointed by the bishop after consultation with the vestry and exercises the duties of Canon III.9.5 subject to the authority of the bishop. In other circumstances, the bishop might offer a slate of priest-in-charge candidates.

SUPPLY CLERGY

Clergy serving a parish only on Sundays and for pastoral care – typically serving between when a rector leaves and an interim is called – are termed “supply clergy.” When a supply priest agrees to serve for a prolonged period he or she may be identified as “extended supply.”

OFFICE FOR TRANSITION MINISTRIES (OTM)

The Office for Transition Ministries is a transition resource at the National Church level. Part of their role is to maintain a registry for all clergy and parishes seeking a change in position or leadership. Clergy create “portfolios” which identify their work experience, areas of special interest, training, and developed skills. Parishes create “portfolios” indicating what skills and support they need in a clergy leader. Canons for Transition, among others, access this information on behalf of searching clergy and parishes to help identify matches.

SEARCH CONSULTANT

The search consultant works with the wardens, vestry, and search committee throughout the interim process. The consultant assists the parish in evaluating their strengths and resources, in identifying goals, in dealing with conflict, and in negotiating the procedural aspects of the search. The consultant works with the interim rector or extended supply priest and with the diocesan transition officer and, with their assistance, identifies and responds to the needs and problems that may emerge as the process unfolds. The consultant is the principal resource and point of intercommunication for both the vestry and the search committee and for the transition officer and bishop.

APPENDIX II

TO WELCOME THE NEXT RECTOR

- 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 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 rite for the Celebration of a New Ministry. This is a revision of the rite provided in the BCP, which a new rector might not know. For a copy, contact Cheryl Wilburn at 202-537-6543 or see the diocesan website, www.edow.org
 - A map of the area
 - If there is an ECW or other guilds for men or women, 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. This number should be provided to the rector and one other person who is authorized to view and change the data.
- Any liturgical customary or instruction manual for Eucharistic Visitors, acolytes, altar guild, chalice bearers, lectors and intercessors along with current Sunday schedules
- Offer to provide a tour of the building

- Offer to arrange lunch with a neighboring priest who can provide information on the regional convener, regional meetings, clergy meetings, diocesan convention dates, clergy days, ecumenical events, and other ecclesiastical matters.

APPENDIX III

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 to, 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.9.5 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. Any assistant shall serve at the pleasure of the Rector and may not serve beyond the period of service of the Rector, except that pending the call of a new Rector, 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 subject to the Bishop's approval.

APPENDIX IV

PARISH VITALITY ASSESSMENT

Through the *Becoming Good Soil* strategic planning process, the Diocese identified 7 vital signs of parish health. Using a scale (0 = no demonstrable evidence of this vital sign to 10 = highest demonstrable evidence of this vital sign), rate your current parish reality and provide a description supporting your rating for each of the following vital signs:

- **Have and can share a clear and compelling mission of drawing people to Jesus.** Thriving congregations intentionally and regularly discern God’s will in ways that are grounded in Scripture and engage the whole community in a spirit of celebration of God’s blessings. Regular discernment provides clarity and excitement about purpose and assists in aligning their structures and ministries with their mission.
- **Have a clear path of discipleship that fosters spiritual growth for all ages.** Thriving congregations offer clear opportunities for members to take next steps of Christian practices to deepen their faith. Christians today are called to adapt practices of teaching, fellowship, shared meals, prayer and generosity that characterized the early Church and that sustain life in Christ (e.g. Acts 2:42-47).
- **Provide uplifting and inviting worship experiences.** The Episcopal liturgical tradition is grounded in Sunday worship, the rhythms of the Church year, and the daily office, offering rituals and rhythms that draw people into God’s story and help people interpret pivotal life experiences.
- **Actively bless the local community with ministry offerings.** Thriving congregations champion justice and “seek the welfare in the city” in which they live (Jer. 29:7).
- **Welcome and connect new people in dynamic and life-giving ways.** Like Jesus, thriving congregations have an outsider focus and are on the move, spreading the good news (John 1:39). They tell stories of meeting Jesus and invite friends and neighbors to celebrate God’s love. They welcome newcomers and connect them to ministries with clear next steps to deepen faith.
- **Have capable leadership committed to personal growth, building leadership skills, and spiritual practices.** In thriving congregations clergy and lay leaders partner to lead ministries and are deeply committed to growing as disciples of Jesus. These leaders live by a Rule of Life with regular rhythms of worship, prayer, study, silence, and service. They are able to clearly and joyfully articulate their faith as Christians in the Episcopal tradition.
- **Engage in healthy and sustainable financial practices.** Thriving congregations engage realistic and transparent budgeting and maintain reporting practices that align their financial resources with the mission and vision of the congregation.

We believe these practices make God’s presence palpable, draw people into deeper faith and community, and transform their understanding of themselves and their engagement in the world.

APPENDIX V

QUALITIES WE SEEK IN A PRIEST

Our ordained leaders collectively will be multicultural and racially diverse, to reflect the breadth of humanity represented in our mission area. They will be mission-focused, entrepreneurial, collaborative, and adaptive. The qualities described here are not exhaustive -- nor are these qualities exclusive to priestly ministry. They are the result of much discernment and many conversations amidst clergy, lay leaders, congregations, and other dioceses. We do not expect every candidate for the priesthood to exhibit all of these qualities, but we do expect them to exhibit most of them. Our discernment process will focus on discerning the presence, or the seeds of presence, of these qualities and abilities in each candidate.

- 1) **Compelling spiritual life and a passion for the Gospel:** There is great spiritual hunger in the culture at large and in our congregations. The Diocese seeks clergy who love God with heart, mind, and soul, and who know Christ and seek to make Christ known. Our clergy will have a vision for the Episcopal Church's ministry and how to guide our people to greater faithfulness and spiritual depth. They will have both a deep reverence for the sacraments at the heart of our liturgical life and a sacramental worldview in which outward and visible things reveal inward and invisible truths.
- 2) **Ability to communicate the Gospel in ways that people and communities find engaging and relevant to their lives:** Communication is multi-faceted. Today's clergy need to speak several "languages," both human and technological, from the pulpit, in personal conversation and in social media. They are called to minister in a wide variety of contexts, among all sorts of people. There is a particular, urgent need to reach younger generations—families raising children, teenagers and young adults—as well as the ability to be an effective spiritual presence among our fastest growing demographic, those over the age of 75.
- 3) **Spiritual maturity, self-awareness, and authenticity:** The work of the Episcopal priesthood is challenging. It requires a strong spiritual center, physical and mental stamina, healthy personal boundaries, and a willingness to grow and learn alongside others. Effective clergy must be able to persevere in challenging circumstances, recognize their personal growth edges, and be willing to learn new skills and ask for help.

- 4) **Ability to lead, organize, and equip others in ministry:** Many people are drawn to the priesthood for the love of ministry—pastoral care, teaching, service, and speaking out for justice. The predominant model of ministry in most Episcopal churches is that of one minister (the priest) ministering to all the people, or at the center of the Church’s ministry. We seek a new paradigm, of clergy able to equip others for meaningful Christian lives and vocations, inviting others into the life of Christian community and ministry. It will require community organizing skills and the ability to identify and mentor new leaders.

- 5) **Entrepreneurial leadership:** We seek individuals who are able to take risks and try new things in ministry. Twenty-first century clergy need creativity, the capacity to discern new paths, and the willingness to make mistakes and learn from them. Entrepreneurial leaders see opportunities where others see decline; possibilities where others see insurmountable challenges. 3

- 6) **The ability to lead congregations through change:** The majority of our congregations face significant adaptive challenges. This generation of clergy will lead our congregations through the wilderness of life as it has been to the Promised Land to which God calls us. As with our spiritual ancestors, there is a process of transformation required of us on the journey, as well as the ability to adapt to new ways of being the Church. Our clergy will lead the way, in faithfulness to God’s call and in the challenging work of change.

- 7) **A willingness and ability to be vocationally flexible:** Our churches are in a variety of contexts in a variety of locations with a variety of needs. Our clergy will need to respond to this variety with their own flexibility. Few are likely to serve in one role at one type of church in one city for their entire vocation. In addition, a growing number of congregations require clergy leaders that do not depend on them for their entire livelihood. Thus, we need some priests who can offer their presence and their gifts as priests in a part-time or non-stipendiary capacity. Our clergy will demonstrate flexibility in their vision of professional ministry in order to respond to God’s call to them and the church in our world.