Tasks for Search Committees

Before beginning the tasks below:

Organize the committee
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 before, who approve the profile in hardcopy and any additional formats before dissemination by the parish. Additional copies 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. 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 request 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 in the Positions Open Bulletin and the Deployment Ministry newsletter. It will be listed for at least a month to allow as many candidates as possible to apply.

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. **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 may elect to conduct telephone interviews, followed by further culling of the list and plans for on-site visits. 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 and prepare a visitation schedule
- At least one person on the search committee should be conversant regarding parish finances
- Prepare questions for interviews and anticipate questions by the candidate
- Agree on which committee members will host each candidate
- Prepare name tags for the committee
- Prepare packets of information for candidates to take home. These should include information about the church and community.
- Prepare an interview evaluation form
- Arrange for a mock interview
- Select one person to take notes during the interview
- Determine the size and makeup of the visiting teams
- Be prepared to discuss dates of follow-up visits to the candidates' parishes
- Arrange an interview with the bishop for candidates from outside the Diocese of Easton

Task 6: Post Interview Session

The host/hostess returns the candidate to the hotel if she/he is staying in one.

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. Do not try to eliminate a candidate before visiting him/her. 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 7: Parish Visits

After the interviews, arrangements are made for teams to visit the candidate's parish for a Sunday service.

Teams are usually made up of three people.

It is important to be discreet – don't sit together, don't interview parishioners or discuss with them why you are there.

After each visit the team reports back to the full committee.

Task 8: Checking References

Teams call the references.

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

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

Task 9: Selecting the 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.

Task 10: Vestry Approval

The search committee chairs need to prepare for this presentation. 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.

Task 11: Meeting the Candidates

It is appropriate at this point to invite the candidates for social events with the vestry. Following these visits, 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.

From here on, the transition team takes over.

Good job!