

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT



*Calling
New
Clergy Partnership
in a Congregation*

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Introduction

In *Calling New Clergy Partnership* The Episcopal Church in Vermont offers a discernment process through which we believe that congregations and clergy can find each other, make a good match between needs and gifts or skills, all accomplished by being open to the Holy Spirit. This process has been shaped through the practice of baptismal ministry.

The term “baptismal ministry” is used in Vermont to describe our committed response to live out our baptismal promises within God's creation so all may be aware that we are in communion with a Living and Sustaining God.

Baptismal ministry demonstrates for us the fullest expression of our commitment to the baptismal promises, including both the ministries we may have in our daily lives and the ministries we do within the church and/or on its behalf. This commitment is developed even more in our common life when the discernment process of calling a new clergy partner is rooted in the theology of our baptism.

Overview

Calling New Clergy Partnership is a guide to the multi-dimensional and many-faceted process of the discernment of ministries and the calling of a new clergy partner to be with you in congregational ministry. This guide contains an overview of the process, including variations along the way, suggestions, and recommendations. The material is based upon over 30 years of churches calling clergy partners in ministry: congregations of differing sizes, with a variety of gifts and skills needed, and a commitment to calling the clergyperson who best matches the expressed needs of the congregations.

The process of calling clergy to be in partnership is one of faithful discernment, a spiritual sifting and weighing of the following:

- The congregation’s call to the ministry of all the baptized;
- God’s particular call for the congregation in the moment and for the future;
- How this time of transition can be fruitful for ministry and congregational development;
- How this process can lead to “calling” a new priest as opposed to “hiring” someone to exercise ministry;
- How the Holy Spirit permeates this process.

This process of faithful discernment is done in partnership between the people in the congregation, the Bishop, and the clergyperson. The best relationships among God’s people--the Church--are formed when all involved work with each other, listen to the Spirit, and minister side-by-side.

In the process of moving from one clergy partner to another--the process of ministry discernment and transition—there are typically five parties who are involved: the out-going clergyperson, the Vestry, the Bishop and Transition Minister, the Interim Pastor, and the Ministry Discernment Committee.

Each person or group plays an important role and may be involved in all or part of the process. All of these parties and their respective responsibilities and involvement are described in this document. Some of the roles and types of involvement are shaped by the size of the congregation; some by the numbers of those in leadership positions in the congregation; and some by those who are available—and willing—to participate in the discernment process.

The process is shaped by two factors:

- *size of the congregation and*
- *time available from members.*

There will be other factors, depending on the congregation.

The process of transitioning from one clergy partner to another is much more than a “search” and a position to be filled. The process of discerning God’s Will means the congregation and its leaders commit to:

- take time to prayerfully consider what gifts and skills they have among themselves;
- faithfully explore and then describe what ministries God is calling them to as a congregation;
- determine what gifts and skills are needed for future leadership (lay and ordained) in order to enact the mission and ministries to which God is calling the congregation.

A discernment process always involves the above actions - how these actions are done in each congregation may vary. The variety may be due to size of congregation, the numbers of leaders in the congregation, the personality of the congregation, or events within the life of the congregation—the same reasons that shape the roles and involvement.

For example, in a congregation of 30 or fewer members, the leadership roles may be filled by only a handful of people, all of whom have multiple responsibilities. These members may have little additional time to give to the tasks of a discernment process. The process may be condensed in consultation with the Transition Minister: perhaps the Vestry will also serve as the Ministry Discernment Committee, for example.

In a congregation of a larger size, 70 members for example, there are naturally more members to participate in the process. There are usually enough people to form a separate Ministry Discernment Committee with little overlap of Vestry members. Likewise, there are enough people in leadership roles so no individual is carrying a large burden of tasks.

In a congregation of 100 members with ample resources—people, time, finances—the discernment process and calling a new clergy partner may involve numerous congregation members as well as time

*The steps in the process of discernment and transition
are not always linear.*

*Some phases may overlap,
some steps may need to be repeated,
and some things are done in parallel process.*

*The process will not be exactly the same in
every congregation.*

and financial resources.

The steps in the discernment process and the phases in the overall process of calling a new clergy partner and/or exploring a new leadership model are described in the following pages.

Phase I

A Vacancy in Clergy Leadership Occurs

When a clergyperson announces her/his intent to leave a congregation, it is important that the departure or transition be appropriate to the situation and that all involved are informed and participate in a process of ending and transforming.

A clergy partner may be retiring, leaving ordained ministry, or accepting a call to another congregation or another type of ministry.

Informing the Bishop

When a priest informs the vestry of a plan to resign or retire from the congregation, the Senior Warden should promptly communicate this in writing to the Bishop. Together, the departing clergyperson, congregational leadership, and the Bishop and Transition Minister will plan a process for departure and farewell.

Explaining Next Steps—Vestry and Congregation

Soon after the resignation or retirement has been announced, the Bishop will arrange to meet with the Vestry. At this meeting, the Bishop and the Transition Minister begin the conversation about steps to engage a new clergy partner, outline a variety of options for calling clergy, and describe the resources available to help the congregation during the discernment process.

The Transition Minister will send materials to the Senior Warden and be available to the Wardens and Vestry to assist in preparing for the departure of the clergyperson and beginning an interim phase of ministry. The focus of this time will be the next steps needed from the Vestry, encouragement and reassurance extended through the partnership with the Bishop and diocesan Ministry Support Team, and filling the needs for pastoral care and Sunday coverage.

The Transition Minister will schedule an opportunity to meet with the entire congregation to present an overview of the transition process, provide information on various models of clergy partnership and answer questions. This usually happens on a Sunday morning; the Transition Minister preaches and meets with the congregation following the service.

Holding an Exit Interview

The Transition Minister will initiate and facilitate an Exit Interview between the out-going clergyperson and the Wardens. In advance of the meeting, the Transition Minister will send materials for the exit process to the Wardens and the clergyperson.

The purposes of the Exit Interview are:

- 1) to reflect on the ministry done together
- 2) to offer hopes and dreams for the future ministries of the congregation
- 3) for the Bishop to learn and begin the diocesan Ministry Support Team's partnership in the discernment process with the congregation.

Notes of the interview will be written and reviewed by all the participants before they are sent to the Bishop. General information from the notes may be shared by the Transition Minister with an interim clergyperson.

Planning for Interim Ministry

Calling a new priest and discerning a new leadership model should not be done hastily. Carrying out the discernment and calling process carefully can take twelve months or more. The Vestry needs to consider what sort of clergy partnership needs to be provided for this "between" time, from the departure of the current clergyperson to the arrival of the new clergy partner.

A person employed to provide leadership and support to a congregation in this interval is called an "Interim Pastor" and may or may not be an ordained person. An Interim Pastor can play an important role in maintaining the vital programs of the congregation, reinforcing the ministry of the laity, resolving feelings of grief, and increasing the potential for a successful ministry by the next settled priest.

Experience throughout our Church proves it is very helpful to the congregation to have a pastor assisting them during this time of clergy transition, whether the Interim Pastor is part- or full-time. Congregations will ordinarily employ an interim leader who has been specially trained as an Interim Pastor. The Bishop, through the Transition Minister, will recommend one or more such persons who are available for the Vestry to consider calling. When the Vestry has called an Interim Pastor and the call has been accepted, a Letter of Agreement will be negotiated between the Interim and the Vestry. A model of this Letter is included as an appendix.

Whether a priest or layperson is employed as Interim Pastor, there are a number of important issues that should be discussed and tasks to be accomplished by the Vestry and the Interim as the relationship begins. See Appendix B for a list of items to consider and other information regarding interim ministry.

*No matter the circumstances, change is occurring...
this will affect your congregational life.*

The tasks of an Interim Pastor are separate and distinct from the congregation's discernment process. The Interim Pastor is not to participate in the workings or deliberations of the Ministry Discernment Committee or Vestry.

Forming a Ministry Discernment Committee

The Transition Minister will meet with the Vestry to shape the configuration for the Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC). The MDC will be the group of people who will lead the congregation through the discernment process. This may include exploring which model of leadership will be most helpful to the congregation and recommending this to the Vestry. This may result in the call to a new clergy partner by the Vestry.

There are three variables that come into the formation of an MDC:

- *Size of congregation,*
- *time needed for the transition,*
- *complexity of the situation.*

The Vestry should consider the following questions when forming the MDC:

How many people does the Vestry reasonably think can and will participate on the MDC?

Will some/all of these persons also be Vestry members or are there enough other people to be involved?

Of the people identified, who has the time and can make the commitment to serve on the MDC—on top of the other ministries she/he has?

Will some need to let go of other ministries in order to have the time to serve on the MDC—and, if so, who then picks up those other ministries or does the congregation do without them?

Based on Diocesan experience, a Ministry Discernment Committee should have *no more than ten* members and *no fewer than five*, and *includes at least one Vestry member* on the MDC who will act as a liaison between the MDC and the Vestry.

Our experience also tells us that it is *not helpful* for staff members of the parish, or institution sponsored by the parish, and their spouses/partners to serve as members of the Committee because of possible conflicts of interest.

The Wardens, who carry additional responsibilities during the clergy transition, can easily become overburdened if they also serve on the MDC.

In smaller-sized congregations, the membership on the Vestry and the MDC may overlap members. This configuration is realistic, based on the number of people and the energy they have for ministry.

Larger-sized congregations, with many people willing to undertake ministries, often form the MDC as a *completely separate* group of people from the Vestry with the exception of the liaison.

Smaller-sized congregations might form the MDC from the *same members* who serve on the Vestry.

Which model works best for your congregation?

Once the number of people is set for the MDC, the Vestry should discuss, very frankly, the resources and amount of time reasonable for this process. As the Vestry discerns the matter of time and resources, the Transition Minister and other diocesan partners will also be discerning what they know of your congregation. The Transition Minister can assist the Vestry with exploring optional timeframes.

The Vestry will decide how many final candidates the MDC will present for an interview by the Vestry and final consideration. How the Vestry answers these and other questions depends on which “fit” is better for your congregation’s situation.

Once the Vestry sets the number of members of the Ministry Discernment Committee and the amount of time for the process, the Vestry then invites persons to serve on the MDC. There are a variety of ways to do this. The membership for the MDC needs to be as broadly representative of the congregation as

The Vestry should discuss and be very familiar with the three-fold purpose of the MDC:

- 1. To study and reflect on the ministries of the congregation, current and future;*
- 2. To discern which model of leadership best enacts and supports your next phase of ministry;*
- 3. To identify the clergy candidate who has the gifts and skills to partner with the congregation in these ministries.*

possible.

The Vestry needs to discuss with everyone who serves on the MDC the nature of the ministry to which they are being called, the commitment needed from the person, and all expectations, including the fact that the average discernment process lasts between fourteen and eighteen months. The members of the MDC will decide on the pattern of meetings that will work best for them, usually weekly or bi-weekly. The commitment is a serious one and needs to be described fully and realistically by the Vestry.

The Chairperson of the Ministry Discernment Committee plays a key role. This person will hold the important job of convening the Committee and holding its members to their assigned tasks. The Vestry may decide to appoint a Chairperson or the MDC might select its own.

The Chairperson should have *demonstrated leadership abilities and particular skills*:

- Ability to communicate,
- Ability to delegate,
- Ability to set schedules and hold to them,
- Ability to lead a meeting with a balance between agenda tasks and members' feelings,
- Ability to listen with an open heart and mind,
- Ability to generate optimism and follow-up with tasks.

The Chairperson will need to be able to give a substantial amount of energy and time during the entire discernment and calling process. The Chairperson also will work closely with the Transition Minister in providing leadership.

As the MDC begins its initial work, they will establish a common sense of spiritual purpose, get to know each other, and work on logistics. Possibilities are to pray together; to participate in a Bible Study that focuses on how discernment was done in Biblical times; to engage in introduction exercise(s); to set regular meeting times; and to discuss expectations and priorities, including participation in meetings.

The Transition Minister will facilitate a discussion with the MDC about the need for confidentiality. For example, members need to discuss why information about the candidates must not be discussed beyond the MDC. At the same time, MDC members must understand the need for clear and frequent communication with the congregation. The Transition Minister and the MDC will work out together the expectations, ground rules, and the methods of appropriate communication.

Vestry conversation that leads to forming the MDC will also lead to setting forth the “Vestry’s Charge to the Ministry Discernment Committee” (Appendix C). This is an important document, outlining the Vestry’s expectations for the MDC’s work and helping to avoid misunderstandings which may arise later in the process.

Joint Meeting of Vestry and Ministry Discernment Committee

Before the next phase of the process begins, the full Vestry and the Ministry Discernment Committee gather for a meeting. The experience of other congregations in transition has shown us that being intentional about various roles, setting limits and boundaries, outlining expectations, and creating the scope of each groups’ work is a very helpful—perhaps even necessary—part of the beginning of the journey in calling new clergy partnership.

The Transition Minister, Senior Warden, and the Chairperson of the MDC set the date of this meeting, which includes the Interim Pastor, if one has been called. The Transition Minister facilitates the meeting, which may be held on a Sunday afternoon for a couple of hours or as an all-day event or an extended Vestry meeting. As with many steps in the process, the meeting is a reflection of the needs of each congregation.

At this meeting the Vestry will charge the MDC with its purpose, the timeline, and expectations.

Following the meeting, the Vestry should begin work on a clergy compensation/benefits packet. The Transition Minister is available to assist with this. The Vestry will need to complete their work on the compensation/benefits packet in time to add the information to the congregation's Office of Transition Ministry (OTM) Portfolio.

The Transition Team

The process of identifying a new clergy partner for a congregation is done in partnership with the Bishop and other members of the diocesan Ministry Support Team. The congregation's Transition Team, consisting of the Warden(s), the chair of the Ministry Discernment Committee, the Interim Pastor (when there is one) and the Transition Minister will meet by teleconference on at least a monthly basis.

Shortly after the MDC is formed and the Interim Pastor arrives, the Transition Minister and/or the Chair of the MDC will convene the first meeting of the Transition Team. At the initial meeting, the Team will discuss their roles and expectations of each other and guidelines for maintaining communication. Regular communication should occur between these members and might include agreements such as an e-mail group and meeting together in person, by conference call, or by web-conference periodically.

*It is **normal and natural** for any serious conflicts within a congregation to make themselves known – or known more deeply – during the start of a discernment process. And, they will make the discernment process **difficult or impossible**.*

*Conflicts **must be resolved** before a new priest is called.*

If the Vestry or the MDC become aware of such a situation, the Vestry should try to resolve it with the help of the Interim Pastor. If the conflict is severe, the Transition Minister or the Bishop should be informed so that appropriate guidance and/or assistance can be provided.

The Spiritual Dimension

At the root of all discernment work is a common core of spirituality, uniquely expressed in each community and in each MDC. The ministry of discernment, and the hard labor involved, can be made lighter and clearer only when there is an invitation to the Spirit to come and work among the MDC members.

An outward and visible sign of the Spirit is to *commission the MDC members during a Sunday liturgy* (See Appendix C, *Discernment Committee*). This connection with the Spirit continues through Bible study, prayer and reflection, the use of Morning or Evening Prayer or Compline, a hymn sing, and a variety of other means used by the MDC at each meeting.

The Ministry Discernment Committee may want to share the responsibilities of leadership in creating and facilitating some type of prayerful study or worship. Intentional work on the part of the MDC to invite

and discern God in the process of calling a clergy partner has often led to grace-filled results for the Committee and for the congregation. A helpful resource is Geitz's book, *Calling Clergy. A Spiritual and Practical Guide Through the Search Process*. This and other resources are listed in Appendix C, *Resource List for Clergy and Congregations in Transition*.

Phase II

Understanding the Congregation and the Leadership Expected of a New Priest

Before proceeding to the calling of a new Priest, a congregation takes the opportunity to study itself carefully and to reflect on what sort of ministry it has and what it should or may want to have in the future. This period of discernment and self-study is led by the Ministry Discernment Committee.

The congregation should be encouraged to "enfold the discernment process in prayer." Members may do this *individually by praying daily* for the Ministry Discernment Committee and Vestry and the process of calling clergy partnership. The congregation may do this *in community* by including prayers for the Committee and Vestry *at every public service of worship*. A suggested prayer...

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your whole church and so guide us in this congregation during our time of Self-Study and ministry discernment that we shall grow in our commitment to one another and to the cause of your Christ, and may come to choose a faithful pastor to join us in our ministry in our congregation, community and diocese; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Defining the Self-Study

The Self-Study process is the basis for a clear and comprehensive description of the congregation and its people. The Study includes a clear articulation of mission and ministry, your understanding of following the Baptismal Covenant, and a clear description of which model of leadership your congregation has chosen for your next phase of ministry. The results of the Study are then used in defining the qualifications required in new clergy partnership.

The Self-Study process begins with the **history of the congregation**. Some time should be spent in reflection and exploration of how the congregation has been formed and shaped by its past, particularly on those strengths or limitations its history provides. The Transition Minister will work with the MDC in designing effective methods of gathering this history.

Along with the history, the Self-Study includes gathering information about

- a description of **the congregational understanding of baptismal ministry** – the ministry of all baptized people and how that is lived out in the congregation;
- a **mission statement**, if the congregation has adopted one, and/or specific objectives or goals, along with information about how they were established;
- the **structure and organization** of the congregation and a full description of its life as a faith community;
- data gathered from a **Congregational Discernment Meeting** and other events;
- information from the **Parochial Reports and budgets** of recent years;

- **information about the town and area the congregation serves**, especially how the local demographics have changed are expected to change, or will remain the same.

Some of the information needed for the above components of the Self-Study can be acquired easily through lists and reports already existing in a congregation: the most recent Parochial Report, the recent report of the Annual Meeting, the budget and timely financial reports, for example.

Information on researching your town and the area served by your congregation is available from The Episcopal Church at the Evangelism and Congregational Life Center, <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/evangelism.htm> Click on the sections for “Congregational Vitality”, “Congregational Research”, and “Small Congregations” for information on how to study your community and to learn what information is already available to you from The Episcopal Church.

The Transition Minister will work with the MDC to plan and hold a Congregational Discernment Meeting or “Appreciative Inquiry” Meeting. The discernment of any action of the church takes into consideration the wisdom and insights of all of God’s people: the members of the congregation, the wider community, the Bishop, and the clergy. In such a process the Holy Spirit is more able to be heard and the call of God more able to be known. During a Congregational Discernment Meeting, the congregation will use the Baptismal Promises to explore some fundamental questions to uncover information important about who you are as a congregation and what God is calling you to be. In turn, this information will assist the MDC in determining what gifts and skills will be needed, both from the congregation and from clergy leadership, in order to follow God’s call.

Creating an OTM Portfolio

All of the information gathered from the various components of the Self-Study leads to completing the OTM Portfolio, an online document that helps to define the congregation and its aspirations to the wider church. The MDC reflects on the information gathered and writes narrative responses which are included in the *OTM Portfolio*.

Electronic transmission of information is now the norm in our Church. A congregation’s website site is an important part of the process and introduction to the worshipping community for everyone. The information in the OTM Portfolio becomes the foundation from which interview questions are created, determining a candidate’s suitability and whether she or he has the gifts and skills needed by the congregation.

When the final draft of the Portfolio is *nearly complete* and *before* it is distributed or uploaded, the MDC chairperson contacts the Bishop’s Assistant, requesting a date for a review meeting. The MDC chairperson coordinates this meeting with the Vestry, MDC, and Interim Pastor. The Bishop’s Assistant coordinates the meeting on behalf of the Bishop and Transition Minister. A common date is confirmed, and the review of the final draft takes place. The MDC Chairperson will send a copy or electronic link of the Portfolio to the Vestry members, the Bishop and Transition Minister at least five days prior to the review meeting.

Smaller-sized congregations and those with limited resources, in consultation with the Transition Minister, might use a *Letter of Ministry Goals*. A Letter of Ministry Goals is written by the MDC to the Bishop. The Letter focuses on answering, in summary, the components of the Self-Study, using the information gathered during the Self-Study phase. The content of the Letter assists the Bishop and Transition Minister in understanding exactly what challenges exist for ministry in this congregation and what gifts for ministry already exist among the congregation members.

When the final draft is nearly complete, the MDC chairperson contacts the Bishop's Assistant, and the same review meeting, as noted above, is arranged.

Phase III

Getting to Know the Candidates—and Them Knowing You

Gathering Names of Potential Candidates

Names of potential candidates will usually come from several sources....

1. Names proposed from **the congregation.**

Names may be gathered from the congregation through the Ministry Discernment Committee and sent to the Transition Minister for screening. Proposed names should be submitted no later than when the Letter of Ministry Goals or the Portfolio of the Congregation is sent to the Diocesan Office (see above).

2. Names proposed from The Episcopal Church's **Office for Transition Ministry.**

Using the Office for Transition Ministry has proven to be helpful for many congregations. The Office holds a database of clergy who have "active" portfolios on file. Using this computerized search allows a congregation to consider candidates from across the country or restrict the search geographically.

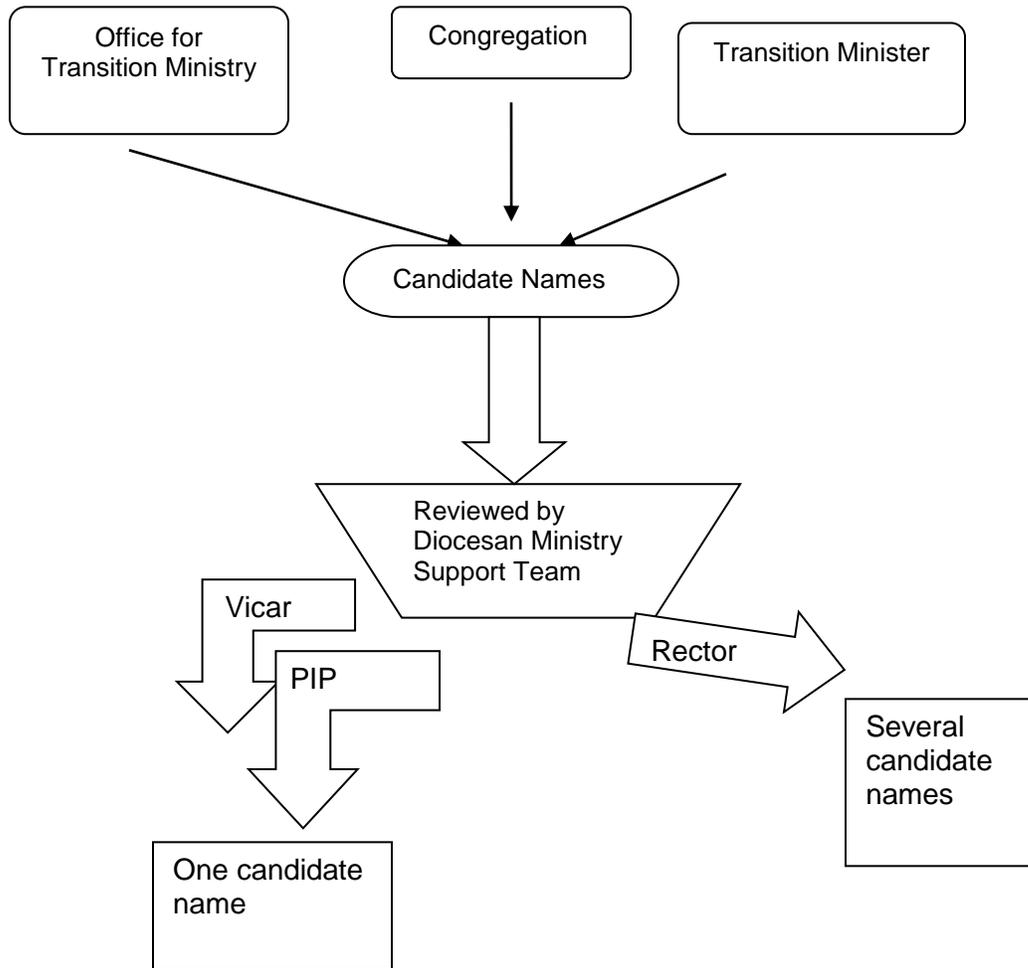
3. Additional proposed names from the **Transition Minister.**

The Transition Minister attends church-wide transition ministry conferences each year. At these conferences, the Transition Minister will describe the congregations in Vermont looking for new clergy partners and receive names of clergy interested in these congregations. The Transition Minister also receives and offers to the gathering names of priests in Vermont who are interested in moving from the congregation where they are currently serving.

Once names are gathered from the three sources above, the Transition Minister conducts a 'red flag' check on the clergy whose names have been collected.

The next step depends on the type of position available in the congregation. In the case of a Vicar or Priest in Partnership, the Bishop and colleagues on the diocesan Ministry Support Team determine the best match of candidate and send one name. In the case of a Rector's position, depending on the wishes of the Vestry, all interested candidates names will be sent or a limited screening (such a geographical limitations) will be done.

So far, this Phase of the process looks something like this...



After the Portfolio or Letter is received by the Diocesan Office, it may take up to five weeks for the Transition Minister to complete the screening process and send the final name or list of names to the Ministry Discernment Committee. No one from the MDC or congregation should contact candidates during this period of review.

Conducting Interviews

The Transition Minister brings or transmits the information on candidates to the Ministry Discernment Committee.

In the case of a Vicar or Priest in Partnership, the name is accompanied by the resume and supporting documents. The Transition Minister contacts the nominee and schedules an interview with the MDC. The Ministry Discernment Committee may ask the nominee to provide, in advance of the interview, written responses to questions formed from the Portfolio or Letter of Ministry Goals. The Transition Minister will send these questions along with the Letter of Ministry Goals or Portfolio of the Congregation to the nominee. Meanwhile, the MDC develops questions for the interview. The questions are based on the information in the Portfolio or Letter of Ministry Goals.

In the case of a Rector's position and a list of multiple names, the MDC sends each candidate a list of questions, and a cover letter. The cover letter states that the clergyperson has been suggested for the position, and, if interested, that s/he should send back a recent copy of their resume, OTM Portfolio, and answers to the MDC's questions. A reasonable deadline must be set for return of information.

See Appendix E for resources on Interviews.

Reviewing One Candidate...for Vicar or Priest in Partnership

The nominee's written responses to the MDC's questions are reviewed by the MDC prior to the interview, evaluating the responses in reference to the gifts and skills derived from the Portfolio or Letter. On the day the nominee visits, allow time for the nominee to see the facilities, rectory or housing accommodations, surrounding area, and have the interview with the MDC / Vestry. The costs of these visits are the responsibility of the congregation.

As a courtesy to the nominee, the spouse should be invited to come to the congregation, not to be interviewed or evaluated, but for the chance to see the church, neighborhood, schools, housing, etc. (You may find that the spouse wants to interview you!) If the spouse decides not to attend, the MDC should see this *without prejudice*. Remember, you are calling the Priest, not her or his spouse.

Following the interview, the MDC /Vestry members evaluate the nominee and her/his responses to the interview questions. Again, it is important to do this evaluation in the context of the gifts and skills described in the Portfolio or Letter of Ministry Goals. Your work is to determine if this nominee is a match for the congregation's current and future areas of ministry. The members of the MDC/Vestry should then determine whether or not to accept this nominee. A decision should be reached by consensus or the usual decision-making model used by the Vestry. The Transition Minister can guide the Vestry through the decision-making.

If the MDC /Vestry cannot accept the nominee, they must continue the work. The MDC will seek another nominee from the Diocesan Ministry Support Team, stating clearly to the Transition Minister why this nominee was not accepted.

...Skip to the section “*Approval of Call and Confirmation*” on page 24.

Reviewing Several Candidates...for Rector

In the letter to the candidates, the MDC may include questions to be answered in writing (see Appendix E, *A Sample Letter to Candidates with Three Short Questions*). The MDC acknowledges all received responses and materials from the candidates. We recommend that the MDC do a “blind review” of each candidate’s response, where names, gender, and geographical identification are eliminated. Evaluate the responses on a 1 to 5 scale in reference to the gifts and skills derived from the Self-Study and the Portfolio. Compare the candidates to the qualifications in the Portfolio, not to each other. You may at this time be able to cut some candidates from the list—they did not address the specific questions you asked, for example, or did not answer all of the questions. However, some people do not present well on paper but have fantastic personal energy ...and vice versa! We recommend short phone interviews now be done with the candidates. We suggest that no one else be cut from the list of candidates until there has been at least one phone interview.

The MDC should try to work as far as possible by consensus, and discussion should continue until members can agree on an evaluation of each candidate’s responses.

When you have decided that candidates will not move forward in the process, be sure to contact them ASAP in writing, thank them for participating, and explain that they will not be moving forward in the process. Sample letters to candidates informing them of each stage of this process are in Appendix E.

Members of the MDC may not, under any circumstances, make contact within the candidate’s present congregation/position without the candidate’s permission.

A note on Christian hospitality in the candidate interview process...

*Candidates will take **time and effort** to be a part of your congregation’s process. The Ministry Discernment Committee needs to take **equal time and effort to stay in contact** with candidates...sending acknowledgements when you receive something from them... assigning a member of the MDC to be the liaison to each candidate by staying in touch every 10 to 14 days... keeping the candidates informed, even when nothing new is happening.*

It is important that each candidate receive courteous communication throughout the process at its various stages.

The MDC develops questions for the interviews with guidance from the Transition Minister or Companion. The questions are based on the information in the Self-Study and Portfolio. Interview each candidate using a consistent set of questions. Samples are available in Appendix E.

Members of the MDC now interview all remaining candidates on the list. Smaller sub-groups form within the MDC, each group responsible for interviewing a particular number of candidates, usually during a Sunday on-site visit. All costs of the interviews are paid by the congregation as part of the MDC budget.

Each sub-group must use the same method of interviewing. Candidates from The Episcopal Church in Vermont must be interviewed in person as an expression of courtesy to a member of this Body of Christ in Vermont.

Previous Ministry Discernment Committees have found that some training in the interview process is very helpful for understanding the *unique* church / clergy process. Some members of the MDC may have interviewing skills already; however, the process of “discerning and calling” a clergy partner in a faith community is a *very different one* from “hiring” a person in a secular organization. Group training also will improve the consistency of the process and help less skilled members participate more effectively. The Transition Minister will work with you on the training.

Following the interviews, the entire Ministry Discernment Committee reviews the answers from each candidate and the interview experience. Once again, the criteria for assessment is based on how well each candidate answers the questions in relation to the gifts and skills needed as identified in the Portfolio, *not in comparison with one another*. Your goal is to find the candidates who best match the description in the Portfolio. Again, remember to write to the candidates who have not made this cut.

Through this process of interviewing candidates, the MDC will create a new list of usually 4 to 6 candidates, what is called “The Short List.” Remember to send letters to candidates who will not continue in the process. Send the Short List to the Transition Minister.

The next step, while the Transition Minister conducts the formal background and public record checks, is for the MDC to conduct reference checks before the final interviews. There are a number of ways to gather information about a candidate. You may ask the candidate for primary references. The candidate might also be asked for a reference who will be "critical" or who will give some feedback other than how wonderful the priest is. You can also ask references for the names of others, secondary references, but only if you have notified the candidate that you will do this. You might also tell the candidate that you will be calling the leadership of the other congregations or employers where she/he has worked (not the current congregation or employer). You may decide to cut candidates based on these reference checks. Remember to notify the Transition Minister and also to send a letter to the candidate.

The Bishop will interview all candidates on the Short List when they visit Vermont. The MDC Chairperson will coordinate these appointments by contacting the Bishop's Office.

The final step in this interview process...

The Ministry Discernment Committee now invites each candidate on The Short List to the parish and the whole MDC interviews each of them. Various formats for such an interview can be considered,

but time is usually allotted for the candidate to see the facilities, rectory or housing accommodations, surrounding area, and also have the interview with the MDC. The costs of these visits are the responsibility of the congregation.

In Vermont, it is the recommendation that the MDC invites the Vestry to participate in these visits. The MDC may invite the Vestry to a social function to meet and chat with the candidate informally and in a relaxed atmosphere; and/or, the MDC may invite the Vestry to sit in on the interviews as *observers only*, with no comments or decision-making. The Transition Minister will explain the reasoning for this, but it cuts approximately 2 months from the process and can reduce candidates' anxiety.

As a courtesy to the candidate, the spouse should be invited to come to the congregation, not to be

The Episcopal Church requires that a formal background and public records check be done before any Priest can be called. The Short List of candidates should be forwarded to the Transition Minister to begin this process. The cost, borne by the congregation, is approximately \$200 per candidate for the Oxford Background Check.

interviewed or evaluated, but for the chance to see the church, neighborhood, schools, housing, etc. (You may find that the spouse wants to interview you!) If the spouse decides not to attend, the MDC should see this *without prejudice*. Remember, you are calling the priest, not her or his spouse.

Following this round of interviews, the MDC then chooses three names (or the number the Vestry requests in its "Charge to the MDC") from "The Short List" and presents all three candidates to the Vestry. At a joint meeting of the Vestry and MDC, each MDC member gets to speak to each of the

candidates in the context of pro's and con's of the gifts and skills for ministry. We believe there should be no ranking of candidates (first choice, second choice, etc.). Rather, the MDC shares the depth of their experience, insight, and wisdom about each finalist and the Vestry hears all of this information. The work of the MDC is now completed and they, as a committee of the Vestry, are thanked and "dismissed", usually in a Sunday liturgy as a de-commissioning (see Appendix C).

The Vestry now makes the final decision. The MDC has already found that the final candidates have the gifts and skills, so the Vestry's discernment is focused on "Who will be the best match for the culture and sense of the congregation?" or "Who will exercise their gifts and skills in the ways that match us best?" The candidate must be accepted by the Vestry and an official vote must be taken. The candidate is thereby elected as the new Rector.

Approval of Call and Confirmation

After the Vestry elects the new Priest, the Senior Warden informs the Bishop of the decision and, after contacting the Bishop, contacts the Candidate. When the Priest accepts the offer, the Senior Warden sends (usually by email) a "Memo of Understanding for the Call of a New Priest". A template for this memo is available from the Transition Minister and she will be helpful in moving through the conversations about the Memo. The Priest signs the Memo, accepting the call, and returns the Memo to the Warden. A signed copy must then be sent to the Transition Minister. The newly-elected Priest and the Senior Warden should agree upon a date to make the call public and inform the Transition Minister.

The Vestry, with the help of the MDC, will plan how the congregation will welcome and be most hospitable to the new Priest and her/his family during the transition. You might form a committee to design and coordinate this important step.

In the process where more than one candidate was a finalist, the Vestry should notify the candidates not selected immediately upon the acceptance of the call by the new Priest. Again, thanks and encouraging support for their gifts in ministry should be stressed.

The Senior Warden then makes arrangements for the new Priest to meet with the Transition Minister and Vestry, or with a sub-committee of the Vestry, to negotiate a Letter of Agreement. The Letter sets forth the terms and conditions of the new relationship, ministry goals, and salary and other compensation. A template of this Letter is available from the Transition Minister. When this negotiation is complete and signatures obtained, the Letter is reviewed by the Transition Minister, signed, and sent to the Bishop for his signature.

Read more about the Letter of Agreement below in *Building the New Relationship*.

Phase IV

Building the New Relationship

The Priest/Congregation Agreements

The call from a congregation to a new Priest, and the acceptance of it by the Priest, marks the initiation of a new ministry in which the congregation and its new clergy partner bind themselves to labor together to

do ministry in God's name. If the discernment process has been prayerfully and conscientiously carried out, and the Vestry and Priest have been led by the Spirit to extend and accept the call, a truly spiritual covenant is established in which the congregation and Priest are bound together by their holy calling. *The sense of union of purpose generated in this process is the primary and essential element of the covenant between a Priest and congregation.*

The Letter of Agreement is the final step in completing the call. The purpose of the Letter is to articulate clearly all the terms and conditions relating to the employment of a Priest by a congregation. The Letter establishes both a proper relationship between the Priest and congregation as well as the responsibilities and rights of both the Priest and the Vestry in this relationship. The Letter has a *significant impact* on the success of the ministry they share. The Senior Warden should contact the Transition Minister who will work with the Vestry and new Priest in the negotiation process for the Letter. The role of the Transition Minister in this process is to facilitate the creation of a fair and equitable agreement that is acceptable to the Priest, the Vestry, and the Bishop. The Transition Minister is sensitive to the fact that this negotiation may be a new experience for some.

Although the Letter of Agreement must be agreed upon by the entire Vestry, it is usually better for the actual negotiation to be conducted by a smaller group of Vestry members to whom the Vestry delegates this responsibility. The Vestry then approves the final agreement. Depending on the size of the congregation, three persons is usually a workable number, giving the Vestry confidence in delegating this task and yet avoiding an overpowering presence by a large number of Vestry members. In Vermont, it is recommended that the Senior Warden chairs the negotiation.

The Vestry and congregation now concentrate on welcoming the new Priest.

One other note.... In the past, staff at a congregation resigned *pro forma* when a new Rector arrived. This is *no longer* the policy of The Episcopal Church and The Episcopal Church in Vermont.

“Fresh Start” for Clergy

The new clergyperson is expected to participate in the Vermont's *Fresh Start* Program. We consider this an important and integral part of the transition in clergy leadership for both the clergyperson and the congregation's leadership. Welcoming a new Priest is just as important as welcoming any newcomer into our church community — and all the more challenging as they bring new gifts and ideas to leadership. The early stages of any new relationship are critical to long-term vitality and such transitions in a church community are no exception.

The new Priest will be invited to *Fresh Start* by the Program Facilitator. The Program provides an opportunity to build relationships with fellow clergy who have also just transitioned into a congregation and to get to know members of the Diocesan Ministry Support Team. The group meets quarterly and the new clergyperson should participate for at least one year.

Covenant Agreement of Mutual Expectations

Covenant Agreement of Mutual Expectations is created by the Priest and the Vestry after they have ministered together for a few months. The Covenant is crafted from the ministry goals of the congregation described in the Portfolio or Letter, along with the gifts and skills of the clergyperson, establishing clear mutual ministries and outlining areas of responsibilities for each party.

Mutual Ministry Cycle

We enter the Christian community through baptism. Both the one being baptized and the community that supports the new member make promises to one another. These promises are expressed in the baptismal covenant. The mutual ministry cycle is an opportunity to join one another in fulfilling these promises.

In the Mutual Ministry Review (MMR), held annually, we change the focus of our conversations from individual accountability to corporate accountability—that is, to mutual ministry. Good stewardship of the resources (time, talent, and treasure) with which we have been entrusted is essential. To be consistent with our mission, planning and reviewing must be done in a way that builds trust rather than breaks down the community. Planning for ministry, doing the work, and reviewing or reflecting on what we have done constitutes the mutual ministry cycle.

The Transition Minister can help you plan for the MMR to take place at the end of the first year of ministry in partnership with the new Priest. The process will be designed collaboratively by the Wardens or Vestry members, the Priest, and a facilitator. The resource *Living into Our Ministries* is available to each congregation and outlines the process, its various options and circumstances.

Information for this section taken from *Living into Our Ministries*

A Checklist for Congregations: Moving through the Process***Phase I***

Senior Warden informs Bishop of clergyperson's departure	_____ date
Senior Warden retains Sunday supply coverage	_____ date
Exit interview with Priest and Wardens is completed	_____ date
"Next Steps" meeting with Vestry (includes models introduction)	_____ date
"Next Steps" meeting with Congregation (includes models introduction)	_____ date
Discernment about interim ministry	_____ date
Bishop recommends, through Transition Minister, interim candidates	_____ date
Vestry calls Interim Pastor	_____ date
Letter of Agreement signed with Interim Pastor	_____ date
Vestry forms Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC)	_____ date
Joint meeting of Vestry and MDC	_____ date
Transition Team organized	_____ date
Vestry charges MDC, makes budget available for search	_____ date
MDC commissioned on Sunday (reading of Charge is included)	_____ date

Phase II

Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC) begins formation	_____ date
Self-Study process defined by MDC	_____ date
Congregational history completed	_____ date
Congregational Discernment Meeting(s) held	_____ date
Town and community research completed	_____ date
Vestry completes compensation package	_____ date
Office of Transition Ministry Community Portfolio form completed	_____ date
Profile or Letter of Ministry Goals review meeting scheduled	_____ date
Profile or Letter of Ministry Goals <i>final draft</i> completed	_____ date
Final draft sent to Bishop, Transition Minister and Vestry members <u>a week prior to the review meeting</u>	_____ date
Bishop meets with Vestry and MDC for document review	_____ date
MDC finalizes document	_____ date
Vestry approves final document	_____ date
Last date to receive applications is determined (TM/MDC)	_____ date
Approved document sent to Transition Minister including completed OTM Community Portfolio form	_____ date
Approved document is posted on congregation's website	_____ date
Transition Minister confirms that notice has been posted Office for Transition Ministry (OTM) Diocesan Positions Open Bulletin Deployment/Transition Ministry Newsletter	_____ date

Phase III

Names proposed from congregation sent to Diocesan Transition Minister	On-going
Responses to postings received by Diocesan Transition Minister	On-going
Interview workshop with MDC held	_____ date

For one nominee:

MDC reviews nominee's information _____ date
 Transition Minister schedules nominee interview with MDC _____ date
 Nominee interviewed by MDC _____ date
 Decision made by MDC _____ date
 Recommendation made to Vestry _____ date
 Vestry elects candidate _____ date

For multiple candidates:

First-round responses ranked and completed _____ date
 Phone interviews completed _____ date
 Results ranked; list shortened _____ date
 Letters sent to candidates not continuing in process _____ date
 Second round interviews and site visits completed _____ date
 Names of the final candidate(s) sent to Transition Minister
 for Oxford background and public records check _____ date
 References checked by MDC _____ date
 Final candidate(s) visit congregation _____ date
 Final candidate(s) meet with the Bishop _____ date
 MDC presents three (or the number charged) candidates to Vestry _____ date
 Vestry elects candidate _____ date

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with priest is drafted _____ date
 Senior Warden informs Bishop of the Vestry decision _____ date
 Senior Warden offers position and reviews Memorandum
 of Understanding (MOU) with priest, including start date _____ date
 Senior Warden signs and sends MOU to priest _____ date
 Priest signs and returns MOU to Senior Warden _____ date
 MOU, signed by all parties, sent to Transition Minister _____ date
Date for call to become public is determined by
 Senior Warden, Priest, Transition Minister _____ date
 Note: Call cannot be announced until MOU is signed by all parties.
 Senior Warden notifies Chair of MDC _____ date
 Chair of MDC notifies MDC members
 when call is public _____ date
 Vestry notifies candidates not selected _____ date
 Vestry attends to ending Interim Pastor's ministry _____ date
 Vestry informs congregation _____ date
 MDC decommissioned during a Sunday service _____ date
 Vestry plans for welcoming and supporting the new clergy leader's entry
 into the community _____ date

Phase IV

Letter of Agreement
 Negotiated by the Senior Warden (on behalf of the Vestry),
 the priest, and the Transition Minister _____ date
 Signed by Senior Warden and priest _____ date
 Sent to Transition Minister for final review and the Bishop's
 signature _____ date

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT

INTERIM LEADERSHIP

A Brief Overview

An Interim helps lead a congregation during the time between the end of one period of clergy leadership and the start of the next. An *Interim Pastor* exercises an intentional transition ministry, supported by specialized training for Interim Ministry. The person may be lay or ordained.

The Bishop and the Transition Minister enter into partnership with the Vestry and other congregational leaders to determine how an Interim Pastor will be most helpful to a congregation. Interim leaders extend the Bishop's ministry to a congregation, and their relationship with the congregation needs to be carefully defined and clearly communicated.

Every congregation needs to maintain effective ministry during an interim period and work for a healthy transition. As part of that transition, a professional Interim Pastor helps the congregation to work through five distinct "developmental tasks."

The Five Developmental Tasks of Interim Ministry

- 1. Coming to Terms with History** ...acting on the realization that the former priest has departed... that the congregation is different now ... acknowledging the past as shaping who the congregation is today while recognizing that history is only a prelude to the present and the future.
- 2. Renewing Denominational Ties** ...seeing the Bishop and diocesan Ministry Support Team as a potential resource, partner, and support ... using this opportunity to renew and rework diocesan relationships...using this time for formational events and opportunities to explore the theology and ecclesiology of The Episcopal Church and The Episcopal Church in Vermont.
- 3. Encouraging Needed Leadership Change** ...adjusting to new patterns of leadership that naturally evolve when a key person leaves the organization ...allowing and encouraging new leadership to emerge constructively.
- 4. Discovering a New Identity** ...claiming a new awareness of itself as a congregation independent of the past leaders ...redefining who it is now as a community of God.
- 5. Commitment to New Directions in Ministry** ...preparing to move into the future with openness to possibilities that new leadership brings...wholeheartedly supporting the new leadership model and/or newly-called priest.

These tasks and the methods employed to deal with them have been developed over the past 35 years and are extremely helpful for congregations experiencing transition in leadership. More information is available from the Transition Minister or from the resources listed below.

Finally, please note:

The role and tasks of an Interim Pastor are separate and distinct from the roles and responsibilities of the Vestry and Ministry Discernment Committee.

The Interim Pastor is a member of the Transition Team.

The Interim Pastor not eligible for the permanent clergy position nor for other positions in the new leadership model.

Discerning What You Need

To determine what you need in an Interim Pastor and how much this will cost, the Vestry needs to answer two questions:

- What Interim presence do you need for the ongoing mission and ministry of your congregation?
- What can your budget support for an Interim Pastor over the next 12 months?

The first pertains to the areas of ministry needing to be done by an Interim. Maybe your former clergyperson did many tasks; do they *all* have to be done by an Interim Pastor? Might some of them be done, and managed well, by *parishioners*? Are there ministries such as pastoral care, for example, that can be performed by parishioners if they are trained and supported?...licensed worship leaders?...healing prayer?...Christian formation for youth and adults?...others? What do you need and from whom? These sorts of questions invite you into a deeper conversation about baptismal ministry in your congregation. The Companion working with you can assist in this conversation about discerning interim tasks.

Further, the Vestry needs to consider the five developmental tasks listed above. Do any of them in particular describe the work needing to be done in your congregation? You will want to consider these as part of the work--and time--for an Interim leader.

Questions like these are worth wrestling with as the Vestry sorts out what you are looking for in an Interim Pastor. The results will offer a clearer picture of what you need, how much time may be involved, leading to...

How Much To Pay

“Work time” for an Interim Pastor is allotted by “units”. A unit is a morning, afternoon, or evening.

Conventionally, *full-time* is considered 12 -- 14 units. This is five days a week with about 2 evening meetings a week. *Half-time* is about 6 to 7 units; *one-third time* is about 4 to 4.5 units.

For example, Sunday “work” for an ordained person is typically 2 or 3 units: sermon preparation, worship service, and time with the congregation. This can be the same amount of time for a lay person serving as Interim Pastor if s/he is participating in worship, preaching, and being with the congregation. If the Interim Pastor is not the preacher every Sunday, if you have licensed preachers in the congregation and make use of them, you can subtract some time. Pastoral care time during a week may be one unit; administration may be another single unit.

The salary scale for Interim Pastors is based on both the number of units you determine for the position and the *Diocesan Mandatory Minimum Clergy Compensation Schedule*, which is adopted annually by Diocesan Convention. This *Schedule* can be found in the *Diocesan Handbook* and on the Diocesan website, where you can also find a description of the components of a benefit package. The Transition Minister is available for assistance in determining a total compensation package.

Resources

Calling Clergy: A Spiritual and Practical Guide Through the Search Process, Elizabeth Rankin Geitz, Church Publishing, May 2007. Highly-recommended; focus on spiritual dimension of discernment work.

Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministers (New from Alban Institute, 2000 (1-800-486-1318, ext 244)). Excellent update and expansion of Mead's interim book.

Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors, Edward White, Alban Institute.

Pastoral Transitions: From Endings to New Beginnings, Wm. Bud Phillips, Center for Study of Church and Ministry, Vancouver.

New Beginnings: A Pastorate Start Up Workbook, Roy Oswald, Alban Institute.

Other Questions to Consider for the Interim Time

- What does the Vestry expect of the Interim Pastor, and what does the Interim expect of the Vestry, herself/himself and of the congregation? Are the terms of agreement and the job description clearly spelled out in the Letter of Agreement and understood by all groups and persons involved?
- Who is to chair the Vestry meetings? To whom does the Interim Pastor report?
- What is the congregation's structure? What are the responsibilities and expectations of the Wardens and Vestry? Are there other significant leadership groups in this congregation? What are their responsibilities and expectations?
- What are the accepted styles of administration and organization in this congregation? Should they be changed? If a change is indicated, should it be undertaken during the interim period?
- What policies are there for use of the building and equipment?
- What major program events are coming up? What are the congregation's customs, holidays, and annual events?
- The Interim Pastor, the Senior Warden, and other appropriate persons should review together the following congregational records: financial reports, budget, directory and membership records, the congregational register and service record book, organization chart, personnel policies, church calendar, and previous mission studies or development plans.
- The Vestry should establish a system for informing the Interim Pastor of pastoral care needs in the congregation, and especially should inform him or her of individuals or families who might need immediate pastoral attention.
- What are the congregation's practice and policies regarding weddings and funerals?

VESTRY CHARGE TO MINISTRY DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

_____ Church

VESTRY RESOLUTION, _____ 20__.

We, the Vestry of _____ Church, charge the Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC) to recommend to us a leadership model; and if the model will include the calling of a priest from outside the congregation, the recommendation from the MDC will be a priest who best demonstrates the gifts and skills needed by this congregation as reflected in our Profile.

This charge incorporates the following:

The Ministry Discernment Process will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines established by the The Episcopal Church in Vermont.

The MDC chairperson will report monthly in writing or in person to the vestry on the progress of the Discernment Process. Additionally, the chairperson will report to the congregation on a periodic basis.

A total budget of \$_____ is established to cover travel, printing, postage, telephoning, and other expenses, for the MDC.

The Ministry Discernment Committee will recommend to the vestry _____ candidate(s) from whom the vestry will discern which candidate to call as rector, vicar or priest-in-partnership.

Use of the telephone and current computer technology to screen long distance candidates is encouraged. The following geographic limitations are set:_____.

The Ministry Discernment Committee should make its recommendation to the Vestry as close to the date _____ as possible.

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COMMISSIONING OF A MINISTRY DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

Warden: I present to you these persons to serve on the Ministry Discernment Committee of [Name of Church].

Priest: Are these persons whom you present prepared by a commitment to Christ, by regular attendance at worship, and by commitment to this responsibility to exercise their ministry to the honor of God and the well being of God's Church?

Warden: I believe they are.

Priest: To you who have been called to serve on the Ministry Discernment Committee in this congregation, as long as you are engaged in this work, will you perform it with diligence, love, and patience?

Candidates: I will.

Antiphon (said in unison): You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen.

Priest: Give thanks to the holy and life-giving God.

People: Make known the deeds of our Creator.

Priest: Let us pray. Have regard to our supplication, O gracious Lord, and confirm with your heavenly benediction your servants commissioned to serve on the Ministry Discernment Committee of _____ Church, that with sincere devotion of mind and body they may offer acceptable service to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Priest (in front of each Committee Member): In the Name of God and of this congregation, I commission you [N.] as a member of the Ministry Discernment Committee in this congregation.

Committee Members:

Eternal Light, shine in our hearts.
Eternal Power, be our strength.
Eternal Wisdom, guide us as we serve you.
Eternal Goodness, you have drawn us to your heart
and united us in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood.
Now grant that with all our heart, and mind, and strength,
We may evermore seek your face.
And finally, by your infinite love,
Keep us in your holy presence,
As we begin this phase of our discernment process
Through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. *Amen.*

From *The Ministry Discernment Consultant Handbook from the Diocese of New Jersey*, The Rev. Canon Elizabeth R. Geitz.

Closing prayer adapted from Elizabeth Rankin Geitz, *Women's Uncommon Prayers* (Harrisburg, Pa., Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 326.

PRAYERS FOR THE MINISTRY DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE AND CONGREGATION

For Leaders

Almighty God, you have given us the responsibility for the leadership of the Church for a season. Grant us patience, courage, and wisdom to discern your will amidst the many competing claims and conflicts of this present time. Give us an appreciative memory for all who have gone before, and a strong clear vision of the church of the future. Let us exercise our stewardship with energy and enthusiasm, so that, when the time comes, we may joyfully relinquish our tasks to those who come after. We ask this in the name of our redeemer, Jesus Christ, who calls us into fellowship and sends the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire us, generation after generation, that may do all to your greater glory. *Amen*

-Dr. Pamela P. Chinnis

For Times of Change

Assist us, Lord, in living hopefully into the future. In the face of change, help us to set unnecessary fears aside and to recognize our potential for creative response. Help us to develop a reasonable optimism when confronted by “the new” and to guard us against our own defensiveness. Be with us as we remember and celebrate former times, and keep us from unreasonable yearning for them, which takes us from the work you have set before us in our time. All this we ask in the name of your Child, our savior, Jesus Christ. *Amen*.

-The Reverend Linda C. Smith-Criddle

For Welcoming

Holy Spirit living within us, guide our hearts and minds as we welcome today all those who worship with us at *N*. Give us discerning hearts so that everyone who crosses our threshold feels welcomed in the spirit of your love. Help us to recognize each person as an individual sent by you who will enrich our lives. And most of all, O God, let this be a place of love and acceptance of all your children; in the name of you Child, our savior, Jesus Christ. *Amen*

-Ms. Valecia Harriman

From *Women's Uncommon Prayers* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 362-363.

DECOMMISSIONING OF A MINISTRY DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE

Warden: I present to you these persons who have faithfully served as the Ministry Discernment Committee of [Name of Church].

Priest: Have these persons shown their commitment to Christ, by regular attendance at worship, and by their commitment and responsibility to exercise their ministry as a Ministry Discernment Committee to the honor of God and the well being of God's Church at _____.

Warden: They have.

Priest: To you who were called to serve as members of the Ministry Discernment Committee in this congregation, do you believe you have performed it with diligence, love, and patience?

MDC Members: We do.

Priest: Will you, Vestry and members of this congregation, give thanks for the ministry of these persons? Will you allow them to return to "a more ordinary ministry" and support them in their transition back into this parish community?

Congregation: We will.

Antiphon (said in unison): You are my witnesses, says the Lord, and my servants whom I have chosen.

Priest: Give thanks to the holy and life-giving God.

Congregation: Make known the deeds of our Creator.

Priest: Let us pray. Have regard to our supplication, O gracious Lord, and confirm with us your heavenly benediction upon your servants who served as the Ministry Development Committee of _____ Church. Acknowledge and give thanks, with us, the offering of their sincere devotion of mind and body and spirit.

Priest (to the MDC Members): Now, in the Name of God and of this congregation, I decommission you as members of the Ministry Discernment Committee in this congregation.

MDC Members:

Eternal Light, shine in our hearts.
Eternal Power, be our strength.
Eternal Wisdom, guide us as we serve you.
Eternal Goodness, you have drawn us to your heart
and united us in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood.
Now grant that with all our heart, and mind, and strength,
We all may evermore seek your face.
And finally, by your infinite love
Keep us in your holy presence,
As we end this phase of our discernment process
And begin a new ministry together,
Through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. *Amen.*

Modified from *The Search Consultant Handbook from the Diocese of New Jersey*, The Rev. Canon Elizabeth R. Geitz.

Closing prayer adapted from Elizabeth Rankin Geitz, *Women's Uncommon Prayers* (Harrisburg, Pa., Morehouse Publishing, 2000), 326.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT

**RESOURCE LIST FOR CLERGY AND CONGREGATIONS
IN TRANSITION**

For Newly-ordained Clergy

Moore, Christopher C., *Opening the Clergy Parachute* (Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN), 1995. Excellent section on resume writing. Good overview.

Harbaugh, Gary L. et al, *Beyond the Boundary: Meeting the Challenge of the First Years of Ministry* (Alban Institute), 1986. Very old, but sensible.

Transition from Seminary to ... A Manual Dealing with Issues Facing Graduating Seminarians (Society for the Increase of Ministry, Hartford, CT), 1994. Good practical advice.

For Clergy Leaving the Congregation

Pastoral Transitions: From Endings to New Beginnings, Wm. Bud Phillips (Center for Study of Church and Ministry, Vancouver) 1988. Includes sections on endings, interim and new beginnings. Excellent resource. Read this one!

Ending Well, Starting Strong. Oswald, R. (Alban Institute, Washington, District of Columbia), 1995. A workshop series in 6 audiotapes, focusing on developing strategies for transition from one parish to another.

For the Interim Period

Calling Clergy. A Spiritual and Practical Guide Through the Search Process, Elizabeth Rankin Geitz. Church Publishing, 2007. An excellent tool for congregations engaged in the discernment process, with a balance of spiritual reflection and practical advice. Some modification needed to match the Vermont process.

Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry, Roger S. Nicholson, ed. Alban Institute, 1998. An updated resource, developed in the last 10 years, which includes a framework for interim ministry and tools for the work.

Saying Goodbye: A Time of Growth for Congregations and Pastors, Edward White, Alban Institute. 1990. An excellent resources around all the issues from "when should I leave" all the way to "what if I stay in town." Focuses on the leaving process for clergy and congregation.

For New Clergy Arriving

New Beginnings: A Pastorate Start Up Workbook, Roy Oswald, Alban Institute. 1989. Focuses on the issues facing the clergy person when they first arrive: issues of transition, grief, fear, joy, etc. Read this to help understand the "big" picture.

Ending Well, Starting Strong. Oswald, R. (Alban Institute, Washington, District of Columbia), 1995. A workshop series in 6 audiotapes, focusing on developing strategies for transition from one parish to another.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT

A CONGREGATIONAL DISCERNMENT MEETING OUTLINE

PURPOSE: To involve the whole Christian community in the discernment of the answers to three questions that will help the Bishop, Vestry, and Ministry Discernment Committee select a clergyperson to share in the leadership of the church.

THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING: The discernment of any action of the church takes into consideration the wisdom and insights of all of God's people: the members of the congregation, the wider community, the Bishop, and the clergy. In such a process the Holy Spirit is more able to be heard and the call of God more able to be known.

PROCESS: The discernment process will focus on answers to the following fundamental questions:

1. Who are we now?
2. Who is God calling us to be?
3. What gifts and skills do we need, both from ourselves and from clergy leadership, to get there?

The Baptismal Promises are used to explore the above questions.

Planning

The Transition Team will meet to review this outline of the process and do some planning.

They will schedule a Sunday congregational meeting (or another time convenient to the community).

The Interim Pastor will preach about the Baptismal Covenant prior to the meeting.

Prior to the meeting, the MDC members and Wardens will discuss and practice how to facilitate the small group activity.

Outline of the Meeting

At the congregational meeting there will be time for food and fellowship.

The meeting will begin with an opening prayer.

The Facilitator will explain the plan for the congregation and the Bishop to work together and the need for this process. S/he will invite the people to participate fully. They will begin with a group activity, asking people to form a line on a continuum from "we are doing great!" to "we need to do a lot of work!" in response to the following statements from the Baptismal Covenant:

- We continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers;
- We persevere in resisting evil, and when we fall into sin we repent and return to the Lord;
- We proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ;
- We seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbours as ourselves;
- We strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

This will take about 10 minutes.

Choose someone from the MDC or Vestry to record this activity: noting where the majority of people stand for each statement, noting if people seemed to understand the statement, or if they needed explanations/ more information.

Following, the congregation will be divided into small groups of people to sit at tables with a MDC member who will facilitate (their task is to keep the conversation on track, make sure everyone gets a chance to speak, and make sure someone keeps a record of the main points made). Each group will have 3-6 members.

Each small group will have 30-40 minutes for discussion of these questions:

- A. Who are we?
What brought you to _____? What keeps you at _____?
- B. Who do we want to be?
What ministries and projects/programs would you like to see us doing in
3-5 years?
What about these are a good “match” for the congregation?
What about these means we would have to “stretch” to accomplish?
- C. What gifts and skills do we need--both from ourselves and from clergy leadership--to get there?

Name 3 gifts and skills we have in this church right now to help make this vision happen.
Name 3-5 gifts and skills we would need from our next clergyperson to help make this
happen. (NOTE: we might use a list of “ministry skills,” from The Episcopal Church’s
Office of Transition Ministry, at the end of the conversation and ask people to check the
top five.)

The Facilitator will roam among the groups to offer help and will be the time keeper. At the end of the small group conversations, each group will briefly report back to the whole group on their findings. The Facilitator will then explain the next steps and answer questions. The meeting will end with prayer, a blessing, and dismissal.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT

A CONGREGATIONAL HISTORY MEETING OUTLINE

1 ½ - 2 hour meeting (moderated by the Transition Minister or other Facilitator)

- **Opening Prayer**
- **Bible Study**
- **Group Exercises – to get people up, moving around, and engaged**
- **Explain Timeline - *It helps if MDC members have “salted” the time line with a few post-its of their own.***
- **Invite people to reflect on their time as parishioners and, speaking always in truth and love, to identify and discuss events that have influenced their time in this congregation. Try to identify both joys and struggles.**

To provide a bit of structure for the conversation, consider these four questions, one by one. People discuss each at table and, as moved to do so, write thoughts on a Post-It and post it at the appropriate point on the time line.

- **What Things were going on Out There in the World that affected our worshipping community? (examples: 09/11/2001 attack, VT civil union legislation,) *blue***
- **What Things were going on with us Here in our Parish that affected our life together (e.g. Hurricane Irene, building campaign, arrival or departure of a priest?) *green***
- **What Things were going on With Me personally that influenced/reflected my Faith and my participation in our worshipping community? (e.g. a memorable sermon, a difficult conversation) *yellow***
- **How am I feeling now about my church and me? *pink***
- **Encourage participation as needed.**
- **Provide a gently given reward in form of Feedback and Summary.**
- **Plan to keep history posted through profile process with reminders, invitations to keep adding to it. Make sure parish youth are also invited to participate.**
- **Closing Prayer.**

Invite people to continue adding to the time line in the days and weeks ahead.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT

A CONGREGATIONAL “APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY” MEETING OUTLINE

Opening Prayer/Welcome

Introductions

**Why we are here; Agenda Preview
Discernment Process
What’s Next**

Review of Meeting Process (Tables of 6 participants, 1 facilitator, sticky notes, chart paper)

***Appreciative Inquiry* Introduction
Small Group formation
Small Group Input (every voice is heard)**

How This Works

- **A series of conversations**
- **The Ministry Discernment Committee (MDC) will gather together the results**
- **The MDC will use the information to complete the Office of Transition Ministry (OTM) Community Portfolio form**
- **The Transition Minister will post and use the OTM Community Portfolio to promote your position throughout The Episcopal Church**
- **There are four questions for conversation which will be taken one at a time (see below)**
- **You will have a few minutes to reflect on and write your response(s) on a sticky note**
- **Each table member will share their response(s) with the rest of their table**
- **A table spokesperson will share a summary with the entire group**

The Basis for the Conversations:

Conversation #1

Remember a moment that was a high point, when you felt this congregation was doing God’s work and fulfilling its mission. Write what was happening.

Conversation #2

Name the 3 things you value most about this congregation.

Conversation #3

Think back over your whole life...recall a time when you most appreciated the ministry of a priest. Describe what happened and what you appreciated.

Conversation #4

What for you will be our congregation’s 3 most exciting, energizing and important accomplishments over the next 3 years?

**Office for Transition Ministry (OTM) Community Portfolio Information
Worksheet**

_____ Episcopal Church, _____, Vermont

Mailing Address _____ Office Phone _____

Contact Information:

Name _____ Mailing Address _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

Average Sunday Attendance _____

Number of Worship Services: Weekend: _____ Weekday: _____ Others: _____

CURRENT Annual Compensation (includes all the following):

Cash Stipend: \$ _____

Housing Allowance: \$ _____

Utilities Included: \$ _____

Utilities NOT included _____

SECA Reimbursement \$ _____

Full _____ Half _____ None _____

Other (Please list amount) \$ _____

Additional Compensation Note: (20 words)

Compensation available

for NEW Position: \$ _____ (includes Stipend, housing, SECA)

Negotiable (yes/no) _____

Housing available for _____ persons (if Rectory provided or offered)

Pension Plan: Church Pension Fund _____ Other _____

Healthcare Options:

Full family _____ Clergy +1 _____ Clergy Only _____ Other _____ Negotiable _____

Dental (yes/no) Life Insurance (yes/no) _____ Life Insurance amount \$ _____

Budgeted Housing Equity Allowance (yes/no) _____ If yes, amount \$ _____

Vacation Weeks (check 1)

_____ 4 weeks

_____ One Month (including 5 Sundays)

_____ Other (please indicate # of weeks and days)

Continuing Education:

_____ Weeks

_____ Funding

Continuing Education Details _____

Sabbatical Provision Yes

Link to Diocesan Sabbatical Policy:

Auto account (Check one) Yes _____ Amount: \$ _____ No _____

Other Travel (Check one) Yes _____ Amount: \$ _____ No _____

Professional/Business Account (Check one)

Yes _____ Amount \$ _____ No _____

Additional Comments regarding Compensation (20 words)

Previous incumbents in this position

Name _____ Date Begun _____ Date Ended _____

Name _____ Date Begun _____ Date Ended _____

Name _____ Date Begun _____ Date Ended _____

Notes (100 words)

Schools:

Church School:

Children: Students _____ Leaders _____

Teens/Young Adults: Students _____ Leaders _____

Adults: Students _____ Leaders _____

Day School: (check those that apply)

Pre K _____ K _____ K-6 _____ K-12 _____ Other _____

Students _____ Teachers _____

Total Staff _____

NARRATIVE

In our baptism we promise to proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ, seeking and serving Christ in all persons. You are invited here to reflect on your ministry by responding to the following questions using approximately 1200 characters each. You may answer in multiple languages, if appropriate. (Attach a sheet with the answers to these questions)

1. Describe a moment in your worshipping community's recent ministry that you recognize as one of success and fulfillment.
2. How are you preparing yourselves for the Church of the future?
3. Please provide words describing the gifts and skills essential to the future leaders of your worshipping community.
4. Describe your liturgical style and practice for all types of worship in your community.
5. How do you practice incorporating others in ministry?
6. As a worshipping community, how do you care for your spiritual, emotional and physical well-being?
7. How do you engage in pastoral care for those beyond your worshipping community?
8. Describe your worshipping community's involvement in either the wider Church or geographical community.
9. Tell about a ministry that your worshipping community has initiated in the past 5 years. Who can be contacted about this project?
10. What is your practice of stewardship and how does it shape the life of your worshipping community?
11. What is your worshipping community's experience of conflict? And how have you addressed it?
12. What is your experience leading/addressing change in the church? When has it gone well? When has it gone poorly? And what did you learn?

Notes: (100 words max)

CONNECTIONS

Your worshipping community's website: _____

Provide any media links to your worshipping community, e.g. audio, video, YouTube, etc.

Provide any links here to other sites where you might be found, e.g. blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.

Languages significantly represented in your parish/institution (approximate # of people)

Languages _____ # of people _____

Provide worship or classes in the following languages: _____

REFERENCES

Please provide contact information for the following references:

- 1. Bishop: The Rt. Rev. Thomas C. Ely
Contact Information 5 Rock Point Road, Burlington, VT 05408
802-863-3431
tely@dioceseofvermont.org
- 2. Diocesan Transition Minister: Canon Lynn Bates
Contact Information 5 Rock Point Road, Burlington, VT 05408
802-863-3431
lbates@dioceseofvermont.org
- 3. Current Senior Warden Name _____
Contact Information _____
- 4. Previous Senior Warden Name _____
Contact Information _____
- 5. MDC Chair Name _____
Contact Information _____
- 6. Parish/Institution Leader Name _____
Ministry _____
Contact Information _____
- 7. Local Community Leader Name _____
Relationship to Parish/Institution _____
Contact Information _____

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

All members should be *very familiar* with the candidate's written material. Prior to welcoming the candidate, select one of your team members to facilitate the interview. The *sample questions* below are open-ended to invite the candidate to share as much as possible. Questions need to be tailored to the congregation's profile and its particular needs, vision, and identified skills for ministry. The questions should also reflect your familiarity with the candidate's material.

Sample Questions

1. Tell us about what has been the most rewarding or most enjoyable part of your ministry.
2. Tell us about a time when you had a vision of some ministry and worked to bring others on board so that it might happen.
3. Tell us about a time when you had to make a controversial decision or take a controversial position. How did it affect the community's life?
4. What is your understanding of how everyone in a congregation has a ministry?
5. Give us an example of how you provide pastoral care.
6. What excites you about our story?
7. What have been some of the major challenges you've addressed as a priest?
8. How have you supported people in living into their baptismal promises?
9. What has been your experience attracting and retaining newcomers?
10. What are your strengths and weaknesses, and how did they affect previous congregations?
11. Vermonters have a breadth of theological understandings, covering the range from conservative to liberal. In the Vermont, we have male and female clergy, gay and lesbian clergy, single and partnered clergy. How do you see yourself working in such a setting?
12. What would you identify as "achievements" in your ministry?
13. How do you take care of yourself spiritually, physically, and emotionally?
14. Each of us has some core belief or beliefs that are non-negotiable. How would you describe that fundamental core in you and how has that surfaced in your ministry?
15. What kind of sense of humor do you have?
16. What other questions do you have about this position, the compensation or the process?
17. Imagine you had \$1,000 given you for professional development, how would you spend it?

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS—
DEEPENING THE NATURE OF THE CONVERSATION

There should be four sets of questions developed for the entire interview process. Each set of questions, given to every candidate consistently, deepens the level of conversation and prompts growth in getting to know each other. The first set is general in scope and geared for written responses. The second set is to be used during telephone interviews and is designed for oral responses. The third set is used when visiting candidates on-site in their congregation. And the fourth set is used when finalists come to your congregation and meet with the MDC and Vestry. The following questions may or may not be right for each setting—they are samples. If necessary, use them as a model to create your own questions in the process of going deeper at each level.

SET ONE: QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN RESPONSES

1. What has been the most positive and exciting aspect of your parish ministry since September 11th of 2001? (Be very specific)
2. What book of the Bible do you most enjoy teaching and why?
3. How do you take care of yourself (spiritually and physically) on a regular basis?
4. After reading our Parish Profile, what might be some first impressions you have about us/ our congregation?
5. What do you see as two of the greatest challenges facing any rector serving the Episcopal Church in 2009?

SET TWO: QUESTIONS FOR A TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

1. Please share with us the name of one book (other than the Bible) that you have enjoyed reading during the past six months and what message or value have you been able to draw from it?
2. What excites you about serving as a rector and how do you view your role as pastor to all parishioners, especially to those who may not always agree with you?
3. What two areas of congregational ministry represent your greatest strengths and what have been some experiences you have had in these two areas of ministry?
4. What do you do with your free time (personally, with family, in the community)?
5. Tell us how you have enabled the congregation in which you have most recently worked to welcome and retain newcomers?
6. Describe how you balance in-depth pastoral care with the demands of the rest of your ministry?
7. What might you want to ask us after reading our Profile and now having answered some of our questions?

SET THREE: QUESTIONS FOR THE VISIT TO THE CANDIDATE (2 OR 3 MEMBERS OF MDC)

1. Tell us how you relate to your bishop and diocese? Are you actively involved in any committee or office in your diocese? Have you been involved in _____ Cursillo, Partners for Sacred Places, Happening, Start Up/ Start Over, etc.) at the congregation or diocesan level?
2. Family life is important for wellness. How do you bring about balance between the demands of the congregation and family?

3. How do you pastorally respond to conflict or a divisive issue confronting the congregation?
4. Public worship and prayer life are both important for both the congregation and for the clergy. What is the structure of your own prayer life and how do you organize public worship in the congregation?
5. Each of us has certain core values within us that are non-negotiable. What might be such non-negotiable core values for you, and how have you made use of them in your ministry?
6. What practical questions might you have about moving to Vermont and the town of _____?
7. Are you still interested in the position of rector at _____? Are there any questions that you might have about the compensation package?

SET FOUR: QUESTIONS FOR THE CANDIDATE'S VISIT

(ENTIRE MDC WITH VESTRY OBSERVING)

Two other opportunities for engaging each candidate at this point:

First, invite each candidate to celebrate a service of Holy Eucharist *just for the MDC* in the church or chapel with a short homily given.

Second, before questions and conversation take place, invite each candidate to teach a 30-40 minute Bible study, making use of one of the lectionary readings for the next Sunday.

1. Now that you have had conversation with members of our Ministry Discernment Committee on several occasions, what is it that most attracts you to the position of rector at with our congregation?
2. Please tell us about the most exciting aspect of your ordained ministry and how you might wish to express that aspect of your ministry with our congregation.
3. Would you give us some examples of how you bring people into shared ministry with you?
4. Please define Baptismal Ministry and share with us some examples from your own experience.
5. We are now going to go around the table and let each member of the committee ask any question of you. Then, we will take a break after which we would like to ask you to ask any questions you might have for us.

Given all that you have heard and seen are you still interested in the position of rector?

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT

INTERVIEW PREPARATIONS: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We're looking for "**evidence** that the Rev. will fill our position well." We assume that *the best indicator of what a person will do is what that person has done.*

Therefore we...

seek evidence of qualifications.
avoid disqualifying those we are in conversation with.
trust that the weight of one person's qualifications will be so great as almost "to make the decision for us."

In this **evidence-based approach** to discernment, the structure of every question to a candidate or a candidate's reference is one form or another of ...

Please tell us about a time when you ...
What have you found to be the best way to...
How do you/have you done ...

After posing a question, it is best simply to **listen**. The longer we listen the more evidence we gather. Extend the original evidentiary question to elicit more evidence, with **encouragements** such as...

That's interesting; please keep going.
We're getting a really clear picture; please say more.
Can you give us another example along the same lines?

When getting more "theory" than hard evidence of actual experience, ask **focusing questions** such as...

Please help us with a specific example of this. What was the outcome of this?
What difficulties did you overcome? What part did you, personally, play?

Remember that it may take candidates one or two "false starts" before they draw out the best example. Be patient and encouraging.

Additional helps:

- *One principal questioner per topic.*
- *Maintain eye contact throughout the interview. Avoid "yes or no" questions.*
- *Avoid theoretical or hypothetical questions; they may tell you what a person might do, but they usually yield little evidence of what a person has actually done.*

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT

INTERVIEW PREPARATIONS: GATHERING EVIDENCE

We seek to gather evidence in several circles. In each circle, we are looking for *evidence of specific ministries, gifts, or skills*. Ministry Discernment Committees can research and locate this evidence by reviewing carefully the candidate's resume, cover letter, and CDO profile materials, and responses to the MDC's written questions. This information is then complemented—or not--by how the candidate presents in the interview.

The following is an example of evidence gathered by one congregation's Ministry Discernment Committee.

CIRCLE ONE: Major Themes of the Candidate's Ministry

For example...

Vision and Leadership *Baptismal Formation and/or Baptismal Ministry*
Team Builder *Evangelism and Outreach*
Social Justice *Administration*

CIRCLE TWO: Professional Skills

For example...

Pastoral Care *Training and Supporting Ministries of Others*
Youth and/or Young Adult Ministry *Music*

CIRCLE THREE: Personal Qualities

For example...

Warmth *Humor* *Spiritual Maturity*
Appropriate Self-Care *Confidence*

Remember that the interview is *mutual*. Candidates will be interviewing the Ministry Discernment Committee and, through them, the congregation. *Expect candidates to be gathering evidence just as the Committee is doing and often in the same general areas*. Invite candidates to ask questions and be prepared to respond to them.

One strategy for promoting *mutuality* during the formal interview is to pause during each area of discussion and *invite the candidate to ask* what s/he would like to know about the congregation in this area.

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN VERMONT
CANDIDATE INTERVIEW PREPARATIONS:
A PRACTICE SESSION

Purposes

To practice formal interviewing skills. To understand the process.

Preparation

A facilitator reviews the principles of productive interviewing with the Committee.

The facilitator will “role play” being a candidate and gives the MDC some background information about the role they are going to play (i.e. divorced woman, 2 children, rector of X type of parish, etc.). The role play interview could be with the whole Committee or smaller groups, one following the other.

The Committee members then prepare a plan for the practice interview. The plan should include greeting the candidate, setting a comfortable tone, offering prayer, what questions to ask, and provision for the candidate to ask questions.

Playing

The role play then begins. A rough outline could be: 3 minutes for gathering, 10 minutes for interviewing, 10 minutes debriefing. Then call on the next team. Increase the times as needed.

The group does not role play an entire interview; rather, it is better to “perform” for a few minutes only, giving the members a taste of the process.

Debriefing

The Facilitator facilitates a conversation with the Committee or each group, following these steps:

1. *Ventilation*

First the candidate then Committee members tell how it felt emotionally and physically as they role played the situation....nervous, excited, confused, chairs uncomfortable, etc.

2. *Feedback*

First the candidate then Committee members respond to content...

Did you get what you needed at the content level?

What behaviors of the "other side" of the interview helped, what hindered?

What stimulated favorable response, what stimulated unfavorable response?

Closing

The Facilitator now adds observations and comments, writes on newsprint a summary of what was learned, and invites everyone to offer additional reflections. Finally, all review the summary and make sure you have as much clarity and understanding as possible.

A SAMPLE LETTER TO CANDIDATES WITH THREE SHORT QUESTIONS

DATE

NAME & ADDRESS OF CANDIDATE

Dear (NAME):

We are happy to tell you that you are one of (number) priests whose names have been included on the Bishop's Approved List for our discernment process for new clergy partnership. We are eager to learn more about you.

We hope that you would like to know more about us, as well. We have enclosed this (DVD, flash drive, etc.) *or* We invite you to go to www. (link URL) to view information about us. We have also enclosed additional materials describing St. XXXX Church and our community.

After you have had a chance to study all these things, please let us know if you remain interested in being a candidate for Rector of XXXX Church . If you are, we would appreciate receiving a copy of your resume and your response to each of the following questions in XX words or less:

[NOTE: modify these to serve your needs best.]

1. What does your present position involve?
2. What do you like most about your present position?
3. What do you like least about your present position?

Don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions. You may reach me by (phone and list number, e-mail address, etc.)

With all best wishes to you in your ministry,

Faithfully yours,

YYYYYY, Chair
XXX Church Ministry Discernment Committee

Enclosures: XXXXX Church Materials
(Chamber of Commerce Materials or website or something)

SAMPLE LETTER TO CANDIDATES MAKING A CUT

Date

The Rev. Name
Address.
Address

Dear Rev. _____,

Thank you for being part of our initial discernment process at XXX Church. As you know, the Ministry Discernment Committee received over XX names of candidates for the position of Rector of XXX Church. We are very pleased to let you know that we would like for you to continue in this process with us. We believe that you offer many gifts and skills that would be a good match with the needs and goals of XXX Church.

To this end, we will be calling you to arrange a date for a three-person team from our Ministry Discernment Committee to visit you in XXX and attend the Eucharist at XXX Church so we can see you preach and celebrate. We would also like the chance to go to lunch after the service with you (and your spouse or partner, if appropriate) for an informal conversation.

Please be thinking about a date that would be convenient for you to have us visit you. And, if you have any questions or concerns, please send them along to us. Again, we are so very pleased to be able to continue together in the discernment process.

Faithfully,

Chair, Ministry Discernment Committee

SAMPLE LETTER TO A CANDIDATE NOT MAKING A CUT

Note to MDC: Be prepared with an appropriate response if the candidate should ask for feedback about why s/he was not chosen. Contact the Transition Minister for hints about such conversations.

Date

Rev. Name

Address

Address

Dear Rev. _____,

Thank you for being a part of our initial discernment process at XXXX Church. The Ministry Discernment Committee received over XX candidates, and we were glad to review each one's material and speak with each candidate. It certainly helped us see the wonderful and diverse kinds of ministry and leadership in the Episcopal Church.

We wanted you to know that we decided not to move forward with you as a candidate. Though you presented many gifts and skills for ministry, we found that other candidates were a better match for our needs.

Thank you for offering us your insights and for taking the time and effort to be in a discernment process with us. We hope and pray that God will continue to work in you and in your ministry. Please know that we pray for your own ongoing discernment.

Faithfully,

Chair, Ministry Discernment Committee

SAMPLE LETTER TO CANDIDATES NOT ELECTED RECTOR

Note to Vestry and MDC: Be prepared with an appropriate response if the candidate should ask for feedback about why s/he was not chosen. Contact the Transition Minister for hints about such conversations.

Date

Rev. Name

Address

Address

Dear Rev. _____,

As you know, the Ministry Discernment Committee presented to the Vestry the final candidate(s) for Rector of XXX Church in YYYY. The Vestry received this information and then began its own discernment about which candidate was called to be the next Rector. We have decided to call another candidate for Rector whom we believe is the best match for our needs at this stage in our ministry.

On behalf of us all, I want to thank you for your role in our discernment process. Your gifts, vision for ministry, and input helped us all see the breadth and depth of clergy leadership in The Episcopal Church. Thank you for your willingness to get to know us and allowing us to get to know you.

We hope and pray the God will continue to work in you and in your ministry. We pray for your own ongoing discernment.

Faithfully,

XXXXXX, Senior Warden

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between the Vestry of _____ Church, _____,
in The Episcopal Church in Vermont
and
The Reverend _____

The Vestry of _____ Episcopal Church in _____, Vermont, acting in
partnership with our Bishop on behalf of the Christian community located in _____, calls the Rev. _
_____ to be _____.

This Memorandum of Understanding is to outline the parameters of this call until a formal Letter of Agreement is developed. By signing below the Senior Warden and the _____-elect are agreeing to the call within the noted parameters and agree to finalize the formal Letter of Agreement as soon as possible. When this document is signed by all parties, the call can be announced and made public.

NOTE: A completed and clear Province One Oxford Document Company background check is a requirement for this call.

The parameters for this call are:

Position: *(amount of time, title of position – i.e. half-time Rector)*
Compensation: *(total amount of compensation package and what it includes)*

All other benefits and parameters will be as per diocesan policy.

All agreements must be reviewed by the Transition Minister and the Bishop to insure fairness for both parties. If the _____ and Vestry are in disagreement concerning interpretation of this Memorandum or the Letter of Agreement, either party may appeal for mediation to a mutually agreed upon third party, the Bishop remaining the final arbiter.

Offering this Call on Behalf of the Congregation:

_____ Date: _____
_____, Senior Warden

Accepting this Call as _____:

_____ Date: _____
The Rev. _____

CALL IS SUBJECT TO CLEARED BACKGROUND CHECK

It is the policy of The Episcopal Church in Vermont that all calls are subject to a completed and clear Province One Oxford Document Company background check. This check includes asking former bishops under whom the person has served and all employers in the last ten years about any history of sexual or financial impropriety as well as a check of public records for any criminal record. The cost, approximately \$200, is the

between
_____ **Church,** _____, **Vermont**
and

having been elected Rector

with the understanding that this tenure will begin on Month Day, Year and continue until dissolved by mutual consent or in accordance with the Canons of The Episcopal Church and The Episcopal Church Vermont. This is a spiritual hire with the understanding that it is made upon the foundation of a relationship – with each other, with our Bishop and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

This above section is required and should not be changed in form. The church name, rector's name, and starting date must be inserted.

The authority, responsibilities and duties of the Rector shall be in accordance with the Canons of The Episcopal Church and The Episcopal Church Vermont. Duties of the Rector are directed toward the congregation and its well being, are of primary importance, and are to be given appropriate priority. A description of these duties will be created by the Vestry and the Rector. The Rector will be responsible for planning and scheduling of her/his duties. Some of the Rector's work will be for The Episcopal Church in Vermont and the wider community.

According to the custom of this congregation:

- The Rector, in consultation with the Vestry, shall call and employ all staff.
- The Rector, in regularly reviewing the ministry of each member of the staff, will oversee such reviews with the help and support of a personnel committee or the Vestry.
- All decisions regarding compensation shall be made jointly with the Vestry and the Rector.

According to the canons of the Episcopal Church:

- The Rector shall supervise all ordained staff as well as be responsible for the supervision of all other staff, usually with the advice of a personnel committee or the Vestry.

The substance of the above paragraphs is required although the wording can be changed or expanded.

SECTION A. TIMES OF WORK AND LEAVE

This is a full-time position and the Rector's scheduled workweek will be five days, or 12-14 units per week, a unit being a morning, afternoon or evening. The Vestry expects that the Rector will use two full days each week for personal and family activities. The Rector will normally not be expected to have responsibilities on more than two evenings per week. It is also mutually recognized that the nature of some congregational responsibilities requires that the Rector be "on call" 24 hours a day.

The workweek described is for full time rectors, and must be modified for less than full time. A paragraph defining the workweek is required. A helpful way of looking at a fulltime workweek is as 12 to 14 "units," a unit being a morning, afternoon or evening. Also, recognize that during some times of the year the clergyperson will be busier than at other times.

The Rector will have the following periods of leave with full compensation:

- ...the national holidays of New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, July Fourth, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving, with the expectation that the actual day off will be taken so as not to interfere with major occasions for worship.
- ...one month of annual vacation (a minimum of 26 days plus five Sundays), as provided in the Canons of The Episcopal Church in Vermont
- ...several days off following Christmas Day and Easter Day.
- ...professional development leave at the rate of two weeks a year, to be used at the Rector's discretion

Annual leave of one month and development leave of two weeks are required. The provisions for designated national holidays and days off after Easter and Christmas are strongly recommended.

The Rector will participate for one year in the Diocesan **Fresh Start Program**, which meets four times per year (two face-to-face meetings; two web-based meetings). This program provides support and professional development for clergy who are in transition to a new position.

The Rector shall also be entitled to a sabbatical leave as provided in Canon 28 of the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont. The leave shall be for four months following each five year period of service in an Episcopal Church in Vermont and after not less than three years of service as Rector of _____ Episcopal Church. During the sabbatical leave the Rector shall receive full compensation. The purpose of the leave is spiritual and intellectual refreshment and the Rector shall be the sole arbiter as to how the leave is used. __ Episcopal Church is responsible for providing supply clergy during the Rector's leave. The Vestry will establish a fund for this purpose and contribute to it in a timely manner, beginning with the 20xx budget. The timing and terms of all sabbatical leaves must be approved by the Bishop.

Sabbatical leave is required by Canon 28 of the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont, which reads as follows:

CANON 28: SABBATICAL LEAVES FOR CLERGY

Every person in Holy Orders canonically resident in this Diocese shall, following each five-year period of service in this Diocese, be entitled to a leave of absence for four months for spiritual and intellectual refreshment, and shall be entitled to full compensation during such period of leave; provided, however, that no person shall be eligible for such leave unless the person shall have served in the position from which leave is to be taken for at least three years.

All leaves shall be subject to approval of the Bishop and, where Diocesan Continuing Education Funds are granted, to the approval of the Commission on Ministry's Committee on Continuing Education.

The canon requires the congregation to pay for a supply priest even though it must continue to pay the Rector's normal compensation during the leave. If this is likely to cause a strain on the congregation's annual budget, it is wise to include in the agreement some plan to accumulate a reserve for this expense over the years of service before the sabbatical occurs. The wording in the draft letter is one way of doing this.

Even though the canon spells out the requirements for sabbatical leave; it is desirable to repeat its essential elements in the letter of agreement.

SECTION B. COMPENSATION

The Rector's annual salary for the year 20xx will be \$xx,xxx.xx and will be paid on or before the first day of each month (monthly payments of \$xxxx.xx).

The rector's salary or stipend must be set within the guidelines and ranges established by Diocesan Convention, which take into account the size of the congregation.

It is important that the salary agreed upon be realistic in terms of the congregation's known resources. It should not be based, for example, on expectations that the new rector will bring in lots more people or stimulate giving.

If the congregation has a rectory acceptable as a residence to the new priest, a paragraph in this section should state that the rector will have the use of it and should spell out what expenses the vestry assumes payment of. In most cases it will also be advisable to set out various other details, such as what appliances will be provided and who will be responsible for their repair or replacement. For tax and pension fund purposes, the value of provided housing is calculated to be 30% of the sum of the Rector's salary (including SECA) and the utility costs. Suggested wording for church-provided housing follows:

The Rector shall have full use of the rectory as personal residence. No parish activities will be planned at the rectory without the invitation of the Rector's household. Expenses connected with the rectory shall be handled as follows:

- (a) Utilities shall be contracted for and paid directly by the Vestry.
- (b) Expenses for repair, remodeling and major appliances shall be paid by the parish in accordance to an annual plan and budget mutually agreed to by the Rector and Vestry. No major changes will be made to the rectory without the Vestry and Rector agreeing. There should be regular conversations about ongoing maintenance.
- (c) Use of rectory grounds are at the Rector's discretion, with the exception of major alterations to the basic landscaping plan. Lawn care and snow removal are provided by the Vestry.

An annual Equity Allowance will be paid to the Rector; the 20xx Equity Allowance will be \$xxxx.xx.

The Bishop expects that an equity allowance will be negotiated between vestries/executive committees and clergy required living in rectories.

If the congregation does not have a rectory it is expected a housing allowance based on the fair market rental value of the area will be provided to the clergyperson. Suggested wording for providing a housing allowance in lieu of housing follows:

In lieu of housing the Rector will receive a monthly allowance for the year 20__ of \$____, which will be paid on or before the first day of the month.

- 3) *The vestry and rector should first agree on a total housing/salary amount, and then let the rector choose how it is to be divided to receive the most favorable tax consideration, The housing allowance agreed upon is the value of the housing for tax and pension purposes.*

The Rector's compensation will be reviewed annually and a cost-of-living adjustment based on the annual change in the Consumer Price Index will be applied to the Rector's salary and housing allowance. The Vestry may also at its discretion grant a merit increase based on the Rector's performance; a merit increase should also be applied to both salary and housing allowance.

Agreement for an annual review of the rector's compensation is required; commitment to at least a cost of living increase is strongly recommended.

SECTION C. BENEFITS

The Vestry shall provide the following benefits:

...enrollment in the Church Pension Fund of the Episcopal Church and will pay the required assessments

...health insurance and dental in accordance with guidelines provided by The Episcopal Church in Vermont, and will pay the premium based on the family rate. If the Rector does not require health insurance the congregation agrees to provide insurance should the need arise.

...half of self-employment tax = (salary + utilities + housing value) x .0765

Participation in the Church Pension Fund and a health insurance program is required. A plan comparable or better than that provided to the diocesan office is required. The rate classification -- single person, couple, or family depends on the domestic status of the priest.

The cost of participation in the Church Pension is based on the Rector's salary and the value of housing provided. If actual housing is provided, the annual pension contribution is 18% of the sum of salary plus utilities provided plus the housing value calculated in the previous section. If housing is not provided, the contribution is 18% of the sum of salary and housing allowance. A description of the method for calculating pension payments can also be found in Section Five of the Diocesan Handbook.

Episcopal clergy are considered by the tax authorities to be self-employed and must therefore pay a self-employment tax in lieu of Social Security. It is strongly recommended that the congregation pay half of this tax to the Rector. This additional payment has to be counted as additional income by the recipient. The value of this payment can be calculated with the following formula: (salary + utilities + housing value) x .0765

SECTION D. PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES

The Vestry agrees to pay for providing the following that are deemed necessary for carrying out the Rector's congregational and professional responsibilities:

1. Travel expenses at the current IRS rate, plus out-of-pocket costs associated with travel, such as the cost of parking and tolls, budgeted at \$x,xxx.xx.
2. The normal expenses of the Church's office operation, such as telephone, postage, office equipment, supplies, copying, etc.
3. An expense allowance \$xxxx.xx for reimbursement of expenses in the course of professional activities on behalf of xxxxx Episcopal Church.
4. The costs of a telephone in the Rector's residence. This telephone number shall be published to insure the Rector's ready accessibility in case of emergencies. The Rector shall pay the cost of all personal long distance calls.
5. A Professional Development Allowance of \$xxxx.xx. The Rector shall be the sole arbiter of the use of this fund. Unexpended portions of this allowance shall be allowed to accumulate for use in succeeding years up to six years.

All of these provisions for professional expenses are normally required. In some cases, it may be useful to add further details.

SECTION E. DISCRETIONARY FUND

In accordance with the canons of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church, a Discretionary Fund is to be established under the Rector's sole control. The Fund will be a line item in the annual budget. The discretionary account is named The [Parish] Discretionary Fund. The Discretionary Fund must be part of the congregation's annual audit with appropriate measures taken to maintain confidentiality.

This wording is required. The Rector's discretionary fund is required by Canon of the General Convention. It can be funded as a line item in the regular budget, or by committing to it the undesignated offerings received at all services on the first Sunday of the month.

SECTION F. SUPPLEMENTARY COMPENSATION

The Rector shall not charge fees for performing any rites of the Church for members of xxxxx Episcopal Church. The Rector may, however, receive income from other sources, such as:

Services on behalf of persons not in any way related to xxxxx Episcopal Church.

Fees and honoraria for professional services performed on personal time for groups unrelated to xxxxx Episcopal Church, or for sermons, books or articles published outside the congregation.

SECTION G. USE OF BUILDINGS

The Wardens and Vestry recognize that the Canons of the General Convention give the use and control of the church and the church's buildings to the Rector for the discharge of the duties of her/his office. In addition, the Rector shall have the right to grant use of the building to organizations, agencies, individuals or groups from outside the Episcopal Church with the concurrence of the Vestry.

Although this paragraph is simply a restatement of the provisions of the canon, it is strongly recommended that it be included.

SECTION H. ANNUAL REVISION

This agreement will be reviewed each year by the Rector and the Vestry and should be updated to reflect changes which the Rector and Vestry agree to. An appropriate time for this review is the mutual review of ministry described in the next section. If the agreement is amended, a copy of the revised agreement must be sent to the Bishop.

The Bishop requires this paragraph.

SECTION I. MUTUAL REVIEW OF MINISTRY

The Rector, Wardens, and Vestry agree to have an annual discussion and mutual review of the total ministry of the congregation, in order to:

- ...assess how well the Rector, Wardens and Vestry are fulfilling their responsibilities to each other and to the ministry they share.
- ...establish goals for the work of the congregation for the coming year. (These goals will serve as the basis for mutual ministry review for each subsequent year.)
- ...identify areas of conflict or disappointment that may be adversely affecting mutual ministry.
- ...clarify expectations of all parties and, in particular, make sure that all parties continue to understand this agreement and the position description of the Rector in the same way

The Wardens and Vestry agree that the basis for the mutual review of ministry for the first year will be the ministry expectations developed in the self-study portion of the discernment process and outlined in the congregation's profile. Any instrument used for the Review must be approved by the Bishop and facilitated by someone outside the congregation, such as a diocesan Companion.

SECTION J. OTHER AGREEMENTS

1. All moving and travel expenses incurred in making the move from _____ to _____, Vermont shall be paid by _____ Episcopal Church. _____ Episcopal Church shall

reimburse the Rector for all additional Federal and State Income Taxes which may result from such expense reimbursement.

2. The moving date shall be in the week of _____. The Rector shall begin duties in the congregation not later than _ unless delayed by adverse circumstances.

3. In the event of the Rector’s death, the Vestry agrees to continue payment of the Rector’s Cash Salary, and appropriate Health and Hospital Insurance to the Rector’s surviving direct dependents for a period of three months. Continued use of the Rectory beyond this term shall be subject to agreements entered into during the term.

ALTERNATE WORDING FOR CHURCH-PROVIDED HOUSING
In the event of the Rector’s death, the Vestry agrees to continue to provide the Rector’s surviving direct dependents with the compensation items agreed to in Section B and appropriate Health and Hospital Insurance for a period of _____ months. Continued use of the Rectory beyond this term shall be subject to agreements entered into during the term.

4. This Letter of Agreement shall be made part of the minutes of the next Vestry Meeting following its signing, and copies shall be given to each new Vestry member thereafter.

5. If the Rector and Vestry are in disagreement concerning the interpretation of this Letter of Agreement, either party may appeal for mediation by a mutually agreed upon third party, the Bishop remaining the final arbiter.

Date: _____
Name of Rector, Rector

Name of Senior Warden, Senior Warden

Reviewed: _____
Canon Lynn Bates, Transition Minister

Approved: _____
The Rt. Rev. Thomas C. Ely, Bishop