

ESTABLISHING THE SEARCH CRITERIA

While the self-study committee has been given the responsibility to create and lead the Appreciative Inquiry Summit and craft the vision statements, it is the vestry's responsibility to affirm their work, set the course for the future, and to determine the criteria for the search. Creating the search criteria has four basic steps:

- Affirming the purpose, vision, and values of the congregation's preferred future. Most of this work will have been completed during the self-study process.
- Describing what a successful ministry would look like as the congregation manifests its purpose. Specific goals are established to enable the congregation achieve their vision of success.
- Determining the primary responsibilities of the rector as they help the congregation successfully manifest its purpose.
- Deciding what skills and abilities the next rector will need to successfully fulfill their responsibilities.

We have found it most helpful to establish the search criteria at a vestry retreat where people can focus intensely, for at least a day, on establishing the search criteria.

Search Criteria Retreat

This retreat will set the course for the congregation's future. The process of coming to a shared vision will be an important factor in shaping the final vision. Consider holding the retreat "off-campus" with at least one overnight stay. Building community will be essential for creating a shared vision and for the later discernment process of coming to "one-mind."

In addition to the vestry, consider inviting the search committee to share in the retreat. At a minimum it is essential that the chair of the search committee be present. First-hand knowledge of the hearts and minds of the vestry will be important for the search committee as it designs and engages in the search process. If the search committee has not already been selected, choosing the members will be one of the final tasks of the retreat. If a separate team has been working on the parish profile documentation (this will be discussed in the upcoming section "Creating the Parish Profile and Web Site"), it would also be helpful to have the chair of that committee at the retreat.

Plans are only good intentions unless they immediately degenerate into hard work.

— Peter Drucker

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to gather wood and divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery

*The way a team plays
as a whole
determines its success.
You may have the
greatest bunch of
individual stars
in the world,
but if they don't
play together,
the club won't be
worth a dime.
— Babe Ruth*

*Remember to
worship and pray.
Important congregational
decisions need to
be made in the
midst of God's presence.*

Resources you will need for the vestry retreat:

- A facilitator to guide the process. This could be the transitional minister or the search consultant.
- The completed job review of the rector's position. This was created from information gathered from the rector exit interview. If you didn't conduct an exit interview, we recommend you interview the current transitional minister, using a modified version of the exit interview, and have this information available at the retreat.
- A review of the section on "Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry," paying attention to the part on creating positive goals.
- The summary portion of the Appreciative Inquiry Summit describing the congregation's present reality and its preferred future.
- The results of the clergy compensation committee's work and recommendations. This information needs to be available now as it will be used in the interview process, and is also a criterion that clergy will use in their discernment process.
- A draft rector-congregation Letter of Agreement. Most dioceses have electronic copies of letters of agreement that can be used as the basis for creating a parish-specific contract. At the retreat, specific goals will be created which will need to be included in the letter of agreement. The letter of agreement is an important component of the search process that is often overlooked.
- Worship and prayer resources. Important congregational decisions need to be made in the midst of God's presence.
- A laptop computer to make notes as you go.

The steps and goals for the retreat are to:

- Reflect on the self-study findings.
- Affirm the congregation's values.
- Create a vision of a successful ministry.
- Set the primary ministry responsibilities of the rector.
- Establish the criteria for the search committee's work.
- Choose the search committee, if it hasn't been established.
- Determine whether the congregation's goals can begun now or deferred until the rector arrives.

Self-Study Reflection

The goal of this step, if it hasn't already been completed, is to identify the life-giving core of the congregation, clarify the congregation's values, and establish a vision of their preferred future. The real task of the exercise is to mine into the things that people consider important to find what is truly important to the entire community, and to discern the critical life-giving realities that need to be the focus of the congregation's ministry endeavors.

The Three C's of the Great Commandment

As you develop your vision consider how it integrates the Three C's of the Great Commandment:

- **Congregation:** How will we love ourselves?
- **Community:** How will we love our neighbors?
- **Christ's Call:** How will we love God?

The life-giving core of the congregation must be linked to the outside world. A congregation that lives only for itself may become a glorious club, but will never be the church. It will die like the Dead Sea because it has no outlet for the riches it absorbs. Christ's call is what links the congregation to the community. It is the way the congregation will take the love they know in Jesus out into the world.

Creating a Vision of a Successful Ministry

The goal of the search process is to call a new rector who will help the congregation successfully manifest its purpose in the world. Imagine that the new rector has been with you for five years and that together you and the rector have been incredibly successful. What would the congregation have accomplished, and what would it be doing?

Review the Design section of the Appreciative Inquiry Summit to create goals that will enable the congregation to be successful.

- If you have a large group, consider breaking the activities into sections, and create sub-groups to simultaneously work on different areas and report back to the larger group. Allow the sub-groups to self-select on the basis of their passion and interest.
- Pay attention first to identifying the life-giving core of the congregation. In setting goals, congregations often overlook or neglect their life-giving core. This neglect can occur because it is currently being done well, so people don't think that it needs to be specifically included in their vision for the future.

*A congregation
that lives only for itself may
become a glorious club
but it will never
be the church,
for it will die like the
Dead Sea because
it has no outlet for
the riches it absorbs.*

*If you pay attention
to feeding the
heart and soul
the fingers and toes
will know what to do.*

Instructions: Using the information gathered from the Appreciative Inquiry Summit, decide as a team what your preferred future is in each of the domains. The preferred future may be the same, an enrichment of your current state, or a significant desire to grow or transform a domain.

God the Source of Life

How do we want to understand and experience God in the congregation?

Purpose: What will the congregation's purpose be?

Write the purpose in the present tense as though it is a current reality.

Identity: What will the congregation's role or mission be?

Write the identity in the present tense as though it is a current reality.

Values: What values do we want to grow?

Write the purpose in the present tense as though they are the congregation's current values.

Expectations

How successful do we think we will be? What would we need to be more successful?

Skills

What new ministries do we need to develop?

Environmental Context

How do we want to develop our facilities?

Instructions: *Imagine that the new rector has been with you for five years and that together you and the rector have been incredibly successful. What would the congregation have accomplished, and what would it be doing?*

- *As you create goals keep referencing your core purpose and values and ask: "How will achieving this goal have integrity with our values and help us manifest our purpose?"*
- *Be realistic. Don't just describe the goal, give details on how it will be achieved. Focus on what you as a congregation will need to do to achieve the goal, and not on what the rector will be doing.*

What needs to be enriched?

What needs to be started?

What needs to be discontinued?

Parish Goals: 1:

Parish Goals: 2:

Parish Goals: 3:

Parish Goals: 4:

What the congregation needs is a leader who will equip the members to grow into being agents of the goal, rather than passive spectators of someone else's life and ministry.

Objectives are not fate; they are direction. They are not commands; they are commitments. They do not determine the future; they are means to mobilize the resources and energies of the business for the making of the future.
— Peter Drucker

Reviewing the Congregation's Goals

Some goals such as "We want to grow" are so general and vague that they are unable to guide future action. The lack of specificity can lead to future conflict. A rector may come and begin growing the church with new parishioners who do not share the original members' theological outlook. The original members may feel displaced and angrily proclaim, "That's not what we meant by growth!"

The goal "We want to grow" is also lacking in a description of what the members of the church are doing in relation to the goal. What the congregation needs is a leader who will equip the members to grow into being agents of the goal, rather than passive spectators of someone else's life and ministry.

The goal "We want to grow" does not provide any indication of how it will be achieved or the resources that will be needed. Aging congregations often want to attract young families with little awareness of what young families want from a congregation. At the same time the goal of attracting young families ignores caring for people similar to the parishioners, a more viable group of potential parishioners because they have more in common with the current parishioners. A more realistic goal might be to grow a ministry to retired and aging people.

When reviewing the goals ask:

- Is the goal specific?
- Does the goal describe the congregation's actions or simply the actions of the rector?
- Is the goal both a stretch and realistic?
- How does the goal relate to our purpose?
- Is the goal consistent with our values?
- If we really achieved the goal, what would happen to our church? Do we really want that to happen?

Converting Goals Into Search Criteria

Each goal statement needs to be converted to one or more search criteria by determining what skills and abilities the new rector will need to help the congregation achieve the goal. The following are some examples of converting a congregation's goals into search criteria:

- **Congregation’s Goal:** To enrich our worship experience by developing our current services and starting an alternative contemporary worship service.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a priest who has invited parishioners to developed contemporary worship services while growing and sustaining participation in current worship services.

- **Congregation’s Goal:** To share the radical hospitality of God with all people in our neighborhood and to establish a reputation as being an inclusive church in our town.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector who is personally welcoming and has grown a church community that welcomes people of all ages, genders, races, sexual orientation, and social classes.

- **Congregation’s Goal:** To develop a neighborhood Latino ministry.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector who is bilingual in English and Spanish and has a successful ministry in a multi-cultural context.

- **Congregation’s Goal:** To establish a capital campaign to raise ten million dollars to build a new worship facility .

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector who has experience leading a capital campaign and sharing in the building of a church while overseeing other parish ministries.

- **Congregation’s Goal:** To develop a comprehensive Christian education program for all ages by growing a dedicated, trained group of Christian education volunteers.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector who has demonstrated both a commitment to and experience in creating and sustaining excellence in Christian education.

- **Congregation’s Goal:** To bring healing and reconciliation to our congregation following clergy misconduct and to help us re-engage in our outreach ministry.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector who has a reconciling, healing presence. We are looking for a consensus builder who is engaged in outreach ministry.

*Above all,
love each other deeply,
because love covers over a
multitude of sins.
Offer hospitality
to one another
without grumbling.*
— 1 Peter 4:8-9

*The best way to predict the
future is to invent it.*
— Immanuel Kant

*Pay attention to what is
life-giving first.
You can live without a foot
but you can’t live
without a heart.*

*Education without values,
as useful as it is,
seems rather to make
man a more clever devil.*

— C.S. Lewis

*Life in Lubbock, Texas,
taught me two things:
One is that God loves you
and you're going
to burn in hell.
The other is
that sex is the most awful,
filthy thing on earth and
you should save it for
someone you love.*

— Butch Hancock

Converting Values Into Search Criteria

A congregation's values can also be converted into specific search criteria to ensure that the next rector and the congregation share a core set of values.

When creating value statements, it is generally not helpful to use labels — conservative, liberal, traditional, high or low church — but to describe the characteristics or essence of what is valued. For example, a congregation may describe itself as traditional, but our tradition in the Episcopal church is very broad. Some churches have a tradition of using morning prayer, others have a tradition of eucharistic worship. Simply saying that you value “traditional worship” does not identify which tradition, or how you find that tradition life-giving.

Likewise, the statement “We value great preaching” does not identify the components of great preaching. Do the people value personal transformation preaching, do they value evangelical preaching, or do they value prophetic preaching about social issues in the community? All of these sermon types could be done well and earn the characterization of being “great,” but not all these sermons would be valued as great by a specific congregation.

In the search process the search committee will be looking for candidates who have demonstrated a history of engaging a congregation to manifest that desired value in their common life.

The following are some examples of converting a congregation's values into search criteria:

- **Congregation's Value:** Connection with one another.

We value our relationships with one another despite our wide differences of opinion on a variety of social and theological issues.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a conciliator who has demonstrated an ability to engage people of diverse views to come together and work for the common good.

- **Congregation's Value:** Historical and contemporary liturgy.

We value both our historic Episcopal forms of worship and contemporary expressions of eucharistic worship.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a liturgical leader who, in the style of Thomas Cranmer, can create worship services to meet contemporary worship needs by honoring and using traditional liturgical resources.

- **Congregation’s Value:** Evangelical preaching.

We value sermons that call people to commit their lives to following Jesus and sharing his love with others.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a preacher who powerfully calls people to repentance and committing their lives to Christ.
- **Congregation’s Value:** Prophetic preaching.

We value sermons that inspire and equip us to challenge social mores and customs that create inequality and injustice.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a preacher who powerfully challenges the prevailing social norms that lead to inequality and injustice, and equips people to engage in social transformation.
- **Congregation’s Value:** Young people.

We value our young people and manifest that value by their involvement in our worship, age-appropriate education, and intergenerational outreach trips.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector who has demonstrated a valuing of young people by ensuring that they are actively involved in worship, education, and parish activities.

Note: In many congregations a ministry such as youth work, christian education, or pastoral care may be delegated to qualified leaders. The rector may demonstrate their commitment to these ministries, not by personally doing them, but by ensuring the ministry is well funded in the congregation’s budget, and qualified leaders are appointed to lead the ministry.
- **Congregation’s Value:** Historic church buildings.

We value the beauty of our historic buildings which remind us of the majesty of God and the faithful witness of generations of worshippers who have gone before us and, like us, have been transformed by God’s glory in our church.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector who will care for our buildings the way we care for them, and find within their historic walls the love of the living God.
- **Congregation’s Value:** Their local geography.

We value the beauty of our physical environment, in which we discover and experience the wonder of God our creator.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector who is spiritually nourished by being in a (rural/coastal/high desert) environment.

We can tell our values by looking at our checkbook stubs.
 — Gloria Steinem

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.
 — Ralph Waldo Emerson

A people that values its privileges above its principles soon loses both.
 — Dwight David Eisenhower

There's nothing more demoralizing than a leader who can't clearly articulate why we're doing what we're doing.
— James Kouzes and Barry Posner:

It is one of the ironies of the ministry that the very man who works in God's name is often hardest put to find time for God. The parents of Jesus lost Him at church, and they were not the last ones to lose Him there.
— Vance Havner

Setting Desired Personal Attributes or Ministry Styles

In addition to the pastoral responsibilities, prior experience, and specific skills, most parishes are also interested in a variety of personal attributes or ministry styles. These styles often relate to those things that the congregation values. The following are examples of specific styles and ways to convert them to search criteria:

Leadership Style: Leadership consists of the following abilities:

- The ability to inspire others to achieve a shared vision.
- The ability to establish goals and to engage others in a mutual quest to achieve them.
- The ability to empower and equip others to achieve their goals.
- The ability to engage in problem solving and conflict resolution.
- The ability to transform followers into leaders.

Leadership can be manifested in various styles. A leader can be visionary, autocratic, consensual, directive, diplomatic, or an enabler, or any combination of the above.

To convert a leadership style to a search criteria, review the congregation's goals and determine what style of leadership would provide the best resource to help the church achieve the goal.

- **Situation:** A small congregation has a goal of broadening its leadership to a team of volunteers to lead specific ministries within the congregation.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a visionary leader who can share leadership through delegating, equipping and empowering volunteers to serve a leadership role in the church.

- **Situation:** A large congregation has a goal of bringing harmony to a highly creative but often conflicted staff.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a consensual team builder who can unite and create a team of talented people around a shared vision.

Another large church with the same situation may create an alternative search criteria using their language and perspective:

Search Criteria: We are looking for a collaborative leader who can reorganize our staff to align their strengths and talents with our congregation's purpose.

Interpersonal Style: Interpersonal style (reserved or outgoing, conversationalist or listener) is probably less important than these essential emotional intelligence and interpersonal abilities:

- The ability to be aware of, understand, and manage their emotions.
- The ability to be aware of and concerned for the feelings of others and to respond with accurate empathy.
- The ability to put others at ease by being open and approachable and dealing with them in a personal way.
- The ability to consider another's point of view and to show interest in their concerns and ideas.

When it is a relevant resource to a congregation's purpose or goals, interpersonal style can also be converted into a search criteria.

- **Situation:** A church with a large senior population has a goal to become a center for senior ministry in the community. At this stage in the ministry's development, they want the rector to have a significant pastoral care component to the program.

Search Criteria: We are looking for warm, empathetic pastor who enjoys ministering to and with seniors. Skills in counseling people through loss, bereavement, and grief are essential.

Personal Spirituality: Spirituality is the ability to sustain a personal faith and connection in something greater than ourselves that is transformative and enlivening, and the ability to live out one's faith in a life of service to others.

Personal spirituality can be carried out in a variety of styles or practices relating to prayer and service.

Of concern to the church is whether the rector's personal spiritual practices are compatible and sustainable with the general practice of the congregation.

- **Situation:** A church located next to a large wildlife sanctuary values their experience of God in creation and has discovered Celtic spirituality to be a significant resource for personal spiritual growth and inspiration for caring for the environment. Their goal is to grow in their understanding of the Celtic way and to be environmental leaders in their community.

Search Criteria: We are looking for a rector with a deep, personal knowledge and experience of the Celtic way who can lead us in our caring for the environment.

For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

— Titus 1:7-9

A celibate clergy is an especially good idea, because it tends to suppress any hereditary propensity toward fanaticism.

— Carl Sagan

*Experience: that most
brutal of teachers.
But you learn, my God
do you learn.
— C.S. Lewis*

*Experience is the
best teacher,
but the tuition is high.
— Norwegian Proverb*

*When I was
a boy of fourteen,
my father was so ignorant
I could hardly stand to
have the old man
around. But when I got
to be twenty-one, I was
astonished at how much
the old man had learned
in seven years.
— Mark Twain*

Candidate's Prior Experience

In addition to their skills and abilities, a candidate's prior experience is usually a significant resource that they bring to the task of helping a congregation be successful. We think of prior experience as akin to "walking in one's shoes." While prior experience will not tell you about the candidate's competency, it will tell you what shoes the candidate has walked in. It will not answer how they have walked in those shoes, but just where the shoes have been. This experience can provide the basis of empathy, understanding, and knowledge of the resources needed to achieve a specific goal.

Well-developed prior experience criteria can provide a quick screen of potential candidates. This is especially true in larger congregations that may have specific needs, and which also attract large numbers of applicants. When determining your preferred prior experience, consider the following:

- What prior experience would you like in your next rector?

Be specific about the tasks you want the candidate to have engaged in while working in a previous setting. For example, a congregation may state that they want someone who has previously been the rector of a congregation. However, there is a large difference in being the rector of a small congregation, and one with a large staff. An associate in a large congregation may have had more experience in supervising staff than the rector of a small congregation. Specifying, "experience leading and supervising administrative and ministry staff" would be more focused and reliable than "experience as a rector."

- Is there a parallel way that the experience could be gained?

For example, a recently ordained candidate may not have been the rector of congregation, but they may have been the leader of a large, volunteer-based, not-for-profit agency.

- How would that experience help us be successful?

Does the preferred prior experience relate directly to your purpose, values, and goals; or does the prior experience relate to your personal prejudice and unexplored presuppositions on the nature of the church and ministry?

- Is the preferred experience related to your life-giving core or is it related to a desired but non-essential aspect of the church's life?

For example, a growing congregation is planning to build a new worship center and seeks a rector who has had experience in capital campaign development. However, in the process they ignore the type of preaching and worship that is at the heart of the congregation's life. The new rector, while experienced in fundraising and building development, is unable to sustain the life of the congregation and the building program falters.

Here are some examples of preferred prior experience a congregation might want in their rector:

- **Situation:** A large congregation with a history of long successful tenures wants a rector who has demonstrated the ability to sustain relationships in at least a medium-sized church.

Preferred Experience: The ideal candidate will have been the rector of a congregation with a budget of at least \$400,000 for a minimum of seven years.

- **Situation:** A congregation in a rural area has a history of attracting rectors who only stay a few years before moving back to suburban communities. They want a rector who will establish relationships in the community and want to stay for at least seven years.

Preferred Experience: The ideal candidate will have had a positive experience of living and being spiritually nurtured in a rural community.

- **Situation:** A corporate-sized church is looking for a rector who understands their congregational culture. Corporate church culture is different than being the rector in a medium-sized church where the rector may lead a relatively small staff.

Preferred Experience: The ideal candidate will have had at least five years of working in a corporate-sized church during which time they supervised other ministry staff.

- **Situation:** A congregation has a significant pastoral ministry to people in addiction recovery. While not requiring that their rector be a recovering addict, they do want their rector to understand personal redemption and be able to empathize and minister to people in recovery.

Preferred Experience: The ideal candidate will be able to share their personal story of redemption, of finding grace in the midst of darkness, and be able to use that as a foundation for providing pastoral ministry.

Good judgment is the result of experience. And experience is frequently the result of bad judgment.

— Robert Lovett

We can teach from our experience, but we cannot teach experience.

— Sasha Azevedo

Experience is not what happens to you. It is what you do with what happens to you.

— Aldous Huxley

The perfect pastor does not exist. Despite intensive prayer retreats, repeated attempts, and near drownings, no pastor we know can walk on water.

No institution can possibly survive if it needs geniuses or supermen to manage it. It must be organized in such a way as to be able to get along under a leadership composed of average human beings.
— Peter Drucker

Caution No One Can Do It All

At this stage, as you review your list of search criteria you may begin to wonder whether you have become too idealistic, and if your ideal candidate even exists. Remember, no one pastor can accomplish your goals. What you are looking for is the leader who can help you as a congregation accomplish your goals. To remain realistic, consider what skills and abilities are essential to your life-giving purpose.

Selecting Pastoral Ministry Competencies

In the exit interview section we described thirteen ministry competencies that cover most of the areas that parish clergy might engage in.

- Administrative Leader
- Christian Education Leader
- Community Leader
- Ecumenical Leader
- Evangelism Leader
- Outreach Leader
- Pastor Care
- Preacher
- Spiritual Director
- Staff Leader
- Stewardship Leader
- Worship Leader
- Youth Worker/Leader

Keeping your core purpose and life-giving values in mind, look over the list and select the six most important competencies that you will need in a rector to help you achieve your goals.

Determining Specific Specialty Skills

In addition to the core ministry competencies, your congregation may also need your rector to have specific, specialized skills to help you achieve your goals. Specialization may also occur within a ministry competency. For example, two separate parishes may both decide that preaching is the most desired ministry specialty, but one wants the sermons to primarily focus on Gospel-based social and political concerns, while the other wants the sermons to focus on Gospel-based evangelical and personal piety sermons.

You can also refer to the summary of the job review of the rector's position to determine if there are any necessary specialized skills the rector will need to have. For example:

- A multi-cultural parish may require their rector to be bilingual or bicultural.
- A congregation with many elderly parishioners or with an extensive outreach to the geriatric community may want their rector to be especially competent at conducting funerals and assisting parishioners through grief situations.
- A parish with a history of long-standing conflict may seek a rector who is skilled in reconciliation.
- A parish that has been devastated by the sexual misconduct of the former rector may seek a rector who is skilled at bringing stability and healing to a community.
- A large parish with numerous paid staff may seek a rector who has strong organizational development and management skills.
- A parish with a specific liturgical outlook may seek a rector who shares that outlook (Traditional, Evangelical, Contemporary, Anglo-Catholic, etc.).
- A parish with a day school may also require their rector to be principal of the school or to be closely involved in and skilled in the management of the school.
- A parish that needs to embark on a building project may want their rector to be skilled in fund raising.

When developing your list of required or preferred prior experience, refer back to the information already collected (exit interview, stated goals, summit output, etc.) and identify any necessary additional skills or sub-specialty skills that the new rector will need.

Summarize the Rector's Responsibilities and Skills

On the following page is an example of St. Paul's Middletown's summary of their purpose, values, and goals, along with descriptions of their ideal candidate and the rector's primary responsibilities and required skills. Using the example as a guide, create a summary of your new rector's responsibilities and skills.

This summary will provide the information necessary to create the executive summary portion of your parish profile.

A successful woman preacher was once asked "what special obstacles have you met as a woman in the ministry?"

"Not one," she answered, "except the lack of a minister's wife."

— Anna Garlin Spencer

Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practise cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God.

— 2 Corinthians 4:1-2

Here is an example of a congregation's summary of who they are, their purpose, values, and goals and their rector's primary responsibilities and desired skills. In the section on creating a parish profile, this information is shown presented as part of a parish search brochure. Specific search criteria are stated both as the "Ideal Candidate" and the specific skills the rector will need to fulfil their primary responsibilities

Our Understanding of God:

We are St. Paul's church in Middletown where we know God as: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and as: Creator, Lover, and Life-Giving Spirit.

Our Ideal Candidate Will Be:

Filled with wonder and awe at the amazing, healing love God has for all people and creation.

Our Purpose:

Our congregation's purpose is to be the hands of God's heart in our community.

Our Ideal Candidate Will Be:

Passionate about outreach and community action.

We Value:

Our caring of all God's children.

Our faith in Jesus and his radical acceptance.

Our traditional and contemporary worship.

Our historic church.

Our Anglican heritage.

Our God-given minds and our ability to think for ourselves.

God's presence in the beauty of creation, in our varied forms of worship, and in our outreach programs.

Our Ideal Candidate Will Be:

Experienced in relating to a diverse parish of highly-skilled and outreach-oriented individuals.

A pastor who can love and lead people of all ages, genders, and sexual orientations.

Our Goals: In the next five years we want to:

1. Grow from a large pastoral parish to a program-sized congregation.
2. To position St. Paul's in the community as the place for informed conversation and action on social justice concerns.
3. Increase stewardship so that our operating budget of \$330,000 will be raised from pledges and our approximately \$50,000 annual endowment income can be used for outreach programs.
4. Complete a capital campaign to raise \$1.5M to rebuild our parish hall to improve our ability to serve our community.

First Responsibility of the Rector: Preaching and Leading Worship

Preaching Skills:

- Gospel Based Sermons
- Social Justice Sermons
- Contemporary Issue Sermons

Worship Leading Skills:

- Traditional Worship
- Contemporary Worship
- Innovative Liturgy

Our Ideal Candidate Will Be:

An inspiring preacher who can put the Gospel in our hands so that we will know what to do with our hands when we go into the world.

A creative worship leader who can honor our Anglican heritage while innovating contemporary forms of worship to meet the needs of a post-modern world.

Second Responsibility of the Rector: Leadership and Volunteer Development

Leadership Skills:

- Visionary Leadership
- Change Management
- Conflict Management

Volunteer Development Skills

- Coaching/Mentoring
- Leadership Development
- Ministry Development

Our Ideal Candidate Will Be:

A leader with outstanding people skills who can oversee the desired growth of the parish in numbers and finances by keeping us true to our purpose and enriching what we value.

Third Responsibility of the Rector: Community Organization and Outreach

Community Organization Skills:

- Community Organizing
- Community Development and Planning
- Ecumenical Involvement

Outreach Development Skills

- Social Services
- Advocacy
- Food Pantry

Our Ideal Candidate Will Be:

An organizer who can engage and mobilize people around shared values and concerns

Fourth Responsibility of the Rector: Stewardship, Fund Development and Building Renovation

Stewardship Skills:

- Teaching Stewardship
- Stewardship Program Design
- Capital Campaigns

- Grant Writing
- Planned Giving

Our Ideal Candidate Will Be:

Experienced in leading a capital campaign as well as a teaching regular, faithful, stewardship of the gifts God has given us.

I cannot give you the formula for success, but I can give you the formula for failure: which is: Try to please everybody.
— Herbert B. Swope

But he did not understand the price. Mortals never do. They only see the prize. Their hearts desire, their dream... But the price of getting what you want is getting what you once wanted.
— Neil Gaiman

Doing more of dying can only result in death. Trying even harder will just get you dead quicker.

Comparing Your Preferences to the Former Rector's Skills and Abilities

Your list of desired skills and abilities has been developed from those needed to achieve your preferred future. As you make your list, pay attention to how the list varies from the previous rector's skills and abilities. Congregations often make two potentially disastrous mistakes when setting their search criteria:

- They look for someone exactly like the former rector.
- They look for the exact opposite of the former rector.

By using the congregation's preferred future as their guide, the vestry will be less susceptible to these two mistakes. Be cautious when seeking a rector that is very different from the previous rector. This is especially true following a long successful tenure. It is important to determine whether the desired future and rector skills are simply a reaction to the past, or the call of God to manifest new possibilities.

Caution: Is This What You Really Want?

Having established a vision and goals for the congregation and your preferred rector skills and abilities, take some time to ask yourselves whether your plans for the future represent a change of your underlying congregational culture.

- If your vision of the future represents no significant change to your underlying culture, then consider whether your congregation is currently successful or in decline. If you are currently successful, then your plans represent a continuation of your culture of success.

However, if you are in decline and you do not change the underlying culture, you will further decline and die, for doing more of dying can only result in death. In this situation, carefully consider how your vision will result in new life rather than a continuing decline and death.

- If your vision represents a significant change in culture consider what will be lost and gained by the culture transformation. Ask yourselves is this what we really want? Take some time to consider the consequences of making the changes. This is an important time to seek and satisfy any objections to the change in culture to ensure that the culture change is sustainable.

Often clergy have been called to engage in congregational transformation, only to experience a backlash from parishioners who did not value the changes that were being made. Expecting a new rector to come and make substantial and immediate changes may jeopardize their ability to establish a collaborative relationship with the congregation.

Steps to Take When Embarking on Culture Change

Here are some steps to take to ensure the success of your change efforts and to reduce the possibility of unnecessary conflict:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate.

While we always encourage communicating with a congregation about the current status of the search, embarking on congregational transformation requires regular conversation within the congregation to ensure a shared ownership of the new future. Fortunately, the Appreciative Inquiry Summit engages all the parishioners in envisioning the future, and typically results in a great shared ownership of the changes.

Seek and satisfy objections to the changes being made. Ensure that the process to achieve the goals are consistent with the goals.

- Start the culture change now, rather than waiting for the rector. This culture change needs to be experienced as something desired by the congregation, not something inflicted on them by a new rector. Beginning now will ensure the congregation's ownership of the changes.
- Ensure that the new culture is represented on the search committee and is part of the search process. Conducting the search from within the new cultural perspective will increase the possibility of finding a rector who wants to be part of that new culture.

Creating the Profile and Communicating with the Parish

At the end of this section is information on creating an executive summary of the profile and a web-based profile, and communicating with the congregation. Even if your search does not result in significant cultural change, it is still imperative that the congregation be informed of the congregation's goals and the qualities they are looking for in their next rector. This information will help build a relationship with their next rector and reconcile them to their future.

Desire is the key to motivation, but it's determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal – a commitment to excellence – that will enable you to attain the success you seek.

— Mario Andretti

God has fallen out of containment in religion and into human hearts – God is incarnating. Our whole unconscious is in an uproar from the God who wants to know and to be known.

— C. G. Jung

Choose people for your search committee who have shown their love and commitment to the congregation through effective leadership and teamwork on other church committees.

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.
— Mohandas Gandhi,

When the spirit of people is strong, focused and vibrant, wonderful things happen.
— Harrison Owen

Choosing A Search Committee

The last step of the search criteria retreat is to develop a list of potential search committee members and alternates. Ask these people individually, describing the task and the time commitments. As the vestry chooses the search committee, remember that these members will be representing your congregation. We have known candidates to withdraw prematurely from search processes due to uncaring and unprofessional behaviors by members of a search committee.

About 8-12 members will be sufficient, and several functions may be accomplished by the same person. The search committee will need:

- At least one person who has proven leadership skills and the ability to stay organized and accomplish tasks in a timely fashion.
- Someone with effective and efficient secretarial skills.
- Someone with strong logistical and organizational skills, to arrange visiting schedules and other aspects of the search.
- A spiritual director or chaplain: a layperson to provide spiritual support to the committee by being responsible for leading Bible studies or prayer services.
- A liaison person for the vestry.

Choose people who:

- Have shown their commitment to the congregation through effective leadership and teamwork on committees and programs.
- Participated in the summit and share the congregation's vision for the future.
- Represent the significant demographic groups within the parish: male-female, conservative-liberal, from different worship services, age groups, married-single-families, etc.
- While representing diverse groups, have been able to affirm their own viewpoint and work flexibly with others for the common good. A sense of humor is also helpful.
- Represent the past and the future of the congregation. If significant culture transformation is occurring in the congregation during the transition period, ensure that the new culture is represented on the search committee.

The Search Committee Will Not Need

- A staff person or spouse of a staff person. While these may be wonderful and talented people, dual relationships create an enormous potential for conflict of interest which can easily result in pain and suffering for all concerned.
- Parishioners whose perspective is inflexibly limited to one special interest. The parish is calling a rector for the whole of the church community not just for one special-interest group.
- People who have consistently demonstrated an inability to work with others as a collaborative and responsible team member.
- A highly competent person who is also extremely busy and only able to attend half of the meetings.
- A member who disagrees with the vestry and cannot accept the objectives outlined on the one-page profile summary.

Search Committee Mandate

The vestry needs to prepare a mandate for the search committee to represent the parish and to spend the parish's money while conducting the search. One of the principal questions at this stage is the number of candidates the vestry desires to consider when discerning a call. Like most aspects of the clergy search process there is considerable variation across the country. Typically there are two main possibilities:

1. The search committee is mandated to find one candidate which the vestry will confirm with minimal additional process.
2. The search committee is mandated to provide several qualified candidates from whom the vestry will discern who is called to be the next rector.

Both approaches, and especially the first, require that the vestry and search committee agree on the search criteria. As the governing body it is the vestry's responsibility, in consultation with the congregation, to tell the search committee what the overall search criteria are. It is not the search committee's job to tell the vestry and congregation what they are looking for in the next rector.

In the second approach, it is preferable for the search committee to present three candidates rather than two. With only two candidates to discern a call from, vestries are likely to simply compare the two

*A clever arrangement
of bad eggs will never
make a good omelet.*

— C. S. Lewis

*A shared vision
is not an idea...
it is rather,
a force in people's hearts...*

— Peter Senge

*Something magical
happens when you bring
together a group of people
from different disciplines
with a
common purpose.*

— Mark Stefik

*"Begin at the beginning,"
the King said, very gravely,
"and go on till you come to
the end: then stop."
— Lewis Carroll*

candidates and be at the mercy of their own subjective biases. With three candidates, vestries are more likely to relate each candidate to the needs of the congregation rather than simply making direct candidate comparisons. Discernment is about discerning God's call in the midst of specific congregational needs, and not simply entering into a popularity debate or contest.

More than three candidates will waste parish resources and the vestry's time. It is highly unlikely that a congregation will find four equally competent candidates. As we will see, the inability for a search committee to agree on the differences between the candidates' competencies is most likely to be a problem related to a lack of agreement on the assessment criteria rather than a lack of agreement on the candidate's performance. In case of disagreement, the search committee should first review and then agree on their assessment criteria.

Example of Search Committee Mandates:

"The search committee is directed to utilize the congregation's purpose and goals and the information contained in the parish profile and the profile summary to find three priests who have the necessary skills and abilities to be our rector."

"The search committee is directed to utilize the congregation's purpose and goals and the information contained in the parish profile and the profile summary to find one priest with the necessary skills and abilities to be our rector, and whom they believe is called by God to be our rector."

Creating the Parish Profile and Web Site

We no longer recommend that congregations spend time and money on extensive parish profile documentation. Nor do we recommend congregations spend considerable sums of money creating DVD movies of their congregations. Instead, we recommend that parishes put their time and resources into upgrading or creating a web site. The extensive published profiles and DVDs are of minimal value beyond the immediate search, whereas the church's web site continues to be useful for members and non-members after the search is completed. The web site can also provide candidates with real-time information about the life and ministry of the congregation.

In addition to the web site development, we recommend congregations complete an executive summary profile for the search process.

Executive Summary Profile

The summary of the rector's responsibilities and skills can be easily converted to an executive summary profile as shown on the following pages. This summary profile was printed on letter-size paper as a tri-fold brochure. This summary has two main advantages:

- It is specific and succinct. Too often we have seen searches lose focus in the vast array of information contained in the large parish profiles. The summary keeps the important and critical information in front of the candidates and search committee.
- It can be widely distributed and used by the congregation to invite potential candidates to engage in the search.

Church Deployment Office (CDO) Profile

The National Episcopal church has a computer database of clergy that can be searched for potential candidates. Your summary data of the congregation's purpose and goals, and the rector's responsibilities and desired skill sets, can be coded into the database search for matching clergy profiles.

Your diocesan deployment officer will be able to provide you with the forms and codes to enter your search criteria. They will then be able to run the search and provide you with names that match your criteria.

*Sometimes,
if you stand on the
bottom rail of a bridge
and lean over to watch
the river slipping slowly
away beneath you,
you will suddenly
know everything
there is to be known.*
— A.A. Milne, *Winnie the Pooh*.

*Making the simple
complicated is
commonplace;
making the complicated
simple, awesomely simple,
that's creativity.*
— Charles Mingus

THE IDEAL RECTOR

The Ideal Rector will be:

- An inspiring preacher who can put the Gospel in our hands so that we will know what to do with our hands when we go into the world.
- A creative worship leader who can honor our Anglican heritage while innovating contemporary forms of worship to meet the needs of a post-modern world.
- A leader with outstanding people skills who can oversee the desired growth of the parish in numbers and finances by keeping us true to our purpose and enriching what we value.
- A stewardship leader with a proven record of increasing giving and leading a capital campaign.
- Experienced in relating to a diverse parish of highly-skilled and outreach-oriented individuals.
- A pastor who can love and lead people of all ages, genders, and sexual orientations.

IN RETURN WE WILL

In addition to the compensation package included in this profile we will:

- love you,
- worship with you,
- cry with you,
- pray with you,
- play with you,
- serve with you,
- and take our place in God's Kingdom with you.

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Established 1853
1234 Church Street,
Middletown, USA
Phone: 555-555-1234
Fax: 555-555-1235

Bishop: The Rt. Rev. Mark Chissom
Interim Rector: The Rev. Fred Pierce, III

OUR VESTRY

- James Adams
- Beverly Westinger
- David Brown
- Jonathan Smith
- Pauline Reilly
- Sarah Monstadt
- Sam Peters
- Philip Sloan
- Wendell Waters
- Josephine Cramer, Sr. Warden
- Robert Grainger, Jr. Warden

OUR STAFF

Parish Secretary: Monica Hutchins
Organist & Choir Director: Fred Warner
Christian Education: Evelyn Greaves
Youth Director: Carolyn Porter
Sexton: Sam Peterson

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please see:
www.stpauls.org

**ST. PAUL'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
MIDDLETOWN, USA**



Invites Applications
for the Position of

RECTOR

To Join Us

**In Being the Hands
of God's Heart
in Our Community**

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

Founded in 1853, St. Paul's has a membership of 483 with an average Sunday attendance of 165. In addition to a full-time rector and parish secretary we have part-time organist, choir director, Christian education director, and sexton.

The parish has an active youth program, a choir of 12 members, and an outreach committee with an endowed budget of \$10,000 per year. We actively participate in the Habitat for Humanity program, a community food-for-the-homeless program, and we have sent adults and young people on mission trips to Native American reservations, Puerto Rico and Mexico. We are currently considering a trip to Peru.

Two members of the parish serve as chairs of diocesan committees, and several members are active on the boards of local charities.

MIDDLETOWN, USA

Middletown is a picturesque, progressive, community known for its prestigious College of Fine Arts which has produced some of America's most well known artists and entrepreneurs.

Middletown is located next to one of the purest fishing lakes in the world and is a popular recreational area, especially in the winter season when many people use the town as a base for skiing in the surrounding mountains.

Middletown also has active ballet, drama, small orchestra, and opera companies. The many community-oriented places make Middletown an exceptional place to minister and to live.

St. Paul's Congregation

Where We Know God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and as Creator, Lover, and Life-Giving Spirit

Our Congregation's Purpose:

To be the hands of God's heart in our community.

We Value

- Our caring of all God's children.
- Our faith in Jesus and his radical acceptance.
- Our traditional and contemporary worship.
- Our historic church.
- Our Anglican heritage.
- Our God-given minds and our ability to think for ourselves.

God's presence in the beauty of creation, in our varied forms of worship, and in our outreach programs.

Our Goals

In the next five years we want to:

- Grow from a large pastoral parish to a program-sized congregation.
- To position St. Paul's in the community as the place for informed conversation and action on social justice concerns.
- Increase stewardship so that our operating budget of \$330,000 will be raised from pledges and our approximately \$50,000 annual endowment income can be used for outreach programs.
- Complete a capital campaign to raise \$1.5M to rebuild our parish hall to improve our ability to serve our community.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

An annual church compensation base of \$75,000 for Stipend and Housing.

The benefits package also includes:

- Health, dental, & life insurance.
- Four weeks vacation per year.
- Two weeks continuing education per year with \$1,000 for expenses.
- Three months Sabbatical leave after 5 years of service.
- \$2,000 business expense allowance per year.
- Travel reimbursement at the IRS rate, adjusted annually.

SELECTION INFORMATION

Both the Search Committee and the Vestry will interview applicants at St. Paul's.

The Search Committee will review all applicants and forward three qualified candidates to the Vestry for discerning a call. Oxford background checks will be performed on all finalists at Church expense.

The parish will pay for all reasonable interview expenses.

The parish anticipates the new Rector will be called no later than January 31 of next year.

Resumes and CDO profiles are to be sent directly to the Search Chairperson:

Mr. John Smith: jsmith@goto.com

or to the Diocesan Deployment Officer: Rev. Can. Bill Glenn at billw@dio.org.

APPLICATION DEADLINE

June 1, This Year

*I've learned that people
will forget what you said,
people will forget
what you did,
but people will never
forget how you
made them feel.
— Maya Angelou*

*The challenge in creating
any web site is that the
development of these
three elements -
the look, the structure,
and the content -
are typically done by
at least three different
people. It is rare to find
people who are both good
artistic designers and
engineers.*

Developing a Parish Web Site

Several years ago we reviewed the web sites for every Episcopal cathedral in the United States. We also inquired as to how much the web sites cost to develop. The prices ranged from “nothing, because we had a volunteer computer person do it” to \$5,000-\$70,000 for professionally-developed sites. What was interesting is that it was very easy to tell which were the free sites. Generally they were well engineered, but had very unappealing aesthetics. They simply presented information but did not feel welcoming or inviting.

Three Core Features of a Web Site

- 1. The Look.** This is the aesthetic design of the web site. The appearance of the web site contributes much to the feeling people experience when they view the web site. It will influence people to return to the site and their inclination to attend your church.
- 2. The Structure.** This is the engineering behind the site. It creates the layout of the pages, the navigation, and any interactive components such as contact forms. The structure will determine how easy it is for visitors to find the information they are looking for, such as service times and directions.
- 3. The Content.** This is the basic text and images that provide the information that you want your web visitors to access. This will include information about service times, directions, contact information, committee materials, calendar details, and other congregational activity and programs. In the case of a congregation engaged in a search, several pages related to the search process may include information contained in traditional profiles such as a brief history and information about the surrounding area.

The Web Site Challenge

The challenge in creating any web site is that the development of these three elements — the look, the structure, and the content — are typically done by at least three different people. It is rare to find people who are both good artistic designers and engineers.

The content creates a different challenge. While you may hire an artistic designer or web engineer, they may work with many church volunteers to create the content. In addition, other church members may also be given access to the site during development. Getting consistent information in a timely fashion and keeping it relevant is an ongoing challenge when designing and maintaining a web site.

Designing a Church Web Site

Even though the search process may have prompted the web upgrade, design the site for the current congregation and potential new members. The search materials are better placed as a menu item rather than the main focus of the web site. Prospective candidates will often find more realistic and relevant information about your congregation from the day-to-day content of the site than material created specifically for the search process. Additionally, in our experience, newcomers and church visitors tell us that the first place they found the church was on the web.

Here are some suggestions for the design and implementation process:

- Create a design and implementation team. Ensure that there is a balance of people with aesthetic, engineering, and writing skills on the team.
- Define the purpose for your web site. Who will visit the web site? Divide them into groups: parishioners, visitors, newcomers, staff, and (for a brief time) potential candidates.
- What are the web site goals for each group? For example, if a primary goal is to use the web site for communication, you may have two sub-goals: (1) to communicate with parishioners, and (2) to communicate with visitors and potential parishioners. What do you want to communicate to each group?
- How do you want to engage with web visitors? Will you offer sermons on line or make other materials available? Do you need e-commerce services for a bookstore, event registration, or on-line pledging and giving?
- Check the web sites of churches in your neighborhood and the wider church community. Here are some things to reflect on:

Which sites appeal to you? Notice what makes it appealing.

Which web sites seem inviting and encourage you to explore their site?

As you view the site is it clear what the people value and what their mission or purpose is?

Imagine you are a “church shopper.” How long does it take for you to find the times of the Sunday services and the location of the church?

Which site is closest to your needs and purpose?

A common mistake people make when trying to design something foolproof is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools.

— Douglas Adams

It is, in fact, nothing short of a miracle that the modern methods of instruction have not entirely strangled the holy curiosity of inquiry.

— Albert Einstein

*Scientists investigate
that which already is;
Engineers create that which
has never been.*
— Albert Einstein

*Make it idiot proof
and someone will
make a better idiot.*
— William A. Arnett

*Dating is never easy
for engineers.
A normal person will
employ various indirect and
duplicitous methods
to create a false
impression of
attractiveness.
Engineers are incapable
of placing appearance
above function.*
— Unknown

- Create an overall design and “map” for your web site, using the information you gained from the suggestions above.

Once you have your basic design plan:

- Consider Your Resources.

What can you afford?

Who will design the web site? Will they be professional designers or volunteers?

Who will maintain the site? Will this be an ongoing volunteer duty, or something that needs to be budgeted for?

- Create the Design.

Start with the look and feel, and “map” out the pages.

Review the congregation’s values and purpose. Does the site communicate the essence of your congregation?

- Create the Structure.

How will the information be organized?

A visitor’s initial encounter is visual. Keep the home page free of clutter and large amounts of text.

Move content rich pages deeper into the structure.

- Gather the Content.

While you will have multiple sources of information you will need one or two people to do the final editing to provide a sense of continuity among all the web pages.

- Check Your Design.

From your home page, can web visitors find with one easily-identifiable click:

Sunday worship times?

Directions to the church?

How to contact the church office?

Information about the search?

- Validate Your Web Site.

Check your web site on multiple computers and browsers. One of the great time-wasting frustrations of web design is the inconsistent ways different browsers present the same pages. Personal individual computer settings, such as monitor resolution, also impact web page appearances.

Check your web site with high-speed internet connection and low speed dial-up connections.

Can your site be viewed by the visually impaired, who use non-graphical large font layouts?

- Review Your Total Design.

Does it fulfill its purpose?

Does it communicate your values and purpose to visitors?

Things to Avoid on Web Sites

Your web site is likely to be the first contact visitors have with your church. Rather than enhancing the feeling of hospitality, the following web site elements are not welcoming:

- Time-wasting large or animated graphics, especially those that load automatically and may slow down older browsers.

Remember, many people will check your site just to find the service time or a contact telephone number. They do not want to wait until they have taken a tour. If you want to provide a virtual tour, place it deeper in the web site structure where people can access it by choice.

- Automatic sounds such as hymns or audio greetings that can only be turned off by leaving the site.

If you want visitors to listen to your choir, provide a readily-accessible link or button.

- Multiple fonts, or font colors and patterned backgrounds that obscure rather than enhance the content.

Web sites are inherently visual — don't abuse people's eyes. The old design adage "more white space" is very appropriate for web sites.

- Different page formats for each page.

Mixing formats leaves visitors confused and feeling they have jumped to a totally different site. Use your core values and purpose to create an overall aesthetic that conveys the common foundation of your diverse community.

- Long pages with multiple themes and contents.

Long pages are hard to navigate. Create a separate page for each different content theme.

Engineers like to solve problems.

If there are no problems handily available, they will create their own problems. Normal people don't understand this concept; they believe that if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Engineers believe that if it ain't broke, it doesn't have enough features yet.

— Scott Adams

An optimist will tell you the glass is half-full; the pessimist, half-empty; and the engineer will tell you the glass is twice the size it needs to be.

— Unknown

*The attention span
of a computer is only as
long as its power cord.*
— Unknown

*The good news
about computers
is that they do what
you tell them to do.
The bad news is
that they do what
you tell them to do.*
— Ted Nelson

Web Site Based Parish Profiles

Rather than creating a series of HTML pages for the profile, consider creating the document in a desktop publishing or “Powerpoint” format. Then create a PDF version that can be posted on the web site and viewed in a web browser. This will require fewer links and other specialized coding. Once the search is completed, the profile can be removed with minimal disruption to the rest of the site.

When creating profiles for a web site, remember that an internet browser’s window is wider than it is longer. Consider creating a PDF document with pages that fit in the browser window without scrolling. This will be more conducive to web browsing than documents oriented lengthwise. This format also encourages brevity. Text-intensive pages may obscure the salient features of your congregation that you want to highlight.

Web Site Maintenance

To be useful, a web site needs to be regularly maintained. On many church web sites you will find out-of-date information, such as invitations to events held several years ago. Consider what message this conveys to a visitor.

Fortunately, content maintenance is a lot easier than the overall design. When designing the overall site, consider how time-sensitive material will be updated. To simplify the updating process, group time-sensitive information on one or two pages rather than scattering it throughout the entire web site. Templates can be created for the material that needs weekly or regular updates. A person with the computer skills to lay out a Sunday bulletin can easily be trained to manage the content of an already developed and established web site.

Our strong recommendation for parish web sites is this:

Regardless of who designs and creates the web site, make sure that it can be easily updated by someone in the parish office.

Most churches cannot afford professional weekly maintenance. Those churches who had volunteers design and create the web site will often find it difficult to have these same volunteers update content on a regular and timely basis. Someone from the parish office, trained in content management, should be included in the overall web site design and implementation. This updating process can be made a regular task that coincides with Sunday bulletin and newsletter preparations.

Parish Feedback Session

Conclusion to the Self Study and Setting of the Search Criteria

After the vestry retreat and the selection of the search committee, schedule a parish feedback session. This could be a forum between Sunday services, or a parish luncheon after the Sunday service. The search committee could also be introduced to the congregation and commissioned during the Sunday service on the day of the feedback session.

- Prior to the gathering make available the executive summary of the parish's purpose, goals, and the desired skills and abilities of the new rector.
- At the gathering review the executive summary. Briefly discuss the rationale for the decisions. Describe what you discovered in your self-study, and lay out your vision for your future.
- Introduce the search committee and explain their task. Will they be presenting one or three candidates to the vestry? Provide an approximate timeline.
- If names of prospective candidates have not been solicited from the parishioners, do it now. Provide nomination forms, and give them a specific date by which those names need to be given to the search committee.
- Encourage the parishioners to be prayerfully patient. From an outsider's perspective, little will appear to be happening during the next few months. Usually the diocese will establish a list once the parish profile is completed. A list generated from computer searches and other sources can take at least a month. These clergy will then need to be contacted and given time to respond to the materials. While it may seem that little is happening, there is a considerable amount of preparation that the search committee will need to accomplish during this time.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate. Create redundant forms of communication: announcements, newsletters, bulletins, web site updates, etc. While the specific names of the candidates are confidential, the process needs to be open and transparent. Regular communication to the congregation, at least once a month, even when it seems little progress is being made, is essential to maintain congregational confidence.

*To the blind
all things are sudden.*

— Unknown

*I know that you believe you
understand
what you think I said,
but I'm not sure
you realize that what you
heard is not what I meant.*

— Robert McCloske
