

DISCERNING A CALL

As we have noted, discernment is a very different type of decision-making process than assessment. Assessment relies on objective, analytic observation. Discernment relies on subjective, intuitive processes. Rather than asking whether the candidate could do the job, we are primarily asking a relational question:

“Can we and this candidate together enter into a relationship with God, to be the people of God and fulfill our Divine purpose?”

While essentially an intuitive process, discernment is not done abstractly in a vacuum. We discern God’s call by reflecting, in God’s presence, on our experience of the candidates. In this section we will provide strategies to create the types of experiences with the candidates that will best inform the discernment process. In developing any discernment strategy it is important to remember:

- Only engage in discernment after you have determined the candidate is competent to perform the job.
- Candidates are also engaged in their own discernment process about whether they are called to, and desire to be, the rector. Any discernment activity, such as an interview with a candidate or listening to them preach, will be communicating to the candidates an impression of the congregation that will influence their discernment.
- You need to use loving discernment strategies, both with the candidates and one another on the committee, if you desire to call a loving priest.

Who Does the Discernment

In most congregations we have worked with, the vestry is given a short list of qualified candidates from the search committee from whom the vestry discerns who is called to be the rector. In some dioceses the search committee provides only one name that the vestry confirms with minimal interaction with the candidate. In this case the discernment process is conducted primarily by the search committee after the assessment phase of the search process. While the essence of the discernment process remains the same in both cases, the strategies used to the discernment will be different. The following section primarily describes the discernment process from the perspective of the vestry conducting the discernment. A process for search committee discernment will also be provided.

*Discernment:
Gathering together
in community and
being of one mind
in the presence of God and
making a decision
that we all find life-giving.*

*Only engage in
discernment after
you have determined the
candidate is competent
to perform the job.
A prayed over turkey
is still a turkey and is
only good for eating,
not preaching.*

*A rich man may be wise
in his own eyes,
but a poor man
who has discernment
sees through him.*
— Proverbs 28:11

*Discernment is learning to
listen to and trust
your natural knowing.*
— Steve Ryals

*Light attracts butterflies
and mosquitoes.
Wisdom is knowing
the difference.*
— David Bojorquez

Creating “Clear Space” to Discern

Discernment isn't about saying a brief or perfunctory prayer at the beginning of a meeting and then assuming that all subsequent decisions are the will of God. Discernment is about taking the time to be open and remain open to one another and to the Holy Spirit throughout the process.

In the Quaker tradition discernment is conducted by a “clearance committee” and the goal of the process is to achieve that place where “all hearts are clear” regarding the decision that is being made. Some of the elements for creating a clear space for discernment are:

- Positive emotional space. Discernment is essentially an intuitive process and intuition is more likely to be accurate when people are in a positive emotional space.
- Imagination. Discernment is about imagining what the future will be like if a person were to be called and deciding whether you would find that imagined future life-giving.
- Attention. It is impossible to come to a clear mind when our minds are distracted by worries and the intrusion of cell-phones.
- Trust in the people that you are working with. Trust requires that you can safely make what you value vulnerable to their actions.
- Faith in God that you are engaged in something greater than either the individuals or the group combined.
- Faith in God's grace, that even if you get it entirely wrong, your individual and collective power to make a mistake is not greater than God and God's capacity to love and make that love infinitely accessible.
- Generosity and patience. We need a generous spirit to take the time to listen to one another and to discover what is truly valuable and life-giving to the people on the committee.
- Curiosity. When we find ourselves judging someone's perspective it is helpful to move from judgment to curiosity and wonder what values underlie the person's perspectives.
- Sense of humor: the capacity to hold oneself lightly and to see things from multiple and even absurd perspectives.
- Openness: to God, God's presence, to one another and to possibilities that realistically stretch our imagination.

Discernment Questions

Discernment questions are developed from the specific search criteria. Because they are subjective questions they cannot be rated using a numerical scale. Instead the questions can only be answered “yes,” “no,” or “unsure.” Creating the questions as a team will develop a shared understanding of who you are seeking to call. The following are typical questions that have been developed from specific search criteria to help the committee reflect, discuss, and discern a call.

When calling a Preacher.

- Can I hear God speaking to me through this person?
- Would I look forward to hearing this person preach?
- Would I feel inspired by this person’s preaching to invite a friend to church, knowing that they would benefit from hearing them?

When calling a Pastor.

- Would I feel confident in seeking out this clergyperson for personal counseling or to hear my confession?
- Would I like this person to officiate at my children’s marriages or conduct my funeral?

When calling a Leader.

- Would I follow this person?
- Where would I end up if I did follow them?
- How would I be treated on the journey?
- Can I serve on the vestry with this person as the rector?

When considering sustainability: Will the pastoral relationship be sustainable and life-giving to both the congregation and priest?

- Can I see this candidate as the rector of this parish for the next 10 years?
- Can we as a congregation and the rector call forth each other’s best and create an empowering relationship that will endure through good times and bad and to the depths of human experience?

Answers to these questions are not simply pulled out of the ether, but are discerned by reflecting on your experience of the candidate in the various interviews and exercises that the vestry will develop for the discernment phase.

I must admit that I personally measure success in terms of the contributions an individual makes to her or his fellow human beings.
— Margaret Mead

Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved.
— Hellen Keller

*The most beautiful things
in the world cannot be
seen with the eyes,
but only with the
human heart.*
— Helen Keller

*He was praying in a
certain place, and after he
had finished, one of his
disciples said to him, 'Lord,
teach us to pray, as John
taught his disciples.'*
— John 11.1

Preparing to Engage in Discernment

In anticipation of receiving a short list of qualified candidates from the search committee, the vestry needs to come together to prepare themselves spiritually, emotionally, and practically for the discernment process. Some of this preparation will have been initiated during the finalization of the self-study and visioning process. To come together as one mind on who to call begins with coming to one mind on what we are looking for in the one we call. If you find that you are not of one mind, pay attention to what you need to come together rather than seeking who or what is to blame. Blaming inquiries will increase the alienation rather than bring people together.

As with the search committee's process, the discernment process is assisted by inviting the candidates to visit the parish. A similar day-long series of activities, including preaching, worship, structured interview, and simulated work exercises, can be created to provide an opportunity for both parties to learn more about each other.

To prepare for the candidate/vestry visitation, schedule a vestry retreat day to prepare an interview and other discernment exercises. This could also be done over several evenings. If you do decide to do the preparation over several evenings, begin with a light meal. We have discovered that eating together is a very effective way to build community cohesiveness.

In anticipation for the planning meeting read through the "Introduction to the Appreciative Way" and "Interviewing Strategies" sections, as well as this section on Discernment.

Spirit-Building Activities at the Meeting

Possible Bible Studies

- 1 Samuel 16:6-13 — Samuel's discernment of David as the next King of Israel.
- Acts 1:21-26 — The call of Matthias.
- Acts 10:9-23 — Peter's vision and discernment that the Gentiles were recipients of God's grace in Jesus.

Other Activities

- Exercise: Name the Fear and the Resource to Return to Love
- Take time to share, if you haven't already, what you value about the congregation and what is truly important to you.

Vestry Preparations for the Candidate's Visit

At the planning meeting the vestry will need to:

- Prepare the activities for the candidate's visit.
- Plan a Eucharist and sermon for each Candidate to celebrate and preach for the vestry, and prepare points of reflection for the sermon and celebration.
- Review the congregation's goals and the search criteria.
- Prepare a structured interview based on the core elements of the search criteria. *(Review the material on interviewing and developing a structured interview in the Assessing Skills section.)*
- Develop a series of points of reflection for each topic in the structured interview. *(An example is shown on the next page.)*
- Practice interviewing, perhaps with the transitional minister or the search consultant as the practice candidate.
- Develop a simulated Vestry Retreat Discussion or another exercise that will allow you to interact with the candidate in a way that is relevant to the parish's experience. *(An example and template is provided in the following pages.)*
- Prepare a draft copy of the letter of agreement between the parish and the rector. Many diocese have examples and templates. You can find examples on the National Episcopal Church Deployment Office web site at:
<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/cdo>

Include in the letter of agreement the vestry's definition of a successful ministry and the specific things you want the congregation to accomplish.

Include in the letter of agreement the mutual ministry valuation process, based on the definition of a successful ministry that will be used to monitor the congregations performance.

It is imperative that this letter of agreement is sent to all the candidates prior to their visit, as the letter of agreement needs to be part of the discernment conversation.

- Prepare a "packet" of information for each candidate, with the schedule for the visit, instructions for the sermon and Eucharist, the vestry retreat simulation, and the letter of agreement.

This is a mutual process of discernment. The candidate is evaluating you just as much as you are evaluating them. Would they be good for us? Would we be good for them? And together could we be good for God?

*Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?
— Corrie Ten Boom*

Instructions Given to the Candidates for Preaching.

On the day of your visit we would like you to celebrate the Eucharist and preach on the following lessons: _____

Although only the vestry will be present we would like you to imagine that you are preaching to the entire congregation at a regular Sunday service.

(Alternative lessons and scenario can be provided to meet the needs of your congregation.)

For the celebration we will provide an acolyte and a lay Eucharistic member who will read any lessons or other parts of the service that you choose.

Instructions Given to the Vestry at the Worship Service: Allow yourself to fully enter into the worship service. Following the service you can make some brief notes on what was valuable before engaging in the interview or the next activity.

What did you value from the sermon?

What would have made the sermon more valuable?

What did you value from the celebration?

What would have made the celebration more valuable?

Points for Reflection *(These may be adapted to reflect your congregation's needs.)*

Sermon

1. Can I hear God speaking to me through this person? Y N ?
2. Would I look forward to hearing this person preach? Y N ?
3. Would I feel inspired by this person's preaching to invite a friend to church, knowing that they would benefit from hearing them? Y N ?

Celebration

1. Did the candidates celebrating lead me into the presence of God? Y N ?
2. Would I look forward to worshipping with this person? Y N ?
3. Would they provide a rewarding experience for acolytes, lay readers, LEMs etc.? Y N ?

Reasons for "Y", "N" or "?":

Candidate: _____ **Interviewer:** _____

Theme: Teacher/Christian Education:

Describe how you currently “do” Christian education in your parish.

How do you integrate Christian education with other aspects of church life, such as pastoral care, outreach, and stewardship?

How do you recruit, train, resource, and supervise teaching staff?

What curriculum are your current Sunday school teachers using? _____
 How was that decision made?

In the past we have had a Sunday morning rector’s forum that explored a range of topics.

What is your experience of Sunday morning adult education programs?

How would you decide what format or curriculum you would use?

Points for Reflection

- 1. Does this candidate demonstrate experience and enthusiasm for Christian education? **Y N ?**
- 2. Do they have the experience and interest in developing a wide range of Christian education for all ages? **Y N ?**
- 3. Will this candidate help me grow in my understanding of the Christian faith? **Y N ?**
- 4. Will this candidate help the parish grow in its understanding of the Christian faith? **Y N ?**
- 5. Would I invite a friend to hear this candidate teach on a specific subject? **Y N ?**

Reasons for “Y”, “N” or “?”:

*The man who is anybody
and who does anything
is surely going to be
criticized, vilified, and
misunderstood.
This is part of the
penalty for greatness,
and every man
understands, too,
that it is no
proof of greatness.
— Elbert Hubbard*

*Trying to “trick” or really
test a candidate will
destroy your credibility and
jeopardize the building of
a trusting relationship with
the candidate.*

Simulated Vestry Retreat Discussion

A specific issue in the parish that is of critical concern for the future of the parish is chosen as the topic for an hour-long simulated vestry retreat discussion. It is preferable to choose an unresolved issue of vital concern to the parish. Here are some possible examples:

- A vestry may choose to discuss how they will respond to the growing number of homeless people who sleep on the church grounds and in the surrounding neighborhood.
- A vestry from a predominantly monocultural parish in a changing demographic area may choose to discuss the future of multi-cultural ministry in the congregation.
- A vestry facing significant financial challenges may choose to have a discussion about a forthcoming stewardship program.

The purpose of the exercise is to provide a basis by which the vestry members and the candidate can come to some conclusions about what it would be like to work together. Could this vestry, with this person as the rector, seek to establish and grow the Kingdom of God in their neighborhood?

The simulated vestry retreat exercise not only allows the vestry to consider the leadership qualities of the candidate, but also provides the candidate the opportunity to observe a real life critical issue within the parish. Consequently it not only provides discernment information for the vestry, but also for the candidate, as they discern whether they have the interest, skills, and abilities to serve in the congregation if they were to be called as the rector.

Real Play, not Role Play

The exercise will work most effectively when a real issue is discussed and the vestry members honestly share their own thoughts and feelings about the issue. Simulations allow people to actively engage in an issue rather than just talk about an issue. This is time for real conversation about real issues with each of the candidates. This is not a time to role play or to engage in deceptive practices. Your next rector doesn't begin a relationship with the congregation when they are finally called. The relationship has been steadily growing with every contact with the search committee and vestry. Trust is a fundamental requirement in any relationship. Trying to “trick” or really test a candidate will destroy your credibility and jeopardize the building of a trusting relationship with the candidate.

Instructions Given to the Candidate Before Their Visit

On the day of your interview with the vestry you will be asked to lead an hour-long discussion with the vestry members on the course and direction of the congregation’s future.

The vestry acknowledges that over the last five years the parish has been losing membership and its financial base. The vestry is concerned about the parish maintaining its traditional style of worship while at the same time attracting new members and restoring its financial viability. For the purposes of this discussion, please assume that you are the rector of the parish and the setting is a vestry retreat, at which an hour has been set aside to discuss these concerns and the future of the parish.

Vestry Retreat Discussion, Instructions to Vestry Members

Refer back to the instructions for the discussion. The expectation is that the candidate will lead this discussion as though you had an hour to spend discussing the course and direction of the parish’s future. In addition to being a “real” participant in the discussion and genuinely sharing your personal thoughts and feelings on the subject, you are also evaluating your experience of being a vestry member with this candidate to discern if you could work with them if they were called as your Rector. Rather than taking copious notes of your experience and thus distracting yourself from the discussion during the session use the points for reflection after the discussion to guide your reflections. Remember that the candidate is also evaluating whether they want to come and be your rector.

Points for Reflection

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Did the candidate ask questions of the vestry that clarified the issues? | Y N ? |
| 2. Did the candidate respect differences of opinion? | Y N ? |
| 3. Did the candidate show adequate appreciation for the wide range of emotional issues attached to the issue of maintaining our traditions but also allowing for growth? | Y N ? |
| 4. Was the candidate able to bring the vestry to a place of consensus regarding the future direction of the parish? | Y N ? |

(Note: the consensus may be simply to agree on the issues and need for further discussion rather than any conclusions. The idea of consensus here is to contrast it with confusion and frustration which can occur in this type of discussion.)

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|---|-------|
| 5. Did the candidate draw conclusions that you felt accurately reflected your views? | Y N ? |
| 6. Would you feel good about serving on a vestry with this person as your rector? | Y N ? |
| 7. Do you feel that with this person as your rector, God will be able to lead you and the vestry into His chosen path for the parish? | Y N ? |

Reasons for “Y”, “N” or “?”:

As with the assessment of skills, practice interviewing, and be thoroughly prepared so you can relax and enjoy the opportunity to go on a journey of discovery with the candidates.

Make the process mutual. The candidate also needs to discern whether they are being called by God to be your rector.

Structuring the Vestry/Candidate Day's Activities

- Check the parish calendar to ensure confidentiality can be maintained.
- A schedule similar to that used by the search committee can be developed for the vestry/candidate meeting. An informal dinner the night before would be a helpful way of developing rapport with the candidate and provide an opportunity to develop relationships beyond the merely professional church situation.
- Inform the candidate of the day's schedule and what is expected of them, (i.e. if you want them to preach give them adequate preparation time and provide them with the readings). Tell them of the exercise that you have prepared so that they may make appropriate preparations.
- Inform the candidate that the agreement and compensation that has been sent to them will be discussed during the interview.
- When discussing the compensation plan stay within the outline. If the compensation committee and vestry were responsible when developing the plan it should represent a valid portrayal of what the parish can afford and shouldn't be radically altered. The upper stipend range is not automatic; it is to attract and compensate a superior candidate for their education and experience.
- Be prepared. If you are using simulated exercises make sure they are field tested. Practice interviewing and know who is responsible for each aspect of the interview.
- Have a member of the parish that is not on the vestry provide transportation. It may be appropriate to have the candidate meet with a realtor to explore possible housing options.
- Be clear with the candidate which expenses are paid for by the church. At this point it may be reasonable to provide travel for the candidate's spouse. It may not be reasonable to bring their six children for a tour of the neighborhood.
- It may also be appropriate and beneficial to request a neighboring parish to confidentially host the candidate as a guest preacher and celebrant on the following day at their church to provide an opportunity to experience the candidate in a more representative parish setting.

A Typical Parish Visit Schedule

9:00 - 10:00 a.m.	Eucharistic Service. Within the Episcopal church this is a private service for the vestry, not a public service. Some denominations may require the final candidates to preach at an actual public service but that is not the Episcopal church custom as it will violate the confidential nature of the search.
10:00 - 10:30 a.m.	Refreshments; the vestry may take a few minutes to make their own notes about the sermon and Eucharist.
10:30 - 12:30 p.m.	Structured interview
12:30 - 1:30 p.m.	Catered lunch
1:30 - 2:30 p.m.	Simulated vestry discussion exercise
2:30 - 3:00 p.m.	Conclusion of interview. Discuss the letter of agreement and compensation plan with the candidate.
3:00 - 5:00 p.m.	The candidate may be taken on a tour to explore real estate, schools etc. The vestry convenes to review the day and consider points for reflection.

Concluding the Search and Issuing a Call

After the candidate has visited with the vestry, review the points for reflection as a group. Endeavor to come to some consensus with regard to the "yes" and "no" answers by having the individual members discuss their experience of the candidate.

- Develop a general impression of the candidate.
- Realize that this is subjective and may not yield a consensus.
- Pay attention to the candidate's overall impact on your committee. Some candidates by their nature are polarizers. This may be manifested in wide disagreement with some people being heavily in favor and others heavily opposed.
- After all the candidates have visited and been evaluated, schedule a meeting to decide on a call.

Let each candidate know the schedule ahead of time and given them adequate time to prepare for preaching or other activity.

Consensus doesn't mean that we all have to agree completely, it means that we can all find life in the outcome and that none will be deprived of that which is life-giving.

*The value of
consistent prayer
is not that He
will hear us,
but that we
will hear Him.*
— William McGill

*God speaks in the
silence of the heart.
Listening is the
beginning of prayer.*
— Mother Teresa

When the Search Committee Discerns

The following is a list of steps if the search committee is to do the discerning and provide only one candidate to the vestry for confirmation.

- Remember assessment is different from discernment and the two should be done separately rather than being confused.
- Complete the entire assessment phase with all the candidates before engaging in the discernment.
- Create a list (no more than three) of qualified finalists.
- Schedule an extended meeting or retreat day to engage in the discernment process.
- Before the meeting have the committee read through the Discernment section to familiarize themselves with the process of discernment.

At the day of the discernment meeting:

- Invite the transitional minister to celebrate the Eucharist or lead the committee in a time of prayer and reflection.
- Review the profile, and especially the purpose of the congregation and the core competencies required of the next rector to help the congregation manifest its purpose.
- Using the previous pages as guides, create a series of discernment questions for reflection for the committee to discuss and explore.
- “Re-member” each candidate by recalling their sermon from the assessment phase or by having a discussion about the candidate, their interview, and any other activities that you engaged in with the candidate.
- Review the questions for reflection. Complete each series of questions for each candidate.
- Continue with the vestry discernment process on the following pages.

At the Vestry Discernment Meeting

- Decide on how to decide. Will the call only be made by a unanimous decision, a two-thirds majority, or a simple majority? Check the by-laws and Church Canons as the parish may be bound by at least a two-thirds majority. A six-to-five majority is not appropriate for the selection of a rector as it indicates significant disagreement.
- Which candidate consistently was given a consensus of “yes” on the points for reflection? Can the vestry readily say “yes” to one candidate across all necessary areas of expertise and across most of the desired areas? Which of the candidates can the vestry say “yes” to with regard to entering into a holy relationship or covenant to jointly pursue the congregation’s preferred future?

The decision may be readily apparent. In other situations it may be a hard choice.

If no decision seems possible, stop. Schedule a period of prayerful reflection. Reflect on these questions:

- Consider what is best for “me” and what is best for the “parish.”
- Seek and satisfy objections. As part of the conversation ask for people’s reasons for calling a candidate and their objection to calling a candidate. Ask what would satisfy the objection.

Do you need additional information? Can other members provide the information or do you need to clarify a concern with a candidate or a reference?

- Check the love. Are you and your fellow members in a place of loving confidence or have you become afraid?

What would you need to regain a loving outlook?

- Consensus doesn’t mean that we all have to agree completely, it means that we can all find life in the outcome and that none will be deprived of that which is life-giving.
- Are all hearts clear?

It may be that all hearts are clear that none of the candidates can be called to be the next rector. Samuel had to confront this issue before he anointed David as King (*1 Samuel 16*).

*Check the love.
Are you and your fellow members in a place of loving confidence or have you become afraid?
What would you need to regain a loving outlook?*

*We need not think alike,
but we are to love alike.
— Francis David*

*When you are arguing with a fool,
make sure he isn’t doing the same thing.
— Unknown*

*There is no place that you
and the vestry can get to
that is beyond
the grace of God.*

*“Let me sleep on it”
may be an entirely
appropriate response.
Some people need space
to prayerfully make
these decisions.*

*It is only with the heart
that one can see rightly;
what is essential
is invisible to the eye.
— Antoine De Saint-Exupery*

When No Decision Seems Possible

- Review the points for reflection again.
- If no decision seems possible, do not be afraid to start the search process again. Perhaps some issues within the parish need to be resolved before a rector can be called. Perhaps none of the candidates is truly called.
- Do not be pressured. At this point in the search process many members will be either exhausted by the search or tired of the transitional state and simply acquiesce to any decision even against their better judgement. Many parishes have suffered as the result of being pressured into making an unwise decision to accept a candidate rather than restarting the search process. A little more delay is better than making an unwise choice.
- Remember there is no place that you and the vestry can get to that is beyond the grace of God.
- Its better to start the search again than accept a candidate against your better judgment.

When a Decision is Reached

- Inform all the candidates of their status in the search process.
- Inform the bishop of your decision.
- Be prepared to wait. Some candidates may take a short period of time to prayerfully make their decision. Decide on a mutually agreeable time period for them to come to their decision.

Caring for All The Candidates

By this stage in the search all the candidates will have invested themselves significantly in the process. Those not called may be very disappointed. Because people don't want to be the bearer of bad news or face such disappointment, vestries often ignore those not called. We encourage vestries to:

- Call all the candidates and speak to them personally.
- Thank them for their time and participation in the process.
- Listen empathetically. It is not a time to argue or renegotiate.

If the person wants more information about what they could do to improve their qualifications, schedule another time to talk

with them. Consult with the rest of the vestry on what would be appropriate to share.

- Remember your decision was based on accepting the qualifications of the person called and on your sense this was God's call, and not a decision to reject a candidate.
- Remember that this candidate may still be a candidate if the called candidate decides not to accept the call.

When You Get Turned Down

Be prepared to be turned down. Candidates may turn down a call for a variety of reasons. They may have accepted an alternative position, or decided they didn't feel called to the parish, or that they have not completed the work they are currently doing. If the candidate does not accept your call:

- Notify the bishop.
- Meet and share your feelings about being turned down. Monitor any fear. Before making any decisions return to a place of love.
- Review the other candidates. Consider issuing a call to another candidate, especially if there were two equally good candidates.
- Restart the search process if necessary. Many congregations become frightened at this stage and rather than restart the process have accepted second best, only to become a miserable second best version of what they could have become.

When Your Call is Accepted

- Negotiate a starting time and any moving issues.
- Sign the letter of agreement that has already been discussed. There should be no surprises at this stage.
- Arrange a celebration dinner for the vestry to debrief and conclude this aspect of your work together.

*A bend in the road is not
the end of the road...
unless you fail
to make the turn.*
— Unknown

*The world is round
and the place which may
seem like the end
may also be
only the beginning.*
— Ivy Baker Priest

*That some good can be
derived from every event
is a better proposition than
that everything happens for
the best, which it assuredly
does not.*
— James K. Feibleman

*If I have been of service,
if I have glimpsed more of
the nature and essence
of ultimate good,
if I am inspired to reach
wider horizons of
thought and action,
if I am at peace with
myself, it has been a
successful day.*
— Alex Noble

Preparing for the Transition

- Organize a farewell party for the transitional minister. A good farewell will celebrate their ministry, conclude the search and prepare the way for the congregation to receive their new rector.
- Establish a hospitality team to provide logistical support for the rector and their family as they transition to the congregation.
- Prepare a welcome. Discuss with the rector how they would like to meet and get to know the congregation. In addition to the regular schedule of services and engaging in parish activities, organizing several forums or home meetings may help the rector and congregation to establish their mutual relationship.

After the Welcome

- Review the parish goals with the rector and vestry. While these would have been discussed during the interview, in the midst of moving and entering into a new church system, it is easy to lose track of the congregation's goals.
- Schedule a mutual ministry valuation.

In the light of the congregation's goals, determine how the review and valuation will be conducted. The process of the review needs to be established at least six months before the valuation is conducted.

- Stay appreciative and resourceful.

Focus on what is valuable and what would make the ministries more valuable.

If things fail, focus on "what else do we need" and "what else does the rector need to be successful" rather than engaging in blame and judgment.

- Stay engaged.

It is all too easy to sit back and let the rector do it all. Remember that you have called someone to help you in your ministries and not simply someone to do ministry to you.

- Find reasons to celebrate and rejoice!

The path to any goal can be long and arduous. Regular encouragement and random acts of enjoyment will lighten the load and sustain the heart.