



Frequently Asked Questions for the Exit, Interim and Transition Time for Churches in Search Processes Episcopal Diocese of Texas

1. What are the vestry's responsibilities during transition?

The wardens and vestry are responsible for day - to - day parish life and administration. However, if an interim rector is hired, this person carries the same authority as a rector, with the same degree of oversight and responsibility for the workings of the congregation as a rector would have. The vestry is responsible to contracts with any coach/consultant, the interim rector, and eventually the new rector. The vestry empowers the search committee to carry out its responsibilities. They keep informed of the committee's work at a non-confidential level. The Sr. Warden works very closely with the interim rector to assure maximum communication and cooperation during the transition and time of interim.

2. What is the role of the search committee?

The search committee in the Diocese of Texas has the sole responsibility for interviewing all potential candidates cleared by the Bishop for the position of rector. This committee is charged with the responsibility of representing the whole congregation, its values, mission and vision for the future. In addition, it should represent work completed during a period of "pre-search" where congregational identifying statements, surveys and rector profile work were completed. The search committee will prayerfully work together until such time they can recommend **one** candidate to the vestry for the position of rector. The vestry then votes to confirm the recommendation, issues a call to the individual. If the individual does not accept the call, the search committee continues to do its work until such time that a recommended candidate accepts a call.

3. Who serves on the search committee?

Active, confirmed, pledging members, regular in attendance are chosen usually by a vestry to serve on a search committee. These persons should reflect the demographics and nature of the parish. They are diversified by age, gender, areas of parish life and ministries. However, these persons should be recognized as leaders and are able to dismiss personal agendas for the well being of the whole congregation, supportive of the ministries of the entire parish. Sr. Wardens in the Diocese of Texas often serve as ex-officio members with voice but no vote. Often search committees will have a number of active vestry members serve as search committee members. It is not recommended that vestries serve in total as the search committee.

4. 5. Why have an interim rector, and what does an interim rector do?

The bishop's office may determine that an interim rector is recommended for a parish in transition. If so, the Transition Officer will provide the vestry with the name of an interim rector. A letter of agreement will be written and signed by the vestry and the interim rector. It is important to welcome the interim rector in a special way. The interim rector provides the leadership necessary to maintain stability during the period of transition. A key task is to help the congregation complete its disengagement from previous chapters in its life as it begins the self - study related to the search process. Specific tasks are decided with the vestry and may include helping the parish come to terms with its history and relationships with previous clergy; discovering the congregation's special identity, what God is calling it to be in the future; dealing with shifts in leadership roles that naturally evolve in times of transition, allowing new leaders to come to the fore constructively; renewing relationships with the diocese, so that each may be a more effective resource and support to the other; and building commitment to the leadership of the new rector in order to be prepared to move into the future with openness to new possibilities.

5. Why do interim periods take so long?

The temptation at the time of an interim is to rush. It never should be in a hurry. The interim period is the optimum opportunity for a congregation to do internal assessment, reclaim its sense of values, mission and vision/goals and work on issues that need to be resolved. It also must allow time to separate from the leadership of the departing rector. This takes months. In addition, the work of a search committee is significant, arranging for multiple visits, interviews, meetings, etc. with multiple candidates, often at great distances. Their ultimate recommendation of a single person to the vestry is so significant that the committee must do a great deal of discernment, prayer and discussion, all taking significant time. In addition, candidates must schedule their lives around visits. All of this work has to be coordinated with the Canon to the Ordinary who serves as the deployment/transitional ministry officer for the Bishop. This in itself takes time. Finally, sometimes the candidate that accepts the call builds into the process a number of months to prepare for a move. So the time period for the search should never be compared to a business setting. Churches have unique needs and unique processes which must be honored.

6. What is a transition committee?

Once a candidate accepts a call, a transition committee helps smooth over the entry for the new rector. The transition committee should be appointed by the vestry to serve as a committee of welcome, to introduce the new rector and his or her family to the community, to help in relocation, and to assist in the beginning of the new ministry throughout the new rector's first year. This committee might also plan for an appropriate goodbye to the departing interim rector. This committee is often made up of members of the search committee because of their familiarity with the new rector.

7. How do we welcome a new rector?

Plan a welcoming event. Plan "get acquainted" sessions for the rector and members of the parish. Work together to plan a Celebration of New Ministry. The bishop will be in contact with the new rector to schedule this service. Welcome the new rector into the life of the congregation. Provide a support group for the new rector during the first year(s). Plan for a mutual ministry review after the first six months which will review goals stated in the parish profile. Engage outside resources as necessary for a successful entry.