

place and the final candidates visit your church, along with their spouse or partner. The Discernment Committee then recommends a pre-specified number of candidates to the vestry. You should contact the Transition Ministry office to perform background checks.

Phase 3: The Call

In the third phase, these final candidates are invited to visit your congregation for several days to see the church and housing, and to get a feel for your community. After meeting all candidates, the Vestry votes and proposes to elect your new rector or vicar. At this time the final candidate meets with the Bishop. The Vestry meets to choose the new rector or priest-in-charge, and informs the Bishop's Office of their intent to call or elect the person so chosen. The Bishop then issues the call to the new priest. The call is considered in force when the warden, elected rector or priest-in-charge, the Transitions Officer, and the Bishop have all signed the Letter of Agreement and the Oxford Background check is complete.

WELCOMING YOUR NEW PASTOR

After the Vestry has completed the calling of your new priest, your senior warden will oversee the process of transition. This will include: helping relocate the priest and his or her family, coordinating with the Bishop's office for The Celebration of New Ministry, setting up a process to review the expectations of the Vestry and rector or vicar, along with periodic evaluations of the total ministry of the parish and the priest's role in that ministry, through a Mutual Ministry Review. We're In this Together.

At our Diocesan House, we pray regularly for each of our churches in a discernment process for their new priest. In addition to prayer support, we offer assistance at critical junctures along the way. We are here to serve you! Please call or email us whenever we can be of help.

Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey

The Rt. Rev. William H. Stokes
Bishop of New Jersey
808 West State Street
Trenton, New Jersey 08618
Phone: 609.394.5281, Extension 11
Web: dioceseofnj.org
email: wstokes@dioceseofnj.org

Transition Ministry

The Rev. Canon Brian A. Jemmott
Canon to the Ordinary/Transitions Officer
Phone: 609.394.5281, Extension 21
Web: transition.dioceseofnj.org
email: bjemmott@dioceseofnj.org



DISCERNMENT PROCESS

In the Diocese of New Jersey

Congregations experience transitions in pastoral leadership when their pastor retires, resigns, or dies. This is usually a time of uncertainty and trepidation for the members of the congregation. "How do we get another rector or priest-in-charge?" is the question uppermost on people's minds.

If your pastor is completing a long period of service to your congregation, undoubtedly, there will be moments of anxiety about his/her departure, and uncertainty about what to do next.

Our Bishop and Diocesan Staff are prepared to help congregations with their transitions on a regular basis. We will meet with you to give you assurance, and outline the process that will lead to the beginning of your next pastorate. This document is being provided for your leaders and members to offer a brief overview of the transition process.

Web: Transition.DioceseofNJ.org

YOUR RECTOR OR PRIEST-IN-CHARGE IS LEAVING

Before the self-study and discernment processes begin, the process of ending the pastoral relationship must be completed. When the priest notifies the vestry of his or her retirement or resignation, the senior warden calls to inform the Bishop that the retirement or resignation has been received. The vestry then plans and carries out appropriate events to celebrate the departing priest's ministry.

Your senior warden sets up a meeting between the vestry, bishop, and transition ministry staff to discuss the interim and discernment processes by calling Mary Ann Rhoads at 609.394.5281 ext. 11.

If an Interim Priest is what you need, your wardens will advertise the position. This is an important transition phase in the life of your church. All interims are trained to provide ongoing pastoral care and guide you through the developmental processes of the interim period:

- 1) Evaluating your history
- 2) Discovering your new identity
- 3) Instituting leadership changes
- 4) Renewing denominational linkages
- 5) Committing to new ministries

In addition, your interim will work with you to ensure that: Congregational records are up-to-date; the church is in compliance with *The Manual of Business Methods in Church Affairs*; a financial audit is completed; adequate bonding and insurances are established; and a property audit is performed. These tasks must be completed before any names are given to the Discernment Committee. The interim will not be involved in the self-study or discernment processes

PRAYING THROUGHOUT YOUR TRANSITION

Immerse yourselves in prayer throughout the self-study and discernment processes for God's guidance, especially during times of worship. Members also are encouraged to pray daily for all those involved in the process.

The following prayer may be used at vestry, self-study, and discernment committee meetings, as well as at all worship services:

"Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your Church, and so guide the minds of those who shall choose a rector (priest-in-charge) for this parish (congregation), that we may receive a faithful pastor, who will care for your people and equip us for our ministries; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen." (Book of Common Prayer, p. 818)

TRANSITION CONSULTANT

The Diocese has trained Transition Consultants to guide you through your self-study and discernment processes. Your consultant will meet with you regularly and is an invaluable part of the process.

A "typical" discernment process takes 12-18 months. Responsibility for this lies with your vestry and wardens. The process formally begins when the interim priest and diocesan office approve the vestry to appoint a self-study and a discernment committee.

The Diocesan Anti-Racism Committee then schedules a mandated two-hour training for members of the Vestry and Discernment Committee.

Each committee member should be a person of prayer. The vestry defines the committees' tasks, and develops a budget and guidelines for the work to be completed. At this point the Transition Consultant is called. In general the discernment process consists of three phases.

Phase 1: Self-Study

In this phase the self-study committee gathers information in order to create a "snapshot" of your congregation. The gathering of this information will be through surveys and focus groups. The type of information generated will include: current mission, goals for the future, congregational and diocesan history, programs, worship style, housing arrangements, financial information, and demographics. The Transition Consultant has many resources to aid in this process. This information is then used to create two documents:

The Parish Profile: The purpose of the profile is to describe your congregation at this point in your life and ministry, as well as to introduce a potential candidate to your congregation. The end result needs to be true to who you see yourselves to be as a worshipping and ministering congregation, as well as who you are striving to be in the future.

Office of Transition Ministry Portfolio: This document is prepared from the parish profile, the Congregational Workshop, and all other pertinent information gathered. This information is then circulated by way of online resources on the following Episcopal Church web sites: The Office of Transition Ministry; The Transition Ministry Conference; The Episcopal News Service. These sites are accessible by clergy who are discerning their next call.

Phase 2: Discernment

Transitions Officer reviews applications from candidates and performs reference checks and then forwards them to the Transition Consultant and the Discernment Committee. Candidates are interviewed remotely and successful candidates advance in the discernment process. These candidates are visited by Discernment Committee members, who observe them preside and preach. Further discernment takes