



Overview of the Search Process

Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe

The process of looking for a new rector in the Convocation resembles the process currently used in the United States. One difference is that the canon governing the Convocation specifically requires the express approval by the Bishop-in-charge of any call issued by a vestry in Europe. Since no priest can begin work without this approval (including other clergy in the Convocation), our process is designed to give the parish or mission maximum latitude in finding good candidates in a relatively short timeframe, working in concert with the Bishop-in-charge, who also serves as the deployment officer of the Convocation.

This is the usual outline of a successful search:

Step 1: the Rector (or Vicar) gives notice of resignation, which must be accepted both by the Vestry (or Bishop's Committee) and Bishop-in-charge to become effective.

Step 2: at an appropriate moment, the Bishop meets with the Vestry and others whom the Wardens and Vestry believe to be part of the congregation's leadership circle, especially those who might be appointed to a profile committee. The meeting is open to anyone else who wishes to come, and the whole congregation should be encouraged to attend and participate.

That meeting is usually a retreat format of a day and a half, during which the Bishop or his designate leads the group in a visioning process. The purpose of this is to come up with a few basic concepts of the strengths and barriers of the parish, the direction that the Spirit is calling the congregations to move in, and the resultant leadership skills and gifts required of the new priest. It also explains the process in depth, and sets forth the basic schedule for the call.

Step 3: the Vestry names the profile committee. It issues first a survey of the parish's members, with help from the Convocation Office. Based on that survey and the results of the retreat in Step 2, the committee develops a profile of the parish and future Rector. The Vestry decides on the range of financial compensation to be offered. The treasurer adds a balance sheet and income/expense sheet for the previous complete year. These are added to the profile.

Step 4: The Bishop places the position on the Church Deployment Office list, and may advertise it elsewhere as well (e.g., *Church Times*, *Living Church*, *Anglicans Online*, etc.). As the names come in to the Convocation Office, the Bishop and his staff select candidates, based upon the profile created by the congregation. All necessary background checks are done through the Convocation Office.

Step 5: the Bishop sends a number of candidates to the Vestry, which interviews each first by telephone, then if there is interest, brings over candidates (and spouses) for interviews. Of course, candidates named by the Bishop have by this time received his canonical approval to be called.

Step 6: If no call can be issued, the Vestry will inform the Bishop that more names are needed. Finally, the Vestry calls a new rector, when they are convinced they have found the right priest. The priest then formally accepts the call. A priest called to be Rector or Vicar must transfer his or her Letters Dimissory to the Bishop in charge.

Step 7: the Vestry negotiates a letter of agreement with the nominee, following Convocation guidelines for such agreements. When the priest, congregation, and Bishop have reached agreement, the call is issued and the results of the search are only then made public. The priest makes application for visa and/or other documents required for work and residency for the country in which the congregation is located. *No priest can begin ministry in the Convocation before these documents have been issued.*

Step 8: a transition committee begins the work of welcoming the new rector (and family).

Step 9: the Bishop or his representative institutes the new priest as Rector or Vicar of the parish or mission.

Points to remember: **prayer** must inform the entire process, from leave-taking of the previous rector through the institution of the new rector.

Communication is vital! The Senior Warden should give updates about the *process* to the congregation, and their survey feedback should be taken seriously in developing the profile.

The Convocation expects that all parties in the search process will respect **confidentiality**. The congregation is not to make public the names of candidates, and candidates should not make public the church with which they are interviewing. This includes, but is not limited to, social media.

The Bishop is here to **serve** the parish, not dictate whom they will have as a priest. He will be helping the parish leaders elaborate their own process and help develop a profile, a parish survey, and interviewing techniques.

This process is designed to give the parish great latitude in choosing its priest, while respecting the fact that the Bishop has weighty responsibility for that choice as well.

The Rt. Rev. Pierre W. Whalon, D.D.
Bishop in charge
Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe