

Interviewing in the Calling Process

Fourth Edition

Suggested Guidelines for Parish Calling/Search Committees

FOREWORD

The Board for Church Deployment and CDO: the Office for Ministry Transitions are pleased to present this booklet on *Interviewing in the Calling Process*. The insights presented here represent the accumulated wisdom of clergy, search committees, parish consultants, deployment/transitions officers and bishops gained over the past several years.

How congregation and clergy engage one another in a process of mutual discovery and discernment is key to a successful call and rectorship. The dialog between priest and parish can enable or disable prayerful discernment and decision-making. The procedures, resources and tools outlined in this booklet will be useful to clergy and laity in preparing well for this engagement.

As with all such resources written for the calling process, local situations and needs may differ from this general approach. Clergy and calling committees may need to adapt or amend what is offered here.

Board for Church Deployment

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Early in its existence, the Church Deployment Board passed the following resolution:

...that the Church Deployment Office make use of every opportunity to lead the Church into providing at all levels equal opportunity for employment regardless of race, marital status, age or sex, and...that to that end, the Church Deployment Office establish and make known to the Church a policy of not using such categories in searching its files for the purpose of deployment, except to further by positive action the deployment of women and minorities.

INTRODUCTION

The search process is complex and the outcome is important to everyone in your parish. This booklet of guidelines has a simple aim: to help your committee make the interviewing process an effective tool to determine whether there is a good fit between your parish and priest candidates under consideration. It is intended to be used with other resources **particularly those recommended by your own Diocese.**

Guidelines — Not Rules: please remember — we are offering guidelines, not rules. This booklet should not be taken verbatim, but should be applied with judgment, flexibility and prayer.

By now you should have received the names, resumes and personal Profiles of clergy who seem to have most of the qualities and experience that your parish needs. From this list, which may be a long one, you are developing a shorter list of those to be interviewed.

How will these interviews be conducted?

What do you have to do to get ready?

Do you have an advisor? Most dioceses provide some kind of consultative help to work with the vestry and search committee through the entire calling process: the bishop, a member of the bishop's staff, or some other trained consultant. Part of the consultation process should include interview training since interviewing is a skill that can be learned. Other training resources may be available through your diocese or elsewhere.

If help is not readily available through your diocese, is there someone with interview experience in your group or in the parish? Many people have learned interviewing skills in their work, through volunteer or community services or in parenting and family life. You may have someone who has interviewed professionally or has experience in filling another position.

Such backgrounds of skill and experience can be adapted to the specialized process of interviewing clergy in the name of the Church.

BRIEFLY STATED...

INTERVIEWING PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

These are guidelines—not to be used verbatim, but with judgment, flexibility and prayer. Each member of the team may be responsible for making certain that specific key questions are covered, either directly or indirectly, before the interview ends.

- Try to look at the whole ministry of the parish, not just the ministry of the priest. The ministry of the congregation and its members is up for “viewing” as well as that of the priest.
- The level of authority of parish representatives in an interview should be clearly defined both for interviewers and for clergy.
- Be explicit about arrangements for transportation, hospitality and expenses—with flexibility for the comfort and convenience of priest and spouse, if included.
- Vestries and other parish leaders should remember that they are acting not only in their own name but in trust for the people of God in this congregation.
- Interviewing should shed light and interpretation on recorded information.
- Thorough preparation before interviews should assure a relatively uniform process for all candidates.
- Try to create an attitude of mutuality between the candidate and those representing the parish.
- Every question you might think of can be evaluated in three ways: What does it have to do with the position? Why do we need to know? Would I be willing to answer the same question about myself?
- All through the interview process questions are being raised and answered without being asked.
- For each category of questions, your objective is to discover what may happen in the life of your parish and its members if this priest is called.
- Answers may be less important than the feeling or attitude behind them—energy, conviction, enthusiasm, sensitivity, respect for acceptable differences and contagious personal faith.
- It is important to know not only about the priest's prayer life and spiritual journey but how he/she would guide, direct and accompany other people on theirs.

- In discussing social issues, the ways in which a candidate expresses Christian witness may be more important than ideological convictions.
- Many clues about administrative skills will emerge in the way a priest handles correspondence and arrangements during negotiations for a call. The way he/she organizes and administers his/her own affairs will tell much about the way he/she can be expected to organize and administer in the life of the congregation.
- In most search processes, the final candidates are interviewed more than once, sometimes by different people in different settings.
- Telephone interviews may be used for checking references and for contacts with distant candidates.
- Feedback to each candidate may help his/her personal growth even if your parish is not a good “fit.” Don't keep the candidates waiting after your decision.
- Destroy all records of the search committee after the call is extended and accepted.
- When the hearts of all concerned are open to God's guidance, there are good grounds for hope that God will bless the call and support the covenant between parish and priest.

PURPOSE OF INTERVIEWING

An interview in the calling process is a mutual testing of call:

- a priest's potential call to a particular parish
- a parish's call to a future with a particular priest

Each party is preparing to make an important decision about the future.

The interview process seeks to predict or anticipate a future relationship largely on the basis of two sets of past experience—of the candidate and of the parish (as reflected through its interviewing representatives). Conclusions for both parties will come about as they discuss their experiences, describe what experience has taught, and consider how the two sets of experiences promise to match or clash.

Files of information are enlivened and confirmed in the interview process as everyone shares in the give-and-take of spontaneous discussion.

Interviewing is discovery: Each person taking part in the interview, including the priest, should seek to discover for him/herself and for the parish: “Will the relationship wear well, through good times and bad, in the deepest of human experiences?” You may make new discoveries about each other—facts about the priest and about the parish that did not get written down beforehand.

Look at the whole ministry of the parish, not only the ministry of the priest. The ministry of the congregation and its members is up for “viewing” as well as that of the priest.

The priest and committee must get to know each other well enough to avoid inadequate impressions or snap decisions. Provide sufficient time and opportunity to be with candidates in a variety of situations.

Interviews are not merely casual dialogue in a social setting. They should demonstrate how the priest communicates Christian faith and understanding effectively and intelligibly in small groups; how he/she uses leadership skill to elicit articulation of Christian faith and values from others, to enable and facilitate the ministry to which each baptized person is called.

An interview can be a demonstration of the way a candidate goes about doing these things.

. . . THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH

Vestries and other parish leaders should remember that they are acting not only in their own name but in trust for the people of God in their congregation.

It is a God-given responsibility: first to seek God's will for the community of the New Covenant (BCP, page 854) where you are; and then, of equal importance to seek someone whom God is calling to be your leader. Parishes, therefore, do not interview priests only in order to “hire” them to fulfill a contract. Neither do priests come “applying” for positions only to suit some personal ambition of their own. Parish leaders and priests come together with a common faith and a common task—to seek the guidance and will of God for God's people in that particular time and place.

When the hearts of all concerned are open to God's guidance, then we have grounds for hope that God will bless the call and support the covenant between parish and priest.

Interviewing, therefore, is perhaps the most critical and vital part of the calling process.

It is indeed a time for **inter-viewing**—a time for priest and people to view each other searchingly through the eyes of faith—to pray hard for each other, to ask hard questions, and finally to make hard decisions.

That we will do our part, and priests will do theirs, we can only pray. **That God will do God's part, we have no doubt.**

PRAY FOR GUIDANCE

It is more than appropriate to pray both publicly and privately for God's continued help and guidance at every meeting of the search committee, the vestry, and the whole congregation. Prayers may be found in the CDO Search Manual, the Book of Common Prayer or may be composed locally, such as:

Almighty God, giver of every good gift: Look graciously on your whole Church, and so guide us in this parish during our time of self-study and search that we shall grow in our commitment to one another and to the cause of your Christ, and may come to choose a faithful pastor to join us in our ministries in our parish, community and diocese; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

How you and any candidate prepare for interviews and the way each party behaves during the process may well tell more than all the reports, resumes, and parish profiles about the possibility of a good match.

This includes not only the formal interview time itself, but everything about the interview visit.

Interview visits may last a day or more and should involve a good deal of freedom and informal contact.

Spouses should be included in at least one visit, but not necessarily in formal interviews. That is up to joint decision by all concerned.

What is comfortable: any preparations for interviews must be considered in the context of what is comfortable and appropriate for participants. For example, it is generally uncomfortable for everyone when one individual is interviewed by a large group of strangers all at once. Yet with good preparation and orchestration, a large interviewing team can do a good job; and the process becomes a demonstration of the way candidates and interviewers function in a participative process.

Mutual interchange: an interview is a **personal interchange**, face-to-face, to help an individual and a group get to know each other.

An interview is not a grilling or a confrontation. Nor is it an occasion for finding out facts which should be a matter of record, on paper, for both congregation and clergy.

Interviewing should shed light and interpretation on recorded information, particularly where terms and concepts may mean different things to different people. Examples include such words as “liturgics,” “evangelism” and “spiritual development.”

Interviewing is a process of mutual exploration, of testing how best to express the vocations of both the parish and the candidate.

Try to create an attitude of mutual interviewing between the person being interviewed and the interviewers. Be prepared for, and open to, questions which clergy may ask. Their questions can profitably shape as much as half of the interview. How they go about learning about you helps you understand how they work.

HOW SHOULD INTERVIEWS BE ARRANGED?

When . . . ?

In the process schedule, clergy and search committees are ready for interviews when each has done the necessary paperwork and reference-checking to determine that this **might** be a good fit.

By the calendar, interviews can be scheduled at the mutual convenience of all concerned. They should not be scheduled when either party is likely to be under unusual stress or severely inconvenienced.

In the cycle of days and weeks, most clergy interviews have to be scheduled at times when people can come together alert, rested, and preferably unhurried. Many interviews must be scheduled in the evenings of working weekdays because that is the only time the group can gather and the clergy can be available. Daytime Saturday interviews often work well; and Sundays may be acceptable if clergy can be relieved of the pressure and exhaustion of Sunday morning routines.

When considerable travel is needed to bring the parties together, be sure to allow time to recover from travel fatigue.

Where . . . ?

It is almost essential that one interview take place on the site of the congregation to be served. Another may take place on the “home turf” of the priest. Before you plan such a visit, check to be sure it does not interfere with important events in the life of the candidate or his/her congregation. A living room or family room may be a comfortable location; but it is generally not advisable for a group to conduct an interview during a meal. Interviews by individuals or small groups may be conducted at almost any convenient/quiet location.

Who . . . ?

Who conducts the interviews depends on the organization of the search committee. A large committee may be divided into small groups, **provided all groups follow the same process**. Or a well-organized, well-trained committee of any size may conduct interviews as a body.

Interviewing should not be open to the whole congregation, and generally not to anyone who is not part of the whole search process.

The search committee and vestry have a heavy responsibility for maintaining good communication with the whole congregation throughout the process—until the new priest is on board.

However, to involve the members of the congregation in any part of the process tends to line up pressure groups, based on limited knowledge of candidates and task. Choosing a parish priest involves much more than what a parishioner sees on Sunday morning, or at a hospital bed or in a retreat setting.

SETTING THE STAGE

Some other considerations in setting up interviews are:

- a quiet comfortable place
- a relaxed atmosphere
- a definite duration of time set in advance
- planned breaks for stretching and refreshments
- scheduled opportunity for questions from the priest

Generally an interview on clergy's "home turf" can be conducted only by a small group—simply because of the difficulties of getting more than one carload of people to a distant location. There may be some one-to-one interviews with wardens or other parish leaders because of distance or some other overriding factors.

Become a team: Each interviewing group should have its own leader and interviewing groups must meet together often enough to discover and understand their own differences and to manage these differences. Each group must represent the whole search committee, and know each other well before interviews begin.

You need to feel like a team to be able to trust each other and be comfortable about disagreeing with one another, even in front of candidates.

Spend plenty of time talking about how you will handle interviews and visits. Practice listening for what candidates are really saying. Do not hesitate to ask, "What do you mean by that?" Or, "Say something more about that."

Role-playing can be a useful tool to help the search committee familiarize itself with the art of interviewing— as well as to sensitize itself to how it feels to be interviewed. A priest who is not a candidate can be helpful in the role of a candidate.

BASIC TOOLS

Be well-acquainted with basic tools which are background for interviews:

- parish self-study
- requirements, criteria, or description of the position
- personal Profiles or resumes of candidates

Do not assume that you already “know” your parish without doing any homework. A good parish self-study represents a parish consensus about its present situation and expectations for the future. This consensus should be reflected in the position description or Profile, and in the criteria for it, fully accepted and almost memorized by interviewers.

Personal Profiles of clergy you know can help you become familiar with what these documents tell you—particularly in the priest’s Personal Ministry Statement, Ministry Specialties, and Leadership Description.

Be sure that all interviewers have the same understanding of what is expressed in these papers.

HAVE AVAILABLE . . .

...copies of the candidates' CDO personal Profiles, resumes, and other reference information for all interviewers. Sufficient copies of all documents should be on hand for reference during interviews.

If it is desirable to have printed copies (or recordings) of sermons, copies of parish bulletins or other papers, interviewers should have these well in advance.

STRUCTURE

Some attention must be given to structuring the interview and keeping it moving:

- build good rapport at the beginning
- get down to business
- keep moving so you don't get bogged down in one subject—however interesting
- bring the interview to a definite end **on time**
- summarize and organize the information
- record results and conclusions

Recording: Since it is distracting to have everyone writing during the interview, someone should be appointed for each interview to take notes and write a summary. Everyone should understand how the record is being kept. (The interview should not be electronically recorded without permission of **everyone** present.) See **Appendix A**.

WHAT YOU OWE TO CLERGY—IN ADVANCE

Each candidate should know **where his/her interview fits into your process**. Are you just beginning with a long list of candidates, or is this interview coming close to a final recommendation? Or are you somewhere between those two extremes?

Be explicit about arrangements for **transportation, hospitality and expenses**. Allow some flexibility on these arrangements for the comfort and convenience of the priest (and spouse if included). A visiting priest (and spouse) may prefer to stay in a hotel or motel rather than in a parishioner's home. Have a clear understanding about time and guidance for **seeing the environment** of the parish—not only the church, rectory and immediate neighborhood but the **community, shopping areas, schools, and neighboring parishes, and opportunities for spouse's employment**.

If an **appointment with the Bishop** is to be scheduled, this should also be settled before an out-of-town person arrives. Also, offer the candidate help in arranging other appointments which might help his/her decision-making process. It is appropriate for the candidate to request conferences with specific individuals, such as staff members, church school personnel, or youth group representatives.

Each person to be interviewed should have a copy of the **parish self-study** and the **position description** or **Profile** well in advance of the interview. Relevant **information about the community** will also be appreciated.

Candidates will appreciate an outline of **special areas of importance** to the parish which are likely to be discussed in the interview—particularly any which have come to light since the parish self-study was completed.

Some search committees provide written questions in advance and may even ask for written responses. However, lengthy written questionnaires should be avoided; and any written questionnaire should be used sparingly.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Everything of a personal nature revealed by the candidate is privileged information and should **never** be disclosed. All records of a search committee should be destroyed after the call is extended and accepted.

Debriefing: immediately after each interview the group should meet and share impressions of the person interviewed to arrive at a consensus if possible. First impressions may be especially valuable, even if they are modified by later reflection. At this point more complete notes may be recorded to avoid confusion later. One authority suggests that some prayer and silent time should precede debriefing, so that all present may get clear about their own impressions. If each individual can consolidate his/her own reactions, there is less likelihood

that anyone will dominate the debriefing, persuading other people to accept one point of view or impression of the candidate.

Feedback: if feedback is to be provided to persons interviewed to aid their personal growth, it will be necessary to have some procedure for doing so, perhaps guided by your diocesan advisor.

Notification: once a priest has been eliminated from your consideration, he/she should be notified promptly—with an expression of gratitude for the time and attention given.

FRAMING QUESTIONS

Questions must be planned carefully so that all areas can be covered in the allotted time.

Ten minutes for each of nine areas will take more than an hour and a half.

Every question you ask can be evaluated three ways:

- What does it have to do with the position?
- Why do we need to know?
- Would I be willing to answer the same question about myself?

Core questions: you should agree in advance as to what questions must be included in every interview, and write them down ahead of time. These are the “core” questions for your search process. They should be based on the parish profile and job criteria and should be the same for all interviews. Trick questions have no place in clergy interviews.

You may also want to ask specific questions based on information already on hand about the person to be interviewed. Information about the parish and about a priest should be studied together by the committee in preparing specific questions for each candidate. This sets up opportunities for mutual exchange based on what records show about expectations for the parish and for the priest.

Using CDO Personal Profiles . . .

The priest's *Leadership Description* suggests ways to frame questions on personal leadership styles—how things will get done through people other than the priest. **You may want to ask for examples (both good and bad) of interactions with subordinates, superiors, and coworkers, especially individual volunteers or committees.**

It is generally more helpful to focus on how the priest functions rather than how he/she expresses concepts. Try to elicit stories of actual experiences rather than recitals of theory or listings of credentials. Ask questions which will lead the candidate to describe specific achievements or accomplishments. Achievements point to skills, abilities and effectiveness, and may be more useful measures than mere length of experience.

A rule of thumb is: the way a person describes handling a situation in the past indicates how he/she might act in the future.

Avoid “Yes/No” or other short answers. Some examples of good form:

- What comments or questions do you have regarding our parish Profile?
- Tell us about a time when . . .
- What do you want us to know about . . . ?
- Give us an example of . . .
- You say . . . about yourself. How has that been demonstrated?
- Describe an experience where . . .
- How do you . . . ?
- What is your experience with . . . ?

You will be watching to see whether the priest draws naturally, attractively and with confidence on the resources of education, experience and faith.

NINE TYPICAL AREAS

Nine typical areas of concern may suggest how you can design a pattern of questions that will be responsive to your particular parish. These should be based on your own parish Profile and the credentials of the people being interviewed. They can also be related to Ministry Specialties and other information on record.

- Worship-Liturgy-Music
- Preaching
- Christian/Formation Education
- Growth
- Spiritual Development
- Pastoral Care/Counseling
- Social Issues
- Administration
- Personal Dimensions

The methods suggested for framing questions on these subjects can be adapted for other important areas such as stewardship, diocesan and community activities, ecumenism, congregational development, and leadership development.

For each category, your objective is to discover **what seems likely to happen in the life of the parish and its members on Sundays and on weekdays if this priest is called.**

There is no right or wrong response in any of these areas. Each response contributes toward deciding whether this priest and this parish are likely to move together in directions each party wants.

WORSHIP-LITURGY

When the priest-leadership of a parish changes, there are likely to be some changes in its worship and liturgical life. The principal concern is for both the search committee and the priest each to determine the other's attitudes and convictions about worship and liturgy.

Key questions therefore, might be:

- How do you make decisions about worship?
- Tell us how you have introduced new experiences in worship in your congregation.

The responses will indicate the priest's attitude toward the traditions of the parish and his sensitivity to worshippers.

Another approach is to ask about specific hymns, or music in worship. It may be important to discuss some aspects of the Prayer Book, particularly the choices it offers, and how they are to be made.

Some questions about worship may be resolved by what is seen and experienced in a visit to a worship service in the priest's present parish. This will give opportunity to observe first-hand the priest's own style and delivery—in prayer, preaching, celebrating, perhaps in singing, and in participation by laity of all ages.

The committee should understand that the style and schedule of worship in the priest's present parish is not necessarily what he/she prefers or would choose, or would duplicate in another situation.

It is entirely appropriate to ask questions about anything that is observed and that is relevant to the position.

Visiting a service at a candidate's parish will also provide an opportunity to observe the priest's relationship with the congregation, with its individual members, and with other individuals participating in the liturgy. However, these informal observations should be verified through reference-checking or some other way.

PREACHING

It is impossible to arrive at a fair evaluation of a priest's preaching from hearing one sermon; and there are wide ranges of specifications for what constitutes “good” preaching or a “good” sermon. It may be necessary to have considerable discussion in the committee before questions about preaching are framed. Some helpful questions (which have no right or wrong answers) might be:

- How do you go about preparing your sermons?
- Tell us about some of your satisfactions and disappointments in preparing and delivering sermons.

- In preparing your sermons, what use, if any, do you make of the Bible, the church year, personal experiences—your own or others; current events, contemporary issues in culture and society?
- What sources do you use for sermon ideas?
- What different methods do you use for preparing and delivering sermons? How often do you write out the entire text or speak extemporaneously?
- How long do you preach?
- How do you involve the congregation in your preaching?
- How important do you consider preaching to be in the total life of the Church?
- What do you do with a sermon after you have delivered it?
- How do you use guest preachers?

See **Appendix A** for a guideline to assess skills and abilities, specifically a sermon assessment, developed by the Rev. Dr. Rob Voyle, Director of the Clergy Leadership Institute, which incorporates the latest understandings in the field of Appreciative Inquiry.

CHRISTIAN/FORMATION EDUCATION

In discussing Christian Formation/Education, a committee is likely to be interested in some of the following elements in a priest's responses:

- level of creative energy
- range of resources used
- familiarity with various curricula
- training and trust of lay people in various roles
- levels of direct personal involvement and of the priest's personal competence in education

The discussed may include all levels of the parish's educational program now and hoped for: adult education, Bible study groups, church school, youth/young adult programs, Lenten study, and preparation for baptism/confirmation.

Questions might be phrased something like this:

- How do you view Christian Formation/Education: its role in parish programs?
- How do you recruit, train, assist and supervise teaching staff?
- Tell us about one of your recent adult education (or youth) programs.
- What are some of your favorite tools and resources for Bible study?
- How do you involve parents in the formation/education of children?
- What do you expect people of various ages to learn or retain through the Christian Formation/Education program?
- What curriculum do you use and why?

GROWTH

Growth in membership is a matter of concern to many Episcopal parishes. It must be discussed in the context of trends and realistic expectations of the specific parish and openness of present parish membership.

Many parishes whose Profiles list growth as a goal are not willing to make the changes necessary to achieve growth. If growth is a goal and is stated in the self-study, questions such as the following are appropriate:

- To the extent that you know us thus far, what do you think we will have to do to increase membership?
- What experience have you had with increasing membership—what works well for you?
- What do you as a priest expect to contribute to growth in a parish—and what do you expect of lay people?
- What factors inhibit or support parish growth, in your experience?

SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

To frame your questions about spirituality, you must first have some agreement among yourselves. The catechism and the services of ordination are natural resources for questions relating to spirituality and spiritual development.

Episcopalians' views of spirituality are shaped by a rich and varied heritage of writing and teaching experience and examples. What usually concerns a search committee is not the priest's spiritual journey alone, but rather, **what will happen when the priest and the parish undertake a spiritual journey together**—how he/she will guide, direct and accompany people.

Not only the priest's spiritual life is up for viewing, but also the spiritual strength and receptivity of the parish.

You can begin by asking:

- Tell us how you and your present congregation have grown in your spiritual life: separately and together.
- Tell us how you teach people to pray.
- What are some of the resources you would bring for spiritual development in the congregation?
- How do you teach the use of the Bible in prayer?
- What is your experience with various traditions of direction—retreats, quiet days, prayer disciplines, renewal, Cursillo, private confession, observance of feasts, fasts, and days of obligation?
- Where have you recognized the life of the Spirit in the midst of the life in the contemporary world?
- Tell us some ways in which you have seen spiritual growth in yourself or in someone else.
- What kinds of resources refresh you spiritually?
- What kind of difficulty have you observed in personal spiritual life—your own or someone else's?

It is not always easy to discover a deep and contagious personal faith in another person, even a priest. But spiritual compatibility can be expressed in unexpected ways. Try to remain open to pleasant surprises.

PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING

Parishioners look to clergy for counseling and pastoral care at times of personal crisis, especially at key transitions: birth, death, marriage, divorce, vocational stress or change, physical or mental illness.

It is appropriate to ask a priest to talk about his/her response to people in such situations. For example:

- What kinds of counseling and pastoral care can parish members expect of you?
- How much responsibility for visitation do you share with laity?
- Which areas do you find difficult to share?
- How do you prepare people for great sacramental moments, such as baptism, marriage, confirmation, penance?
- How much time do you spend in marriage counseling before you refer a couple to a specialist?
- How do you work with:
 - troubled teenagers?
 - persons involved in abuse of alcohol or drugs?
 - family and patient in a lingering terminal illness?
- What do you teach about grief and bereavement?
- What do you do about people who are not members of your parish who come to you for counseling?
- How do you deal with your own limitations in counseling?
- How do you provide for pastoral care when you are not there? (e.g. on your day off or during your vacation)

SOCIAL ISSUES

Contemporary ministry, for priests and lay people, takes place in a society where stresses spark controversy.

It is important for a priest and search committee to know where they agree and where they differ, not only on specific issues, but in the manner of expressing and demonstrating Christian social responsibility.

One way to open this discussion would be to name a few current social issues and to speak briefly about the parish's own experience in dealing with them. An open-ended invitation to the candidate to relate experiences may be helpful. Here are some examples:

- Tell us about a time when you dealt with disagreement on a social issue.
- How have you worked with differences in lay and clergy responsibilities to express Christian witness on social issues in the community?

- How have you led parishioners to express their witness on social issues?
- How have you enabled people to discuss controversial issues and to share their honest differences?

ADMINISTRATION

As chief executive officer of the congregation, a parish priest faces a wide range of administrative responsibilities.

Discussion in this area should relate to your parish more than to where the priest has been. At the outset of this portion of the interview, the priest may have more questions to ask than the committee has.

It may be well to provide in advance, or through an introductory statement, some details about the parish's expectations on administration and the resources or help that will be provided.

For example, the priest may want to know:

- What is the composition of the parish staff: assistant clergy, organist, secretary, sexton, administrator, bookkeeper, etc.?
- What administrative responsibilities are handled by lay people—and how well are they being done?
- How does the parish handle: personnel matters, budget and finance, job-related expenses, bulletins and mailings, maintenance and emergency work on grounds and buildings (including rectory)?

As these matters are discussed, the priest's questions and responses will give many clues about individual style and values in administration and need for support (staff and financial). The search committee might want to ask:

- How do you manage work through other individuals? Through groups or committees?
- How do you maintain a balance of power among various power groups in a parish?
- How do you deal with staff changes?
- How do you recruit and train volunteers?
- How is the agenda prepared for vestry meetings?

A priest's own sense of administrative skills and values may be evident in his/her present parish, if it is the senior priest and not a staff priest who is being considered. In most parishes, the senior priest does not actually do all the administrative tasks, but it is usually the priest's responsibility to see that they are done and to set the standard of quality.

So visitors to a candidate's present parish may learn something by noting:

- Quality and comprehensiveness of parish bulletins and publications
- Involvement of ushers, acolytes, lay readers, choir, and altar guild

- Schedule of weekday meetings
- Quality and selection of music

Positive ratings on any of these may be signs of credit to the administrative skills of the senior priest. A negative rating may **not** reflect negatively on the priest, but is probably worth discussing.

Many clues about administrative skills will also emerge in the way a priest handles the correspondence and arrangements during negotiations of a call. The way he/she organizes and administers his/her own affairs will tell a good deal about the way he/she can be expected to organize and administer in the life of the congregation.

PERSONAL DIMENSIONS

A good many personal questions are illegal for pre-employment discussions. Respecting this, a search committee must also be guided by the principle: **“Don't ask a question that you would not answer for yourself.”**

But personal questions may reflect your concern about caring for the priest and family. It is generally assumed that a parish priest is to some degree a public person. Therefore, considerations go beyond ordinary “employment matters,” to include the expectations of a personal relationship.

Therefore, some personal discussion is proper. The areas of discussion should be sensitively considered by the search committee among members, in advance, and tested by addressing questions to each other.

Appropriate questions might be:

What do you want us to know about:

- . . . goals of your own professional development?
- . . . how you schedule and use your time off?
- . . . what books you are reading?
- . . . what you do for fun?
- . . . your likes and dislikes about the way your life and ministry have evolved over the years?

The committee should not use the interview to initiate questions relating to marital history, sexuality, personal financial matters, or past history of substance abuse or mental illness. An effective background check of finalists may identify some of these issues.

If such matters are of concern to the committee, a means of dealing with them should be worked out before the interview. Generally the bishop or one of his/her staff members can help resolve any such questions regarding a promising candidate. If the candidate is not a serious prospect after one interview, it is better to leave such questions alone.

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Two general categories of telephone interviews may be used in a parish search process:

- checking references
- with the candidate, either one-to-one, or conference calls if necessary

For either type of phone call, if someone on the search committee knows the candidate to be called, it can be most helpful for that committee member to make the call. More candid information can pass between friends and acquaintances than between strangers.

Since such calls are likely to take as much as 45 minutes to an hour, it is simple courtesy to make an appointment for such a conversation. Call to ask when the person on the other end can talk at length—now or at another more convenient time.

With references: the telephone interview is the next best thing to face-to-face conversation, and often better than correspondence. A knowledgeable person must make the call, and the questions to be answered must be clearly delineated.

It is only reasonable to expect mostly favorable comments from a reference named by a candidate. This bias may be offset by asking open-ended questions about actual experience with the candidate.

A checklist of uniform questions should be used in interviewing all references. But as in all the rest of the interviewing, it is helpful to phrase the questions so the answer can be more than a few words.

References can be most helpful in verifying information relating to leadership style, interpersonal relationships and handling conflict. If the reference is willing to summarize the conversation in writing, so much the better. Many are reluctant to put things in writing.

An objective evaluation may be obtained by using a tabulation and rating sheet, based on criteria for the job. See **Appendix A** for a sample based on information sought rather than questions asked.

If the candidate is a curate at present, it is important to know the extent and limits of his/her responsibility, experience, and ministry in order to arrive at an accurate assessment. **If the candidate agrees,** the rector's evaluation will be helpful. It is difficult for a search committee to make comparisons in a field of candidates that includes both curates and functioning rectors.

With a candidate, particularly one who is far distant, a telephone interview with a knowledgeable representative of the searching parish can help determine, for both sides, whether it is worth the time and expense to travel for a personal interview.

In general the approach for a telephone interview can be a shortened version of the foregoing pages—using the “core questions.” It should cover major concerns agreed upon by the search committee before the phone call. The substance of the interview is governed by such things as:

- whether or not this is the parish's first contact with the priest
- how his/her name came under consideration
- how much the priest already knows about the parish
- whether the committee member calling is authorized to extend the invitation for an interview or simply will report back to the committee
- the priest's responses as the conversation proceeds

CONCLUSION

Although each interview will be personal and unique, it is to be hoped that there will be enough uniformity of process and content so the conclusions about each person interviewed can be arrived at and compared with fairness and accuracy.

All through the process it will be found that questions are being raised and answered without being asked—or that the answer to one question comes out in discussing another—or that the thread of the interview leads to new questions that had not been raised previously. These are likely to be signs of a good process rather than imperfections.

No matter how carefully priests and parishes prepare their documentation, the interpersonal action is most likely to bring out what is really important to each—and if the interview process brings this out, then it will contribute to establishing a good fit in both compatibilities and challenges.

Sample Checklist for Summarizing Interviews

Name of Candidate: _____ Date: _____

SUBJECT	MATCH
LEADERSHIP STYLE Refer to CDO Profile Leadership Description	
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS Refer to criteria relating in your congregation's self-study	
WORSHIP-LITURGY Is the style compatible for this parish's future?	
PREACHING What kind of sermons? How well delivered?	
CHRISTIAN FORMATION/EDUCATION Is there evidence that the candidate can do/be what we expect in Christian/Formation/Ed.?	
GROWTH AND CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT What does the candidate contribute to vitality and attractiveness of the parish and bringing in new members? Is this what we need and want?	
SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT Are we satisfied with what we know about how this priest guides others and nurtures his/her own spiritual life?	
PASTORAL CARE AND COUNSELING Is his/her record of counseling and pastoral care consistent with what we expect?	
SOCIAL ISSUES Will this priest represent and lead us appropriately on social issues?	
ADMINISTRATION Is the priest's administrative work compatible with parish standards? Is there generally good communication and a spirit of cooperation in areas of the priest's responsibility?	
PERSONAL DIMENSIONS Does the candidate seem to maintain good balance of responsibilities between work and family?	
STEWARDSHIP What is the record of stewardship of human and material resources in parish(es) where this priest has served?	
CONTINUING EDUCATION What efforts does this priest undertake for personal and professional development?	

MATCHING KEY:

Excellent.....1 Fair.....3 Very Poor.....5 No History.....X
 Good.....2 Poor.....4 No Data.....0

The Assessment of Skills and Abilities

Assessing Skills and Discerning Calls, ©Copyright 1996 Robert and Kim Voyle

Assessment not Comparison

This section provides a method of objectively rating the skills and abilities of candidates for the position of rector. The intention of this process is not to compare candidate A with candidate B but rather to rate each candidate with respect to a predetermined set of job-related criteria. To simply compare one candidate which is a surefire way of creating a disaster. Patrick Maher, a personnel consultant, provides the following scenario to illustrate the danger of simply comparing candidates.

Suppose we are testing to select a competent neurosurgeon. We have five participants and will use a comparative rating scale. The participants are:

- A skid-row alcoholic with an 8th grade education.
- An attorney who specializes in medical malpractice cases.
- A veterinarian who specializes in treating domestic pets.
- A second year medical student.
- A cardiologist.

Using a 5 point comparative rating scale the alcoholic would score 1, the attorney by comparison would be 2, the veterinarian would be rated a 3 by comparison, the medical student would be 4, and finally the cardiologist, by far the most qualified and experienced would be rated a 5 in comparison to the others.

Now having made this assessment, who would you select to remove a brain tumor!

Thus simply comparing candidates does not guarantee that a qualified candidate will be selected. Each candidate must be assessed with respect to the criteria of brain surgeon, or the task at hand. Because each parish has different needs clergy can not be selected on the basis of comparing one clergyperson with another. Rather they must be assessed with respect to the criteria established to meet the specific needs and character of each parish.

Clergy are notorious for their ability to theorize. Putting theory into practice is another matter. In assessing candidates it is important not to be distracted by theorizing, even when it is presented as a most eloquent theology. Psychological and personnel research consistently shows that our ability to predict a person's future performance is very poor. Theories and best intentions often do not get put into practice. Research has also shown that people continue to do what they always have done. Thus the best predictor of what a clergyperson will do when selected rector of a new parish is what they have done in previous parishes. Hence assessing prior experience and its outcome is very important in the assessment process. Remember....

Past Behavior is the Best Predictor of Future Behavior!

Rating System for Skills and Abilities

All skills and abilities are assessed with respect to the following 5-point scale.

1 Poor 10%	2 Weak 20% Negative	3 Acceptable 40% Average	4 Good 20%	5 Excellent 10% Positive
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1. Poor: The candidate's response on this factor is either totally lacking or well below that required for effective job performance. The person indicates, regardless of the reason, that he/she has no experience or fails to report experience of the particular criterion being rated.

About 10% of clergy would fall into this category.

Parishioners would complain bitterly about performance at this level.

2. Weak: The candidate possesses this factor to some degree but at a level below that required for effective job performance. The person indicates little or negative experience of the particular criteria. Rather than provide experience he/she may stress theoretically why the criterion is important.

About 20% of clergy would stumble in this category.

Parishioners would grumble about this level of performance.

3. Acceptable: The candidate's response on this factor is adequate or at a level just sufficient for effective job performance. The person may indicate some experience and stress the theoretical implications or the importance of the criterion. There is no indication as to the outcome of his/her experience.

About 40% of clergy would walk in this category.

Parishioners would accept, but not be inspired, by this level of performance.

4. Good: The candidate's responses on this factor is clearly above the minimum required for effective job performance. The person indicates significant experience of the criterion but without indicating the outcome of the activity.

About 20% of clergy would run in this category.

Parishioners would be appreciative for this level of performance.

5. Excellent: The candidate possesses this factor to the degree that his/her job performance would be outstanding, of extremely high quality. The person indicates considerable experience of the criterion with positive outcomes.

About 10% of clergy would excel in this category.

Parishioners would be grateful and enthusiastic for this level of performance.

Rating of Sermon

Name: _____

Rating Instructions

Use the following pages as a workbook for your assessment and rating of the sermon and celebration. Either unobtrusively during the service or immediately following the service make brief notes or circle appropriate items in the criteria boxes. Following the service it would be appropriate to have the Candidate taken on a tour of the property or schedule a similar activity that will allow the Search Committee members time to make their individual assessment.

Be aware of your overall impression. As you rate the individual criteria do not allow your overall impression to color the individual scores. Use the scoring sheet to record your rating. Circle the score and transfer it to the score sheet. Use the consensus scoring rules to achieve committee score.

1. Audibility:

1	2	3	4	5	
Too quiet, inaudible, mumbling, tailing off sentence endings. Too loud, yelling.		Audible but affected accent/tone that detracts. Mixture of adequate with some poor quality. Acceptable but not inspiring.	Consistency of audibility with appropriate inflection. Easy to listen to.		

2. Nonverbal Communication: posture, hand gestures, and eye contact.

1	2	3	4	5	
Posture stiff and distracting. No hand gestures. Distractive hand gestures. No eye contact with listeners. Stares at just one person.		Acceptable, some inconsistency. No distractive gestures but minimal positive gestures. Relaxed posture but no eye contact.	Appears relaxed and comfortable. Hand gestures emphasized point. Relaxed eye contact with most listeners.		

3. Preaching Style: ability to establish rapport with listeners.

1	2	3	4	5	
Reads script verbatim. Doesn't use script but rambles. Minimal rapport with congregation. "Loses" congregation.		Acceptable but not captivating.	Script does not interfere with rapport. Effective extemporaneous style. Consistent "contact" with congregation.		

4. Organization of Presentation: Note: this is largely independent of content and appropriateness of presentation. Is there a clear opening, middle and conclusion without inappropriate repetition, distraction, and/or discordance? Is it neither too short nor too long?

1	2	3	4	5	
Rambling, repetitive, needless digressions. Abrupt transitions and conclusions. Too long, too short.		Acceptable; has opening, middle and conclusion. Generally good but requires some energy to follow and sustain attention	Creative but not excessive use of discord. Presentation easy to follow, coherent with smooth transitions. Good length, (Note: a good sermon may seem short.)		

5. Content of Sermon: sermon based on the readings provided. Balance between academic and personal perspectives, use of humor, and extra Biblical stories.

1	2	3	4	5	
Minimal relation to readings of the day. Entirely academic with minimal personal relevance. Preacher gets lost in own personal material.		Acceptable but imbalance may detract from overall presentation	Readings of day well integrated into presentation that balances academic and personal perspectives. Use of humor and other stories enhances presentation.		

6. Appropriateness of Content: sermon appropriate and relevant to the congregation gathered.

1	2	3	4	5	
Content entirely inappropriate for Sunday service. Content not within general teaching of Church.		Content appropriate and relevant for Sunday Service.	Sermon integrated with rest of service. While very appropriate for Sunday service, preacher has adapted the sermon to be relevant to search committee.		

7. Creativity and Imagination:

1	2	3	4	5	
Sermon lacking any originality creativity or imagination. Boring. Excessively creative that detracts from message.		Acceptable, "solid". Presentation was not boring but showed only minimal originality.	Presentation and content contains degree of creativity that captivates the imagination of the hearer. "Hearing the old message in a new way."		

8. Authenticity of Preaching: a global assessment of the congruency between what the preacher says, how they say it, and the manner in which they live or embody the message.

1	2	3	4	5	
Phony. Affected pronunciation. Speaking down to congregation. No indication that preacher lives or believes their own message. Preacher appears personally uninspired.		Acceptable, but not inspiring. Presentation may appear genuine but without enthusiasm. Excessive enthusiasm that detracts.	Preacher embodies the message. Congruency between message, manner of presentation and personal references. Preacher expresses enthusiasm for preaching and living the Gospel.		

Rating of Celebration

Name: _____

Assessment of Celebration

The following criteria were developed for an Anglo-Catholic (AC) congregation that required significant amounts of chanting by the Celebrant during the service. Lay Eucharistic Ministry and Acolyte duties were provided by Search Committee members.

9. Interaction with Lay Eucharistic Minister and Acolyte:

1	2	3	4	5	
Does not seek advice or make requests. Argumentative. Dogmatic. Ignores during service.		Acceptable. Some positive interaction	Mutual exchange of information prior to service. Smoothly interacts during service. Recovers graciously from "glitches".		

10. Prayerfulness:

1	2	3	4	5	
Spoken parts of service are raced through. Inaudible. Affected accent/tone when praying.		Acceptable. Deliberate but not joyful. Joyful but not attentive.	Prayers are spoken attentively, deliberately, smoothly, joyfully.		

11. Chanting:

1	2	3	4	5	
Unable to maintain chant. Inaudible. Chanting distracts rather than enhances.		Acceptable. Minor errors.	Maintains chant well. Chant enhances worship.		

12. Ceremonial:

1	2	3	4	5	
Minimal AC ceremonial. Overly dramatic that distracts. Fussy.		Acceptable but not inspiring.	AC ceremonial that is well integrated into spoken and chanted parts of service.		

13. Interaction with Congregation:

1	2	3	4	5	
No appropriate eye contact with congregation. Cuts off congregations prayers. "Drowns" out congregation. Oblivious to congregation		Acceptable but not inspiring.	Strong sense of priest and congregation worshipping together.		

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