



C4SO Customary: Rector Search Process

1. Guiding Principles

When a congregation enters a season without a Rector, it is both a time of uncertainty and a sacred opportunity for renewal. C4SO approaches this transition with prayer, transparency and partnership between the local church, the Bishop's team and the Holy Spirit.

Our aim is to help a church discern—not merely decide—whom God is calling to lead the church into its next chapter of mission. The Bishop, not the local church Vestry, gives ultimate approval for the appointment of a new Rector.

2. Immediate Care for the Community

When a Rector leaves or is in the process of transitioning away from the church (i.e., retirement, different assignment), the Bishop or his designate (i.e., Suffragan or Assisting Bishop, Dean) assumes oversight, with particular responsibility for spiritual matters, until a new Rector is called, or an Interim Rector is appointed. The Senior Warden and Vestry ensure pastoral and organizational stability. For example, all hiring/firing authority, contract authority, financial oversight, etc., rests with the Vestry in the absence of a Rector.

Steps include:

- Identifying interim clergy or supply priests (see accompanying customary for Interim Rectors)
- Establishing clear communication and prayer rhythms for the congregation
- Ensuring pastoral care, continued ministry and operational reliability (i.e., facilities, cash and other assets, security, etc.)

The goal is to care well for the community and sustain unity during the transition period.



3. Forming a Search Committee

The Vestry appoints a Search Committee, consisting of 5-7 members, in consultation with the Bishop's Office. In some cases, churches may have bylaws or canons that govern the assembly of a Search Committee, which should be adhered to. In most cases, the Search Committee should be considered a committee of the Vestry, to be made up of both Vestry members and non-Vestry participants. The team should represent the congregation, and each member should exemplify spiritual maturity, humility, and a commitment to prayerful discernment.

Qualities of Search Committee Members:

- Active members in good standing
- Spiritually grounded and emotionally healthy
- Team-oriented and discreet (able to maintain confidentiality)
- Open to the leading of the Holy Spirit

A Chairperson is appointed to organize meetings and maintain regular communication with the Vestry and the Bishop's Office. We recommend that this person be highly organized and ideally possess experience in organizational human resources or a related field.

4. Preparing for the Search

a. Parish Profile

The Search Committee (under the guidance of the Vestry) leads the congregation in a time of reflection and listening. All communication related to the search should be facilitated through the Vestry or a Vestry-appointed person. The *Parish Profile* should tell the story of who the church is, where God has placed it, and where it senses the Lord's leading. Both the Vestry and the Bishop review and approve this profile.

The profile should include information such as:

- The church's mission, values and worship life
- Demographics and community context



- Current ministries and areas of growth
- Hopes for the next season

[See a recent example](#) from Church of the Cross in Austin, TX; [Another](#) from Eucharist Church.

b. Rector Profile

In light of the Parish Profile, the Search Committee drafts a *Rector Profile* that describes the kind of leader being sought—spiritually, pastorally and practically. The Vestry and the Bishop review and approve this profile before the search opens.

[See a recent example](#) from Church of the Cross in Austin, TX; [Another](#) from Eucharist Church.

c. Proposed Timeline of Process

The Search Committee should also prepare a timeline of all events associated with this process, including target completion dates. Items to include (but not limited to): application open/close date, interview timeframe, and reference and background check initiation/completion.

5. Receiving and Discerning Candidates

The Search Committee manages all aspects of the application, including reviews of sermons, references (professional and personal), and other relevant materials. They may also choose to conduct initial interviews virtually or in-person. Additionally, the diocesan office, in collaboration with the Bishop, should confirm that the candidate(s) is currently in good standing with relevant parties, as needed.

In addition to internal candidates, the Search Committee should broaden the search to consider external candidates. It is recommended, for the sake of objectivity, that any internal candidates be initially assessed by a neutral third party, to ensure the candidate's experience and skills are a good match for the position. Additionally, the Search Committee should think of creative ways to interview the internal candidate (that may differ from external candidates being considered) since an existing relationship is a factor. The ultimate goal would be an interview process that serves all parties involved in mutually respectable ways.



After prayer and discernment, the Search Committee should recommend a small number of finalists (usually 2–3) to the Vestry for approval, and subsequently to the Bishop for his approval. Once the list of finalists is approved, it is expected that the Search Committee will initiate a 10-year background check on each finalist, in alignment with state requirements.

Throughout the process, communication with candidates and the church community (staff and congregation) should be:

- Respectful and transparent (without violating confidentiality)
- Grounded in prayer and discernment, rather than competition

6. Final Interviews and Discernment

The Vestry, in coordination with the Bishop's Office, should invite the finalists for in-person visits. These visits include:

- Formal interviews with the Vestry (and Search Committee if desired)
- Opportunities for mutual discernment about fit and calling
- Time for the candidate and spouse to get to know the community

After the interviews, the Vestry should meet to discern whether to extend a call. Before issuing a call, approval from the Bishop is required, along with confirmation of satisfactory results in background checks and reference checks, as well as all relevant components of the diocesan Safe Church Training initiative (i.e., Ministry Safe and Sexual Harassment Prevention Trainings).

7. Extending the Call and Planning Transition

Once the call is approved by the Vestry and Bishop, a *Letter of Agreement* is prepared outlining terms of employment, compensation, job description and other mutual expectations (including at-will employment status). After acceptance, the Bishop's Office assists with an announcement of timing and transition planning.



8. Welcoming the New Rector

- Provide practical help with moving and housing.
- Introduce the new Rector and family to leaders, ministries and community.
- Establish regular rhythms of communication and support during the first year.
- Transition executive powers and responsibilities from the Vestry to the new Rector (i.e., bank account authorization, relevant security codes, employee/staff files, information databases, etc.)

9. First Year and Mutual Ministry Review

Within the first 6–12 months, the new Rector and Vestry will meet for a *Mutual Ministry Review* and then discuss the review with the Bishop. This time allows reflection on the transition, shared expectations and ongoing health of the ministry.

10. Summary of Key Steps

Step	Primary Responsibility	Bishop's Involvement
Interim Care	Vestry	Approves interim plan
Form Search Committee	Vestry	Consults
Parish & Rector Profiles	Search Committee/Vestry	Reviews & approves
Candidate Review	Search Committee	Screens and approves finalists
Final Interviews	Vestry	Participates & approves call
Letter of Agreement	Vestry	Approves final form
Transition & Review	Rector & Vestry	Supports

For guidance at any point, contact the diocesan office (admin@c4so.org) to set up a meeting with one of the Bishops. Additionally, the diocesan office expects bi-weekly updates throughout the process from the Search Committee. Our desire is that every Rector search be a Spirit-led journey of discernment and renewal for the entire community.