



Overview of the Search Process Convocation of American Churches in Europe

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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 search committee and vestry maximum latitude in finding good candidates 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 gives notice of resignation, which must be accepted both by the Vestry 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 search committee. The meeting should be open to anyone else who wishes to come.

That meeting should be 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, and the resultant leadership skills required of the new rector. It also explains the process in depth, and sets forth the basic schedule for the call.

Step 3: the Vestry names the search committee. It issues a survey of the parish's members. 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.

Step 4: when the parish is ready to receive names, the Bishop places the position on the Church Deployment Office list, and advertises it elsewhere as well (e.g., *Church Times*, *Living Church*, *Anglicans Online*, etc.). As the names come in, the search committee selects the first group of candidates, and writes to thank those not chosen.

Step 5: the committee then sends a questionnaire to the remaining candidates along with a copy of the profile. The Bishop may also name candidates at this point, who will receive questionnaires and profiles as well.

Step 6: as soon as the deadline for replies occurs, the committee selects up to 10 quarter-finalists. These then receive telephone interviews. The Bishop does a very basic screening with their bishops.

Step 7: a group of 4 or fewer candidates are selected for on-site visits (if possible). The Bishop runs in-depth background checks.

Step 8: the Search Committee names the finalists, who come for interviews by both Vestry and Bishop. The Bishop informs the Vestry whether there are any unsuitable candidates (this is unusual, but quite possible).

Step 9: the Vestry calls a new rector from among the finalists, if they are convinced they have found the right priest. The priest formally accepts the call. A priest called to be Rector must transfer his or her Letter Dimissory to the Bishop in charge.

Step 10: 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 publicized. The priest makes application for visa and/or other documents required for work and residency in the country where the congregation is located. *No priest can begin ministry in the Convocation before these documents have been issued.*

Step 11: a transition committee begins the work of welcoming the new rector (and family).

Step 12: the Bishop or his representative institutes the new priest as Rector of the parish.

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 parishioners and Vestry members not on the search committee will not be privy to information about candidates until the very last stages. The Search Committee chair should give updates about the *process* to the congregation, and their survey feedback should be taken seriously in developing the profile. The committee should also maintain good communication with all candidates, especially those not selected.

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 the search committee develop a profile, a parish survey, a questionnaire for candidates, 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 American Churches in Europe