



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

Wardens' and Vestry's First Steps in Clergy Transition (When a Rector is departing)

When the Wardens receive the Rector's resignation, their ministry kicks into high gear. And, they do not need to do all of the work themselves, although they are, with the Vestry, canonically "in charge" between the departure of the Rector and the appointment of a Priest in Charge (PIC).

- First, the Rector's resignation is officially accepted by the Vestry and that acceptance is recorded in the Vestry minutes.
- Next, the Wardens are canonically required to notify the Bishop's office of that acceptance, and that the rector's position will be vacant as of (date resignation is effective).
- In most cases, a "Clergy Compensation Capacity Analysis" is carried out by the office of the Canon for Mission Finance and Administration. The office of the Canon for Mission Leadership (CML) will request the necessary financial information from the wardens.
- The CML will set dates to meet with the Vestry. This can take place during the last month of the rector's service if the rector is NOT present at the meeting. After the rector departs, the CML will come to preach at the main Sunday service and conduct a Parish meeting about the Transition Process.
- A letter should be sent to the parish from the Wardens and Vestry assuring the community about the ongoing life of the parish (including services and pastoral coverage), and the next steps in the Transition Process.
- The Wardens and Vestry, with the departing Rector, are responsible for making the parishioners aware of the Leaving Well Policy prior to the farewell liturgy.
- There should be lay worship leaders in the parish prepared to lead Morning Prayer for Sunday worship. If ordained leadership is needed for worship, Wardens will contract with clergy for occasional Sunday services and other pastoral care until a PIC has been appointed (usually 3-6 months).

Some members of the Vestry can focus on helping oversee the health of the parishioners in the interest of establishing a healthy, life-giving, positive time of



transition. They serve as “eyes on the ground,” able to identify areas of systemic concern and bring these into conversation with the leadership as well as serving as a calming voice in the midst of what is often a period of fear and anxiety. Empathetic listening and patient understanding are essential to this work.

Tasks typically undertaken by this group may include:

- Providing support for clergy who are present — the departing Rector, Assistant(s), and their families
- Working to ensure that celebrations and thanksgivings for the ministry of the departing Rector are priorities for the parish
- Monitoring the effect of the Transition Process on the heart and life of the parish — listening to thoughts and concerns throughout the process and reporting on their impressions and findings regularly to the Vestry
- Enhancing and enabling communication throughout the transition time — suggesting a variety of ways for parishioners to gather and be apprised of information through forums, pot-luck dinners, picnics, etc.; along with informal gatherings where conversation is encouraged
- Serving as “spotters”, noting parishioners who don’t seem to be around as often and making a conscious effort at reaching out to those on the margins or those who have become disenfranchised

To the Congregation: Saying Goodbye Well

- Suggest that parishioners take time individually to share a few last words with the outgoing priest and tie up any loose ends.
- Encourage all parishioners to be a part of the farewell celebration.
- The parish will likely give a community gift to the outgoing priest — which may be an item, money (called a “purse”), or combination thereof.
- There is a liturgical farewell, “Liturgy for the Ending of a Pastoral Relationship”, in the Book of Occasional Services, which can be part of the rector’s last Sunday service. While the liturgy assumes the presence of a diocesan representative, a Bishop or Canon may not be available. The CML can provide a version of the liturgy that can be done without diocesan representation.
- At the final farewell celebration, it is appropriate for the Vestry to develop and emcee the program.