



When You've Found Your Finalist

for Associate/Assistant Rector

A Few Notes:

- In most cases, [Ed Keithly](#), Vocational Development Minister, serves as transition minister for assistant/associate searches. Ed and [Shirley Smith Graham](#), the Transition Minister, are in regular contact about ongoing searches and she's also available for support.
- “A Priest serving as an assistant in a Parish, by whatever title designated, shall be selected by the Rector, and when required by the Canons of the Diocese, subject to the approval of the Vestry, [Vestry approval *is* required in Virginia] and shall serve under the authority and direction of the Rector.” – General Convention Canon III.9.3(c)

The Process

The steps below don't have to be followed exactly in this order, but the order is intentional.

1. **Conduct Reference Checks, esp. Transition Minister Reference:** Be sure you have spoken to the finalist's references, and especially that you've received a reference from a Diocese of Virginia transition minister. If the finalist is not from this diocese, we will seek a reference from their diocesan transition minister.
2. **Background Check:** Ask your transition minister if we have a current background check on this person (often the case for seminarians from this diocese). If a background check is needed (likely if they're not a recent ordinand from this diocese), see instructions at the end of this document.
3. **Vestry Confirmation:** The canons require the associate rector be approved by the vestry. Our recommendation is that the vestry be made comfortable with the finalist selection, but we don't prescribe how that unfolds. Whether the vestry meets or interviews the finalist, whether the rector and/or search committee presents on the discernment that brought them to this decision—all those things are local decisions. The Transition & Vocation office is happy to talk through your process with you if you would find that helpful.
4. **Candidate Confirmation:** Call the finalist and ask if she is willing to accept the call (though the call is not officially extended/accepted until after Bishop Confirmation).
5. **Bishop Confirmation:** Before LOA negotiation begins, let the transition minister know so we can initiate bishop confirmation, which happens in one of two ways:
 - a. **If the finalist is from this diocese,** the transition minister will share the prospective call with the bishop.
 - b. **If the candidate is from another diocese,** let the transition minister know you'd like to set up a “Bishop to Bishop” call and a “Bishop to Candidate” call. This is important as calling an associate isn't just about welcoming a new priest to your church, but a new priest to this diocese. *We ask your patience here.* Sometimes it takes a little time for the Bishops to coordinate their schedules.
6. **Rector & Finalist LOA Negotiation:** The rector (or proxy) negotiates with the finalist to ‘come to terms’ following the Assistant Rector Letter of Agreement template on the [diocesan website](#). Comparable salaries are available on page 15 of the [compensation guidelines](#), and Ed Keithly can provide comparables specific to recent ordinands.

7. Once Bishop Confirmation is finished and approval is given the call can be officially extended to the finalist. (Assuming Vestry approval has already been given.)
8. **Transition LOA Review:**
 - a. Once you come to terms on the LOA (using the [diocesan template](#)), send an unsigned draft to Ed, who will review and give feedback. It helps if any proposed changes/additions/deletions to the LOA are noted with the track changes feature or highlighted. Our LOA template is a template rather than a sample, meaning the language is meant to stay largely intact. That said, we don't wish to limit helpful additions or clarifications, but making those clear will help the revision process.
 - b. Once feedback is given, the LOA can be signed, scanned and emailed to Ed, who will send it to Bishop Goff, letting her know that it's been reviewed.
 - c. Please allow *10 business days* from the day the LOA is received to when the final is returned. *The call cannot be announced until the Bishop has signed the LOA.* The length of time it takes to approve an LOA depends primarily on the number of edits and wait time for signatures, but we do try to prioritize LOA review.
9. **Announcing!** Once you've received the LOA with all signatures, an announcement of the new call can be made.
 - a. Be sure to coordinate the announcement with the incoming associate rector and the community they will be departing.
 - b. Please be sure to release and thank other candidates before a public announcement is made, if you haven't already.
 - c. Please let Ed know the date you plan to announce so we can be sure to not preempt your announcement (in the monthly Clergy Communique or informally).

If a background check is needed...

When you're ready to start background checks, you can follow the instructions on the [background check webpage](#).

Be sure the candidate is ready for you to initiate this process, and you'll want to let the candidate know to expect an email from Praesidium. As a security measure, the candidate will have just 48 hours to respond to Praesidium's email.