

The Episcopal Diocese of Ohio

Guidelines and Sample Letters for Clergy Transition Announcement (Arrival)

Below you'll find guidelines and a template for announcing a new priest to a faith community. This resource is designed to help wardens and incoming clergy communicate the news with clarity, warmth, and coordination across all involved communities.

Timing

- Public announcements must only occur after the Letter of Agreement has been finalized and signed by the new priest, the vestry, and Bishop Anne.
- Ideally, the background check should be completed before the announcement is made.
- Announcements should be coordinated in conversation with the incoming priest, ensuring a respectful timeline for both communities:
 - The current parish (where the priest is departing) should receive the news first, with approximately one hour's notice before the receiving congregation is informed.
 - The receiving parish (the priest's new call) should hear the news next, in a timely and coordinated fashion.
- Announcements should not take place on a Sunday, so that all members may receive the same message at the same time, outside of the dynamics of Sunday worship.

Format

- Announcements should be shared via the parish email listserv, website, and social media channels.
- Timing should be coordinated across all platforms so the news is released simultaneously.
- You may choose to share the announcement in video format, in written form, or both. A video from the new priest can be a warm and effective complement to the written announcement.

Contents of the Announcement

The announcement should consist of two coordinated messages:

1. Letter from the Wardens

- a. Names the new priest and expresses gratitude for the discernment journey.
- b. Thanks the search committee and consultant (by name, if appropriate), as well as interim clergy and lay leadership who have guided the parish through the transition.
- c. Includes information about the new priest's first Sunday and any planned welcome events.
- d. Names the interim clergy's final Sunday and expresses appreciation for their ministry.

2. Letter from the Incoming Priest

- a. Offers an introduction in their own voice: a brief bio, what drew them to the call, and expressions of hope for the ministry ahead.
- b. Includes a warm and faithful tone that reflects gratitude, anticipation, and pastoral presence.
- c. May optionally include a family photo or a short video message.

Template Letters

Subject: Announcing Our Next Rector/Priest-in-Charge:

Dear People of [Church Name],

Grace to you and peace from God our Creator.

Rector opening paragraph: We are thrilled to share the joyful news that [The Rev. Full Name] has accepted our call to serve as the next Rector of [Church Name]. After a thoughtful and prayerful search process, the Vestry voted unanimously to extend this call, and it has been affirmed by Bishop Anne B. Jolly.

In priest-in-charge instances, use this opening paragraph instead: We are thrilled to share the joyful news that [the Rev. Full Name] has been appointed by Bishop Anne B. Jolly, with the unanimous support of the Vestry, to serve as the next Priest-in-Charge of [Church Name]. [His/Her/Their] appointment is for a [NUMBER]-year term, with the hope that, if all discern this ministry to be life-giving and fruitful, it may continue beyond that time.

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All letters continue:

[Clergy Name] will begin their ministry among us on [start date], with their first Sunday being [first worship date]. Plans are underway for a warm and celebratory welcome—and we hope you'll join us in making [him/her/they] feel at home.

We are deeply grateful for the faithful work of our search committee: [list names, if appropriate], and to our search consultant, [consultant name], for their dedicated guidance throughout the discernment process. We also give thanks for the steadfast leadership of [interim clergy name], who has shepherded our community with grace and care during this transitional season. [His/Her/Their] final Sunday with us will be [interim's last Sunday], and we will share more soon about how we plan to honor and thank [him/her/them].

This has been a Spirit-led process, and we rejoice in the future we now begin together.

Below is a letter of introduction from [The Rev. Full Name] to help you begin to get to know them in their own words.

Faithfully,

[Senior Warden Name], Senior Warden

[Junior Warden Name], Junior Warden

[Church Name], [City, State]

Letter of Introduction from the Incoming Clergy

Dear People of [Church Name],

I am delighted to greet you as your incoming [Rector/Priest-in-Charge/Vicar]. Over the past [timeframe] of prayer, conversation, and discernment, it has become clear to me that the Holy Spirit is indeed alive and moving among you. I am honored to walk alongside you in this next chapter of faithful ministry.

A bit about me: [Insert brief bio – prior parishes, seminary, family, areas of ministry passion, etc. Example: I come to you after serving as Associate Rector at St. Mary's in Springfield, and before that, I worked in campus ministry and hospital chaplaincy. I studied at [Seminary] and was ordained in [year].]

What drew me to [Church Name] is your deep commitment to [values from the profile or discernment process—welcome, formation, justice, creativity, etc.], and your desire to

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grow more fully into the community God is calling you to be. I am eager to join you in listening for that call and responding together with courage and joy.

In the coming weeks, I'll be saying farewell to my current community and preparing for this new beginning. I look forward to meeting you all—through worship, conversation, and shared ministry—and discovering all that God has in store for us.

With gratitude and anticipation,

Faithfully,

[The Rev. Full Name]

Incoming [Rector/Priest-in-Charge/Vicar]

[Optional contact or social media]