The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh

Policies Concerning the Hiring of Clergy (and Lay Persons) for Parish Positions

Required Background Check

Timing of Request

When the search process for the calling of a new clergy person is nearing its conclusion, i.e. a call has been issued by the vestry and accepted by the candidate or the search committee has reduced the pool of potential candidates to the small number of a final slate. The background check process must be completed before a public announcement of the new clergy person is made.

Procedure

It is the responsibility of the senior warden to contact the bishop's executive assistant with the request to formally initiate the background check with Oxford Document Management Company. The bishop's executive assistant will require the name and current contact information for the person(s) for whom the background checks will be done. The candidate **should not** be the person initiating this process.

Cost

The cost of the formal background check process ranges from $170 to $350 per individual, depending primarily on the states in which he/she has resided or been employed and the frequency with which the individual has changed employment or residency. The parish is responsible for the entire cost of the background check(s). The diocese will bill the parish for these costs when it receives the invoice(s). In cases where the cost(s) of the background check(s) cause significant financial stress on a parish's ministry, the senior warden may contact the bishop's office and request financial assistance.

Duration of Process

The background check process requires a minimum of two weeks from its formal initiation. It may take several weeks if the candidate's background is more complex and/or the required respondents and agencies are slow to return the inquiries they receive.

Letter of Agreement

For clergy, it is *required* that prior to beginning a compensated ministry within the Diocese of Pittsburgh, a **Letter of Agreement**, specifying Terms of Call and Compensation, has been signed by the clergy person, the senior warden or other officer of the parish or employing organization, and the bishop. An original, signed copy of the Letter of Agreement is to be maintained in the files of the diocesan office.

Terms of compensation within the Letter of Agreement are to be reviewed annually, and the entire Letter of Agreement should be reviewed and updated periodically. For further information on the calculation and structuring of Compensation, see the *2014 Compensation Guide for Clergy and Lay Employees* available on the diocesan website.

It is strongly recommended that similar, periodically updated Letters of Agreement be for all Lay Employees as well.

Public Announcement of New Ministry:

Under no circumstances should a public announcement concerning the beginning of a new ministry be made before the bishop has signed off on the completed Letter of Agreement and the background check process is sufficiently complete, as determined by the bishop's office.

The bishop's office must also be consulted in the process of scheduling a date and time for any public liturgical events such a *Celebration of New Ministry*. Such celebrations normally occur several weeks after a new rector or other minister begins his/her new ministry.

Other Helpful Resources

The Church Pension Group website has several helpful checklists for parish administrators under the Administrators' Resource Center. These are called "What to Do When …", for example, "When You Hire a New Cleric," "When You Hire a New Lay Employee," "When a Cleric Retires," etc.

These checklists provide information on various benefit options and the associated time frames for each. If you have questions, please contact the Diocesan Financial Administrator or the Church Pension Group.

The link for the checklists is: www.cpg.org/administrators/resources/arc/what-to-do-when/