



Resources for Parish Leaders

October 2006

Introduction to Resources

These resources are designed for Orthodox Christian parishes that would like to grow and enhance their ministry through expanding their staff. Many Orthodox Christian priests and parishes are finding that to meet the growing needs of those they serve, it is important to expand their staff in order to focus specifically on these needs.

The success of adding an additional worker to your parish payroll is directly related to how thoughtfully you undertake this hiring process. What are the needs of your parish? How do you determine these? How are they related to the long-term mission of your parish? Does everyone agree? How is consensus and commitment formed? Is the parish community committed to funding this person? Different parishes will have different needs: some may need a full-time youth director, others a full-time parish education director, others a more general pastoral assistant, and others a full-time cantor/chanter. Smaller parishes may only be able to afford part-time assistants, and should design job descriptions accordingly.

The following resources are provided to help you with this important work:

- ❑ Tips on hiring for parish ministry
- ❑ Determining remuneration/salary
- ❑ Tips on writing a job description for a parish ministry opportunity
- ❑ Creating a posting for a ministry opportunity
- ❑ Tips on creating a variety of interview questions
- ❑ Equal employment opportunity interview guidelines
- ❑ Sample interview worksheet
- ❑ Sample reference check form

Hiring for Parish Ministry

Hiring for parish ministry can be a daunting task, but it does not have to be. Many priests find convening a core group of faithful parishioners to define and oversee this process quite helpful. In some parishes a subcommittee may be formed from the parish council. In smaller parishes it may be the parish priest taking most of the responsibility, perhaps assisted by two or three parishioners.

The parish priest can discuss some of the questions posed in the introduction with his team as a way to prepare for hiring. The priest may decide to take a team approach to hiring by divvying up the responsibilities among his team. For example, a different person can oversee each of the elements of the hiring process. Another approach is to have each member of the team create and ask interview questions that cover different aspects of the position. The team then compares notes on each candidate after each interview.

Step 1 – Getting started

- ❑ Assess your needs.
- ❑ Decide how to meet those needs. Hire a full-time parish worker? A part-time parish worker?
- ❑ Decide how much of the parish’s budget can be committed to this. Salary guidelines include:
 - At what rate are other employees of equivalent education, ability and responsibility compensated?
 - What benefits can we afford and offer?
 - How will this impact the parish’s mission and work?
 - What is the cost of living in our area?
- ❑ Establish a hiring team.
- ❑ Identify the hiring process with roles and responsibilities for all involved.

Step 2 – Writing a job description and posting

- ❑ See the resources:
 - Tips on writing a job description for a parish ministry opportunity.
 - Creating a posting for a ministry opportunity.
- ❑ Email posting to Orthodoxjobs.com.
- ❑ Consider putting your posting in local and national Orthodox papers and magazines.
- ❑ Email or mail posting to anyone you know who might be interested in the job, and invite them to apply.
- ❑ Email or mail posting to anyone you know who might know potential candidates.

Step 3 – Screening applicants by reviewing resumes

- ❑ When reviewing applicants’ resumes ask:
 - Does the candidate meet the basic, core qualifications for the position?
 - Does the candidate meet the specific hiring criteria and skills and experience?
- ❑ Establish a separate file for each of the applicants who pass the initial screening process.
- ❑ Conduct phone interviews with candidates who pass the initial screening to discuss the job description and briefly go through why they feel they are a good fit for the job.
 - Ask them what salary they are interested in receiving. If the requirement is too high, ask them if they would consider a lower salary.
- ❑ Invite for interviews the candidates who pass the phone interview.

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Step 4 – Interviewing candidates

- Interviewing do's (from *Human Resources Kit for Dummies* by Max Messmer*):
 - Make sure you are familiar with the job description and hiring criteria.
 - Review everything the candidate has submitted and note any areas needing clarification or explanation.
 - Write out the questions you intend to ask and keep the list in front of you during the interview. Make sure the candidate is doing more talking than the interviewers. After talking briefly about the job description, ask the candidate to go through his or her resume and highlight reasons why he or she would be a good match.
 - Have a timetable or schedule for the interview to ensure you cover all your key areas.
 - Use a room that is private and reasonably comfortable.
 - Begin the interview with small talk as a warm-up and to put the candidate at ease. Thank the candidate for coming.
 - Know what you want to gain from the interview before you even begin the interview. For ways to get to know your candidates well, ask what, when, where, who, why, and how questions.
 - Take notes during the interview. See the interview template in the back.
 - Vary the style of questions:
 - Closed-ended
 - Open-ended
 - Hypothetical
 - Ask for specific examples from past experiences. If candidates are applying for a youth position, ask them to describe their favorite retreat in detail. Also ask them to tell you about retreats they conducted that went badly and why. Tell them to be specific.
 - After the interview take some time to record your impressions and summarize your notes while everything is still fresh in your mind.
- Close interviews properly. Thank candidates for coming and explain they should be hearing from you after the committee reviews all applicants. It is not proper to give any applicant an answer immediately. There are legal ramifications in making faulty job promises and it is best to speak to your committee and look at all candidates before making a job offer.
- Interviewing don'ts – avoid questions that relate to any of these areas as they may violate employment & discrimination laws (from *Human Resources Kit for Dummies* by Max Messmer):
 - Race
 - Sexual orientation
 - Ancestry or national origin
 - Marital status
 - Military service
 - Height or weight (unless directly related to job performance)
 - Political preference or membership in social organizations
 - Handicaps or disabilities
 - Remember! If you don't need the information, don't ask the question.

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Step 5 – Evaluating candidates

- ❑ Set up a system that identifies and weighs the hiring criteria. Use this for *each* candidate. See interview template in the back.
- ❑ Check a candidate's references.

Step 6 – Offering your top candidate the job

- ❑ Once you've decided on a candidate, you're ready to make the offer.
- ❑ Review the job description with the candidate to make sure each of you understands what is expected.
- ❑ Clarify your parish's policies or procedures such as:
 - Weekend work
 - Overtime
 - Travel requirements
- ❑ Give all the details about the compensation:
 - Pay
 - Benefits
 - Vacation
 - Anything extra
- ❑ Give a reasonable acceptance deadline.
- ❑ Put the offer in writing. You may want to have your candidate sign a duplicate copy of the job-offer letter as an indication of acceptance.

To discern well and make a good hiring decision be sure to:

- ❑ Stick with the hiring criteria.
- ❑ Take your time.
- ❑ Take into account all the information you have about a candidate (resume, application, interview).
- ❑ Get input from others who know the parish and the ministry well.

*Messmer, Max. *Human Resources Kit for Dummies*. Hungry Minds, Inc.: 1999.

Determining Remuneration

The topic of remuneration is an important part of the planning process when parish leaders consider adding to their staff. Compensation is most likely your top expense. Once you identify your needs and how to meet those needs it is then time to see what financial resources can be committed to this. We have provided a separate section on compensation because what you pay someone and how you make decisions about this can profoundly affect the quality of your parish's ministry. It can also affect your ability to attract and retain reliable, productive lay pastoral assistants.

The terminology of employee compensation can be confusing. The following guide to terms is adapted from *Human Resources Kit for Dummies*:

Compensation – This refers to any remuneration that employees receive in exchange for their work.

Base wage or salary – This is the pay that employees receive before any types of deductions.

Benefits – Any perks (e.g. health insurance, paid vacation) provided by an employer in addition to wages or salary.

Exempt workers – These are employees who are paid as a flat weekly, biweekly, or monthly amount, regardless of how many hours they work.

Non-exempt workers – These are full time employees who are paid per hour.

Think strategically about compensation, keeping the needs and ministries of your parish in mind. Here are some good questions to guide your planning:

- Do your staff members feel they receive a fair and equitable wage for the work they perform?
- Are your payroll costs in line with the overall financial health of your parish?
- Is your basic philosophy of compensation clearly understood by all your staff and does it have the strong support of you, the parish council, and the employees alike?
- Does the pay scale for the various jobs in the parish reflect the relative importance of the job and the skills that performing those jobs requires?
- Are your compensation policies in line with state and federal laws involving minimum wages and job classifications?
- Can the candidate reasonably live in your area with the salary you provide?
- Is your salary range too low for a full-time employee? Should you consider hiring a part-time employee?
- Have you conducted research on how similar jobs in your area compete with this job? Consider looking at teacher salaries in your area or hospital chaplains.

Most parish leaders find working with a human resources professional very helpful in sorting out all the complexities of creating a compensation program. Many find legal counsel helpful too.

Writing a Job Description for a Parish Ministry Opportunity

When creating a job description include:

1. Title of the position
2. Department (if applicable)
3. Direct report (to whom the person directly reports). The more people the candidate needs to report to, the more stressful and confusing the job will be.
4. Responsibilities (describes clearly and simply what the person does). Be sure that the job description is reasonable and that you are not trying to hire Superman.
5. Necessary skills (describes the skills the person needs to fulfill the responsibilities)
6. Experience required (describes specific experiences, education, training, and certification relevant to the ministry opportunity)

Sample job description:

Position Title

Pastoral Assistant

Department

N/A

Reports to

Parish priest

Responsibilities

- Develop an Orthodox Christian education program for children and adults that serves the long-term mission of the church; recruit and train lay leaders to support the program.
- Assist in leadership of parish youth programs (e.g., JOY/HOPE, GOYA, Teen SOYO, etc.).
- Lead a weekly Bible study.
- Preach one time per month.
- Assist with general administrative responsibilities.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Necessary Skills

- Knowledge of Orthodox theology and liturgical practice
- Demonstrated leadership abilities
- Team player who enjoys working on projects with others.
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Sound administrative skills

Qualifications required

- Master's degree from an accredited Orthodox theological seminary
- Minimum of one year of experience in Christian ministry (or two summers of experience)
- Member in good standing of the Orthodox Christian Church

Creating a Posting for a Ministry Opportunity

When creating a posting for a ministry opportunity in your parish include:

1. Ministry position title
2. Ministry position location (city, state)
3. Ministry position contact (name of parish, name of contact person)
4. Contact phone
5. Contact email
6. Website address
7. Ministry position salary or salary range (optional)
8. Ministry position description
9. Date of posting

Creating a Variety of Interview Questions

Open-Ended Questions

- Provide more information about the candidate.
- Give examples of how well the candidate thinks through a question, organizes a response and uses verbal communication.
- Gives you time to listen, to analyze the response and to prepare follow-up.
- Examples: How? Why? Tell me about. What?

Situation Stories

- A situation story is an account of any experience in which the candidate might have demonstrated what you are looking for.
- Shows problem-solving/decision-making skills
- Example: Tell me about one of the most difficult decisions you made and what happened as a result.
 - Look for what the candidate did and the process the candidate used.
 - Look at how successful the candidate was.
 - Look at the skills the candidate demonstrated in dealing with the situation.

Success Stories

- A success story is a situation story with a positive ending. It is the candidate's opportunity to tell you something that (s)he did well.
- Examples: Give me an example of some recent work you did that was of very high quality. Tell me about a particularly difficult situation that you were successful in addressing.
 - Look for skills, personal characteristics, and motivation.

Ask for Outside Perspectives

- Ask the candidate how (s)he thinks other people might view him/her.
- Examples: What might your current director tell me about the quality of your work? How would your best friend describe you?
 - Look for how the candidate describes himself/herself.

Ask Self-Evaluation Questions

- Ask a candidate to describe, evaluate, or rate him/herself.
- Examples: How skilled are you in performing ___? How would you rate your skills?
 - Look for supporting statements and relevant experiences.

Creating a Variety of Interview Questions

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Ask Preference Questions

- Likes and dislikes about previous jobs and experiences
- Example: What do you like/dislike most about your current work responsibilities?
 - Look for how well the candidate will "fit" with the job, team, parish.
 - Look for how well the candidate's likes and dislikes match the requirements of the position.

Sample Interview Questions for Youth Workers

- Could you go through your resume and highlight what you have done?
- Give me an example of a retreat you offered that went very well. Why was it successful? What about one that didn't go well? Why was it unsuccessful?
- How would you involve parents in your ministry?
- Tell me about the last retreat you ran.
- What would be the first thing you'd do if you were hired here?
- What are you looking for in this job? How would you like to grow in this position?
- If a teen approached you with a serious problem, how would you handle it?

Sample Interview Questions for Lay Assistants

- Could you go through your resume and highlight what you have done?
- Give me an example of a program you would want to implement here. What past experiences would help you implement such a program?
- Describe your experience ministering to different age groups. What did you learn from that experience?
- What would be the first thing you'd do if you were hired here?
- What are you looking for in this job? How would you like to grow in this position?
- If a parishioner approached you concerning a sick family member, how would you handle it?

Equal Employment Opportunity Interview Guidelines

Subject	Lawful *	Unlawful
Address	Applicant's place of residence	Inquiry as to whether candidate owns home, rents rooms, or lives with relatives. Inquiry into duration of current or previous addresses.
Age	Are you over 18 years of age?	Inquiry about age or date of birth.
Arrest Record	Inquiry as to whether candidate was ever convicted of a crime	Asking an interviewed candidate if (s)he has ever been arrested.
Birth Date	None	Requirement that candidate submit birth certificate, naturalization or baptismal record. Requirement that applicant produce proof of age in the form of a birth certificate or baptismal record.
Citizenship	Asking whether the candidate is a citizen of the U.S. If not a citizen of the U.S., does candidate intend to become one? If not a citizen of the U.S., has the candidate the legal right to remain permanently in the U.S.? Does the candidate intend to remain in the U.S.? Was the candidate ever interned or arrested as an enemy alien?	Asking candidate of what country(ies) (s)he is a citizen. Inquiry as to whether candidate is a naturalized or a native-born citizen; the date when candidate acquired citizenship. Requirement that candidate produce naturalization papers. Inquiry as to whether candidate's parents or spouse are naturalized or native-born citizens of the U.S., the date when parents or spouse acquired citizenship.
Children	None	Ages of children, plans to have children in the future, child care arrangements, capacity to reproduce, advocacy of any form of birth control or family planning.
Disability	None	Inquiry as to whether the individual is disabled. Inquiry about certain diseases for which candidate may have been treated.
Education	Inquiry into candidate's academic, vocational, or professional education and the public/private schools attended	Inquiry about year of graduation from high school. Inquiry about the nationality, racial or religious affiliation of schools attended.
Experience	Inquiry into work experience	
Gender, Sex	None	Inquiry as to sex. Inquiry as to how candidate wishes to be addressed: Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms.
Language	Inquiry into languages candidate can speak and write fluently	Inquiry as to native languages. Inquiry into how candidate acquired ability to read, write or speak a foreign language.
Marital Status	None	Inquiry as to marital status, name or occupation of spouse.

Equal Employment Opportunity Interview Guidelines

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Subject	Lawful *	Unlawful
Military Experience	Inquiry into candidate's military experience in the U.S. or in a state militia or service in particular branch of U.S. service	Inquiry into candidate's general military experience.
Name	Have you ever worked under a different name? Is there any additional information relative to change of name, use of an assumed name or nickname necessary to enable a check on your work record?	Original name of applicant whose name has been changed by court order or otherwise, maiden name of a married person, or requiring prefix (i.e., Mrs.) to applicant's name. Spouse's name.
National Origin, Birthplace	None	Inquiry into candidate's lineage, ancestry, national origin, birthplace, descent, parentage, nationality, or native language. Inquiry regarding nationality or birthplace of candidate's parents or spouse.
Organizations	Inquiry into candidate's membership in organizations that (s)he considers relevant to ability to perform job	Requesting candidate to list all clubs, societies, and lodges to which (s)he belongs.
Race or Color	None	Considering the complexion or color of the skin, hair or eyes; or any other questions directly or indirectly indicating race or color.
Relatives	Names of candidate's relatives, other than a spouse already employed by the same employer	Names, addresses, ages, number or other information about candidate's spouse, children, or other relatives not employed by the same employer.
Religion or Creed	None	Inquiry into candidate's religious denomination, religious affiliations, church, parish, pastor or religious holiday observed.

* Inquiries which would otherwise be deemed lawful may, in certain circumstances, be deemed as evidence of unlawful discrimination when the inquiry seeks to elicit information about a selection criterion which is not job-related and which has a disproportionately burdensome effect upon the members of a minority group and cannot be justified by business necessity.

Remember, the purpose of an interview is to evaluate a candidate for a job so only questions that speak to a bona fide occupational qualification may be asked. In a parish ministry position religious affiliation is more than likely a legitimate qualification and in this case an inquiry is not unlawful.

Sample Interview Worksheet

Candidate:

Date Interviewed:

Skills and Knowledge

- Technical skills
- Communication skills
- General knowledge

Competencies

- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- Communication
- Real vs. ideal expectations

Experience

- Relevant experience
- Quality of experience
- Progressive growth

Job Suitability

- Match of skills to position requirements

Sample Reference Check Form

Name of applicant:

Place of employment:

Person contacted:
(Title)

Telephone number:

Dates of employment:

Title:

How long in that position:

Duties:

COMMENTS

Quality of work:

Quantity of work:

Attendance record:

Punctuality:

Ability to get along w/peers:

Supervision given or received:

Reason for leaving:

Would you rehire: Yes_____ No_____ Explain:

Additional comments:

Salary:

Checked by:

Date: