

## What is a Priest-in-Charge?

At times, being an Episcopalian involves deciphering “episcopalese” or our own unique “churchy” jargon in order to understand something. This may be true for you if you have ever wondered about the different titles of priests who serve in various settings. To complicate it even more, it can be a mixed bag depending on which area of the Anglican Communion you reside in!

The terms “Rector,” “Vicar,” “Priest-in-Charge,” and “Interim” all denote different roles and levels of authority within a parish or mission. In the Episcopal Church, the process of calling a priest involves a collaborative effort between the bishop, the parish, and the individual discerning a call to ministry. The bishop, as the chief pastor of the diocese, plays a key role in recommending candidates, overseeing the ordination process, and ensuring the individual's readiness. The parish, through its vestry and congregation, participates in the discernment process, expressing their needs and preferences for a new leader. It is also a bishop's prerogative to directly appoint a priest to a parish at his or her discretion.

A Rector is the priest in charge of a self-supporting parish, holding the highest level of responsibility and authority. The appointment of a Rector is not time limited. A Vicar, on the other hand, is typically the priest in charge of a mission or chapel, often with support from the diocese. Can be indefinite, like a rector, or time-limited like a Priest-in-Charge.

I was called to Holy Family as a Priest-in-Charge. A Priest-in-Charge holds all the responsibilities and authority of a Rector and is eligible to be called as Rector at the conclusion of a three-year period via mutual consent between the priest and the people. In our Diocese, Bishop Jennifer often appoints a Priest-in-Charge after a long tenure, when a parish is between rectors, or when she wants to strategically manage a transition.

An Interim is a priest is appointed for a limited time to lead a parish during a transition period, often with specific goals related to stability and preparation for a new, permanent leader. While the interim is serving, the authority within the parish lies with the Wardens and the Vestry.

- Father Frank