

GUIDELINES FOR QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION WITH THE CONGREGATION

A successful question and answer session with the entire congregation is important but must be handled with the utmost care to protect the integrity of the candidating process. The following guidelines will help insure the candidate is treated fairly and the congregation has their questions answered in a timely manner.

1. A copy of the candidate's doctrinal statement should be distributed to the congregation at least a week before the Q&A, along with a short bio of him and his family and a picture.
2. Choose a time where the majority of those interested in asking a question can attend and allow enough time for the candidate to express his opinions on a wide range of issues.
3. Anyone who might be hesitant to speak in front of the congregation should be encouraged to write out their questions and give them to the Search Committee several days before the Q&A.
4. Choose a moderator to facilitate the session - someone who is capable of fielding questions and deflecting those that are inappropriate. The moderator should be someone from the Search Committee as he will have in depth knowledge of questions the candidate has already addressed.
5. All questions are to be addressed to the moderator who will repeat the question to the candidate. This allows the moderator to receive clarification if necessary and a few seconds for the candidate to think before he speaks.
6. Only one question per person should be entertained until everyone has had an opportunity to ask a question.
7. If the question has already been asked and answered, the moderator should note that and ask for another question from the same person.
8. If the question is instruction, either to the candidate or to the congregation, and not actually a question, the moderator should request an actual question.
9. Questions that demand complicated theological answers should be avoided. The questioner should be encouraged to read the candidate's doctrinal statement and then speak to the candidate privately if further clarification is necessary. Every assurance should be given that the Search Committee has thoroughly researched the doctrinal stand of the candidate and determined he is in full agreement with the church's doctrinal positions.
10. Trite questions should be acknowledged but not passed to the candidate.