

Following are *suggested* steps for the pulpit Committee working to ascertain God's will regarding a new pastor for their church. The questions and procedures should be modified to your particular church setting, taking into consideration your location, your needs, and your church Constitution. Anything the Committee is not comfortable with should be omitted.

Pastoral Search Committee Guidelines

I. Look to the Head Shepherd (Col. 1:18)

- A. We are never without a Pastor or Shepherd because Jesus never resigns. (Ps. 23:1)
- B. Jesus continues to build His church. (Matt. 16:18)

II. Trust the Head of the Church to Superintend His Servants

- A. The Master has the right to place and replace His servants. (Rev. 3:7)
- B. Watch your attitude; don't be angry with God or His servant. (Rom. 14:4)
- C. The Head of the church has a master plan for His church and His servants.
(Eph. 4:11-12)

III. Make Prayer and Faithfulness Top Priority

Matthew 9:37-38:

"...The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

- A. Start every Committee meeting with prayer and commit to each other that you will pray daily as you work on individual responsibilities.
- B. Encourage the entire congregation to pray daily for the Committee, for the pastor God will eventually send, and for unity within the church in the interim.
- C. Commit as a Committee to be faithful in your church attendance, your ministries, your giving and your daily walk with Christ. Your example of faithfulness will encourage the church through this difficult time.

Lewis Sperry Chafer said:

"It is as much decreed to be done by prayer as it is decreed to be done at all."

IV. Know What You are Looking For

- A. Study the qualifications of a pastor in the Scripture. (1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9)

- B. Stick to your Church Constitution. This is the agreed upon document that outlines procedures for the functioning of the church body. You will avoid confusion and controversy by following established guidelines.

V. Proceed in an Organized Manner

- A. The Scriptures are almost silent on how to call a pastor. That means God expects you to develop a strategy that implements biblical principles in an appropriate fashion for your congregation.
- B. The choice of members to serve on a Search Committee will vary. Some churches use the Deacons to aid the flow of information. If the Committee is composed of various members of the congregation, the deacon board, as spiritual leaders of the church, will need to be updated regularly on the progress being made. If your church has continuing staff members, their opinions and counsel should be sought. If some are pastoral/elder positions, they can be especially helpful.

It should go without saying that every member of the Search Committee should be a member in good standing of the church, one that attends all the main services and tithes faithfully.

- C. Set aside an adequate amount of time to fulfill this responsibility. Each member of the Committee must be prepared to devote time and energy to the search, using their specific talents and abilities.
- D. Proceed carefully and methodically.
- E. Elect a chairperson who has the drive and sufficient time to keep the whole project on track. Everyone will have responsibility but this person should energize the project.
- F. Set up a timeline with specific goals. The process may take a year or more and you want to keep it moving. Dates will have to be periodically adjusted but without specific goals, you will lose momentum.
- G. The members of the Search Committee should report their general progress to the congregation weekly. The congregation is profoundly impacted by this decision and should be given every consideration throughout the search. Furthermore, it's easy for the Committee to let weeks slip by with no real accomplishment if there is no accountability.
- H. Depending on the size and scope of the church, the Committee might want to consider an interim pastor. If the congregation is capable and willing to take over the everyday

running of the church this might not be necessary. But if the church is large and has a number of strategic ministries, an interim might be in order.

It should be understood from the beginning that the interim is not a candidate. If pressure comes from the Search Committee or the congregation to consider the interim, and he is interested in the position, he should step away from any involvement in the process, refrain from statements to church members about his interest in this ministry, and go through the candidating experience.

VI. Preparation and Paperwork

- A. Poll the church in some way to ascertain needs and expectations. God has the ultimate say in who He brings to the church but He expects us to use our minds and resources in the process. A sample polling sheet is included.
- B. Do a rough demographic study to determine the needs of your community and the people you are trying to reach for Christ.
- C. Write up a brief letter introducing your church to potential prospects. Include a Constitution with By-Laws and Articles of Faith, a church brochure and a short introductory questionnaire (sample included), enough so that he can adequately pray about the opportunity. Your goal is to ascertain whether there is any evidence of the Holy Spirit's leading and whether or not you are theologically and practically compatible.
- D. Put together a Packet to send to serious candidates. This should be done in a professional way and include the following:
 - 1. The Church Constitution and Articles of Faith.
 - 2. A copy of your most recent church directory, one with pictures if you have it
 - 3. A copy of the church budget
 - 4. A brief history of the church, including previous pastors
 - 5. The demographic study of your church: major occupations, races represented, major issues of change in the past 10 years, average attendance at services over the past five years
 - 6. A description of the various ministries held at your church, i.e. AWANA, youth ministries, Bible studies, etc.
 - 7. A map of the city
 - 8. Demographical data from the Chamber of Commerce
 - 9. A few pictures of the church with a description of the facilities

10. A more extensive questionnaire to discuss the finer points of theology and practice.

This questionnaire will also ask for more personal information about the candidate and his family. (A list of suggested questions is attached.)

- E. Record the responses given when a potential candidate's references are called. A sample form with specific questions regarding the personal life, practice, theology and so forth of the candidate is attached. The responsibility of calling references will be shared by different members of the Committee who will then report to the full Committee. It's wise to photocopy the forms for everyone so the discussion can proceed smoothly.
- F. Construct a letter of "thanks but no thanks" to those potential candidates that fill out the paperwork but are not actually invited to visit the church.
- G. Lock down the financial remuneration and benefits you are prepared to offer the new pastor. This should be done before a candidate comes to visit the church and discussed with him at that time. If the church offers a parsonage in lieu of a housing allowance, an equity fund based on current market appreciation should be established as part of the salary package. Moving expenses should also be discussed and solidified. The proposal can be adjusted as you work with the variables of actual candidates, but it is essential to present an overall plan up front.

VII. Where to Obtain Names of Potential Candidates

- A. Bible Colleges and Seminaries that share your theological views
- B. Your CARBC State Representative and the GARBC National Office
- C. Other GARBC State Representatives. Ask your State Representative for their names, e-mail addresses and/or phone numbers.
- D. Ask pastors you trust if they know of possible candidates.
- E. The congregation should be allowed to submit names to the Committee with the understanding that the potential candidate will be contacted ONLY by the Committee.
- F. A specific name should not be given during the weekly progress report to the church until all the research has been completed and the Committee is prepared to offer the man as a potential candidate.

VIII. Establish and Use the Correct Terminology

- A. **Guest Speaker.** Anyone who speaks is a guest speaker, filling in while you do not have a pastor. Some of them may be interested in being considered as a candidate but most will not be.
- B. **Potential Candidate.** This is a speaker the Committee is actively considering. You will probably have several of these. They may become an actual candidate, they may not.
- C. **Candidate.** Only one candidate should be presented to the church at a time. A congregational vote is always taken after he has officially candidated unless he withdraws his name.

IX. Working with Guest Speakers

- A. Make sure the speaker is completely aware of his responsibilities: the services he will speak in, what time they start and the time constraints you expect him to adhere to.
- B. A guest speaker should be given an honorarium for speaking and a reimbursement for any expenses he may incur, i.e. gas, meals and motel. Mileage should be paid at the maximum allowable rate by the IRS. He should be asked how the check is to be made out (some speakers are required to channel funds through a specific organization). The church treasurer or an assistant should be prepared to give him a check that day before he leaves so that he does not have to cover the expense of the trip from his personal funds.

X. Working with Returned Questionnaires

- A. The Committee should carefully and prayerfully review each completed questionnaire and cull those that do not fit the appropriate profile. A “thanks but no thanks” letter should be sent to any that are not being considered.
- B. Potential candidates should be called to discuss generalities. This can be designated to one person who reports back to the Committee.
- C. A potential candidate should be scheduled to come as a guest speaker, with no strings attached. Pastor-less churches normally have a number of guest speakers while they work toward a viable candidate.

XI. Working with a Potential Candidate

- A. The number of men given serious consideration should be one to three. They will be determined by their response to the extensive questionnaire.

- B. References should always be called. It's also a good idea to ask the references for more references you can contact.

It is appropriate to call the churches a potential candidate has pastored. However, if he is currently at a church and has not told them he is considering a move, you should not jeopardize his ministry in any way. Be very careful to ask him who you can and cannot talk to at his current church.

Record the comments of each reference on the appropriate form and photocopy it for other members of the Committee before the next meeting. Use a new form for each reference.

- C. Once the field has been narrowed, set up conference calls with the entire Committee and the potential candidates. A list of unanswered questions or areas from the questionnaire that need further clarification should be written out before the phone call begins. Every member of the Committee should be involved in making this list.
- D. If the potential candidate is pastoring another church, you will learn a great deal about him by sending a delegation to visit his congregation. Again, you will need to be careful not to jeopardize his ministry to that church. Questions to his church members would not be appropriate without his express permission.
- E. Once you have narrowed the list to one candidate, set up a time for him to visit the church.
- F. If a candidate filled out the extensive questionnaire but was not chosen to actually candidate, a letter of regret should be sent thanking him for his response.

XII. The Candidating Experience

- A. Make sure you follow the Constitution to the letter with regard to announcing the candidate and when a vote will be taken. Be certain that the congregation and the candidate are both clear on the exact timeline.
- B. The candidating process will be much easier on the candidate and the church if it is more than just a weekend experience. If possible, schedule a week for the candidate to spend in your community. This is especially important if he is coming from a long distance.
- C. The candidate should spend time with the Committee, staff members and their spouses, the Deacons and their wives, the youth, and any other active and influential groups in the church. They should also spend time in the individual homes of key leaders.

- D. The church should be allowed to question the candidate at a public meeting. However, questions should be filtered through a moderator with the capability of dismissing any that might be inappropriate or have already been sufficiently answered.
- E. Someone with knowledge of the community should take the candidate around town pointing out key places of interest.
- F. If you expect the pastor to live in a parsonage, the candidate will want to see the home and discuss any necessary repairs or renovations. The parsonage should be in the best possible condition for the candidate's visit. Paint or other decorating and appliance choices should be left to the new pastor's discretion but a clear statement of what the church is prepared to provide and maintain in the parsonage (i.e. paint, carpeting, appliances, etc.) should be made.
- G. The Committee should be prepared to discuss the financial package the church is offering.

XIII. Voting

- A. A vote should be taken either the same day the candidate is presented to the church, or definitely no later than the following Sunday. If you wait a week, it should be spent in prayer with no campaigning by anyone either for or against the candidate.
- B. Unless voting is clearly defined in the Constitution, certain questions will come up. The answers to these questions should be clearly stated before the candidate arrives at the church.
 - 1. Who is eligible to vote?
 - 2. Can absentee ballots be used?
 - 3. What does an "abstention" mean? Is it considered a negative vote or not counted at all?
 - 4. What percentage is needed to extend a call? Does the vote have to be unanimous? Will the congregation be asked to vote again if it is not unanimous? We would not recommend this but would encourage you to take one vote and give the candidate the actual count.
 - 5. Will there be a paper ballot? A paper ballot is strongly recommended.

XIV. Follow Up

- A. The candidate should be contacted immediately regarding the outcome of the vote. If it is favorable and he needs additional time to consider the call, a timeline should be established for his acceptance or rejection.
- B. If his response is also favorable, the church body should be notified in the next scheduled church service. This would also be a good time to worship and praise God for His guidance and leading.
- C. A letter of regret should be sent to any other potential candidates the church has contacted.
- D. Notify the State Representative and the National Association of the GARBC that you have called a new pastor. Be prepared to give them his personal information and the date of his first Sunday in the pulpit.
- E. Begin to work on the details of an installation service for the new pastor. In order for local pastors and community leaders who attend other churches to be present, you should consider having this service on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon.
- F. If your new pastor is moving from a long distance, you will want to consider his immediate needs once he arrives. If he plans to purchase a home, he may need a place to stay until it is available. If he is moving into the parsonage, repairs and redecorating would best be done before he actually arrives. A work crew to help unload the truck and a food shower to restock the pantry is always appropriate.