

GOD PLACES PASTORS
Who does God want to be the next pastor?
Acts 20:28

How does God make His will and choice of a new pastor known to a church? Paul passionately addresses the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17-38. What a premiere message! The gemstone is verse 28: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”

Several truths leap off the page. The church belongs to God. He purchased it with Christ’s blood. It belongs to Him, not to them. Pastors are entrusted with a flock belonging to Another. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd of the flock (John 10:14). He is the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20-21), the Shepherd and Bishop, (1 Peter 2:25), and the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 4:4). The Lord is our Shepherd (Psalm 23:1)! Pastors engage in careful self-watch and flock-watch. They are responsible to lead, feed, care for, and protect the sheep. What a high and holy calling to be a pastor serving under the Head of the church, Jesus Christ.

Who ultimately places men into leadership as pastors? The key phrase answering that question is “over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers.” Our risen Lord Jesus Christ through the agency of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6) is the One Who bestows the spiritual gift of pastoring (Ephesians 4:11-12). God specifically placed these Ephesian elders into their pastoral roles. The word translated “hath made,” means to place, set, or lay. And He does the same thing for churches today. God places pastors in their office. **So, the key question is, “Who does God want to be the next pastor of this church?”**

1. **God reveals His choice to a submissive, praying church.** Serious and sustained prayer should pervade the pastoral search. The lay leaders and church members of the church should be praying individually and collectively for the Lord to make His will and choice known. Likewise, prospective candidates should often seek the Lord and His plan (Psalm 143:10; Acts 21:14).
2. **God reveals His will through His Word and its principles.** Everyone should be filled with the Word and be sensitive and submissive to the Word as it is read, preached, and taught in the days leading up to a decision (Romans 12:2).
3. **God points the way through His providential demonstrations of direction.** There may well be matters of timing, location, prior relationships, experience, and connections that will be helpful or profoundly significant in giving spiritual direction (Philippians 2:13).
4. **God leads through essential unity.** Spiritual people recognize God’s leading in a manner marked by essential unity. A united search committee and a high percentage vote of affirmation by the church normally confirm God’s plan. God will show the church and the candidate His will. We can trust Him. (Ephesians 4:3)

The careful process of pastoral search culminates when both God’s people and God’s man recognize that the Spirit of God desires them to come together in the good will and timing of God. The process is formalized by the congregation’s vote of affirmation and calling and by the new pastor’s acceptance of his new responsibilities as coming from the Lord Himself.