

THE PASTORAL SEARCH

How a Church May Seek for a New Pastor An Overview

I. Purpose of the Search

- A. To prayerfully seek one or more prospective candidates for the office of senior pastor who has the **calling, character, capacity, and compatibility** to lead the ministry of this church.
- B. To follow the principles of God's Word, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the leading of the Holy Spirit, the counsel of godly leadership, and the input and choice of the congregation to the man of God's ultimate choosing for the office of senior pastor.
- C. To accomplish the goal in as unified a way as possible, bringing honor to the Lord, the outgoing pastor, and the incoming pastor.
- D. To preserve the essential character and beliefs of this church into the next generation of effective ministry.

II. Preparing for the Search

- A. Who are we as a church?
 1. What is our doctrine?
 2. What is our essential mission and core values?
 3. What is our church's history and ministry culture and personality?
 4. What is appealing to a new pastor and family about the community we serve?
 5. What are our strengths and weaknesses, and what needs to improve?
- B. What is our attitude toward changes that a new pastor will bring?
 1. Are we as a church willing to change toward greater Christlikeness?
 2. Are we as a church willing to follow a pastor leading us to more effective ministry?
 3. What are we willing to change, and what are we not willing to change about *our church*? *What would be considered positive change and negative change?*
 4. How do the answers to the questions above affect our criteria in seeking a new pastor?
 - a. His personal gifts and abilities
 - b. His ability to motivate others toward these ideals
 - c. His administrative skill to develop, implement, delegate, and evaluate

III. Planning the Search Process

- A. Pray
 1. Pray for God's leading the church to the right pastor and God's leading the right pastor to the church. "Lead us to him and him to us."
 2. Pray for God's timing to be right.
 3. Pray for God's people to be unified.
 4. Pray for wisdom, perception, clarity.
 5. Keep praying throughout the process including seasons of prayer.

- B. Read three books: *The Right Pastor; In Search of God's Man;* and *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*. See “Resources” on our GFA church staffing website for more detail. Become familiar with other similar books or articles online about good practices in searching for a pastor.
- C. Develop a church profile to share with good prospective candidates.
 - 1. Compile vital information about your church’s size, demographics, ministries, attendance, finances, doctrine, mission, vision, values, leadership structure, and constitution.
 - 2. Compile information about your local community for a prospective pastoral candidate or point to such information if available online.
- D. Develop an ideal prospective pastor profile or possible profiles.
 - 1. Age, experience, background, education
 - 2. Primary and secondary gifts
 - 3. Consistent Christ-like character – meets biblical qualifications
 - 4. Family – wife, children, educational expectations
 - 5. Proven preaching and leadership capability
 - 6. Outlook compatible on key doctrinal and ministry issues
- E. Select a committee according to your church constitution and determine individual roles and responsibilities of search committee members.
- F. Be sure that the process of pastoral selection is clear and according to the constitution of the church. Discuss this prior to beginning the actual search.

IV. The Initial Search Process – Gathering initial prospective candidates

- A. Gather names.
 - 1. Invite congregation to submit names with key information about the prospect.
 - 2. Discretely ask pastors and Christian leaders for recommendations.
 - 3. Confidentially vet possibilities submitted to the search committee.
 - 4. Settle on a limited number of men to potentially pursue.
- B. Get permission to contact each prospect if the prospect is on the church staff and serving under a pastor. Get permission from the pastor himself.
- C. Contact each prospect for a good preliminary conversation.
- D. Send application to each man and get his permission to do background checks.
- E. Review the completed applications and check references. Do all due diligence.
- F. Narrow the applicants down to one to three possibilities.

V. Intermediate Process – Increasing familiarity with prospective candidates

- A. Committee members should listen to sermons of prospects.
- B. Committee members should travel to meet prospects at a neutral location.
- C. Committee may invite a prospect to provide pulpit supply at the church.
- D. Committee will meet informally with prospect and wife during this visit.

VI. Candidating Process – Discerning God’s Choice of a New Pastor

- A. Extend a formal invitation to candidate to one prospect.
- B. Eight days is an ideal timeframe for a visit: two Sundays, full week on site, time to preach four or five sermons.
- C. Hold a series of meetings and Q&A sessions with various church groups.
- D. Interact socially during lunches and dinners.
- E. Vote in one to two weeks.
- F. Extend call if the vote is positive and share with him the vote percentage.
- G. Give the prospective pastor up to one week to respond.