

# Ten Proven Steps for Selecting the Right Pastor

What will our pastor search team be doing?

Selection of a new pastor is a great responsibility. The search team is faced with the dilemma of determining which person is best suited to meet the needs of our congregation at this unique time in our church's life. Pray for your team as they diligently work through the following steps:

1. Clarify church documents and study the church's and the community's identity, needs, and goals.

The search team will review the constitution and by-laws and recommend changes as needed. The team will do formal and informal studies of the congregation and your community to provide a point of reference from which to work. These steps will provide information for a pastoral candidate and help the search team identify the specific qualities needed in the new pastor.

2. Establish criteria and then seek resumes

The team will use information from step one and establish a prioritized criteria grid of the desired gifts, skills, and experiences for the next pastor. Then they will seek resumes from various sources: seminaries, Bible Colleges, the Heartland Church Network, state conventions, etc. One source may be the recommendation from a church member.

3. Prayerfully and Carefully Review Resumes

Each team member will prayerfully and carefully review the resumes received in light of the established criteria. You can pray that God will guide their thinking as they review each candidate's experiences, education, and background. Some things that they will be considering when reviewing resumes are:

- Does the candidate possess the skills and experience which will be needed in your unique setting?
- Does the overall appearance and content of the resume reveal an ability to communicate clearly and concisely?
- What volunteer, part-time, and vocational experiences does the candidate have? Every ministry opportunity provides a valid and valuable training ground.
- Does the candidate's educational record and degrees received match the needs of the church? There are a variety of special degrees offered, and not all degrees or institutions are equal.

Having reviewed all the resumes the team will select a few names they feel led of God to pursue.

4. Scheduling Interviews

Having selected the candidates that are most suitable, the team will do an initial interview. This is generally done by phone by a single team member, and it will determine their interest and begin the evaluation process. Areas that can be clarified in initial phone contacts are communication skills, personality traits, general attitude, and it provides an opportunity to resolve questions not addressed on the resume. This step often eliminates some of the candidates. The candidates, who are interested and in whom the team is still interested, will be scheduled for an interview by the whole team.

5. Conduct In-depth Interviews

If possible a personal interview is best; however, because of distance it is sometimes necessary for this interview to be done by way of a conference call or on-line venue. The candidate will be provided some basic information about your church before the interview. It is important that your team be totally honest. In addition to a written

job description items like church newsletters, recent bulletins, church budget, constitution and bylaws will help a candidate get a clearer picture of your church. Some things search teams typically seek to discover in this first in-depth interview are:

- Family background
- Christian experience and call to ministry
- Personal strengths and weaknesses
- Philosophy of ministry
- Priorities in ministry
- Theological stance in areas important to the church

## 6. Check References and Hear Candidates

The team will contact all listed references as well as seek secondary references for the candidates. They will contact the Associational Director of Missions and pastors in the region where he is now serving. Because reputation in the community is also critical, most teams will do a credit and criminal background check on their top choices. Attending a worship service led by the candidate is the ideal. In some cases distance demands that they use video or audio tape of a service or sermon.

## 7. Narrow the Field to One Candidate

At this time the team will prayerfully narrow its focus to only one candidate. A unanimous vote of the team is always best as they seek God's leadership.

## 8. Face-to-Face Interview

A face-to-face interview will be scheduled with the selected candidate. This will be an extended time for the candidate and his wife (if married) and the team to get better acquainted and to clarify any remaining questions that either party has. It usually requires either the couple or the search team to travel, and usually is coordinated so the team can hear the pastor preach in a live venue.

In this more in depth interview, a committee will want to discuss some of the following:

- The church's history and previous pastors
- The church's ministry and unique style
- The church's involvement in association, state, and convention activities
- The specific duties of pastor
- The salary and support provisions
- Moving arrangements and housing

If possible the team will arrange a tour of the church facilities and the community.

## 9. Calling the Pastor

If the personal interview affirms to the team that this is "God's man" and if the candidate is willing to pursue the prospect of serving as your pastor, then he will be invited to preach in view of a call. All arrangements for travel, lodging, and meals will be covered by the church. At this time, the team will provide the church as much information as possible about the candidate and his family in preparation for his coming.

A typical schedule has the prospective pastor and his family arriving on Friday, meeting with various church groups in informal settings on Saturday, preaching on Sunday morning, attending a covered dish dinner at noon on Sunday, and participating in a formal question and answer time with the congregation.

The team will clearly communicate to the church and candidate when the vote on extending a call will be taken. Following the vote the leader of the team will inform the candidate of the church's decision and the church of the candidate's decision.

#### 10. Completing the Process

After the call has been issued and accepted, the team will write a formal letter extending the call, summarizing salary and benefit arrangements, and listing any special agreements that have been made with the candidate.

When the pastor arrives on field, a press release to the local media regarding your new pastor will be issued to the local newspaper. Your church will schedule an installation service, preferably at a time when pastors from sister churches could attend. This is an excellent way to commemorate the beginning of a new stage in the church's life. The installation could include a reception to introduce your new pastor to the community.