



Finding &
Calling a
Pastor

The **Search** Is On



ARKANSAS BAPTIST STATE CONVENTION



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A Word from Our Executive Director

The pastor search process is one of the greatest opportunities in the life of a church as it firmly establishes a foundation for God's future blessings. This is one of the most advantageous times to dream, rethink, pull the fellowship together, and pray for God's incredible hand on the life and future of the congregation. For this to be one of the greatest times in the life of the congregation, several things must be in place.

The congregation, current staff, and search committee must all be equally aware of what is involved in the process. You must realize this is a critical moment of opportunity and calls for great spiritual intensity and preparation. In addition, a congregation must protect and care for its existing staff in a special way during the interim process.

The Pastor Search Committee must fully understand and embrace that they have been given one of the greatest roles of trust from the congregation. The search committee must accurately and fairly represent the wishes, desires, and DNA of the church. The search committee has no right or authority to set a new vision or try to establish new DNA for the church. They are only given the right to represent the wishes and desires of the church body.

When search committees work with a hidden agenda of establishing new DNA for the church, it almost always results in serious conflict within the congregation. It can also result in the new pastor's ministry dreams being dashed and the new pastor's family being wounded.

The church and the search committee must trust that God's timing is perfect! If the search process goes quickly or it takes a long time—God's timing is still perfect.

The Pastor Search Committee must understand that the church must go through a "grieving process" for the past pastor before the congregation can embrace a new pastor, especially if the previous pastor was deeply loved or long-term. This process usually takes 6 to 12 months. To call a pastor during the interim transition time usually results in the new pastor being the "unintentional interim" and his difficult departure within two years.

The ABSC welcomes hearing from your church as you enter the pastor search process. We want to pray for you, and we can assist with finding an interim pastor. My prayer is that God will help Arkansas Baptists—the greatest folks in the world—have highly effective pastor search processes.



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Search
Committee
TRAINING



The Interim Time... A Wilderness Journey

A pastoral vacancy causes church members to react in various ways. Some have great anxiety about the future of the church. Others may be excited about the opportunity for a new beginning. Many church members may not understand what has happened or what the next steps for the church should be.

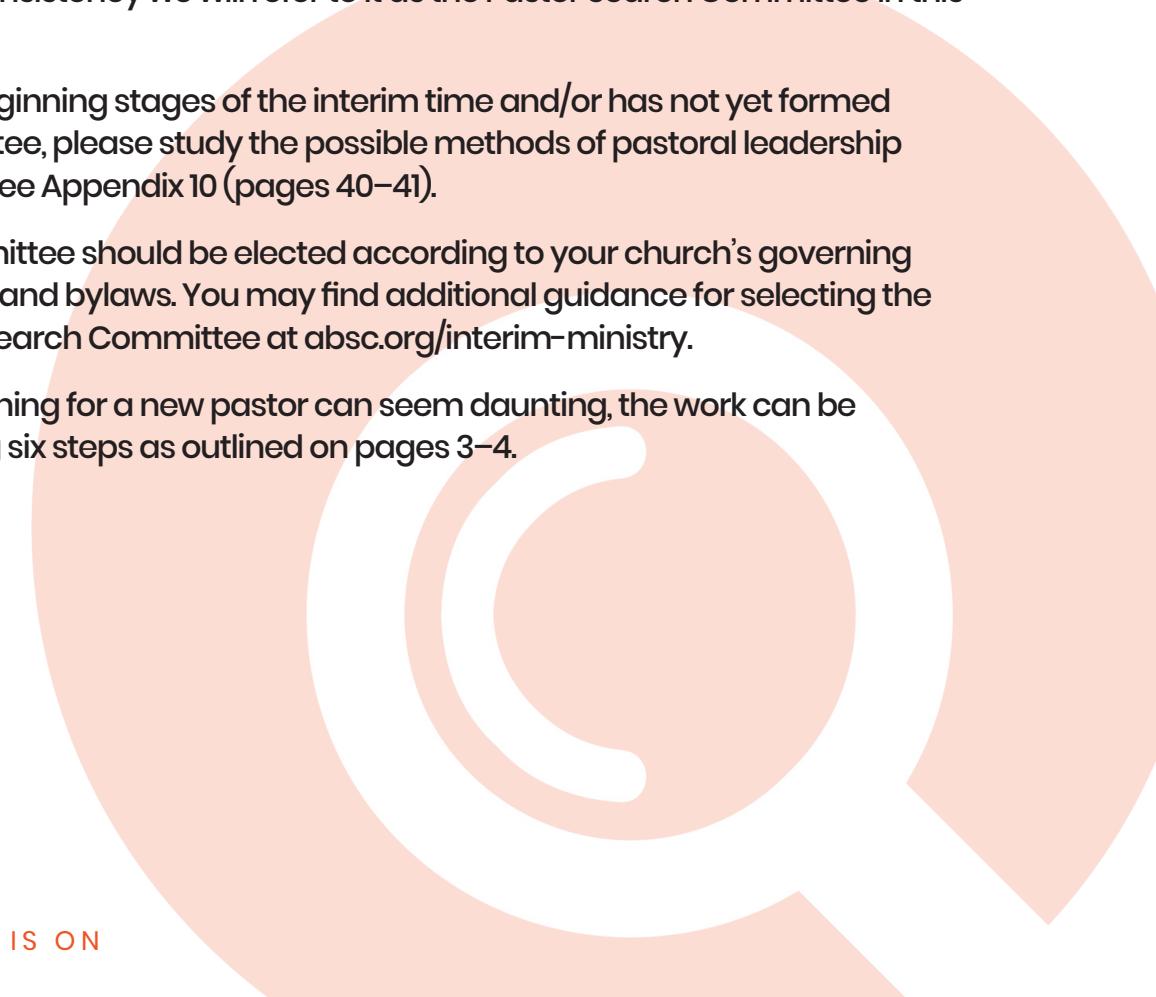
The time of transition from one pastor to the next is the **interim time**. The term “Wilderness Journey” has been used to describe the experience. A “Wilderness Journey” can provide many benefits for an individual or a church. In Scripture, Abraham, Moses, Paul, and even Jesus experienced a kind of wilderness journey that prepared them for what God wanted to do. Similarly, a church need not fear a wilderness journey through the interim time between pastors. Rather, a church can eagerly anticipate how God will use this time to prepare them for a new and fruitful season of ministry.

An important part of the interim journey is the work of the **Pastor Search Committee**. This booklet gives suggestions for a process that a Pastor Search Committee can use to find a church’s next pastor. While we recognize that some churches may use the term “search team,” for purposes of consistency we will refer to it as the Pastor Search Committee in this booklet.

If your church is in the beginning stages of the interim time and/or has not yet formed a Pastor Search Committee, please study the possible methods of pastoral leadership during the interim time. See Appendix 10 (pages 40–41).

The Pastor Search Committee should be elected according to your church’s governing documents/constitution and bylaws. You may find additional guidance for selecting the members of the Pastor Search Committee at absc.org/interim-ministry.

Though the task of searching for a new pastor can seem daunting, the work can be simplified by considering six steps as outlined on pages 3–4.



Overview Reference Guide

Step 1: Get Ready (page 5)

- Review church constitution and bylaws and other documents.
- Elect Pastor Search Committee leadership.
- Review biblical qualifications for a pastor.
- Develop pastor/congregation Covenant. See Appendix 2 (pages 28–29).
- Review financial and personnel information with the appropriate committees.
- Meet with existing staff on protocol and expectations.
- Conduct a congregational survey and develop an initial pastor profile.
- Create or review pastor’s job description.
- Assemble information for a church and community packet.
- Develop an initial list of questions for the questionnaire and interview steps.
- Develop a plan for how you will receive resumes.

Step 2: Receive and Review Resumes (page 10)

- Actively pursue names/resumes.
- Begin reviewing and “grading” resumes according to the pastor profile.

Step 3: Prioritize Resumes (page 12)

- Narrow the pool to 10–15 top candidates.
- Make initial contact with each candidate to confirm their willingness to be considered.
- Send a copy of the questionnaire to all candidates in this pool and review responses.
- Listen to a sermon and review information from each candidate’s current church.
- Examine all publicly available information—church website, social media, blogs, etc.
- Determine the top group of candidates (probably four or five) that you want to interview.
- Contact all candidates to inform them of their status and confirm their desire to move forward.



Step 4: Focus on the #1 Candidate (page 16)

- Conduct an initial interview with the top group of candidates.
- Ask permission to contact references.
- Listen to additional sermons and request any other needed information from candidate.
- Conduct a follow-up interview if additional clarification is desired or questions arise.
- Identify and proceed with the top candidate.
- Conduct a more formal, thorough interview.
- Invite the candidate to visit the church campus and community.
- Identify and contact additional references.
- Conduct a criminal background and credit check.
- Discuss any unaddressed information: financial, personnel, relocation, etc.
- Visit the candidate's current place of ministry.
- Invite the candidate to come "in view of a call" and finalize schedule.

Step 5: Present the Candidate to the Church (page 20)

- Plan and communicate the "view of a call" weekend.
- Host the candidate for the weekend with planned activities.
- Vote on the candidate.

Step 6: Help the New Pastor Get Started (page 22)

- Plan installation service.
- Help the pastor get connected to the community.
- Maintain contact with new pastor.

Step 1: Get Ready!

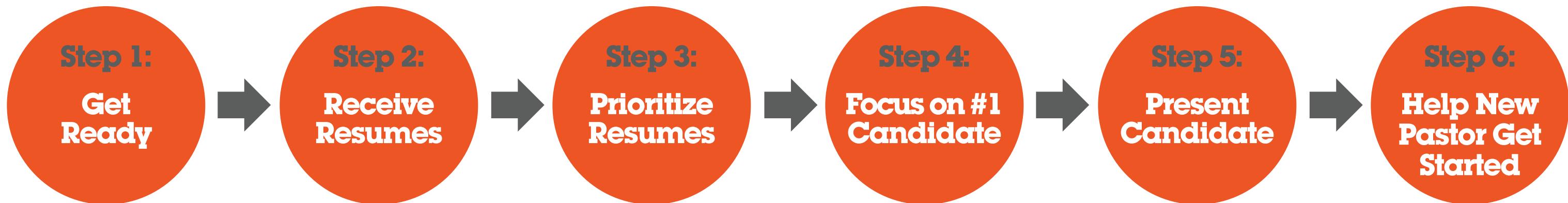
Every Pastor Search Committee is excited about getting to work. The temptation is to start gathering resumes and arranging for interviews or going to hear different preachers. However, failing to take enough time in the "Get Ready" stage will result in challenges later! The Pastor Search Committee should plan to take the first month engaging in several activities designed to prepare them for a positive search experience.

The first and most important activity is **prayer**. One committee chairman remarked that the first thing he planned to do was buy some knee pads! He understood the need to spend much time in prayer. During the first meeting, talk as a committee about your concerns, hopes, and anxieties. Spend much time giving these to the Lord in prayer, entrusting your work to Him, and declaring your confidence in His leadership. Make a commitment to set aside time for focused prayer in all future meetings.

Leaders are needed to organize the committee's work. Normally, a chairman, vice-chairman, and recorder should be elected. The chairman will lead all meetings, keep the committee focused on the search process, serve as the spokesperson to the church and as the main point of contact between the committee and prospective pastors. The vice-chairman serves in the absence of the chairman. The recorder should keep minutes of all the decisions made by the committee as well as other records as needed.

Preparation time provides a good opportunity to read and discuss the **biblical qualifications** for a pastor. Two major passages of Scripture listing these qualifications are 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. In an initial meeting or two, spend time as a committee sharing perspectives on how to discern these qualities during the pastor search process. If desired, invite a guest Bible teacher or pastor to lead this study.

Many churches have a section in their **constitution and bylaws** related to calling a new pastor. The committee must be aware of any policies pertaining to voting procedures, required percentages, and other items related to the calling of a pastor. If any changes are desired, proper procedures should be followed to amend the bylaws before the search begins.





Every Pastor Search Committee should establish some basic **operating procedures** to guide the committee in its work. Some procedural needs to discuss are:

- **Making Decisions**—The only “vote” a committee should take is on the final recommendation of a pastor to the church. Other decisions should be made by reaching consensus through discussion.
- **Reporting to the Congregation**—The committee should plan to make regular reports to the congregation. Although names and other details cannot be shared, these reports could inform the congregation on recent committee activity (“We’ve met three times since our last report”), update them on the stage of the search process (“We are reviewing resumes”), and always ask them to pray for specific needs.
- **Confidentiality**—Everyone should be reminded about the need to work with utmost confidentiality regarding names of candidates, items of discussion, and all other committee work. Committee members should agree on how confidentiality applies to spouses.
- **Silence = Agreement**—All committee members should be reminded that their presence on the committee means a responsibility to speak up on all issues. Every committee member should feel the freedom to ask questions, express concerns, ask for clarity, and even voice disagreement. To remain silent is the same as agreeing with the discussion. Under no circumstances should a committee member express disagreement after a decision has been made and the committee has moved forward. If anyone has misgivings, he or she should speak and give the committee pause until agreement can be reached.

While the Pastor Search Committee is responsible for identifying the pastoral candidate, other leadership groups in the church will need to provide important information. These groups should meet toward the beginning of the process so the committee has good, approved information to use when dealing with specific candidates.

- The **Finance or Stewardship Committee** should review all issues related to the pastor’s compensation. This includes a salary range, retirement benefits, health/disability insurance, conference/convention expenses, reimbursable accounts, and any other related needs. Every two years, LifeWay Christian Resources and GuideStone conduct a compensation study that can provide information on salary ranges and other information for churches with similar attendance and budget parameters. Contact your state convention for help locating this information.

What type of benefits and expenses should be considered?

In addition to salary, insurance, and retirement, the Pastor Search Committee should know the church’s position on and be prepared to discuss other reimbursable expenses and equipment (see Appendix 9, page 39):

- Conferences and conventions
- Pastor’s library
- Office computer, phone, and other devices
- Hospitality (lunch appointments, etc.)
- Ministry travel/mileage reimbursement
- Continuing education
- Personal/staff development

- The **Personnel Committee** should provide the Pastor Search Committee with information related to time allowed for vacation, illness, conference/convention attendance, revivals, and other related items. The interim period is a good time to review the Personnel Policy Manual or other related documents and update them as needed. Create or update the pastor’s job description in order to identify expectations.
- A pastor search process affects the **existing church staff** in a unique way. The Pastor Search Committee may choose to meet with the staff at the beginning of the search to hear their perspective on the role of the pastor in the day-to-day operations of the church.

What about the existing church staff?

For churches with multiple staff members, the Pastor Search Committee should discuss how to relate to them. Generally, staff members should not be involved in the search process, but committees may find it valuable to meet with staff and gain their perspective on a candidate profile. Keeping staff members appropriately informed on the search process will be encouraging to them. When the committee has settled on the candidate, he will have his own view on when to meet the staff. Many candidates will want to meet and perhaps visit with the staff prior to the “View of a Call” weekend. Other candidates may prefer to wait until a later time.



How do we handle a staff person as a candidate for pastor?

Church staff members who desire to be considered as candidate for pastor create a unique situation that must be navigated carefully. Here are some general guidelines to consider:

- Do not allow a staff person to fill the pulpit on a regular, consistent basis. This will put undue pressure on the search committee to consider him as pastor and invite potential division within the church over his candidacy.
- When a staff person does express interest, the search committee should consider his candidacy early in the process and communicate clearly to the staff person whether or not he will be considered.
- If a staff member is to be considered, the search committee should pray and seek consensus about whether to engage in this possibility immediately or include the staff member in the process as they would any other candidate.
- Staff and committee members must strictly honor confidentiality concerning his candidacy or potential candidacy and refrain from discussing this possibility with other members of the church.
- Search committees should understand that a staff member who has made known his desire to be considered as a candidate will likely leave the church if he does not become the pastor.

Another task to be completed during the “Get Ready” phase involves preparing some key documents and instruments that will be used in the search process.

- A **congregational survey** may be used to help the committee form a prospective pastor profile. A congregational survey allows church members a way to participate in the process and provides the search committee with some insight into what the church values in a pastor. If a survey is used, the congregation should be made aware that the exercise is not a “vote” or a template that the search committee is obligated to use to screen candidates. No survey or process supersedes the leadership of the Holy Spirit!

A survey instrument should be brief enough that a person can complete it in just a few minutes. Although the committee may choose to include items related to age, education, and experience, the bulk of the survey should be related to pastoral functions and

personality characteristics that are valued by the congregation. A sample survey may be found in Appendix 1B (pages 26–27).

The survey should be announced in advance and in most cases administered and collected on one Sunday morning. Anyone who will be away on that Sunday may submit a survey in advance. The committee may also consider using a “Comment Box” for church members to use in sharing names or other communication with the committee.

- Following the survey, the committee should consider the insight gained to develop a tentative **prospective pastor profile**. This exercise will allow committee members to discuss how highly each of them values pastoral experience, education, and other characteristics and abilities. The profile need not be shared with the congregation but will serve the committee well in developing questionnaires and evaluating resumes.
- A tentative **pastor and congregation commitment or covenant** should also be developed. The covenant is a set of written expectations that the church has of her pastor and that the pastor can have of the church. The final covenant should be written in consultation with the candidate to be recommended to the church and shared with the church during the time of the call. A sample is provided in Appendix 2 (pages 28–29).
- A **candidate questionnaire** will be sent to a small group of candidates later in the process. Committee members should compile a list of possible questions and then narrow them down to 8–10 questions to which candidates will provide a written response. Developing the questionnaire at this stage in the process will be a healthy discussion exercise for the committee. A sample letter and questionnaire may be found in Appendices 3 and 4 (pages 30–31).
- A **reference questionnaire** will be used later in the process to gain written insight from a candidate’s references. The committee can use a similar process as suggested for the candidate questionnaire to develop this item. A sample letter and suggested questions may be found in Appendix 5A and 5B (pages 32–33).
- A **church and community packet** will be sent to a small group of candidates later in the process. Now is the time to begin to collect the appropriate items to be included. This task provides a way that others who are not on the Pastor Search Committee can be included in the process. A sample list of contents may be found in Appendix 6 (page 34).
- Read and discuss **Potential Mistakes a Search Committee Can Make**, Appendix 1A on pages 24–25.

The “Get Ready” stage may seem to require a lot of work; however, the time invested now will pay off later when the committee is engaged in reading resumes and communicating with candidates. In addition, taking the time to work as a committee on these items will build relationships, identify priorities, and provide a strong initial position from which to search.



Step 2: Receive and Review Resumes

Most Pastor Search Committees look forward to gathering resumes and getting to work. Any church can easily accumulate a large number of resumes. In fact, the church will likely receive some resumes as soon as the vacancy occurs. When searching for resumes, quality is desired much more than quantity. The committee should determine a time frame during which resumes will be received, usually no more than two to three months. After this time, the committee will need to discern if they feel confident enough to proceed to the next step with the candidates in hand, or if additional resumes are desired.

This step is not a “wait and see” stage. The Pastor Search Committee should actively seek resumes from several possible sources:

- Perhaps the best source for quality resumes is **personal recommendations**. Committee members should call friends or pastors they know and ask them for the names of pastors who are serving well. Church members may also be encouraged to provide names to the search committee. However, the committee should make the contact to request the resume from the candidate.
- Placing an **advertisement in state Baptist news services** will make candidates and others aware of your search. In addition to resumes directly from prospective pastors, you may also receive leads from others who see the notice and think of someone who could be a good fit. State Baptist news services will offer options for advertising via print or online media. SBC.net also offers a job posting page.
- Many **state conventions** offer a resume service. The resumes obtained from these services are not recommendations but are resumes which have been submitted by candidates. Search committees may also consider calling state convention offices to inquire about leads to possible candidates.
- Most **seminaries** publish graduate lists or collect resumes from candidates who are looking for places to serve. A resume from a recent seminary graduate does not mean that the candidate has no experience. Many students attend seminary after serving in churches for several years and may also serve while attending school. When contacting seminaries, look for an office or department called Church Partnerships, Ministry Employment, Ministry Connections, or something similar. A list of seminaries may be found in Appendix 7 (page 35).

When inquiring about resumes, the pastor profile will be helpful in describing the type of candidate for which the committee is searching. This description will help people think of potential candidates. Resumes may be received by mail or electronically. The search committee should establish a secure email address to use for receiving resumes. Some

churches establish a place on the church’s website through which resumes may be submitted. Every committee member should receive copies of all resumes.

With the pastor profile in hand, the committee can review resumes as they are received. Ideally, committee members would receive resumes in advance of the meeting in which they will be discussed. This will allow the committee to discuss each resume according to the following guidelines with additional information found in Appendix 8 (pages 36–38):

- **Basic information**—The resume should contain information about the pastor’s family, age, current location, and perhaps a brief statement of ministry philosophy or vision.
- **Education**—The committee should become familiar with the types of degrees normally earned by ministry leaders. A brief description of common ministry degrees is found in Appendix 8 (page 37). Because the options for theological education are many, the committee will want to understand these differences in order to fairly compare resumes.
- **Experience**—The resume should include ministry experience organized by place, type, and date of service. Take special note of “gaps” in the chronology of service. This may be an item that the committee will want to explore further. Some candidates will include secular work experience and other types of service.
- **Current and/or Previous Church Data**—If the candidate is currently serving at an SBC church, the committee may desire to view data from the Annual Church Profile (ACP). If the church has submitted an ACP, information such as worship service and Sunday School attendance, baptisms, and missions giving may be available. This data may be helpful in understanding the ministry experience gained by a candidate in his current and previous places of service. Contact your state convention or association office to obtain this information.
- **References**—The reference list of a candidate will also provide the committee with additional information on past associations and experiences.

When initially reviewing resumes, the committee should come to a consensus on assigning a ranking to each resume. During each session of resume review, the committee should spend significant time in prayer asking for God’s discernment and guidance. Using the suggestions above and pastor profile as a general guide, the committee should arrive at a consensus on ranking each resume using the following suggested system:

- 1—Assign a 1 to the resumes that have strong support from the committee as good fits to the profile and clear candidates for the position.
- 2—Assign a 2 to the resumes that have strong qualities but some question from the committee as to their candidacy.
- 3—Assign a 3 to the resumes that the committee agrees are clearly not good candidates.



Resumes assigned 1 or 2 should be retained while resumes given a 3 can be confidentially discarded. Search committees should establish a procedure for acknowledging resumes. If the resume has been requested by the committee, acknowledgment should be given to the candidate that the resume has been received and is being considered. Communication should continue from the committee to the candidate as the resume moves through each stage of the process.

If the resume was received unsolicited by the committee or through a bundle of resumes sent by a convention or seminary service, acknowledgement at this point is not necessary. If one of these resumes continues on to the next step, the committee would need to establish contact with the candidate and maintain communication from this point forward.

Throughout the time set aside for receiving resumes, the committee should meet regularly to pray and review and assign a classification to each resume.

Step 3: Prioritize Resumes

When the time frame has expired on receiving resumes and the initial evaluation has been made (1, 2, or 3), the committee can take the next step of prioritizing a group with which to move forward. This step should begin by returning to all of the resumes that received an initial “1” ranking. Spend some time in focused prayer as a committee asking God for guidance.

The goal of this step is to narrow the group of candidates to about 10 to 15. This task can be accomplished by reviewing all of the “1” resumes according to these criteria:

- Review the pastor profile and note any previous concerns or questions.
- Review the pastor/church covenant and note any concerns about the candidate’s experience and training in carrying out the described tasks.
- If available, visit the website of the church in which the candidate currently serves. Note any ministries, emphases, activities, sermon series, and other information that may be relevant to weighing the candidate against the Pastor Profile and Covenant.
- If available, listen to a portion of an online sermon in order to get a sense for the pastor’s communication style.
- If available, examine any media activity by the candidate including social media posts, blogs, and other information.

Listening to sermons

In the past, Pastor Search Committees had to wait later in the process in order to hear a candidate preach. Today, sermons are so easily accessible that many committees jump right into listening to pastors through websites and podcasts. Obviously, preaching is one of the most important responsibilities of a pastor and one that is highly valued by congregations. However, be cautious about getting attached to a candidate’s preaching before you learn about his ministry strategies, leadership style, people skills, church polity views, and other important pastoral duties. Becoming too quickly enamored by a “preacher” can cause a committee to overlook significant details of how well a candidate might fit as your “pastor.”

Take whatever time necessary to arrive at a consensus group of about 10-15 candidates with which to take the next step of sending the written questionnaire. Before doing so, the committee should make personal contact with each candidate as mentioned below.

- Candidates who were solicited for a resume by the committee or had received any other previous communication from the committee but are *not included* in the group of 10-15, should be informed of this development.
- All candidates within the group of 10-15 should be personally contacted and made aware that they are in this stage of the process. The chairman of the committee should confirm that the candidate is willing to take the next step in the process.
- Remember that while the committee has spent much time in deliberation and prayer leading up to this stage, the candidate could be hearing this for the first time. Be gracious in giving candidates plenty of time to pray and discuss with their spouse whether the Lord is leading them to take the next step with you in the process.
- For various reasons, some candidates may decline to be included in further steps of your search. This is part of the Lord working to guide you to the right pastor.

The Written Questionnaire

For every candidate of the 10-15 who agrees to move forward, mail or email the written questionnaire to them (see sample letter and candidate questionnaire in Appendices 3 and 4, pages 30–31). Allow two to three weeks for them to respond. Most pastors will prefer to receive and respond with an electronic copy.

As completed questionnaires begin to arrive, the committee should review them. Prior to the meeting, all committee members should receive copies of the responses for personal



review and reflection. At the meeting, discuss how each member of the committee reflected on the candidate's responses and any further expansion or clarification that may be desired. Again, much time should be spent in focused prayer.

Be sure to acknowledge the receipt of all completed questionnaires and keep in contact with the candidates to keep them updated about the status of the review process. Candidates from this point forward should receive an update from the committee at least once every two weeks.

Identifying the Top Candidates

The goal of the written questionnaire is to help identify a **group of four or five** with which to move forward. In order to do this, the committee may wish to ask some candidates to clarify or expand upon something in the written questionnaire. The committee should also return to a pastor's online sermon library and listen to a full version of a message or two. If candidates do not have sermons online, the committee will want to ask them for sermons on a DVD, CD, or a link to electronic means. If the full worship service is available on video, this will provide even more information about the pastor's leadership and "fit" with the church.

Once all of this information has been gathered, the **committee will need to identify the top four or five candidates** with which to proceed. The committee should feel as though any of these four to five candidates could be an effective pastor of their church. Once consensus has been reached on this group, the following steps should be taken:

- Inform the candidates who are *not* in the group of four or five of the committee's decision to move in a different direction.
- Confirm with the four or five candidates that they feel led by God to continue in this process.
- Ask permission to contact the references that they have listed on the resume. If no references were listed, ask the candidate to provide references. An example of a contact letter and possible questions for references are provided in Appendices 5A and 5B (pages 32–33).
- Send the Church and Community Packet to each candidate (Appendix 6, page 34).
- Set up an appointment for an initial interview with each candidate.
- Obtain statistical data from the church in which the candidate currently serves (worship service and Sunday School/small group attendance, baptisms, giving, missions support, etc.). This information is available from the Annual Church Profile (ACP) submitted by most churches each year. Your state convention and/or association will be able to help you with this information.

When do we talk about salary?

Different views exist on the appropriate time to talk about salary and benefits with a candidate. Most search committees would prefer to wait until they are focused on one candidate before having this conversation. However, this approach may be unrealistic. Salary and benefit information are important factors that prospective pastors must consider in order to make a good decision on continuing the search process with a church. Family needs and other considerations may require some pastors to know this information earlier in the process. For this reason, search committees should expect to provide general salary, expense allowances, and benefit information to pastors that will make their short list for interviews. Search committees should not view this in a negative sense, but rather as a responsible request from someone who is considering such a dramatic life change.

The Initial Interview

Initial interviews between the top four or five candidates and the Pastor Search Committee should be face-to-face. While it is preferable to be able to meet in the same physical location, technology now allows for very effective initial interviews to be conducted through online video meeting platforms. If the meeting is done in person, a neutral location may be desired in order to protect the confidential nature of this stage in the search process.

The candidate's spouse should be invited to participate in the initial interview. However, this should not be required at this point. Because the pastor knows that he is still in a group of candidates, he and his spouse may choose not to alert their children to this possibility at this time.

The purpose of the interview is to get to know one another, observe the pastor in a casual setting, and begin to discuss initial items related to the written questionnaire and pastor covenant. Following the interview, the committee should discuss their impressions and observations as soon as possible.

Deciding on "The One"

After all responses from references have been received and initial interviews have been conducted, the committee must decide on **one candidate** upon which to focus their attention for the next step.



- Spend much time privately and as a committee in focused prayer.
- Listen to additional sermons and collect any other information about the candidate's current church's ministry, leadership structure, emphases, and past accomplishments.
- Examine responses from references and ask follow-up questions if desired.
- Reflect further upon the interview experience. The committee may wish to ask for additional explanation or clarification on items that came up in the discussion.
- Conduct a follow-up interview if desired. This could be done online or over a speaker phone with the committee present.
- Keep in close communication with all candidates to let them know about the status of the search.

After the committee has gathered enough information on each of the top candidates, the time has come to discuss the candidate with which to move forward. Each member of the committee should take extensive time to pray about how they would personally rank each of the candidates from top to bottom and list the candidates in order. At the next meeting, each member of the committee should share their candidate ranking list and reasoning. Through much discussion and prayer, the committee should arrive at a consensus list of how to proceed through the list of candidates one at a time from this point forward. The committee may wish to let the list set for another period of time for additional prayer.

Although one candidate will be chosen to proceed to the next step, the committee should remember that there are no "bad candidates" at this point. The committee should feel as though any of the candidates in this final group could serve well as the next pastor. If, after going through step 4, this candidate decides that God is not leading him to move at this time or the church does not fulfill the required number of votes to call him, we encourage the committee not to get discouraged but prayerfully recognize God's omniscience and move forward.

Should the circumstances of the search eventually lead the church to call the candidate that was originally "4" on the list, this does not mean he was the fourth best...he was the Lord's choice. Though the ranking system may be flawed, God's direction is not!

Step 4: Focus on the #1 Candidate

When the committee has agreed upon the ranked order of the remaining candidates, the number one candidate on the list should be pursued into this step of the search.

The remaining candidates should be contacted and informed about this development. The remaining candidates should be told that although the committee feels led to take the next step with another candidate, the search is by no means over. Any number of circumstances could lead the committee to come back to them should the Lord lead in that direction.

The number one candidate should be contacted and informed that the committee has determined to focus on only him from this point in the search forward. He may request some additional time to pray and discuss this development with his family before agreeing to move ahead. Once the committee and the candidate are prepared to move forward, the following steps should be taken:

- Secure additional references on the candidate. These may be supplied by the candidate himself; better yet, ask some of the references he provided for the names and contact information of others who could provide reference information by phone.
- Invite the candidate and his wife to visit the church campus.
- During the visit, an interview should be conducted. In addition to further questions from the committee to the candidate, the focus of the time should be an opportunity for the pastor to ask questions of the committee. See Appendix 12 (pages 44–45) for "Questions a Candidate Might Ask." The pastor's wife should attend this interview.
- At this point, the candidate should be given all information regarding salary and benefits, insurance, time off, and all other personnel related information. On some occasions, this information may be provided earlier in the process.
- Obtain written permission from the candidate to conduct a thorough criminal background and credit check.

Conducting background checks on pastor candidates

In today's world, conducting a background check on a pastoral candidate is not optional. When the Pastor Search Committee has identified the candidate upon which to focus exclusively, a criminal background check and a credit check should be conducted. Written permission is required in order to conduct these checks and a copy should be provided to any candidate upon whom a check is conducted. See Appendix 13 (page 46).



Discussing abuse

In recent years, the issue of abuse in churches has become too great to ignore. Churches must make every reasonable effort to protect children, students, and themselves. Pastor Search Committees must be diligent in discussing this issue with candidates. Consider these important guidelines:

- Search committees should understand mandatory reporting laws and how they apply to churches and staff members.
- Search committees should ask pastoral candidates about their grasp of these issues as well as any past experiences they have had in dealing with cases of abuse and those who have been victims of abuse.
- Have the candidate's churches implemented basic practices for creating safe environments that protect minors and volunteers?

Following the candidate's visit to the church field, both the candidate and the committee will want to take some additional time for prayer and consideration. If both parties continue to feel led to move forward, some final steps may be necessary before the candidate is asked to come in view of a call by the church.

Should the committee visit the candidate's church?

In the past, a visit to the prospective pastor's current field of service to hear him preach was a standard part of the search process. Today, churches can listen to sermons online or through podcasts with little difficulty. However, visiting a pastor's current church gives the committee valuable insight on how he interacts with people, the atmosphere and general feel of the church, the appearance of the facility, guest relationships, and many other factors that cannot be related by a video sermon. Generally, a committee should not plan to visit a candidate's church until they have agreed to focus exclusively on him. The candidate and the committee should work together to schedule and work out the details of the visit so as to create as little disruption as possible.

- The candidate may desire to make another trip to the church field. If he has not already done so, he may wish to meet with other church staff members and even some key leaders, if this is acceptable to the committee.
- Absolutely all financial and personnel items should be agreed to during this time. If any of these items involve changes that require approval from the church, this matter should be taken care of before the pastor is invited to come in view of a call.
- Moving expenses and arrangements should be discussed in detail. If a professional moving and packing service is to be used, some budget parameters should be agreed upon. If another arrangement is planned, the candidate should understand the details of this. Do not assume that the pastor and the church have the same understanding of how the pastor's relocation will take place.
- A general relocation and "start date" should be discussed. Depending on the time of year and the candidate's family situation, the church should be flexible and helpful as the pastor's family makes the transition.
- Leave no stone unturned! The only remaining step is to present the candidate to the church as the committee's recommendation as the next pastor. Continue to seek the Lord diligently for confirmation. Ask for the assurance of the candidate that he and his family also sense the Lord's leadership in this decision.

Some final details

Before the candidate is announced to the church, all details should be discussed and understanding reached. Items to discuss should include:

- Timeline for completing his current ministry and beginning his new service. This timeline should include when first payroll time will begin, when any new insurance coverage will take effect, any time off needed, first Sunday in the pulpit, etc.
- All relocation details including what expenses the church will cover, who will make arrangements for the move, what the budget will be for moving expenses, assistance with other transitional costs, and arrangements for temporary housing if needed.
- Prior to coming in view of a call, the candidate and the committee should discuss and agree on what percent of the vote is needed in order for the pastor to accept a call.



Step 5: Present the Candidate to the Church

From the beginning of the search, the committee looks forward to the day when a prospective pastor is announced to the congregation. At this point in the search process, the time has come! Once the committee and prospective pastor are satisfied with all of the communication that has taken place and feel confident in God's leadership, plans should be made for the candidate to come "in view of a call" to the church. Consider these items of preparation:

- Discuss with the prospective pastor how he will handle communication with his current church and encourage your church to respect this process especially when it comes to the use of social media.
- The committee and pastor will work together to select the nearest possible date for the "view of a call" weekend. At a minimum, plan for two weeks between the time that the announcement is made and the date for the "view of a call" weekend.
- Make plans for how to spend the time during the weekend. Work for a good balance of fellowship, business, and family time for the pastor. See "What Should Happen During the View of a Call Weekend" on page 21 for ideas.
- Discuss voting procedures with the pastor. In most cases, the vote on calling the pastor should be taken by secret ballot on the same Sunday that the pastor preaches in view of a call. The pastor and the search committee should discuss any percentage requirements stated in the governing documents of the church and the percentage that the pastor will be satisfied with in order to accept the call as pastor. This is an important piece of information to clarify with the pastor prior to the vote. Also, ask the candidate for assurance that he will accept the call if the percentage requirement is met.
- Prepare information for the church. The committee should prepare a brief biographical sketch on the pastor along with a picture of the entire family. This biographical information should be on a separate sheet to be handed out after the announcement is made and on the Sunday the pastor preaches in view of a call.
- Prepare a letter with details on the "view of a call" weekend and mail with the biographical sheet to church members. Send other invitations and appropriate publicity to the groups that the pastor will meet with for fellowship opportunities during the weekend.
- Carry out the weekend with great energy and excitement. Pray during every event in the schedule.

- When the vote is taken, have the pastor and his family in another room. Provide instructions to the church family and take the vote. In many cases, the church will have music and singing while the votes are counted and the result shared with the pastor. The vote should then be announced to the congregation and the pastor given the opportunity to accept the call of the congregation. The service should end with focused prayer for the new pastor and praise to God for His leadership and providence.

What happens during the view of a call weekend

When the candidate comes in view of a call, the full weekend may be used for various opportunities for church members to meet and get to know the prospective pastor and spouse. Some possible ideas include:

Friday

- Fellowship lunch with staff
- Friday night fellowship with students

Saturday

- Afternoon drop-in reception for church members with Q&A
- Evening dinner with church leadership: deacons, committee chairs, SS teachers, etc., with Q&A

Sunday

- Pastor drops into adult Sunday School classes, if appropriate
- Preach in Sunday morning worship service(s)
- Opportunity for pastor to share personal testimony and priorities of ministry
- Vote



Step 6: Help the New Pastor Get Started

The work of the Pastor Search Committee is not finished when the vote is taken. At the beginning of his ministry, members of the Pastor Search Committee will be the people he has gotten to know best in the church. The incoming pastor will depend on the committee to assist him in his transition. Maintain good communication while the pastor is preparing to move to the church field. Consider enlisting others to plan for a welcome reception or other fellowship opportunities.

When the pastor arrives, many churches plan a special “installation” service to affirm the beginning of a new season in the life of the church. Members of the search committee will want to help the pastor get connected to the community. The search committee should also plan to meet with the pastor on a regular basis during his first year.

The search committee should take some time to reflect on the journey and celebrate God’s guidance and faithfulness. Your new pastor will always enjoy a special connection to members of the Pastor Search Committee that God used to clarify His call to this new place of service.

Notes





Potential Mistakes a Search Committee Can Make

1. Ignoring the church's search process as outlined in the governing documents.

2. Not preparing spiritually.

- It is the committee's responsibility to discern God's will...not "making a hire."

3. Not respecting confidentiality.

- *DECIDE THE SCOPE of confidentiality.*

4. Failing to fully commit to the search process (do not hurry!).

- Requires great patience and prayerfulness.

5. Not being united.

- Unanimous decisions...unanimous recommendation (a must!).

6. Inadequately communicating with candidates.

7. Poorly communicating with the church.

- Updates comfort the church, even if the update is one of "prayer and patience."
- Anxiety, speculation, and hallway talk enter when the congregation has no information.

8. Not diligently investigating a candidate.

- Viewing history at previous churches.
- Discovering how a candidate operates in areas other than preaching (leadership, conflict management, time management, etc.).

9. Committee members talking to candidates without the committee's knowledge and approval.

- A committee member can begin to be viewed as campaigning for a certain candidate.
- A committee member will have information other members do not have.

10. Potential candidates preaching before coming in view of a call.

- Becomes a popularity contest...drives the congregation to only focus on preaching.
- Allowing staff candidates to preach regularly may lead to external pressure (see #11).

11. Not considering staff who have expressed interest in the position (see page 8).

12. Giving staff members too many responsibilities.

- The staff member becomes overwhelmed.

13. Hiring a pastor to fix major problems that needed to be addressed before his arrival.



Sample Congregational Survey

The Pastor Search Committee desires to hear from the congregation and will use this information to help develop a candidate profile for use in evaluating resumes and conducting interviews. The information gathered from this tool may or may not be shared publicly. Responses to this survey are not a “vote” and do not create a template to which the Pastor Search Committee is bound.

Ideally, how much ministry experience should our new pastor have? (check one)

- Less than 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- More than 10 years
- Not a factor

Ideally, what is the minimum level of education our new pastor should have? (check one)

- High school diploma
- College degree
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree
- Not a factor

For the following list, please rank each of the following pastoral skills/duties in the order of their importance to you (1—most important skill to 10—least important skill):

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| ____ Gifted Preacher/Communicator | ____ Personal Evangelism/Outreach |
| ____ Vision and Strategy | ____ Administrative/Organization |
| ____ Office Presence/Availability | ____ Involvement in Local Community |
| ____ Pastoral Care (Hospitals, etc) | ____ Pastoral Counseling |
| ____ Leadership of Church Decision-Making Structure | ____ Developing Leaders/Staff |

For the following list, please rank the following areas of ministry in the order of greatest need for attention (1—area needing the most attention to 12—area needing the least attention):

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| ____ General vision/direction | ____ Senior adults | ____ Missions (outside of our community) |
| ____ Local evangelism | ____ Outreach | ____ Families with preschoolers and children |
| ____ Worship services | ____ Discipleship | ____ Administrative needs/leadership structure |
| ____ Families with youth | ____ Spiritual maturity | ____ Connection in our community |

Please provide any other comments that you feel would be helpful to the Pastor Search Committee:

Demographic Information

Your age and gender:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 12 or under | <input type="radio"/> Male |
| <input type="radio"/> 13–18 | <input type="radio"/> Female |
| <input type="radio"/> 19–29 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 30–45 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 46–60 | |
| <input type="radio"/> 61 or Over | |

I attend a Sunday morning worship service (please check one):

- About once a month
- Two or three times each month
- Every Sunday with rare absences

I attend a Sunday school or small group (please check one):

- About once a month
- Two or three times each month
- Every Sunday with rare absences

Family (check more than one if applicable):

- I am single with no children at home.
- I am single with children 12 and under at home.
- I am single with children 13 and older at home.
- I am married with no children at home.
- I am married with children 12 and under at home.
- I am married with children 13 and older at home.
- I am married with adult children.



Sample “Pastor and Congregation Commitment and Covenant”

Agreeing on a list of basic responsibilities will help the pastor and congregation begin with a shared understanding of expectations.

Our Pastor will provide pastoral leadership in the following ways:

- Provide spiritual leadership through growth in personal spiritual disciplines, faithful preaching from Scripture, personal evangelism, and focus on the Great Commission.
- Discern, develop consensus, and communicate vision and movement forward to what God would have our church to be and do.
- Lead in corporate worship, including the celebration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.
- Model and oversee pastoral care to the sick, bereaved, and those with other needs.
- Perform and/or delegate administrative duties related to office, staff, and property that are necessary in the ongoing life and ministry of the church.
- Work through the decision-making structure of the church (committees, ministry teams, etc.) to help them perform their assigned tasks.
- Serve as the supervisor of all paid staff.
- Represent the church in community and denominational activities.
- Provide training for our people in the areas of personal evangelism, discipleship, age group leadership, and other ministry areas related to the vision of the church.
- Work with the deacons to provide spiritual leadership and service to the congregation.
- Minister to families through major life events such as births, weddings, funerals, and other milestones.

Our Church will provide support to the pastor’s leadership in the following ways:

- Pray regularly for the pastor and his family.
- Maintain strong personal growth in an individual relationship with Jesus that understands each church member’s responsibility to personally participate in the Great Commission.

- Participate in this family of faith by ministering to and caring for the needs of each other.
- Support the pastor and church leadership through faithful attendance and giving.
- Provide salary, benefits, and expenses adequate to meet the pastor’s financial needs and including opportunities for continued service and growth.
- Provide budget resources necessary for fulfilling the expectations of his job and for accomplishing the vision and mission of the church.
- Believe the best about his motives and leadership and talk with the pastor about concerns rather than talking about him to others.
- Continually look for ways to personally serve and contribute to the ministry of the church.
- Remain prayerfully open to new ideas, strategies, and methods for reaching and baptizing more people than ever before.

Note: Some churches have a very detailed job description for the pastor. This document is a summary of the job description and the addition of the congregation’s commitment.



Sample Letter/Email to Prospective Candidate

Dear (Dr, Rev, Bro.) _____:

The Pastor Search Committee of _____ Church, (town,state), has received your name as a prospective pastor for our church. We are interested in finding out more about you and your ministry. Though any attempt to begin this process seems awkward, our committee has chosen this initial letter of inquiry as a way of taking some initial steps to finding God's will for our church.

We do want to acknowledge several facts to you in this inquiry:

- You may not have known until now that your name had been given to us for consideration. Furthermore, you may not be interested. If you choose not to respond, we will assume that you do not feel led to pursue further correspondence.
- Your response to this inquiry is not a commitment on your part, nor is this inquiry a commitment on our part. Our prayerful work to this point, however, has led us to take this step in our process.
- We will keep in strictest confidence the information you share. In no way do we want to embarrass you or negatively affect your work.
- Should you respond positively to this inquiry, we will maintain good communication with you concerning the progress of our search. If for any reason we cease to feel that you are a candidate, we will immediately notify you.

Please find included a brief questionnaire on some items of interest to our committee. We recognize that volumes could be written on each subject and are not expecting you to prepare a complete theological treatment. A few sentences will suffice for each question.

Please send your response in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope. You may also send an email reply to _____. We would be very grateful to receive your response by _____. Be assured of our prayers for you as you seek God's direction in this matter. Thanks so much for your willingness to consider this letter and its implications for you and our church.

Sincerely,

Chairman's Name
Pastor Search Committee

_____ Church



Candidate Inquiry Questions

1. Tell us about your conversion experience.
2. Describe your call to pastoral ministry and your view of the role of the pastor in a local church.
3. Describe your style of leadership, including your preference in structuring the decision-making process of the church.
4. Describe your approach to planning and delivering sermons.
5. Describe your practice of evangelism/outreach including any programs, events, and training that you prefer to utilize personally and through the church.
6. Is your church's current level of Cooperative Program and other missions giving consistent with your personal preference? How would you like to see it change?
7. Describe your philosophy for working with different age groups in the church (children, youth, adults, older adults). Is there an age group with which you feel most comfortable?
8. What is your understanding of the role of deacons in the church?
9. Describe your participation in the local Baptist association, state convention, and national convention.
10. Are you in agreement with the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 as a doctrinal statement? Please include any clarifying or qualifying statements that you feel are important.



Sample Letter/Email for References

Dear _____

I am a member of _____ Church, (town/state). I am contacting you as a reference for Dr./Rev./Bro. _____ who is under consideration as pastor for our church.

I would appreciate it very much if you would provide our search committee with information related to the questions on the enclosed inquiry form. You can be assured that your responses will be kept confidential.

Please return the inquiry in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope. You may also email your response to _____. Our committee would be greatly helped if you could submit your reply by _____.

Sincerely,

When contacting a reference by telephone

Hello. My name is _____ and I am calling as a member of the Pastor Search Committee of _____ Church in (town/state). You have been listed as a reference for Dr./Rev./Bro. _____ who is under consideration as pastor for our church. Do you have time now to answer a few questions or would you prefer to respond by mail or email? You can be assured that your responses will be kept confidential.

If the person is willing to respond over the phone, ask the “Reference Inquiry Questions” (Appendix 5B, page 33).

Be sure to take careful and accurate notes.



Reference Inquiry Questions

1. Describe your personal impression of _____ as:
 ...a preacher/teacher
 ...a leader
 ...an administrator
 ...a spiritual example
 ...a family man
 ...a friend
2. How would you describe the kind of sermons that he generally preaches?
3. How are his relationships with different age groups in the church? Are there any age groups that he doesn't relate to as well as others?
4. How active is he around the community?
5. Would most people consider his wife an asset in his ministry? Why or why not? Are there any family challenges that we need to know about?
6. Can you describe his participation in the local Baptist association and state convention?
7. Does he encourage the church to give to support missions through the Cooperative Program and other missions offerings?
8. What would you say are some of his greatest strengths? In what areas could he improve?
9. Would you recommend him as pastor of a Southern Baptist Church? Would you be excited if he were coming to serve as your pastor?
10. Is there anyone else that we could talk to who would have a good perspective on the questions we talked about?
11. Is there any other information you think would be helpful to us?



Church and Community Packet

Church Items

1. Mission/Vision Statements
2. Statement of Core Values
3. Constitution and Bylaws
4. Personnel/Policy Manual
5. Deacon Ministry Manual/List of deacons
6. Other planning documents
7. Pastor profile/Position description
8. Latest Annual Church Profile statistics
9. Church history
10. Layout of church campus
11. Photos of church buildings
12. Recent Sunday bulletins and other communication pieces
13. Church pictorial directory
14. Current budget (include breakdown of personnel items—salary, benefits, reimbursable expenses)
15. Current list of church committees/ministry teams
16. Diagram of church organizational structure
17. Other items unique to the church

Local Baptist Association Items

1. Profile of Associational Missionary with contact information
2. Recent copies of Association communication pieces
3. Current Association calendar and budget
4. Latest Association Annual
5. Associational strategic planning documents

State Convention Items

1. Recent copies of state news publication and other communication pieces
2. Latest State Convention Annual
3. Information on State Convention personnel and resources

Community Items

1. Census and demographic information
2. Map of the community with church location
3. Promotional material from Chamber of Commerce
4. Information about local schools, hospitals, shopping centers, etc.
5. Information on local attractions, places of interest, ministry centers
6. Other items unique to the community



Directory of Baptist Seminaries

Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary

200 Seminary View
Cochrane, Alberta, T4C 2G1
Canada
Phone: 403.932.6622
csbs.ca

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary

Church Minister Relations Office
3939 Gentilly Boulevard
New Orleans, LA 70126-4858
Phone: 504.282.4455 or 800.662.8701
nobts.edu

Gateway Baptist Theological Seminary

3210 E. Guasti Road
Ontario, CA 91761
Phone: 909.687.1800
www.gs.edu

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary

Denominational Relations Office
120 S Wingate Street
Wake Forest, NC 27587
Phone: 919.761.2100
sebts.edu

Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary

2095 Appling Road
Memphis, TN 38016
Phone: 901.751.8453
mabts.edu

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Office of Ministry Referral
2825 Lexington Road
Louisville, KY 40280
Phone: 502.897.4616 or 800.626.5525 ext. 4616
sbts.edu

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

5001 North Oak Street Trafficway
Kansas City, MO 64118
Phone: 816.414.3733 or 800.944.6287
mbts.edu

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

The Office of Church-Minister Relations
2001 W Seminary Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76115
Phone: 817.923.1921, Ext. 6330
swbts.edu



Reading a Resume

Reading a minister's resume is often your first introduction to your prospective pastor. While not comprehensive, these suggestions will help your committee understand the document.

General

The resume is an example of a pastor's organizational and written communication skills. Observe how well the information is presented and described. Is it easy to read and understand? Are there grammatical or spelling errors? Is there attention to detail?

Basic Biographical Information

This section may include information about that pastor's home town and state, his family, his date of birth, and other information. Photographs are also helpful.

Education

Educational preparation should be an important factor to search committees. Candidates will likely indicate where they graduated from high school and college. You may find that many excellent candidates obtained bachelor's degrees in fields not related to ministry. Seminary education is advanced, post-graduate study that is focused exclusively on ministry preparation.

SBC Seminaries

The Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention provides financial support to six seminaries. In addition to funding, these schools provide a report to the SBC Annual Meeting and are governed by trustee boards elected by messengers to the SBC. Doctrinally, these institutions operate within the framework of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message. The six SBC seminaries are:

- Gateway Seminary (Ontario, CA)
- Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Kansas City, MO)
- New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (New Orleans, LA)
- Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Wake Forest, NC)
- Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Fort Worth, TX)
- The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, KY)

Candidates may attend seminary at other non-SBC institutions. In this case, your committee will want to examine the school's doctrinal statement and accrediting agencies. SBC seminaries are accredited by the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Accreditation ensures that an institution's degree programs have comparable completion requirements, faculty expertise, curriculum content, and student requirements.

On the resume, look for the candidate to indicate a year of graduation. A candidate who says he "attended" may mean that he only completed a few courses toward a degree.

Degrees

A candidate's resume may include abbreviations for his completed degree. The following are the most common types of master's degrees earned by seminary students:

- **Master of Theological Studies (MTS)/Master of Arts in Theology (MATS)**

Usually 35–45 hours of general theological education, sometimes with hours dedicated in an area of ministry concentration.

- **Master of Arts in Christian Education (MACE)**

Usually 60–70 hours of general theological education with additional hours in age group ministry, administration, discipleship, and other educational courses.

- **Master of Divinity (MDiv)**

The MDiv is the standard preparation degree for pastoral ministry, usually requiring 85–95 hours of general theological education, biblical languages, preaching, and a likely concentration in a chosen area of ministry.

- **Master of Theology (ThM)**

The ThM is an advanced degree usually requiring two years of research-based study beyond the MDiv. In many cases, the ThM is earned by students on the way to completing a PhD.

Some candidates may also have earned doctoral degrees. The following are the most common types of doctoral degrees earned by those who have already completed a master's degree:

- **Doctor of Ministry (DMIN)**

The Doctor of Ministry is usually completed in two or three years plus a written project. This degree focuses on the practical aspects of pastoral ministry with a project chosen by the student in an area of his particular interest and with application to the church.

- **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

The PhD is a research-based degree designed to prepare a candidate for teaching and/or pastoral ministry. This degree normally requires at least three years of course work and examination followed by a dissertation in a chosen area of interest.

In addition to the degrees listed above, you may find some candidates who have earned an associate's degree, a diploma, or a certificate from a seminary. These degrees usually



require one or two years of study and are offered to people who have not completed a bachelor's degree.

Ministry Statement/Philosophy of Ministry

Many candidates will include a summary of their foundational principles for leadership and ministry. The SBC statement of faith is the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

Ministry Experience

A candidate should include a list of his previous places of service, the time frame of this service, and the positions in which he served. Some candidates may also include a brief description of duties and responsibilities.

Be especially mindful of "gaps" in ministry service...that is, periods of time between when one tenure at a church ends and another begins. Gaps in a service record do not automatically mean that a problem occurred. A search committee, however, should ask a candidate to provide the missing information.

Another note to keep in mind is that pastors may move more often when they are young in the ministry. If older pastors have a history of relocating to different churches every two or three years, wise search committees will want to find out why this is the case.

Some pastors may offer examples of the type of results that took place during their tenure at a particular church. Information supplied by the church's Annual Church Profile (ACP) will show the attendance, baptisms, and giving information as reported by the church during the pastor's years of service. The ACP will also allow the committee to gauge the financial support of the church through the Cooperative Program, local association, and seasonal missions offerings. Using ACP data from previous churches will give a search committee an idea of how many people the pastor may have supervised, the size of budget he is used to managing, and the growth patterns of the churches he served.

References

Pastors should provide the committee with four to six references. Some candidates may write "References Available Upon Request" in this area as a safeguard to their privacy until the time that he and the search committee have made progress in the process. In either case, the committee should notify the candidate before contacting references. If the Associational Missionary from the pastor's current association is not included as a reference, consider asking the candidate about this omission.

Worksheet for Salary/Benefits

A. Personal Income

1. Personal Salary (salary paid to minister by the church) \$ _____

2. Housing Allowance
(This can never exceed fair market rental value of the home furnished plus utilities) \$ _____

3. Self-Employment Tax Offset
(Amount church provides to offset pastor's self-employment tax) \$ _____

Total Personal Income \$ _____

B. Ministry Related Expenses to Be Reimbursed (not income)

1. Personal vehicle expenses (ministry mileage) \$ _____

2. Ministry expenses (material for sermons or church functions) \$ _____

3. Professional development expenses (conferences, workshops) \$ _____

4. Travel expenses (meals, lodging) \$ _____

5. Hospitality Expenses (hosting speakers, church groups, etc.) \$ _____

Total Ministry Reimbursement Expenses \$ _____

C. Employee Protection Benefits (not income)

1. Health insurance/dental/vision \$ _____

2. Term life insurance \$ _____

3. Disability insurance \$ _____

4. Retirement plan contribution (paid by church) \$ _____

Total Employee Benefits \$ _____

For more information on compensation planning or to download a workbook guide, go to absc.org/compensation



Pastoral Leadership During Interim Time

Traditional Interim

Many churches choose to have an interim pastor that only preaches on Sunday and maybe Wednesday. This is called the traditional interim method. Sometimes the traditional interim may be asked to help with administrative matters, visit the sick, and other duties.

SmartStart Interim

The SmartStart Interim uses a trained interim that will lead the church through an eight-week interim designed to help the church during the first weeks after the pastor leaves and to prepare for a productive transition. The eight-week interim is designed to help the church make wise decisions about the future of the church. It also serves to answer the question, "Who is going to fill the pulpit right away?"

During the eight weeks, together the church will consider different topics, such as:

- Seeking God's Direction
- Finding God's Purpose
- The Church As the Body of Christ
- The Mission of the Church
- What Is a Healthy Church?
- What Is My Role in the Church?
- Who Are Our Ministry Partners?
- Committing Our Future to God

If your church has an interest in securing a SmartStart Interim, please contact your associational missionary or the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. (501.376.4791, Ext. 5103 or 1.800.838.2272, Ext. 5103)

Intentional Interim Ministry (IIM)

This type of interim ministry uses a trained IIM pastor who will lead the church through a thorough study of the church by working through the following five focus points:

- History
- Mission
- Leadership
- Connections
- Future

The church elects a Transition Team of committed church members to work with the IIM pastor to lead the church to work through these five focus points. Working through these focus points takes several months. The purpose of working through these five focus points is to prepare the church for calling a new pastor. Working through these five focus points is a challenging but remarkable spiritual experience for the church.

If your church would have an interest in exploring the IIM process, please contact the ABSC office at 501.376.4791, ext. 5103 or 1.800.838.2272, ext. 5103. An ABSC staff member would be very pleased to make a presentation of the IIM process to your church leadership.



Potential Search Committee Questions for a Pastoral Candidate

Theology (What do you believe about...?)

- What do you believe about the Bible?
- How is a person saved?
- What is God's role in salvation?
- What is the person's role in salvation?
- What is "the Gospel?"
- What is the purpose of the church?

Evangelism/Outreach (How do you share your faith and lead the church in outreach?)

- Describe a time when you shared your faith personally.
- What is your favorite way to present the Gospel?
- Approximately how often do you personally share your faith?
- How do you think a church should reach out to lost people? What is your preferred strategy or strategies?
- What is the role of church members in the numerical growth of the church?
- How should the church conduct follow-up on guests and prospects?

Discipleship (How do you develop believers?)

- What is your preferred way to study the Bible personally?
- What strategy do you prefer in discipling new believers?
- What is the best way for discipleship to occur in the local church?
- What is your view of Sunday School? Small groups?

Leadership (How do you lead the congregation?)

- How do you understand pastoral authority?
- What is the purpose of deacons?
- How should the pastor relate to the deacons?
- What is the purpose of committees/ministry teams?
- How should the pastor relate to committees/ministry teams?

Administration (How do you oversee the administration of the church?)

- What is your opinion of church constitution and bylaws?
- What purpose should the constitution and bylaws play in the church?

- How should significant financial decisions be made?
- What is the pastor's relationship to the church's finances?
- Are you comfortable moderating business meetings?

Ministry (How do you oversee care for the congregation?)

- What is your favorite part of ministry care in the church?
- What part of ministry care is the greatest struggle for you?
- What is the pastor's role in ensuring the members receive ministry care?

Worship

- What should a worship service look like?
- What is your preferred style of worship music?
- Who is responsible for leading the worship service?
- What is your view of the invitation at the end of the sermon?

Staff

- Do you have experience leading a staff? (number, type, etc.)
- Describe how you would lead and relate to the staff.
- How would you conduct staff meetings?
- Have you ever used a goals-oriented system of accountability?
- How would you address problems with staff performance?

Missions

- What is your preferred churchwide strategy for missions?
- Have you been on mission trips? If so, please expound.
- What is your opinion of the Cooperative Program?
- What is your opinion of the Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, and Dixie Jackson offerings?
- Are you actively involved in the local association? State convention?
- What is your opinion about attending the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting?

Other

- Purpose of Sunday evening and Wednesday evening?
- What are your views on current social issues?
- What role does the Internet play in the church's ministry?
- What role does social media play in your life and ministry?
- What is your experience and plan for addressing the threat of sexual abuse in the church?
- What is your opinion and experience with church discipline?
- Describe your family. Have you ever been divorced? If so, please expound.



Questions a Candidate Might Ask the Search Committee

1. What do you perceive to be the church's greatest strengths?
2. What do you perceive to be the church's greatest weaknesses?
3. What was the best time in the church's history (high water mark or golden era)?
4. How would you compare the church currently in relation to the golden era?
5. What is your dream for how the church might look 10 years from now?
6. What do you think it will take for the church to get there?
7. What needs to change soon?
8. Would most church members agree with you on questions 4-7?
9. How is your church structured to make decisions?
10. If there are committees/ministry teams, how many and what are they?
11. Is the church financially healthy?
12. What is the existing church schedule?
13. How many attend each weekly service/event?
14. How is business generally conducted in the church?
15. What was the topic of your last contentious business meeting?
16. What have been some hot button issues in the past?
17. If a big decision needs to be made in the church, to whom do the members look for blessing/approval?
18. What is the role of the deacons? How often do they meet?
19. Tell me about existing ministries. Children? Men? Women? Senior Adults? Others? (expound on each)
20. Tell me about the previous pastor's ministry (strengths/weaknesses).
21. What is the biggest mistake made by any of your previous pastors?
22. Is there a job description for the pastor? Is there a job description for all other staff members?
23. What would be the greatest needs for a new pastor to address?
24. What do you think the church would like for the pastor to do in the first year?
25. What role have past pastors' wives had? Expectations?
26. When there is a full staff, how many are there and which positions?
27. Who oversees the staff members?
28. Is there a formal evaluation of the staff? If so, by whom?
29. Are staff salaries made public?
30. Who is currently leading worship?
31. What are the biggest worship service changes that have been made?
32. What is the community like?
33. What is the church's reputation in the town? What is the church best known for?
34. What outreach/ministry has the church done in the town? When?
35. How open is the church to ministry/outreach in the community?
36. What is the church's relationship to other area churches?
37. How did former pastors relate to other pastors in the community?
38. When members leave the church what churches do they go to?
39. What is the relationship like with the local Baptist association?
40. What is the church's missions strategy?
41. How does the church emphasize missions giving?
42. Where are you in the search process?
43. Can you mail/email me a copy of the:
 - Updated constitution and bylaws?
 - Non-personnel portion of the budget (specifically "ministries")?
 - Pastor and staff job descriptions?
44. Does the church have a Leadership Council or Church Council?
45. If so, does the council currently function? In what capacity? How often do they meet?
46. What is the church's strategy for social media and Internet presence?
47. What expectations does the church have about the pastor's social media presence?
48. Is the service on TV or radio? Live or week delay?
49. Does the church reimburse for mileage and ministry expenses?
50. Compensation discussion. What benefits are provided? Is there a parsonage?



Background Check Authorization Form

Notification and Authorization to Conduct Background Investigation

I hereby authorize _____ Church, _____, _____ (city, state) to investigate my background to determine any and all information of concern to my record, whether same is of record or not, and I release employers and persons named in my resume from all liability for any damages on account of him/her furnishing said information. Additionally, you are hereby authorized to make any investigation of my personal history including, but not limited to a credit check, driver's license history, educational background, military record, and criminal record. I authorize the release of this information by the appropriate agencies to the investigative service of the church's choice. This authorization, in original or copy form, shall be valid for this and for any future reports and updates that may be requested.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full name _____ SSN _____

Other names or SSN used _____

Current street address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone (_____) _____

List ALL addresses for the past seven years (show others on back and check here)

Dates (Month/Year)

From ____/____ to ____/____ Street address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Driver's license # _____ State _____ DOB ____/____/____

May we contact your current employer? Yes No

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? Yes No

(If yes, please show details including date, charge, county, disposition on another sheet.)

Signature _____ Date _____

Notes





Notes

Notes





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