

# PASTOR SEARCH

## *A Prayer-Driven Process*

Bob Lowman, Jr.



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|                                                           |          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Introduction</b>                                       | <b>4</b> |
| <b>A. ORGANIZE</b>                                        |          |
| 1. Being intentional with the interim period              | 5        |
| 2. Forming and preparing the Committee                    | 6        |
| 3. 14 mistakes Search Committees make                     | 9        |
| 4. Prayer in the process: Depending on God together       | 11       |
| 5. Revitalization during the transition                   | 14       |
| 6. Next strategic steps                                   | 16       |
| <b>B. RESEARCH</b>                                        |          |
| 1. Gathering information                                  | 18       |
| 2. Developing a pastor profile                            | 20       |
| <b>C. SEARCH</b>                                          |          |
| 1. Finding prospective names                              | 24       |
| 2. Prioritizing prospects                                 | 26       |
| <b>D. SELECT</b>                                          |          |
| 1. Communicating with the candidate                       | 29       |
| 2. Contacting references and doing background checks      | 32       |
| <b>E. CALL</b>                                            |          |
| 1. Calling the pastor                                     | 37       |
| 2. Following up after the call                            | 39       |
| <b>F. APPENDICES</b>                                      |          |
| 1. 10 best practices for pastor search teams              | 41       |
| 2. 40 days of prayer (example)                            | 42       |
| 3. Prayer requests for Pastor Search Committee and church | 44       |
| 4. Congregational demographic survey                      | 45       |
| 5. Church member survey                                   | 48       |
| 6. Survey for the Pastor Search Committee                 | 49       |
| 7. Reference release form                                 | 52       |
| 8. Reference letter                                       | 53       |
| 9. Reference telephone interview form                     | 54       |
| 10. Credit and legal information release (pastor)         | 57       |
| 11. Credit and legal information release (spouse)         | 58       |
| 12. Letter to pastor on questionnaire                     | 59       |
| 13. Pastoral candidate questionnaire                      | 60       |
| 14. Pastoral compensation                                 | 63       |
| 15. A covenant for ministry between pastor and church     | 66       |
| 16. A pastoral installation service                       | 69       |
| 17. Recommended resources                                 | 70       |

# INTRODUCTION

Through 17 years as an associational leader in North Carolina, training over 40 pastor search committees thus far, I have come to believe that pastoral transition has the potential to be one of the most important times in the life and ministry of a church. The pastor search process allows a church to strategically pause and prayerfully consider who they are, where God is leading and what kind of pastor He is preparing to answer the call to serve with them. With a pastor having the potential of serving in a church for 20 years or longer, this season can be transformative in how it impacts the church and its community for decades into the future.

William Vanderbloemen emphasized the seriousness of this task when he said, “Finding your church’s pastor is as serious as an organ transplant.” Bringing someone new to your church and community to lead and manage the work of the congregation is a critical process and requires expert assistance.

Therefore, we offer this tool for churches engaging in the pastor search process. This resource is designed for North Carolina Baptists, but the principles included can be used anywhere a Baptist congregation is searching for a new pastor.

There are some very good resources available to help churches with the pastor search process, and we reference several of them in this manual. Our goal is to help your church understand and apply basic principles and practices and see the vital importance of prayer throughout the process. Since Jesus is the head of the church, we need to be asking Him often how He would have us pursue this search for the church’s next pastor, yielding our desires to His sovereign design.

This resource recognizes and emphasizes the priority of biblical prayer and the indispensable leadership of the Holy Spirit as a church searches for a pastor. We present this with the belief that pastors are called by God to the ministry, and that His calling points them to a specific congregation. You get to join Him in His work as you take up the pastor search responsibility, doing so with humility, knowing that this task is beyond our ability.

But you may also take up this task with confidence, knowing that the Lord Jesus, who said He would build His church, is able to do immeasurably more than all you can ask or imagine as you trust Him to help your church find the servant of the Lord He has in mind for you (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 3:20-21).

Prayerfully,  
*Bob Lowman, Jr.*

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Acknowledgement and appreciation to M. Wayne Oakes, who wrote the resource *Finding a New Pastor for Your Church* in 1997 when he served with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. This manual uses several of his ideas and processes as we present a new version of this resource. Thanks also to Joe McKeever for providing illustrations for this resource and to many colleagues who have given helpful input that has made this book possible.

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## 1 BEING *Intentional* WITH THE INTERIM PERIOD

When a pastor departs a church, this begins a time of transition often called the interim period. Some think that this time is for the church to keep doing what it's been doing, get a Pastor Search Committee, and find a preacher that can fill in during the search process.

There is a better way. The interim period is a vitally important time for a church to intentionally pause and prayerfully consider who they are and how they believe God is leading them on mission in their setting.

**There are two important decisions a church needs to make when an interim period begins. Yes, a Pastor Search Committee needs to be enlisted. We will discuss this in the next section. The other important decision is who will serve as the interim or transitional pastor.**

Some churches seem to think that having an interim pastor is optional, and they proceed to invite different preachers to fill their pulpit in the weeks after the former pastor departed. Some multi-staff churches opt to have other staff members preach. While both options may work on a short-term basis, it is best for a church in transition to identify and call an interim pastor for this important time.

We have prepared a group of pastors who are trained and ready to serve churches during interim periods, during transitions from one pastor to the next. Our state convention is providing excellent training for transitional interim ministry. Every church can benefit from having a trained interim pastor that is able to strategically lead them through the transition time, helping them in significant ways as they prepare for the future.

The transitional pastor or transitional interim pastor is not just an interim preacher. He is especially prepared to help a church in the interim period. There are other models for this training in addition to the one our state convention uses. Contact your local association to find out who is available in your

area to serve in this way. If you need additional assistance, contact the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and ask about help with transitional interim ministry.

Churches that especially need this kind of ministry in the interim period are those whose former pastor had been serving with them for a long tenure, or those whose pastor has departed after conflict, or other issues forced his departure. We strongly encourage churches in these situations to consider a trained transitional interim pastor.

However, with all the changes we have faced in recent years, and with the need for improved health in a significant majority of our churches, every church facing an interim period would be wise to consider the option of a transitional interim pastor.

Know that your church is being prayed for as you undertake this important responsibility. Your association, state convention and Christians who live near you are asking God to help you identify and call the pastor He is preparing to serve with your congregation.

## **2** *Forming* **AND PREPARING THE PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE**

The group that is assigned the task of finding a new pastor for a church is called the Pastor Search Committee, Pastor Search Team, or whatever a local congregation decides to call that group.

Whatever the name, the task is the same, and this task requires a prayerful, serious method of deciding who will serve on that committee. Most church bylaws include guidelines on what this committee looks like, from the number of members included to a variety of other details on the makeup of the team.

Churches need to examine their guidelines for this committee on a periodic basis to make sure that the details are appropriate for their current reality. For example, if a pastor has served in a church for a tenure of ten or more years, and there has been no revision of those pastor search committee details in that span of time, an update may be needed immediately when a vacancy occurs. This is one reason why it is important for pastors to be responsible leaders in helping the church realize this need and adjust as needed in a timely manner.

Some may ask how many members should be on the search committee. The church's bylaws usually include this detail. Experience has shown that the larger a committee is, the more potential there is for problems. It is also true that too few on a committee may not represent the church well in this important process.

Ideally, a search committee should be made up of five to nine members, depending on the size of the church. Flexibility with the actual number of members can help make sure that members who are qualified are part of the committee, not just a certain number who may or may not match the qualifications.

## **What kind of members should be on the Pastor Search Committee?**

- Those selected for service need to be mature emotionally and spiritually.
- They should also be active members of the church. This is not a casual assignment, but a serious and significant one.
- The committee should also aim to represent the congregation well — balanced in gender, age and ethnicity.

## **Who should not serve on the committee?**

### **Here are some wise examples of those who should not serve:**

- Someone who is not a maturing Christian.
- Someone who shows an inappropriate desire to serve on the committee.
- Husbands and wives should not be able to serve together.
- A staff member or spouse of a staff member.
- Someone who has a reputation for being disagreeable or divisive.

The process of identifying and forming the committee should be prayerful and thoughtful, seeking most of all for those God is preparing to serve His church in this important way in the time of transition.

## **Committee leadership**

- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Secretary
- Prayer Coordinator

Pastor Search Committees will normally elect a chairperson, vice chairperson and secretary — these are important for the order and effectiveness of the team.

The chairperson, by nature of the role, will be the key leader of the committee, including calling and presiding over meetings and setting agendas. The chair is also best to serve as the committee's liaison with the leadership of the congregation. The vice chairperson works closely with the chair, acting for the chair when needed. The secretary keeps accurate minutes of the committee's work and helps manage the resumés and other documents in the process of the work.

An additional role recommended is that of prayer coordinator. This person is responsible for the prayer ministry of the committee, keeping this spiritual discipline in the forefront of the committee's work throughout the search process. More on this role will be included later as we discuss the priority of prayer in the search process.

## **Preparing the Search Committee**

Several years ago, one of our pastors retired and the church he had served for decades had the task of finding a new pastor. I will never forget the call from the Search Committee's new chairman. We were connecting so that I could find out how our association could assist in the process of getting the committee prepared for the task ahead. No member of the committee, other than the chairman, had served before on a search group. When I offered to train the committee, the chair said, "Well, the

association did training for us before our last pastor came. We still have that information, so I believe we are good to go. We don't need any more training." It had been over 30 years since that last training experience. Yes, they needed training, but he would not admit it, and that committee struggled in too many ways because of that failure in leadership.

Every search committee needs training from an outside source before beginning the search process. Yes — Every. Search. Committee. Needs. Training.

Especially in these times, with all the changes that have impacted churches in recent years, search committees need training to help them navigate all the challenges and changes of the pastor search process. Your local association is ready and able to assist with this training, as is our state convention.

One of the benefits of working with your associational leader is the ongoing support that is available through that local relationship. Associations not only provide training but assistance through the search process: consulting as needed, contacting other associations where potential candidates are serving, sharing names and resumés and more.

We recommend training and reading good search process resources. In addition to this manual, there are excellent print resources that help the search committee in significant ways, ways that help the committee avoid mistakes and make good, God-honoring decisions. (See the appendices for recommended available resources.)

The search committee should also take time to get to know one another and to pray together. The relationships you have as a group together are vitally important as you walk through this process. Building trust, sharing hope and depending on the love Jesus makes possible for us are crucial aspects of this journey.

### **One way to get to know everyone on the search committee is by using an early gathering of the group to allow each member to answer two questions:**

1. Tell us your Jesus story. How and when did you come to know and follow the Lord?
2. Tell us your church story. How and when did you become part of this church?

These two stories from each member will give the group a reference point for faith and commitment for each one. These stories can be good anchor points to go back to when challenges come and the process moves on.

One of the best ways to develop the spiritual relationships you need on the committee is by praying together. This prayer-driven perspective will be covered in a later section.

### **Committee agreements for a healthy search process:**

The Pastor Search Committee should agree together on some basic operating principles for their work together. These include: humility, respect, confidentiality and unity.

1. **Humility:** The pastor search process is a challenging one and can be a difficult task to undertake. Search Committee members should acknowledge their need for God's help and the help of their fellow committee members, demonstrating biblical humility with one another as they prayerfully work together.

2. **Respect:** The work of the committee will be made easier if the members are respectful of one another and of the committee's leadership. Mutual, loving respect will help much in the search process and will build the relationships necessary for this effort.
3. **Confidentiality:** This is a vitally important part of the committee's work — that the work be kept confidential between the members. The committee should especially discuss this aspect of their work so that a mutual understanding can be agreed to.
4. **Unity:** The church has deliberately chosen this committee to search for and bring to the church a new pastor for consideration. This process should be marked at every step by the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). If the committee is not united in the candidate who is brought to the church, how can the church expect to be united in their consideration when their committee was not? The time that unity can take in this process is worth the effort and wait.



Jointly signing a pledge to live and serve in these ways and letting the church know that each member has made this commitment will solidify the unity of the team as you walk together through the pastor search process.

### 3 14 *Mistakes* **SEARCH COMMITTEES MAKE**

Before we look at the possibilities when we do the pastor search process well, let us consider mistakes that search committees tend to make so that we can avoid them. Thanks to Chuck Lawless for allowing us to use this information here.

## Here are mistakes to avoid with a Pastor Search Committee:

- 1. Including the wrong members on the committee.** Just because a person is viewed as a leader doesn't necessarily make him or her a good search team member. Members ought to be godly, prayerful Christians, good team members and trustworthy believers.
- 2. Praying too little.** I've seen some committees that prayed a lot when their work started, a little during the actual search process, and a lot more once they'd narrowed their search to one person. Significant prayer is essential during the entire process. We will address this important topic in a later section.
- 3. Not checking the accuracy of the resumé.** You'd hope that all Christian candidates have only written the truth on their resumé, but that's not always the case. Check and double-check the resumé's you consider.
- 4. Not doing background checks.** Again, I wish this was not necessary, but we live in a fallen world. A thorough background check is an absolute necessity for any pastoral candidate. We also recommend that his wife has a background check, also. If either object to such a process, you have good evidence that you need to move on to another candidate.
- 5. Not asking theological questions.** I'm amazed by the number of candidates I know who are asked only one or two (or zero) questions about what they believe. A general, "Do you believe the Bible?" is not sufficient. You need to know what your potential pastor believes. A thorough exploration of the beliefs and convictions of any pastoral candidate is necessary, lest the church finds itself in a situation where the pastor does not believe what the church believes or what Baptists in general believe.
- 6. Asking theological questions too late in the process.** When the search committee doesn't ask these questions until strong relationships have begun to develop, it's too easy to let debatable responses pass. Ask the tough questions earlier rather than later.
- 7. Not checking references.** I admit that few people include negative references on their resumé, but you can still learn about a candidate from others. Also, contacting the local Baptist association where the pastor serves is a good way to get an objective perspective. Again, be thorough in this effort.
- 8. Rushing the process.** In my experience, it's taking longer and longer to find pastors and staff members. The longer it takes, the likelier it is that the committee will want to settle for less than the best. That's dangerous. Trust God through the process and refuse to rush.
- 9. Not being honest with the candidate.** Most churches are not as healthy as search teams seem to think they are. Withholding significant information in the search process will only breed frustration later.
- 10. Spending too little time with the candidate.** Sometimes this issue is the result of an overall faulty process, but the more time the search team spends with the candidate, the better.
- 11. Failing to keep the church informed.** The work of the committee is to be confidential, but the committee can keep the congregation in the loop by sharing basic process information and prayer requests. At a minimum, the church members can then pray more pointedly.

- 12. Failing to keep the candidates informed.** Even if the committee decides not to pursue a particular candidate, they still owe the candidate a response. Leaving people hanging is unkind.
- 13. Overreacting to the previous leader.** Too often, a church responds to one negative leader by next calling the exact opposite type of leader. That option is not usually the best solution.
- 14. Assuming the only possibilities are people who've submitted a resumé.** God might be working in someone whose resumé is not yet available. Committees that don't consider asking someone whose name has not been submitted might miss an opportunity. Watch for ways to find candidates that a member of the committee shares, or a trusted source recommends.

*Additional resources on the pastor search process are available in the resource list in the appendices and on [chucklawless.com](http://chucklawless.com).*

## **4** *Prayer* **IN THE PROCESS: DEPENDING ON GOD TOGETHER**

L. R. Scarborough said, “There are no such things as prayerless spiritual achievements.” For a pastor search committee to achieve the success in their process that is needed to bring the right pastor to their church, prayer must be in the forefront of the entire process. Prayer is not something that is simply done at the beginning of each meeting — rather, it’s a spiritual discipline that drives the entire experience for the members of the committee personally and for the search team as a group.

If the search committee spends the first month of their assignment focused on praying for their next pastor and the search process, that would be a month well spent. Therefore, we say this process, if it is as it should be, is prayer-driven. The Apostle Paul’s admonition in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 fits the pastor search process: “Pray without ceasing.”

This team must be careful not to fall into the mistake that is often made: That if we pray a little, that’s enough; or if praying people in the church are interceding for the process, the committee does not need to do so. Again, if the committee spends most of its meeting time praying together, this is time well spent.

Praying in a focused, intentional way through the search process has a way of taking our attention off what individuals want to see happen — or what the committee wants to see happen — to help us focus on what God wants to happen in this experience. On our own, apart from prayer, we tend toward worldly ways instead of Spirit-led ways. Fervent prayer causes us to crave God’s will without reservation.

One search committee I worked with thought they had come to a point of decision on a pastoral candidate. But one member of the committee, who I believe was the most prayerful person in the group, kept questioning the committee’s perspective, to the frustration of several members. But, after praying further together instead of acting, the group came to a consensus to wait on the Lord for clarity. Within days, they saw that they had to change their direction, and they thanked the brother whose prayerful persistence helped show the way.

The goal in this process is prayerful dependence, practicing prayer together, fully dependent on the Lord who is Head of the church. He knows the way, and every circumstance that will impact the way. He will show the way by His grace if we follow His lead, His timing, His Word to the discovery of His perfect will.

The church family needs to be involved in this prayer process as well. One way for a congregation to be actively engaged in the search process is by praying strategically and regularly for the search committee and the church each step of the way. This manual includes specific prayer requests that cover the range of needs involved in the search process. Finding the best ways to keep the church family informed for the purpose of prayer is a regular responsibility of the search committee.

### **Ways to pray for the pastor search process**

These ways to pray are strategically important for the committee to implement early and often in the search process. The committee's prayer coordinator, in partnership with the chairperson, should take the lead in planning these various prayer efforts and championing the necessity of prayer. This is a prayer-driven process.

### **Prayer retreat for the committee**

As soon as the committee is set, a prayer retreat should be scheduled. This can be as simple as a full day at the church location to a weekend experience at a conference center. The goal should be to have at least eight or more hours of worship and prayer as part of this retreat. The committee's prayer coordinator works with the chair to plan this time with the Lord and one another.

#### **As a schedule is planned, the retreat should include these items:**

- 1. Joint session:** One hour of worship and prayer, focusing on lifting up the name of Jesus and preparing hearts for a focused time with the Lord and with the other members of the committee.
- 2. Individual prayer segment:** One hour of personal time, with each member getting with God for a time of solitude and silence. Use the guide included in the retreat plan in the appendix.
- 3. Bible study and prayer:** One hour of Scripture study led by the chair, interim pastor or someone selected by the committee leadership, focusing on the Bible's directives to seek the Lord, to depend on Him, to surrender to His Lordship in every situation. Conclude the study time with a season of group prayer.
- 4. Meals together:** The committee should schedule the retreat so that at least two meals are shared by the members, building relationships for the task ahead and helping members get to know one another better. Breaking bread around a table is a powerful tool toward biblical unity.
- 5. Preparing to pray through the process:** At least one hour in which the group is encouraged to grow in their practice of biblical prayer and other spiritual disciplines, including journaling and fasting. Encouraging each member to journal through the search process can be a way to discern God's direction at critical times in the process. Reading recommendations are included in the retreat plan.

- 6. Praying for a pastor:** An hour or more in which the group focuses on praying specifically for the pastor God will lead them to in the days ahead. Praying about the kind of spiritual leader the church needs is part of this time. Read and pray Scripture over the pastoral ministry, including reading aloud all of 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus as part of the prayer time. Read a chapter from each letter and then pray about what was included. Add any other Scriptures that can help the group pray well. Also include praying for the pastor's wife and family.
- 7. Praying for one another:** An hour in which the members specifically intercede for one another, and each member's family, work situation, needs and any other requests shared by the members. If this requires more time, take the time to cover the entire committee one by one.
- 8. Praying about a prayer covering:** The group should take time to consider who should be invited to a personal prayer covering for this process. Each member needs two to four intercessors who will commit to pray regularly for them, with the members sharing requests as is appropriate on a regular basis (with confidentiality in mind for the search process).
- 9. Conclude the retreat with a time of worship and thanksgiving:** Give gratitude to God for His blessing on this time away together, and thank Him in advance for answering your prayers and blessing the church by preparing you for the next pastor He has for the congregation.

## 40 days of prayer

Scripture records how God's people set aside certain amounts of time for prayer, seeking the Lord. 40-day periods of occur in the Bible in these ways:

- Moses was on the mountain with God for 40 days before he brought down the Ten Commandments (Exodus 34)
- The prophet Elijah sought the Lord for 40 days (1 Kings 19)
- 40 days is the example Jesus set in Matthew 4:1-11. Before He began His ministry, He went into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, praying and fasting.

40 days has been a significant time of prayer for many Christians through the years, and we have seen it be a time of blessing as churches set aside a 40-day season to seek the Lord as the pastor search process gets underway. We recommend that a 40-day prayer guide be prepared which includes specific prayer requests for each day and a verse or verses of Scripture to read each day. One guide uses the Letter to the Ephesians and reads through all six chapters as part of the 40-day plan (*examples are in the appendices*).

Some churches have gone beyond the 40-day plan to do 100 days of prayer. This is a way to have the church united in praying for the search process for over three months. The Pastor Search Committee should consider which option is best for their church, in consultation with appropriate church leaders. The number of days is not as important as the fact that the church places the priority on prayer to focus for more than a few days on seeking God as they seek a new pastor.

When a plan is in place for this season of prayer, planning how best to communicate it with the church is key. This plan can include printed guides, emails, texting, videos and/or graphics in worship, church website and more. Every way that a church can communicate should be implemented in making this season of prayer well known and well done.

## The interim pastor's role in prayer

The interim pastor is uniquely qualified to help direct the church in prayer during the transition time. From special times of prayer during worship, to midweek prayer meetings, to articles on prayer shared with the church, the interim pastor can steer the church toward an effective and consistent prayer ministry. The trained transitional interim pastor has tools at his disposal that will educate, encourage and challenge the church toward a deeper prayer effort. The Search Committee, and specifically the prayer coordinator of the Committee, should work closely with the interim pastor to develop a robust prayer plan.

## Regular prayer updates and requests

One of the best ways the Search Committee can keep the church informed and involved in the search process is by sharing regular updates and prayer requests with the church. While confidentiality is key in the search process, they can share ways the church can pray for them, for the pastoral candidates being considered and for the church itself.

Asking the church to pray for the committee can include such needs as wisdom, discernment, humility, patience (and all the fruits of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-26) and a fresh awareness of God's presence and direction in their work.

Praying for the pastoral candidates, while not sharing names, can encourage the church to focus on the man God is preparing to serve as their pastor. Praying for him to know wisdom, God's direction and call, protection in spiritual warfare and more can help their pastor they may not know yet. Praying for his wife and family is also important for these times, trusting that God will not only call a pastor, but his spouse and family as well.

*\*See the appendices for more information, including a sample 40-day prayer guide, prayer requests and more.*

## 5 *Revitalization* DURING THE TRANSITION

The time of transition during the pastor search process is a very important opportunity to encourage your church to evaluate where you are and where you believe God is leading you as a congregation into the future.

Knowing where your church is on the life cycle is important for you, your interim pastor and your future pastor. Ask a member of your team to print the Church Revitalization Assessment (RevitalizeNC.org) and make copies for each member of the Pastor Search Committee. Have the committee discuss and decide the most appropriate answers for the 10 questions. Then, ask one member to go to the online assessment and complete it based on the committee's answers. Have a group discussion about where the assessment indicates the church is on the life cycle. Someone on the N.C. Baptist Revitalization Team will contact the person completing the online assessment.

Your local association may also have a process in place to serve churches through revitalization. Contact your associational leader to see how they can partner with your church in this important, future-focused way.

The church may have another leadership group that takes this process through the next steps, but the search committee can lead the way, helping the church take the needed steps to be ready for your new pastor to join you as God leads your congregation ahead.

N.C. Baptists and your local association have the tools and resources needed to help your church make good decisions as you prepare for the days ahead. Make sure the search committee encourages the church to make the best use of these tools and resources.



## NEXT STRATEGIC STEPS:

*Prayerfully, the search process continues...*

### B. Research

#### 1. Gathering information

- a. Compile church demographics and other relevant information
- b. Request studies of community demographics
- c. Prepare church profile and community profile
- d. Update congregation on process

#### 2. Developing a pastor profile

- a. Study biblical passages and relevant material
- b. Consider church situation and readiness for the future
- c. Prayerfully decide on pastor profile

### C. Search

#### 1. Finding prospective names

- b. Contact trusted leaders for recommendations
- c. Initiate process to receive resumés, set deadline
- d. Contact your association for resumés and use online resumé resources

#### 2. Prioritizing prospects

- a. Committee member review of names and resumés
- b. Determine resumé order, groups A, B and C
- c. Structure process: One candidate at a time
- d. Ask for help from associational leaders
- e. Visit church websites, social media platforms and other online locations
- f. Keeping confidentiality through the process

## **D.** *Select*

- 1. Communicating with the candidate**
  - a. Mock interview – preparing for the real thing
  - b. Sample interview questions
  - c. Initial interview with candidates – asking good questions
  - d. Follow-up meeting(s)
  - e. Decide on number one candidate
- 2. Contacting references and doing background checks**
  - a. Be thorough with background checks
  - b. Ask good questions of references
  - c. Receive pastoral questionnaire from candidate
  - d. Number one candidate thorough interview
  - e. Develop covenant agreement

## **E.** *Call*

- 1. Calling the Pastor**
  - a. Prepare the congregation for the visit
  - b. Meeting, connecting, listening, discerning on call weekend
  - c. Vote to call pastor under guidelines of the covenant agreement
- 2. Following up after the call**
  - a. Notify your local association and N.C. Baptists
  - b. Plan installation service
  - c. Pastor Search Committee becomes Pastor's Prayer Team



## B. Research

### Step 1. GATHERING *information*

- Compile church demographics and other relevant information
- Request studies of community demographics
- Prepare church profile and community profile
- Update congregation on process

Be prepared to present basic information about your church to any prospective candidate including information about the size of the church, location, facilities and housing for the pastor. This kind of resource can be prepared and shared broadly when the team begins the process of receiving names and resumé.

Provide this information to determine whether the pastor wishes to be considered as a candidate for the pastoral position. If so, ask the candidate for a current resumé (if needed). There is no need to expend effort considering a resumé if for whatever reason it is not a possibility for a particular candidate.

Begin preparation to present detailed information about your church to your prioritized, serious pastor candidates once they are determined. Place this information in documents that can be shared via email and print. Once compiled, the committee needs to go over this information to be familiar with the contents as they prepare to share this with pastoral candidates in the days ahead.

#### **This information would include:**

- A brief history of the church
- Description of church: membership, attendance, facilities, ministries and missions
- Any adopted church mission statement, vision statement, core values, strategies, goals
- Organizational enrollment and current attendance

- Names and contact information of former pastors
- Church staff members' names, titles and duties
- Job description for the pastor
- Congregational demographic information
- Overview of finances: receipts, expenditures, debt, average weekly receipts
- Two to five mile demographic and psychographic study of your church community (secured by contacting your local association)
- Name of local association and contact information of the associational leader.

Use the Congregational Demographic Survey (Appendix 4) to gain the congregation's demographic information. The committee will take these forms (one per family) and compile them into a report that will be used in the search process.

The advantage we have now that previous generations did not have is that we can see a preacher's sermon through videos online or shared via video files. There are some advantages to visiting a church to hear a sermon, but much of what needs to be seen and heard can be experienced via video.

A pastor's effectiveness is not always apparent through pulpit performance. Meeting with the pastor individually gives the committee an opportunity to observe behaviors and ask significant questions about core beliefs, leadership style and vision.

As individual members of the search committee, you may choose to visit several churches to observe their worship format and style of proclamation. This may help you clarify in your own mind the attributes you will seek in a pastor.

### **Update congregation on progress**

Explain to the church the process the committee will follow. Explain the approach the committee is taking and clarify how the committee will keep the congregation informed through reports and written updates. Congregations want to participate and be informed about the process that the church is following. Look for ways to provide information and participation in the process without breaking confidence with any candidate.

Do not disclose confidential resumé information — the names of persons under consideration or those who are no longer being considered should not be disclosed by the committee. Take care not to do anything that might hurt the pastor's work in their current place of service.

### **Sample comments from the committee to the church**

1. Our committee is encouraging the congregation to join us in a time of prayerful preparation as we seek a new pastor
2. We will ask the congregation to provide information about pastors they think should be considered, but we will not report back whether a particular candidate is under consideration.
3. We will do thorough background and reference checks, making sure the pastor we call is ready in every way to faithfully serve our church family.
4. Please pray regularly for our Pastor Search Committee as we seek God's will for our church.

## Step 2. DEVELOPING A PASTOR *profile*

- Study biblical passages and relevant material
- Consider church situation and readiness for the future
- Prayerfully decide on pastor profile

In this step of the process, surveys and other methods are often used to help the search committee discover a profile or understanding of the kind of pastor they are seeking for the church. While it can be somewhat helpful to conduct surveys to discover perspectives on the type of pastor a church needs, we are not emphasizing that method in this approach.

This search process is not designed to find out who people want to serve as their pastor, but to find out who God is preparing to serve as pastor in a local congregation.

### Applying the Scriptures to the profile

Scripture is your best source for understanding what kind of pastor to look for as you develop your pastor profile. In the prayer resources, committees are encouraged to pray through 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. These letters of Paul contain some of the best truth on who the pastor/shepherd/overseer needs to be and what he needs to do.

This passage from **1 Timothy** especially speaks to the position of pastor:

*This saying is trustworthy: "If anyone aspires to be an overseer, he desires a noble work." <sup>2</sup> An overseer, therefore, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, self-controlled, sensible, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, <sup>3</sup> not an excessive drinker, not a bully but gentle, not quarrelsome, not greedy. <sup>4</sup> He must manage his own household competently and have his children under control with all dignity. <sup>5</sup> (If anyone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of God's church?) <sup>6</sup> He must not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and incur the same condemnation as the devil. <sup>7</sup> Furthermore, he must have a good reputation among outsiders, so that he does not fall into disgrace and the devil's trap. — 1 Timothy 3:1–7 (CSB)*

### This passage gives these as qualifications for a pastor:

- **Above reproach:** One with a good reputation in the church, who lives honestly and with a readiness to repent, following the Lord.
- **Husband of one wife:** This qualification is open to interpretation but should not exclude single people or widowers. This may be best interpreted as one who is fully committed to his wife, if he has one, treating her with love and respect. On the topic of divorce, the first two qualifications should be combined, to be above reproach as the husband of one wife. The committee must wrestle with how they will deal with this topic in the context of their church family, with a view toward biblical faithfulness and love.
- **Self-controlled:** Not obsessive, but controlled, living a responsible life before God.
- **Sensible:** Demonstrating wisdom and a readiness to learn.

- **Respectable:** Someone who can be trusted in life and ministry, who earns and keeps the respect of family, friends, church members.
- **Hospitable:** This shows the shepherd heart of a pastor, one who is ready to care for the needs of others selflessly.
- **Able to teach:** Preaching is not the only responsibility of a pastor, but it is a vitally important one. The pastor must be able to teach and challenge others to trust and obey.
- **Not an excessive drinker:** The Scriptures acknowledge the dangers of alcohol, thus the call to high standards of self-control.
- **Not a bully, but gentle:** We have seen what a bully can do — that kind of person is not qualified to be a pastor. Gentleness is key in relationships and leadership.
- **Not quarrelsome:** The opposite of quarrelsome is peacemaking — a pastor is to be a peacemaker, one who aims for unity among the believers.
- **Not greedy:** In handling money and possessions, the pastor is to be generous, not greedy. In his own financial situation, a pastor must have integrity. The church should be alert to the needs of a pastor and his family, providing as needed for those who serve.
- **Manage his household well:** This is a sensitive qualification, but one that must be noted. The text indicates that if someone cannot manage his family well, he will have difficulty managing the church.
- **Not a new convert:** Someone who has been a Christian for a short period of time is not qualified to serve as a pastor. It takes time to become the servant of the Lord He has called pastors to be. This cannot be rushed but must be done in God's good time. This brings up the issue of the age of a pastor, and the

committee must be prayerful and thoughtful in considering this pastoral qualification.

- **Good reputation among outsiders:** The pastor is not only known by the church, but by the community. Does the pastor have a good reputation where he has served? The committee should explore this aspect, so that they can have a good expectation for what will happen in their own community should that pastor come to their church.

**Ephesians 4** gives a potent perspective on one who is worthy of the calling to follow Jesus. While this text is speaking to Christians in the church, it is also a good reference for qualities needed in a pastor who has answered the call to serve the Lord in life and ministry.

*Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit — just as you were called to one hope at your calling — <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. — Ephesians 4:1–6 (CSB)*

This passage emphasizes the character qualities needed to walk worthy as a follower of Jesus, and every pastor should be ready to pursue these attributes:

- **Humility:** Since God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6), a pastor needs to be an example of humility. As the committee learns about and interacts with pastoral candidates, humility should be noticeable in the life and work of the pastor. Genuine humility opens the door for God to do an amazing work in one's life.

- **Gentleness:** This fruit of the Spirit shows the shepherd heart of a pastor. Gentleness is not a sign of weakness but of strength in serving and caring for others. It enables a pastor to serve with the youngest and the eldest in a church family with love and grace.
- **Patience:** This fruit of the Spirit is described as love that is willing to wait. Relationships require patience. Pastors who have longer tenures in ministry positions usually are patient people who trust God to work through relationships in His time and way.
- **Forbearance (bearing with one another in love):** This trait is a readiness to live with the faults and idiosyncrasies of others, knowing that we each have our own. While this can be difficult in church relationships, it shows a readiness to give an extra level of love and patience freely to others. Healthy relationships require forbearance.
- **Unity-keeping:** Along with the other four character qualities, this personal behavior is a necessary part of the pastor's work with a church family. The Holy Spirit makes unity possible among believers — it is our responsibility to make every effort to maintain that unity in the church. Unity is the ultimate goal for ministry in the local church. If the church is not united, we cannot be effective in worship, in teaching or in disciple-making. Without unity, we are dead and repulsive to the world. So, a pastor's role under the lordship of Christ is to work to maintain the unity of the Spirit. Does a pastor have a reputation for unity-keeping? This is a question the search committee should be ready to ask.

These two Scripture passages give crucial qualifications for those who serve as pastors in our churches. The search committee should explore other Bible texts to prayerfully apply the

truth of God's Word to their pastor search process.

### Understanding the church for the profile

To prepare the best pastor profile, the search committee should take the biblical truths they identify as key for their pastor search and add to that awareness a thorough review of their church's current situation. This situation includes a review of the recent past in the life of the church and the leadership of their former pastor, along with a faith-filled future view of where they believe God is leading their church family on mission in their context.

This does not mean that the committee should identify how the former pastor led and do the same, or the opposite, depending on that experience. It means that with biblical awareness they review what the church has experienced in life and ministry, considering where the Lord may be leading in the days to come.

As was said earlier, pastoral transition has the potential to be one of the most important times in the life and ministry of a church. The pastor search process allows a church and the search committee to strategically pause and prayerfully consider who they are, where God is leading, and what kind of pastor He is preparing to answer the call to serve with them into the future. With a pastor having the potential of serving in a church for 20 years or longer, this time can be transformative in how it impacts the church and its community for decades into the future.

As a profile is developed, it should include characteristics, qualifications and abilities that the search committee believes are necessary as they look for their next pastor. The profile should fit the church. It should be clear and flexible: Clear, so that the committee knows who they are looking for; and flexible, should their perspective shift as the process moves forward.

Most likely, each member of the committee will have specific areas or qualifications that they believe are important. The goal is to bring those perspectives together into one profile that captures who the committee, after much prayer, study and deliberation, believes God is calling to serve as the church's pastor, serving under the Head of the church, Jesus Himself.

Included in the appendices is a survey for the search committee to consider using (*See the survey for the Pastor Search Committee, Appendix 6*). Pastors primarily serve in four general areas of ministry: proclamation, leadership, care and disciple-making. Congregations differ as to the priority they give to these various areas. This instrument will assist the committee in determining the priority of these particular ministry concerns. This is for the use of the Search Committee only.

It is also recommended that the committee complete and compile the results of this survey only after they have spent significant time in prayer and in studying what the Bible says to them about the pastor God is preparing for the church. This survey can help them formulate good questions to ask of pastoral candidates in interview discussions.

The committee can agree on the aspects learned in this process that will define the search experience, with the Scriptural and strategic information necessary to help the team do its work together.

**Mark Clifton has said that a pastor needs to be able and ready to do four things when he serves a church:**

**Preach, pray, love and stay.**

A search committee would be wise to apply these four aspects of ministry to their pastor profile. He should be able to preach God's Word. He should be ready to pray in life and ministry. He should do the shepherd's job of love, caring for those whom God has put in his care. And, he should be ready to stay at that church as long as God has him in the position where He called him, leaving not a minute earlier than the Lord says.



## Step 1. FINDING PROSPECTIVE *names*

- **Contact trusted leaders for recommendations**
- **Initiate process to receive resumés, set deadline**
- **Contact your association for resumés and use online resumé resources**

This step takes the committee from the preparation stage of the search process to the engagement stage, when actual names of prospective pastors are received and begin to be considered. While this step has traditionally been driven by a resumé search, we are recommending a different first step.

It has been wisely said that the pastor who is the best option for churches to consider during the search process does not have a resumé out for consideration and may not be thinking about a move from his current location.

If this is true, it means that if a committee begins with a resumé search, they will not receive or be aware of these names at this point in the search and may miss significant opportunities to discover God's direction in their search process.

So, this approach recommends that the first step of this engagement stage is to consult with trusted pastors and leaders that may be able to share the name of a pastor that the committee could prayerfully consider. These trusted individuals can be former pastors, associational leaders, seminary professors, other pastors that members of the committee know, state convention staff members and others.

The question to ask these trusted leaders is, “You know our church and you know pastors — is there a pastor that you believe God may be preparing for a church like ours?”

This begins the process of receiving names and resumés of prospective pastors. Next is the time to actively search for resumés for the committee to consider from trusted sources.

### Sources for these resumés include:

- Church members
- Trusted pastors and leaders
- Your local association and neighboring associations
- N.C. Baptists' resumé system at [sharing.ncbaptist.org](http://sharing.ncbaptist.org)
- Seminary sharing systems

Give your congregation an opportunity to submit names for consideration. Set a 6-8 week

cutoff date for receiving resumés in order to give church members ample time to secure one from any candidate.

Contact your local association to ask about resumés they may have on file that would be a good match for your church. Associational leaders often have a very good idea of pastoral candidates that would fit the churches of their associations well.

Be aware that usually when a church enters a transition time, some individuals eager to move to a new church will send their resumé on their own to pastor search committees. Be aware of this reality, and check with trusted advisors, like your associational leader, on such resumés.

Contact our SBC seminaries and ask about their resumé sharing system. Southeastern Seminary here in North Carolina has a good system for sharing resumé resources.

Once the committee has secured a good supply of resumés to review, it is important to make sure the candidates are ready and willing for consideration. A resumé may have been on file or in an office for several months, in which time changes can take place that impact the availability of the pastor.

If the committee wants to find out if a particular candidate is open to considering a move but does not want to let the candidate know about

their possible interest yet, the local associational leader can contact the association where the pastor currently serves. The associational leader can inquire about that pastor's situation and hear other information that would help the committee in its considerations. This can be done confidentially without revealing the name of the church involved in the search process.

One aspect of ministerial resumés is the listing of the pastor's educational experiences. The following information will assist your committee in understanding more about the educational degrees most often held by those in vocational ministry.

### Academic Degrees Related to Pastoral Ministry

All degrees offered by accredited seminaries are not included here. However, those that usually appear on resumés of Baptist pastors and other staff ministers are listed. The best-known undergraduate degrees are Bachelor of Arts (**B.A.**) and Bachelor of Science (**B.S.**).

**M.A. Master of Arts.** Our seminaries are now offering a wide variety of M.A. degrees in specialized areas of ministry.

**M.Div. Master of Divinity.** Requires college degree plus three years of seminary training. This has been the most common degree for pastors in recent years.

**D.Min. Doctor of Ministry.** Requires college degree, Master of Divinity and years of ministry experience.

**Ed.D. Doctor of Education.** Requires college degree, a masters degree and two more years of graduate work.

**Ph.D. Doctor of Philosophy.** Traditionally a degree reserved for those who plan to teach in an academic setting.

## Step 2. PRIORITIZING *prospects*

- Committee member review of names and resumés
- Determine resumé order, groups A, B and C
- Structure process: One candidate at a time
- Ask for help from associational leaders
- Visit church websites, social media platforms and other online locations
- Keeping confidentiality through the process

The committee receives names and resumés until an established cutoff date. Using the pastor profile the committee has formulated, establish a priority order in which to consider the potential candidates you have on hand.

**A primary rule for the process a search committee needs to follow is this: Work with only one person at a time.** Work with an individual until the committee is united in believing that this is the pastor to pursue for service with your church, or not.

### **Why is it important to work with only one candidate at a time?**

This is not a popularity contest. Your goal is to discover the man you sense the Holy Spirit has prepared to serve your church.

Considering several candidates seriously at the same time creates the possibility of your committee members' supporting different candidates and dividing the committee.

Emphasize the fact that the pastor is being "called," not "hired." This is first and foremost a spiritual decision. So, depend on the Holy Spirit's leadership as you work with the candidate before you.

We expect a pastor to work with only one prospective church at a time. Extend the candidate the same courtesy.

Your committee should agree on a way to sort through the resumés received. The goal is for everyone to have a sense of involvement in the process. Committee members should prayerfully seek and be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Here are some suggestions on how to sort and prioritize the resumés you receive.

Ask each committee member to rate each resumé for suitability from 1-10, with 10 being the highest. Total your scores on each candidate and place resumés in priority order.

The pastor profile the committee has compiled will influence how they review the resumés received. Apply what you believe is important to the resumés as you consider them.

One recommendation to consider on reviewing resumés is to check to see how long the pastor has served at different locations of ministry. Remember that some of those positions may have been during college or seminary study, and that may have influenced the length of time served.

However, if a pastor has a pattern of staying at a particular pastorate for two years or less, that is an item to note. If he stays only a few years in a location and then moves, and has done that more than once, it may indicate a tendency to leave when challenges arise or when a more attractive position becomes available.

The church needs a pastor that will come and stay as long as God leaves him there. That may just be a few years, but more often than not, that kind of commitment to the call of the Lord will result in a stay of seven, ten or even more years.

Discuss with the committee these kinds of ideas and learn together how to review the information you have received.

Divide the resumés among subgroups of committee members. Ask each subgroup to choose three resumés warranting consideration by the entire group. When the resumés from the subgroups are compiled, ask each member to rate as suggested in the previous section. Place names in priority order.

The committee may study the resumés together and reach consensus on the order in which they will be considered. While a committee can consider resumés in the order received, a better use of time is prayerfully to give priority to persons most matching the church's perceived needs and the profile the committee has compiled for the search.

### **Subgroups place portions of resumés in A, B and C categories.**

- “A” category includes those to *definitely* consider;
- “B” category includes those to *possibly* consider;
- “C” category includes those to *not actively* consider.

Ask other subgroups to concur on B and C categories. The committee then focuses on those in the A category only.

The committee may choose to locate an audio recording or video of a typical worship service and listen or watch all selected candidates to help establish a priority order.

This process depends on the information that can be gleaned from resumés, contacts with leaders, sermon recordings, websites, social media, interviews with candidates and more.

At this point in the search, the search team can also visit the church websites of candidates of interest to find information, sermon recordings, articles, blog posts and more that help introduce the pastor to them. Simply checking to see if the pastor's church website is up to date can reveal much about his administrative leadership skills. If the last post on the website was from a year earlier, that is definitely an item to note.

In earlier times, to hear a pastor's sermon, one had to contact the church and request an audio or video recording of a message. Now, most pastors have their sermons saved online, either at their church's website, on YouTube or Vimeo, on their own personal website, or elsewhere. This makes hearing a preacher much easier for the search team and provides many more such resources than have been available in the past.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are places of interest to examine to learn more about potential candidates. Sometimes these platforms can reveal more than someone would want revealed, but it is a way to get to know the pastor you are interested in. These details at least provide information to discuss with a candidate, should the search proceed to that stage with him.

Sometimes pastors have their own website, enabling him to do a broader ministry beyond the ongoing work of the church he serves. A simple online search should reveal these kinds of resources.

Remember that as the committee does its work, the information you discover is not for public consumption but for the confidential work of the search process. Remember to keep what you learn within the confines of the committee's work. It is not to be shared online or discussed outside the committee during the search process.



A photograph showing the hands and forearms of two people shaking hands. The person on the left is wearing a tan corduroy jacket over a red and blue plaid shirt. The person on the right is wearing a blue and white checkered shirt. A semi-transparent dark grey box is overlaid on the lower left of the image, containing the text 'D. Select' in white.

## D. *Select*

### **Step 1. COMMUNICATING WITH** *the candidate*

- Mock interview – preparing for the real thing
- Sample interview questions
- Initial interview with candidates – asking good questions
- Follow-up meeting(s)
- Decide on number one candidate

#### **INTERVIEWING**

##### **Mock interview – preparing for the real thing**

This is an opportunity for the Search Committee to get ready for the significant responsibility of interviewing pastoral candidates. Some members may have done this before, but most likely most, if not all, of the committee members have not been a part of a process like this.

Start this process by inviting someone who is not a candidate to come for a mock interview. This could be the interim pastor, or it could be your local associational leader. The mock interview is a great time to learn what to do, what not to do and how to help the committee be ready for the interview process.

The chair of the committee should identify the leader who can fill this role for the team and send the “candidate” a pastor profile, church and community profile and some questions the committee would like to ask. He can even share questions for the “candidate” to ask the committee, helping them hone their ability to respond well to a prospective candidate.

The time should conclude with a time of debriefing, with the leader evaluating how the team did, asking what went well, what went wrong and what could be improved.

The goal of the mock interview is to help the committee be ready for the real thing with a potential pastor, encouraging the team members to be comfortable in the process.

### **Sample interview questions**

As the relationship begins and develops with a candidate, seek to ask appropriate questions in order to increase your understanding of one another. Ask questions at the appropriate time in the relationship. Here is a list of sample questions to consider. Use these to come up with questions that specifically fit the committee's work in process.

1. Please tell us about your early years: birthplace, parents, family history, hometown.
2. Please tell us about your conversion experience.
3. Please tell us about your call to the ministry.
4. How does your wife feel about being married to a pastor?
5. Tell us about your children.
6. What would you say are your favorite hobbies?
7. What three things do you enjoy the most about being a pastor?
8. What three things do you like least about being a pastor?
9. How would you describe your personal prayer life?
10. Where have you personally seen the most growth in the spiritual disciplines?
11. What spiritual gifts do you believe God has given you for ministry?
12. What pastor or mentor has meant the most to you in your life and ministry?
13. What are some of your most meaningful memories as a pastor?
14. How do you define and understand pastoral authority?
15. What do you believe about personal stewardship and tithing?
16. What do you consider to be the role of women in the church?
17. What is your perspective on elder leadership in the local church?
18. Which translations of the Bible do you use most often?
19. What worship traditions have been most meaningful to you as a pastor?
20. How do you feel about dealing with church conflict as a pastor?
21. How do you characterize your preaching style?
22. What is your thinking about the church's ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper?
23. Tell us about your perspective on the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.
24. What has been your experience in missions: local, national, international?
25. Where did your last mission trip take you, and what did you learn?
26. How do you respond to the statement that a pastor's job is to do four things: Preach, pray, love and stay?

- 27. Tell us about the last book you read (other than the Bible) that made an impact on you.
- 28. What is your favorite dessert? What is your wife's favorite dessert?
- 29. What role do you believe politics should have in the life of the church?
- 30. What do you hope will be your legacy after a lifetime of ministry?

### Screening interview

This is first contact with a pastor. This interview is done to see if this pastor is one the committee feels led to work with further in the process.

It is recommended that for the first meeting with the pastoral candidate the committee use a conference call or video call (Zoom, etc.) for this purpose. This will be a good introductory gathering and a way for the committee to confirm their belief that this candidate is one to pursue.

An exception to this is if the candidate lives in close proximity to the church, a neutral site could be used for this first meeting, such as an associational office conference room.

The committee will need to decide the questions they want to ask in the screening interviews as they make contact with prospective candidates. A time for the team to ask questions comes first, followed by a time for the candidate to ask questions of the group.

Having time right after the interview to debrief as a committee will be important, so that the group can share impressions, concerns and more from their experience.

### Face-to-Face interviews

After the screening interviews, the committee will need to decide on a short list of three to five candidates who need to be explored further.

These face-to-face interviews would be designed to coincide with a visit to the pastor's church field.

The committee would be wise to send teams of two members to conduct these interviews with prospective candidates. This interview happens along with a visit to the candidate's church field, to visit a worship service and then to meet with the pastor afterwards at a neutral location.

Before this interview, the committee may want to ask the prospective candidate if he would like for his wife to be present for the interview. She would definitely be involved later on in the process, should it go to that level, but asking at this point would give them a chance to consider this possibility.

At this interview, ask the pastor for permission to check references given on the resumé. When a minister lists references, that gives implied consent for you to contact those persons. It does not authorize you to talk with anyone else, so asking if it is permissible for the committee to also contact any individuals that references provide during the process is advised.

It is important to have permission to talk with those who know this man as a minister, with one exception to note. Talk with references **except people who are members of the pastor's current place of ministry. Protect the confidentiality of the search process especially regarding those who are part of his on-going pastoral position.**

The goal for your committee is to make informed decisions based on all the information available. By contacting the suggested references you will learn more about the minister. This should help you ask him more informed questions as appropriate.

You are doing this because you see the minister as a person of integrity. If you did not, there would be no reason to pursue this information. Please assure the candidate that your purpose is affirmation of the minister's calling and example. He will understand this step in the process.

### Number one candidate decision

After the face-to-face interviews, the committee will discuss what they have learned, how they have felt led through these experiences and work together toward agreement on the top candidate to consider. Once this one pastor is identified, the chair will contact him to let him know the committee's desire to engage with him in serious, continuing discussions on him becoming their pastoral candidate.



The pastor should be asked if he believes it is God's will to continue the process as the number one candidate as pastor for the church. If so, the committee is ready to move to the thorough process of completing reference checks and conducting thorough background checks. These topics are covered in the next section.

## Step 2. CONTACTING REFERENCES AND DOING *background checks*

- Be thorough with background checks: financial, criminal and social media
- Ask good questions of references
- Receive pastoral questionnaire from candidate
- Number one candidate thorough interview
- Develop covenant agreement

After deciding that a particular candidate is one to pursue further, begin the process of exploring references and background information.

The extent of your reference checks may be tempered by the direct knowledge you have of the candidate's history. Also, you may have other credible contacts who can verify the information you have been given. Be sensitive and thorough in this part of your work.

Making sure the pastors being considered are of high moral character and integrity is a very important part of the committee's work. Thankfully, only a small percentage of ministers behave

unethically in ministry. However, the search committee is responsible for protecting the church and the integrity of the committee's process. This is best done by the following:

- Background checks on the pastor and his spouse, including financial, criminal and social media.
- Reference checks, by those submitted and including others, such as associational leaders where the pastor has served;
- Examining social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and any others used by those involved.

As this investigation is done, all the information should be documented. This will protect the committee, the church and the pastor.

Permission should be obtained for the background checks to be done, and the committee should discuss with the candidate at the appropriate time the contacting of references, gaining verbal permission for this step of the vetting process to take place. Any resistance to allowing this to happen should be noted. It may indicate an issue that the committee should be aware of and explore further, should that particular candidate move further into the consideration process.

Confidentiality in this process is very important. Notes, emails, minutes and other correspondence and documentation should be carefully guarded and secured well by the committee through the search process.

#### **Instructions for use of the reference permission letter and reference forms:**

- Check with references by email or regular mail and follow up with a telephone interview. Send the reference letter (*See Appendix 8 on reference letter*) to each reference.

- The letter states that the person named is being considered as a potential pastor.
- The letter informs the recipient that a member of your committee will call for a telephone interview.
- Assure that this is being done with the knowledge and approval of the minister.
- The telephone call should be made as planned.
- The caller should complete the reference form (*See Appendix 9: Reference telephone interview*) and ask additional questions, as appropriate.
- Extensive notes should be taken of the phone interview on the form indicated. The notes should be compiled with the committee's records on this pastor.
- Also ask the references for names of other persons who can give you additional information.
- The person(s) making the reference calls should sign the reference interview form.
- The completed reference interview form goes in the committee's records after review by the entire committee.

Ask the pastor to sign the credit and legal information release form (*See Appendix 10*), allowing the committee to secure the needed information.

It is also recommended that the committee ask the pastor's wife to sign a similar form (*See Appendix 11: Credit and legal information release form*)

**Please Note:** If you elect to use a credit reporting agency, they may require use of their own release forms.

The intent of your background checks may be tempered by the direct knowledge you have of

the candidate's history. Also, you may have other credible contacts who can verify the information you have been given. In absence of this, it is best to do all of the recommended background checks.

**Background check should include:**

- A financial search through a credit bureau.
- A criminal check for any police record.
- A thorough check of social media accounts and postings.
- A check of educational and/or specialized training credentials based on the institutions listed on the minister's resumé.

**Pastoral candidate questionnaire**

Provide the pastor with the letter and questionnaire (*See Appendix 12: Letter to pastor on questionnaire and Appendix 13: Pastoral candidate questionnaire*).

This form, answered and signed by the pastor, becomes a part of the minister's record.  
(*Answering the questions in print should be less threatening than being asked the questions directly.*)

Once the pastor has completed the questionnaire and returned it, the committee should review his answers, discussing and clarifying any issues identified.

All of these background checks and questions asked are for the protection of the church. If any answers concern the committee, they should discuss these directly with the candidate. There may be acceptable reasons for the given report. Either way, the committee can make informed decisions about its recommendation to the congregation.

**Consider these suggestions on ways to do background checks:**

Persons on your committee may have access to this information. Confidentiality is essential.

The committee may contract with an employee

screening agency, which will run the appropriate background checks for a fee.

Lifeway Christian Resources provides church and ministry background checks. Searching for background checks at Lifeway.com makes this resource available. Lifeway uses Clear Investigative Advantage for their background checks. Information can be found on the Lifeway website.

If you decide not to consider a potential pastor because of information received, you should inform the minister of the information and its source. The outside agency itself will work with the pastor to correct any data that is untrue.

Remember that if you gather your own data, you must accept responsibility to verify that your data is correct.

After all of the reference interviews are completed and the background checks are done, review that information with the committee. Explore all of the information received thoroughly and see if there are any issues that need to be addressed, questions answered or more.

If any issues are identified that need clarification or explanation through the reference and background checks, a telephone or video call should be held with the candidate by two or three of the committee members, seeking to gain understanding of the information learned.

If this discussion resolves the issues, the committee is ready to move toward the next interview.

**NUMBER ONE CANDIDATE  
THOROUGH INTERVIEW**

**The pastor's visit to the church field**

This interview with the pastoral candidate will include his wife. If they have young children, the committee should work with them to make sure child care is provided for this visit.

It is recommended that this interview be done during a day visit to the church community. The committee should pay all of the expenses incurred in coming to visit with them on their field, including a hotel room if needed. Have a meal together if possible and appropriate. You might want to meet in a committee member's home for a relaxed time of fellowship and dialogue.

Use the day on your church field to acquaint the prospective minister with your church facilities, the community, the school system, neighborhoods where church members live, etc.

Use these meetings as an opportunity to build relationships as well as to gather more information.

If the church has staff members, individual interviews with each staff member are recommended. This would also be a good opportunity for the staff member or members to take the prospective pastor on a tour of the church facilities. Remind the staff that this visit is confidential as the committee continues its work in the search process.

We have seen this step with church staff as very important, especially in that there have been situations when staff members were able to discern aspects of the prospective pastor's beliefs and practices that the team had not yet discovered or understood. This extra layer of examination and consideration can help the committee and the church in the discernment process.

The interview with the candidate and his wife can be held in the evening, after dinner together. This meeting is when no question is off-limits. Both committee and pastor need to be able to discuss any and every issue of concern. An extended time of prayer together is an absolute necessity, seeking God together for His direction for the

future. The committee's prayer coordinator can lead this time of seeking God's will, guiding the group through a time of focused petition and intercession.

### **Decision time**

After the candidate and his wife return home, give the pastor adequate time to pray about the potential relationship. Ask the candidate and the committee if they are willing to continue the process.

If the candidate is ready and willing to move ahead, believing it is God's clear will that he should serve as pastor of the church, then the committee has a decision to make.

It is absolutely necessary that the committee be in unity on moving ahead with this decision. If the unanimous agreement is there, it is time to move forward to work on calling this pastor to your church. Inform him of your decision and move on to other matters to be decided upon.

The committee needs to discuss personnel matters with the pastor. Come to an agreement on matters relative to employment such as salary package, vacation time, sick leave and moving and housing arrangements. Use details from these discussions in the covenant agreement being prepared.

Continue work on the pastor-church covenant (See Appendix 15: A covenant for ministry between pastor and church). The purpose of this document is to clarify expectations in the relationship between the pastor and the congregation.

**The covenant should include** the congregation's expectations of the pastor and the pastor's expectations of the congregation.

Other matters of mutual interest should be included. Appropriate concerns include working guidelines, employment and financial

agreements. The goal is to clarify as many areas as possible to reduce the likelihood of conflict emerging later.

The covenant should be mutually agreeable to the church and to the pastor.

It should consider the pastor's unique gifts in ministry and reflect the church's primary concerns.

It should **not** be written ahead of time and merely handed to the pastor.

The covenant process is putting into print many of the decisions and commitments made in the previous step. By doing so, the possibility of misunderstanding or misrepresentation is limited.

The goal is open, clear, appropriate and concise communication that inspires the development of trust for a long-term relationship between the minister and the congregation.



## Step 1. CALLING *the pastor*

- Prepare the congregation for the visit
- Meeting, connecting, listening, discerning on call weekend
- Vote to call pastor under guidelines of the covenant agreement

Complete work on the pastor-church covenant. (See Appendix 15: A covenant of ministry between pastor and church)

Decide on the weekend the pastor will come and visit the church, with a schedule set for meetings, fellowships, preaching in worship and more.

Develop a brochure on the pastor, including highlights from his resumé. This is the time to make a good impression, so get any assistance needed from office staff, graphic designers, etc. Be ready to distribute this material to the church family on the call weekend and not before.

Do not post this on social media or the church website until after the call weekend. This helps avoid the chance of this information being seen online by his current church.

### **During the weekend visit:**

Be responsible for all expenses, including travel, that are incurred. Make sure to arrange housing accommodations for the pastor and family.

If the pastoral family includes small children, plan for childcare during the visit.

Consider having a time for the pastor to meet on Saturday morning with full and part-time staff.

Consider a meeting of the candidate with the deacons, church council and other appropriate leadership groups.

Plan for times in which the pastor can meet different age groups in the church, from students to senior adults, allowing time for sharing personal testimonies, asking questions and more.

Some churches plan a Saturday evening fellowship meal, when the pastor and his family can meet the church family as a whole, with a time of sharing testimony, stories from the search committee and even a question-and-answer time with the members, closing with a prayer time together as a church.

Plan for the pastor to preach for the morning worship service after being introduced to the gathered church by the united search committee. Some churches have used a prepared video to introduce the pastor and his family to the church, including details of the proposed covenant of ministry in the video to explain the plan the committee is presenting for consideration.

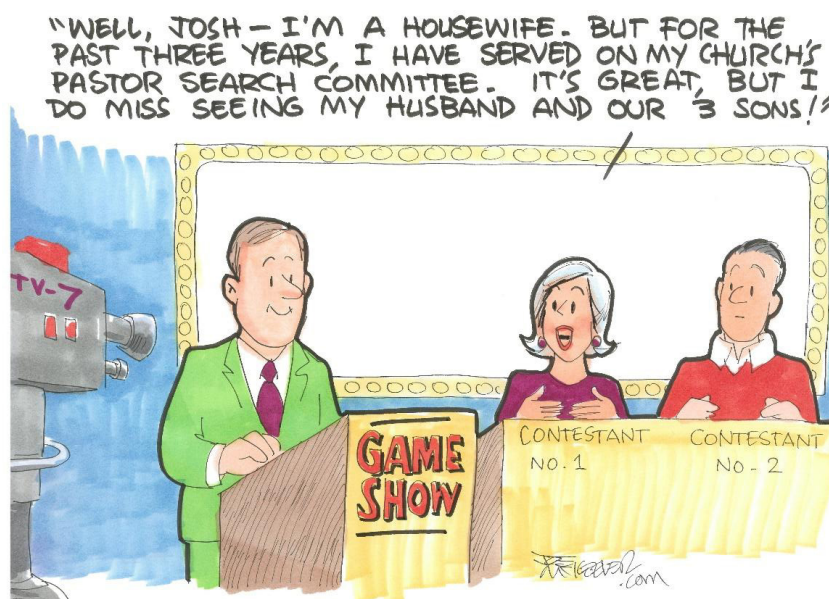
Vote on extending a call for the candidate to serve as pastor of your congregation. This is of course dependent on the church's policy on calling a new pastor. Seek to follow fully the requirements for calling a pastor as spelled out in your church's constitution and bylaws.

Some churches have in their bylaws the requirement to have the call weekend, and then vote the next Sunday, after a one-week delay. This requirement should be addressed early in the search process and changed so that all can be accomplished in the one weekend. This protects the pastoral candidate and his current place of ministry as well as helping conclude this part of the process in a timely manner.

Consider voting by secret ballot unless your bylaws or traditions suggest differently. If the church has a required percentage for the call to be extended, make sure that is communicated to the church and to the pastor before the vote is taken.

Then, once the vote is taken, and assuming it is positive to extend the call, the pastor and his family are invited to return to the worship service to be properly welcomed. He will then inform the church of his intention, hopefully to accept that call and join the church in ministry.

The committee will have discussed with the pastor the proposed time frame for his arriving on the field to begin his ministry. Clearly communicate this to the church, with appropriate plans made to welcome the pastoral family well to their new mission field.



## Step 2. FOLLOWING UP AFTER *The call*

- **Notify your local association and N.C. Baptists**
- **Plan the pastoral installation service.**
- **Pastor Search Committee becomes Pastor's Prayer Team**

Once the call is extended and accepted, it is time to follow up and prepare for God's future.

Notify your local Baptist association of the call, sharing with the association the pastor's name, contact information and any other information that will help the association be ready to connect with and serve with the new pastor.

Make sure your associational leaders know the pastor's arrival date and first Sunday in the pulpit.

Notify the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina of the new pastor being called as well. If possible, give them the pastor's old church and new church addresses. The Biblical Recorder publishes pastoral changes, so notify them also.

As the church prepares for the new pastor and family to arrive, make their arrival a time of celebration. Fill their pantry with food. Ask the children of the church to draw "welcoming" pictures. Ask members to write "welcoming" letters and cards. Provide at least the first day's meals while the family is busy unpacking and getting oriented to their new home. Provide an introduction to community services, schools, shopping and more.

Be sensitive to the family's pain over leaving another place of service. They left behind friends and many memories. Give them time to make the transition to their new friends and church family. If they have children, they may not have known any other home.

Plan an installation service. (*See Appendix 16: Pastoral installation service.*) Invite the local association to be represented and the state convention as well.

We encourage that the Pastor Search Committee becomes the Pastor's Prayer Team at this point. Ask this team to meet with the pastor monthly at first, and then at least quarterly for the first year or so, providing prayer support and encouragement. Initially, these will be the best persons to affirm and encourage the pastor.

This team as the established prayer support group will be a valuable and necessary resource for this new pastor, his family and the ministry of the congregation into the days ahead.

And through this process, rejoice in what God has done to answer prayer and bring this task to a blessed conclusion, trusting the Lord for all that is needed in the days ahead. This process has been and is a prayer-driven one — knowing that Jesus is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine!

May our Lord Jesus  
Christ Himself and  
God our Father,  
who has loved us and  
given us eternal  
encouragement and  
good hope by grace,  
encourage your hearts  
and strengthen you  
in every good work  
and word.

**2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 CSB**

# APPENDICES





# 10 Best Practices

## FOR PASTOR SEARCH TEAMS

- 1. SATURATE THE PROCESS IN PRAYER.** Pray together as a team. Enlist prayer partners to pray for each team member. Share prayer prompts with the church, asking for specific prayer support. Start the search process in prayer and continue that prayer effort until the new pastor is called. Then, be ready to be his prayer team!
- 2. GET SOME TRAINING.** It is helpful to have an outside voice speak from experience to your process. In North Carolina, local associations and the state convention provide this kind of training support.
- 3. READ A BOOK ON THE PASTOR SEARCH PROCESS.** Consider reading books like *Seeking God to Seek a Pastor* by Greg Frizzell or *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search* by Chris Brauns. Read the book as a team and discuss each chapter prayerfully.
- 4. INVOLVE THE CONGREGATION IN THE SEARCH PROCESS.** Surveys, prayer support and regular updates help the church stay engaged as the transition continues. General information, not specific information, is key.
- 5. FOCUS ON ONLY ONE CANDIDATE AT A TIME.** This approach avoids the risk of a “beauty contest” among several candidates and helps the team stay focused on the individual God is calling to your church. Work through the process on each candidate until your pastor is found.
- 6. ASK PASTORS AND LEADERS YOU TRUST TO RECOMMEND SOMEONE WHO MAY NOT BE LOOKING FOR A MOVE, BUT WHO COULD BE THE BEST POSSIBILITY FOR YOUR CHURCH.** Keep the search for names narrowly limited — use the rifle approach instead of the shotgun approach.
- 7. DO YOUR HOMEWORK. VET THE CANDIDATE WELL.** Talk to his references, contact the local association where he has served. Watch for short tenures in previous locations. Ask hard questions. Make sure his wife and family are as open to a possible move as he is.
- 8. DON'T RUSH THE PROCESS.** In these times, it is taking longer to find a pastor than before. The longer it takes, the more likely the committee will be willing to settle. Don't go that route — let the Lord lead you as you take the time needed for the best decision.
- 9. BE THOROUGH IN DOING BACKGROUND CHECKS — VERY THOROUGH.** Don't assume anything about the candidate's background. Verify. Get any help you need to make sure each candidate will serve with absolute integrity. You may want to include the pastor's wife in the background check process. There are good reasons for this.
- 10. AIM FOR UNITY AS A TEAM.** When it comes to making decisions, it is best for the committee to be united as decisions are made. If the search committee cannot be united on a candidate, what do you expect of the larger church family? Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).



# 40 Days of Prayer (EXAMPLE)

## 40 DAYS OF PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH SEEKING GOD DURING THE PASTOR SEARCH PROCESS

Prayer-Driven Transition Ministry for \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church  
Prepared by the Pastor Search Committee

### THE BASICS OF PRAYER

- P** PRAISE: Worship the Lord as you pray.  
**R** REPENT: Return to the Lord as you pray.  
**A** ASK: Pray with passion and patience.  
**Y** YIELD: Surrender all to Jesus as you pray.

This time of focused prayer and devotion will help the church walk well through the pastor search process underway now. During these 40 days, spend time with God, praying for yourself and your church family. Practice the four aspects of prayer (Praising, Repenting, Asking and Yielding) as you pray. Take time to listen to the Lord through Scripture reading and times of quiet in His presence.

Each day has a specific focus and a Scripture passage to read. Unite with fellow Christians in agreement, lifting these requests to the Father. Trust God to hear, heal and answer as we spend time with Him during these 40 days.

Thank you for uniting with your brothers and sisters in Christ in prayer for the church! Christians across our region are joining with us as we pray for God's will to be done and His Kingdom to come in our hearts and in this place.

### **WEEK 1** *(Beginning on Sunday)*

| Day | Pray                                                    | Read Ephesians |
|-----|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1   | that God will lead many to pray these 40 days           | 1:1-3          |
| 2   | that all eyes and focus would be on Jesus Christ        | 1:4-8          |
| 3   | that God would clean our hearts — we need revival       | 1:9-12         |
| 4   | that we will really listen for what God is saying to us | 1:13-16        |
| 5   | that each member will grow in their knowledge of Jesus  | 1:17-21        |
| 6   | that He will give us pure hearts to seek His face       | 1:22-23        |
| 7   | For the Pastor Search Committee as they serve           | 2:1-3          |

## WEEK 2

### Day Pray

- 8 Praise God for His abundant mercy!
- 9 That God will show you the work He wants from you
- 10 For deacons: [Insert names]
- 11 That the peace of God will guard our hearts and lives
- 12 For the worship & preaching of the Word to be anointed
- 13 For our worship leaders as we gather to worship
- 14 For healing and unity in the Body of Christ here

### Read Ephesians

- 2:4-7
- 2:8-10
- 2:11-13
- 2:14-18
- 2:19-22
- 3:1-5
- 3:6-9

## WEEK 3

### Day Pray

- 15 For deacons: [Insert names]
- 16 That God will reveal to you how great His love really is
- 17 Praise God for His ability to do more than we can ask
- 18 [Insert personal prayer requests]
- 19 That the church's leaders will be encouraged and united
- 20 For [insert preacher's name] as he prepares to preach
- 21 That God will reveal sin and purify His church

### Read Ephesians

- 3:10-13
- 3:14-19
- 3:20-21
- 4:1-6
- 4:7-13
- 4:14-16
- 4:17-19

## WEEK 4

### Day Pray

- 22 That we will deny self to live new lives in Christ
- 23 That we will not let the sun go down on any anger
- 24 For kindness and compassion to flow freely among us
- 25 That God will prepare our next pastor for us
- 26 That we will be Jesus' light in our community
- 27 For our church staff [insert names]
- 28 For our church staff [insert names]

### Read Ephesians

- 4:20-24
- 4:25-28
- 4:29-32
- 5:1-4
- 5:5-8
- 5:9-14
- 5:15-18

## WEEK 5

### Day Pray

- 29 Give thanks to God for His blessings and answers
- 30 For marriages to be strengthened and healed
- 31 For [insert names of worship accompanists]
- 32 That the ministry to children will grow & flourish
- 33 [Insert prayer request]
- 34 For Sunday School teachers/Bible study leaders today
- 35 For a strong prayer covering for the Search Committee

### Read Ephesians

- 5:19-21
- 5:22-24
- 5:25-30
- 5:31-33
- 6:1-4
- 6:5-9
- 6:10

## WEEK 6

### Day Pray

- 36 For the church to have the full protection of God
- 37 For wisdom for all those who serve as church leaders
- 38 For readiness as we deal with spiritual warfare
- 39 That God will dramatically answer prayers!
- 40 That God's love will overwhelm the church family

### Read Ephesians

- 6:11-1
- 6:14-17
- 6:18-20
- 6:21-22
- 6:23-24

*"Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think ... to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." — Ephesians 3:20-21*

# Prayer Requests



## FOR PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE AND THE CHURCH

### PRAYERS FOR THE PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

1. Pray for each team member by name, asking for spiritual purity and dependence on the Holy Spirit. (Psalm 24:1-6, Psalm 66:18, John 15:5, Ephesians 5:18)
2. Pray that the search team will exemplify the traits of humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance with one another as they serve (Ephesians 4:1-6).
3. Pray for discernment, wisdom and strength for the team chairperson (Proverbs 3:5-6).
4. Pray for unity in the Spirit for the committee as they serve (Amos 3:3, Matthew 18:19-20).
5. Pray for the team to have protection from spiritual warfare as they do this very important work for our church (Ephesians 6:10-18).
6. Pray for the team to have no timetable but God's for their work. They must be focused on following God's direction from start to finish (Ephesians 5:15-17).
7. Pray for the spouses and families of the search committee as they carry out their task (Philippians 4:4-7).
8. Pray for supernatural discernment as candidates are considered and interviewed, with the unity of the Spirit directing the team's thoughts and decisions (Ephesians 4:3).
9. Ask God to give the team an unusual anointing for prayerful dependence on Him, considering everything through much prayer (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).
10. Pray for divine direction and God's favor in every decision and action as the team prepares to bring the new pastor to the church for consideration (Proverbs 16:9).

### PRAYERS FOR THE CHURCH DURING THE SEARCH PROCESS

1. Pray that this process will be a time when the church learns to depend on God more fully, depending on Him in Jesus' name (Jeremiah 29:13, James 4:8).
2. Pray for a reviving work of God among His people, bringing renewal and health to the church family (Psalm 85:6).
3. Pray for faithfulness in attending, serving and giving as the church walks through the search process (Hebrews 13:20-21).
4. Pray for a God-given unity in the congregation, trusting the Lord together as the church faces the future in Christ (John 17:20-21).
5. Ask God to help the church be ready for any changes that need to be made to prepare for the days ahead, trusting and obeying God's Word (John 13:12-17).
6. Pray for members to build relationships with neighbors, having gospel conversations, making disciples who make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20).
7. Pray that the church will patiently await God's timing to bring the new pastor (Hebrews 6:11-12).
8. Pray for the interim pastor as he leads, preaches, prays and serves through the transition (Ephesians 4:11-16).
9. Pray for protection for the church family in spiritual struggle, depending on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).
10. Praise God for His grace and peace as the church walks with Him through these times (2 Peter 1:2-4).



# CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHIC

*Survey*

## CHURCH MEMBERSHIP QUESTIONNAIRE *One form per family*

Please circle your role in the family:

*Husband*

*Wife*

*Single*

*Son*

*Daughter*

Please answer with check marks or numbers as appropriate.

**1** Family composition by gender \_\_\_\_\_ a) Number of males \_\_\_\_\_ b) Number of females

**2** Family composition by race

\_\_\_\_\_ a) White

\_\_\_\_\_ c) Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_ e) Native American

\_\_\_\_\_ b) Black

\_\_\_\_\_ d) Asian

\_\_\_\_\_ f) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**3** Age (*Give number for all appropriate age brackets.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ a) Birth–5 years

\_\_\_\_\_ d) 18–29 years

\_\_\_\_\_ g) 61–70 years

\_\_\_\_\_ b) 6–11 years

\_\_\_\_\_ e) 30–44 years

\_\_\_\_\_ h) 71 years+

\_\_\_\_\_ c) 12–17 years

\_\_\_\_\_ f) 45–60 years

**4** Occupations (*Place the number of persons in each category as appropriate.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ a) Clerical (*bank teller, bookkeeper, cashier, clerk, secretary, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ b) Craftsman (*baker, carpenter, supervisor, machinist, mechanic, repairman, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ c) Farm worker

\_\_\_\_\_ d) Housewife/Homemaker

\_\_\_\_\_ e) Laborer (*construction worker, freight handler, warehouse worker*)

\_\_\_\_\_ f) Manager (*administrator, bank officer, business director, self-employed, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ g) Operative or transport (*bus driver, inspector, packer, butcher, truck driver, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ h) Part-time employment

\_\_\_\_\_ i) Preschooler(s) at home

\_\_\_\_\_ j) Professional (*accountant, medical, engineer, lawyer, pastor, scientist, teacher, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ k) Retired

\_\_\_\_\_ l) Sales (*advertiser, clerk, insurance agent, sales worker, underwriter, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ m) Service worker (*barber, childcare, food service, health worker, etc.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ n) Student

\_\_\_\_\_ o) Unemployed

\_\_\_\_\_ p) Other \_\_\_\_\_

**5** Number of family members in home by marital status

\_\_\_\_\_ a) Divorced

\_\_\_\_\_ c) Separated

\_\_\_\_\_ e) Widowed

\_\_\_\_\_ b) Married

\_\_\_\_\_ d) Single

**6** Current housing situation

\_\_\_\_\_ a) Own (*Buying*)

\_\_\_\_\_ b) Renting (*Leasing*)

\_\_\_\_\_ c) Neither

**7** Place a number by the highest education level of each family member

\_\_\_\_\_ a) Preschooler at home

\_\_\_\_\_ e) High School

\_\_\_\_\_ b) Kindergarten

\_\_\_\_\_ f) Trade or Technical school

\_\_\_\_\_ c) Elementary School

\_\_\_\_\_ g) College

\_\_\_\_\_ d) Middle School

\_\_\_\_\_ h) Post-graduate

**8** Length of time each family member has been a Christian

\_\_\_\_\_ a) Not a Christian

\_\_\_\_\_ d) 3–5 years

\_\_\_\_\_ b) Less than one year

\_\_\_\_\_ e) 6–9 years

\_\_\_\_\_ c) 1–2 years

\_\_\_\_\_ f) 10 or more years

**9** Length of time each family member has been a member of this church

\_\_\_\_\_ a) Less than a year

\_\_\_\_\_ d) 10–19 years

\_\_\_\_\_ b) 1–2 years

\_\_\_\_\_ e) 20–29 years

\_\_\_\_\_ c) 3–5 years

\_\_\_\_\_ f) 30 or more years

**10** In a typical four-Sunday month, how often does someone from your family attend the following activities? (*If 4 times, enter a 4; if never, enter a 0.*)

\_\_\_\_\_ a) Sunday School

\_\_\_\_\_ e) Prayer meeting

\_\_\_\_\_ b) Morning worship

\_\_\_\_\_ f) Church visitation

\_\_\_\_\_ c) Small groups

\_\_\_\_\_ g) Mission organizations

\_\_\_\_\_ d) Evening worship

\_\_\_\_\_ h) Age-group activities

11

Type of home dwelling

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) Single-family house  
\_\_\_\_\_ b) Apartment/condominium with 2–10 units  
\_\_\_\_\_ c) Apartment/condominium with 10 or more units  
\_\_\_\_\_ d) Mobile home/manufactured housing

12

Length of time your family has lived at present address

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) Less than 2 years                      \_\_\_\_\_ d) 10–19 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ b) 2–5 years                                \_\_\_\_\_ e) 20–29 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ c) 6–9 years                                \_\_\_\_\_ f) 30 or more years

13

Approximate distance you live from the church building

- \_\_\_\_\_ a) Less than 1 mile                      \_\_\_\_\_ d) 11–20 miles  
\_\_\_\_\_ b) 1–5 miles                                \_\_\_\_\_ e) 20 or more miles  
\_\_\_\_\_ c) 6–10 miles

14

Number of family members born in:

- \_\_\_\_\_ This community    \_\_\_\_\_ North Carolina    \_\_\_\_\_ Out of state    \_\_\_\_\_ Out of country

# CHURCH MEMBER *Survey*

## TO BE TAKEN BY CHURCH MEMBERS ONLY (Age 16 and older)

Members are encouraged to prayerfully consider who God is leading to serve as the next pastor and answer these questions from that perspective, knowing that the Search Committee will be praying and considering many different factors in the process toward finding a new pastor.

- 1 Gender ☐ a) Male ☐ b) Female
- 2 Age ☐ a) <18 years ☐ c) 30-44 years ☐ e) 60-70 years  
☐ b) 18-29 years ☐ d) 45-59 years ☐ f) 71 or more years
- 3 What is the minimum acceptable educational level of the new pastor?  
☐ a) Attended seminary or Bible college  
☐ b) Graduate of Bible college  
☐ c) Master's degree from seminary  
☐ d) Doctoral degree from seminary  
☐ e) Formal educational degree unimportant
- 4 How many years of prior pastoral or professional ministry experience are required?  
☐ a) No prior experience necessary  
☐ b) Less than 3 years of prior pastoral experience  
☐ c) Less than 3 years of church ministry experience, such as church staff  
☐ d) More than 5 years prior pastoral experience  
☐ e) More than 5 years prior church ministry experience, such as church staff  
☐ f) More than 10 years prior pastoral experience  
☐ g) More than 10 years prior church ministry experience, such as church staff
- 5 What is the acceptable age range for the new pastor?  
☐ a) No age preference ☐ d) 40-49 years old  
☐ b) 21-29 years old ☐ e) 50-59 years old  
☐ c) 30-39 years old ☐ f) 60 or more years old
- 6 Please check what you consider to be the new pastor's three top ministry priorities.  
☐ a) An administrator, with a hands-on approach in the church office.  
☐ b) A person active in associational, state convention and denominational life.  
☐ c) A leader who serves in community activities/programs.  
☐ d) An effective Bible teacher and preacher of well-prepared sermons.  
☐ e) A skilled counselor available to assist with personal and spiritual problems.  
☐ f) One who emphasizes evangelism and the importance of missions.  
☐ g) A visionary with a well-developed perspective on the future of the church.

# PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE *Survey*

**TO BE TAKEN BY SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERS ONLY**

*Instructions for completing the questionnaire on the next page.*

On the next page you will find 10 groups with four statements in each. Within each group, identify the statement that is most in keeping with the type of pastoral leadership your church needs. Also identify the statement in that group which refers to qualities least needed in the new pastor. Of the two remaining statements in the block, identify the one that is next-to-most and next-to-least like the pastor. Repeat this procedure for each of the ten groups. Use the following point system to mark your answers.

- Assign 4 points to the statement that is most like the pastor.**
- Assign 3 points to the statement that is next-to-most like the pastor.**
- Assign 2 points to the statement that is next-to-least like the pastor.**
- Assign 1 point to the statement that is least like the pastor.**

**Please note:** This is not a test. There is no right or wrong answer. Your primary goal is to determine the ministry priority concerns of your church family. This information will help the committee understand priorities and communicate those concerns to the prospective pastor.

**Scoring:** In the space provided on the page after the statements, write the appropriate score beside the number/letter combination found at the bottom of the page. After transferring all of the numbers, add the four columns. If your addition is correct, your total for all four columns should be 100.

Write your score in the space below.

Preacher

Caregiver

Leader

Evangelist

Change the values to 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th priority:

Preacher

Caregiver

Leader

Evangelist

Now we will determine a group response from the search committee to determine the ministry priorities we are seeking. Complete the table below by placing your 1-4 priority in the appropriate column. Next, total each of the four columns. Finally, assign to each column its appropriate priority from 1 to 4, with 4 being the highest value.

| SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBER   | PREACHER | CAREGIVER | LEADER | EVANGELIST |
|---------------------------|----------|-----------|--------|------------|
|                           |          |           |        |            |
|                           |          |           |        |            |
|                           |          |           |        |            |
|                           |          |           |        |            |
|                           |          |           |        |            |
|                           |          |           |        |            |
| TOTAL OF EACH COLUMN      |          |           |        |            |
| PRIORITY LISTING IN ORDER |          |           |        |            |

**A**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A gifted teacher who enables others to understand deep spiritual truths.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ A volunteer who cooperates in community and interdenominational efforts.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ A regular visitor to the sick, dying and bereaved.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ A pastor who works with church committees.

**B**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ An office administrator, giving attention to details and processes of ministry, etc.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ An effective communicator of well-prepared sermons.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Active in reaching out to new families in the community.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ A skilled counselor available to assist those with personal and spiritual problems.

**C**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Active in associational, state convention and denominational life.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Sensitive to the church's financial needs in budgeting and stewardship.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ A regular visitor in the homes of church members.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ A man who emphasizes evangelism and the importance of witnessing and missions.

**D**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A leader who is well read and can communicate on a broad spectrum of topics.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ A man who understands how to work with diverse people.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ A pastor who emphasizes counseling ministry.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ A leader who uses praise songs and/or drama in worship.

**E**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Someone who enjoys shut-in visitations.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Someone who believes it is important for the church to have a mission statement.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ A speaker who has an excellent pulpit presence.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ A minister who seeks Scriptural applications to resolve life problems.

**F**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A witness with deep concern for those who have never made a profession of faith.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ A minister who is an excellent listener and guards confidentiality.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ A pastor who sets goals and develops strategies to meet them.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ A man who celebrates the uniqueness and giftedness of people.

**G**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ A man who desires to help people reach their full potential and use their personal gifts.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ A leader who enjoys the study of Scripture and its application to current lifestyles.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Someone who is motivated by challenges and growth.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Someone who maintains excellent eye contact with people when speaking to them.

**H**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ An articulate speaker who uses correct grammar and pronunciation.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ An excellent organizer.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Has compassion for all in the church and community who are hurting.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Keeps good records on the number of baptisms and new additions each year.

**I**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Drawn to become better equipped with listening skills.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Has a deep value for tradition and church history.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Has a vision for the future of the church.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Reads extensively on changing trends and cultural shifts in culture and ministry.

**J**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Enlists the support of others in order to accomplish tasks.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Provides multiple entry points into the life of the congregation's ministries.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Encourages multiple ministries aimed at the great variety of human need.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Understands the importance of a sense of drama and timing when speaking.

## TABULATED RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

|            |        |   |        |   |        |   |        |   |        |   |        |   |        |   |        |   |        |   |        |
|------------|--------|---|--------|---|--------|---|--------|---|--------|---|--------|---|--------|---|--------|---|--------|---|--------|
| PREACH     |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | = |        |
|            | A<br>1 |   | B<br>2 |   | C<br>1 |   | D<br>1 |   | E<br>3 |   | F<br>3 |   | G<br>2 |   | H<br>1 |   | I<br>2 |   | J<br>4 |
| LEAD       |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | = |        |
|            | A<br>4 |   | B<br>1 |   | C<br>2 |   | D<br>4 |   | E<br>2 |   | F<br>4 |   | G<br>3 |   | H<br>2 |   | I<br>3 |   | J<br>1 |
| CARE       |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | = |        |
|            | A<br>3 |   | B<br>4 |   | C<br>3 |   | D<br>3 |   | E<br>1 |   | F<br>2 |   | G<br>1 |   | H<br>3 |   | I<br>1 |   | J<br>3 |
| EVANGELIZE |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | + |        | = |        |
|            | A<br>2 |   | B<br>3 |   | C<br>4 |   | D<br>2 |   | E<br>4 |   | F<br>1 |   | G<br>4 |   | H<br>4 |   | I<br>4 |   | J<br>2 |



# Reference Release **FORM**

I hereby authorize \_\_\_\_\_ to verify all information contained in my application or other written communications, including all former churches in which I have served as a pastor, been a member or been ordained. They should not contact my current place of ministry.

I recognize that this verification process will include contacts with former church officers, members, pastoral colleagues, association and state convention personnel, as well as other business and professional references.

I further authorize that any personnel at former places of employment, churches or references may disclose any and all information regarding my work history, personal characteristics, salary, work habits or other areas of importance to this organization.

Furthermore, I waive the right to take legal action against the aforementioned churches, their members and officers or references for releasing such requested information.

I understand this authorization form and agree to the release and verification of the aforementioned information.

\_\_\_\_\_  
PASTOR'S SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE



# Reference LETTER

*Using church letterhead, send this letter to reference with the pastor's release.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Your name has been given by \_\_\_\_\_ as a reference.

Our Pastor Search Committee is currently exploring the possibility of \_\_\_\_\_ coming to serve our church. As a part of our background screening, the pastor agreed to sign a release form in order that all references might know that permission has been given for any and all information to be shared. You will find enclosed a photocopy of the signed permission form.

In order to save you time, we have asked \_\_\_\_\_, who is a member of our Search Committee, to call you on the telephone. You will be asked a number of questions, but the entire interview should not take more than ten minutes. I hope that this will meet with your approval. Please pray for our committee as we continue our search process.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHAIRPERSON OR SECRETARY

Enclosure



*Reference*

## TELEPHONE INTERVIEW FORM

Pastor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Today's date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you known this pastor? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what capacity have you known the pastor? (Member/officer in church, ministry colleague, business associate, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are you aware of reasons there might be openness to a new call? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you have any information which would give you any reservations about this person's appropriateness for ministry? If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you aware of any disciplinary proceedings involving charges against this candidate by the ordaining church, any other church body or other agency or body? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Have you had any personal experience or heard reports from others who have questioned this individual's integrity, honesty, ethics or conduct? \_\_\_\_\_

- 7.** Do you know if this person has ever left a job or ministry position because of charges or accusations related to conduct or beliefs? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
What do you know of the circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 8.** Would you positively recommend this person for ministry at our church? \_\_\_\_\_  
Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 9.** Are you aware of any reports of sexual misconduct? \_\_\_\_\_  
What were those reports? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10.** Have any questions been raised regarding the pastor's personal finances or handling of church funds? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 11.** What is the pastor's reputation among ministry colleagues? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 12.** Based on your knowledge and the pastor's reputation, is his marriage healthy and stable? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 13.** Do you know of any conduct of the pastor's family members that would raise any serious questions about our church's consideration of this person for ministry here? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 14.** Do you have any confidential information you do not feel free to reveal to us concerning the pastor's fitness for ministry? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 15.** Have you signed any legal document that prevents you from disclosing information regarding this pastor and/or his wife or family? \_\_\_\_\_
- 16.** Can you provide the name(s) of other persons who would be helpful references to our church in assessing the candidate? It would be helpful to have names, addresses and telephone numbers. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# CREDIT AND LEGAL INFORMATION RELEASE *for the pastor*

I hereby authorize \_\_\_\_\_ to check my credit, legal and social media history with all appropriate sources. Such information may be obtained for the years of \_\_\_\_\_ to the present.

Pastor's name

---

(Other names pastor has used)

---

(Other states in which the pastor has lived since the year 2000)

---

Pastor's driver's license number: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor's social security number: \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

---

PASTOR'S SIGNATURE

---

DATE



# CREDIT AND LEGAL INFORMATION RELEASE

*for the pastor's wife*

I hereby authorize \_\_\_\_\_ to check my credit, legal and social media history with all appropriate sources. Such information may be obtained for the years of \_\_\_\_\_ to the present.

Pastor's spouse's name

---

(Other names spouse has used, if appropriate: maiden name, prior married name, etc.)

---

(Other states in which the pastor has lived since the year 2000)

---

Spouse's driver's license number: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's social security number: \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_

---

SPOUSE'S SIGNATURE

---

DATE

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# LETTER TO PASTOR

## *regarding questionnaire*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Thank you for your willingness to discuss with our committee the possibility of your coming to serve as our pastor.

We are grateful for the time you have given for us to become better acquainted with your ministry and your family. We certainly believe the Lord is leading us toward His will as we prayerfully search for our next pastor.

We recognize that we have a responsibility to be honest and open with you to build a strong, caring relationship of trust. We acknowledge, also, a responsibility to our congregation and the expectations they have of us. Therefore, we request that you answer the questions on the enclosed sheet and return it to us for our files. These are questions we wish we did not need to ask, but we want to assure a strong relationship of trust and transparency for the future.

If you do not come to serve as our pastor, the questionnaire will be returned to you; and no copies of it will be made. If you become our pastor, the questionnaire will be placed in a closed file and used only to substantiate that the committee followed a thorough process in determining the suitability of the pastor called to serve our church.

Unfortunately, we live in a time of documented abuses from pastors and ministers. We also live in a time when churches are not immune to litigation. Please understand that these questions are not meant to insinuate any negative thinking or distrust on our part. We simply sense a need to have this information on file for your protection and ours. Should there be any response that is problematic, we can honestly report that it was discussed by the committee, dealt with, and an informed decision was made to proceed.

You are asked to answer the questions and return the enclosed questionnaire to the chairperson of the committee. Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

---

SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON



# PASTORAL CANDIDATE *questionnaire*

Ministry candidate: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1.** Have you ever been charged or convicted of any offense other than a traffic violation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, explain the circumstances and dispositions. \_\_\_\_\_

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- 2.** Please note the traffic violations for which you have been charged or convicted over the past three years. \_\_\_\_\_

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- 3.** Have you ever been a party in a civil lawsuit? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

---

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- 4.** 4. Have you ever filed for bankruptcy? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

- 5.** Have you ever been disciplined by any professional, private or public agency?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

6. Have you ever been dismissed by vote of the congregation from the employment of any church?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Have you ever resigned from any church position or employment in the face of charges of misconduct?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Have you ever been treated for alcohol or drug abuse? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  
If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Have you ever been committed, voluntarily or otherwise, to a hospital for psychiatric care?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Have you ever been formally charged or convicted of spousal or child abuse?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Have you ever been arrested, charged or convicted or had any allegation or accusation of any kind made against you? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Have employees, staff, members or others with whom you worked ever brought charges of sexual harassment against you before either a church body or any civil governmental agency or court? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**13.** Have you signed legal documents that prevent you from discussing any employment, situation or problem with others? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**14.** Are you a lawful resident or citizen of the US? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

**15.** Are you currently under continuing medical care for any condition that would impact your ability to carry out the responsibilities of a pastor? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16.** How many times have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_

How many times has your spouse been married? \_\_\_\_\_

**17.** In what states have you held driver's licenses in the past ten years? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

# Pastor's COMPENSATION

It is extremely important to analyze the components of the compensation and benefits received by an ordained pastor. Frequently, a compensation package is put together in such a way that it gives a false impression of the person's true pay, which may not be as high as it appears. The pastor's pay package can better be understood when it is listed as a layperson's own income might be from his or her place of employment. Consider the overall compensation arrangement in three parts:

## 1. CASH PAY AND HOUSING

- Salary
- Housing allowance
- Social Security offset (employer's share)

This component is the real equivalent of what others would be paid in their normal course of work with another employer. The salary and housing allowance are equivalent to gross income on a paycheck. The Social Security offset is in addition to the traditional salary and housing to compensate for the ordained pastor having to pay "both sides" of Social Security under the status of being self-employed. The Social Security offset is additional taxable income reported on a pastor's Form W-2. (The pastor is an employee of the church for income tax purposes but self-employed for Social Security only.) The pastor must pay the full self-employment tax, whereas non-pastoral employees only have to cover half. If the church does not provide an offset, the pastor's true compensation, as compared to the regular marketplace, is already diluted by that extra percentage.

The church should concentrate on the amount to be paid as salary and housing allowance. Several factors — such as education, experience, responsibilities, degree of supervision, cost of living and related items — should be considered. You can use church-related compensation surveys, compare similar positions in other churches in your area, or check with your Chamber of Commerce for salary data for management positions in the corporate environment.

You should consider the salary/housing allowance figure as one amount and allow the pastor to provide the church with the split between the two. Whatever amount is designated by the pastor and approved by the church for housing allowance is excludable from the pastor's taxable wages. However, for the housing allowance to be excluded from income tax, the pastor must actually spend the designated housing allowance on qualified housing costs including mortgage, repairs, taxes, etc., and maintain all receipts in the event of a tax audit. Also, the pastor must include all three items in this grouping when figuring self-employment taxes.

Whatever source you use, keep in mind that this first section is the part that matters the most since it represents cash income for buying groceries, paying the rent/mortgage, dressing the children and going out to dinner.

## 2. EMPLOYER BENEFITS

- Health/medical insurance
- Life insurance
- Disability insurance
- Retirement

These items should be considered as "over and above" the base compensation. These are expenses to provide for the ordained pastor and family in the event of medical emergency, death, disability or retirement. Yes, the insurance premiums can be expensive. However, if the pastor is not covered, your church will probably feel some kind of obligation to provide for the pastor and/or family. The cost of this could significantly exceed the outlay for basic coverage.

### Normal recommendations for coverage are as follows:

- **Health/medical** – Coverage for individual and entire family with reasonable deductibles.
- **Life** – At least four times the salary/housing level for the pastor plus coverage for spouse and children. Spouse coverage could be half that of the pastor and \$5,000 for dependents.

The church can provide up to \$50,000 of group term life coverage to the pastor as a tax-sheltered (free) benefit. If the pastor's insurance coverage exceeds \$50,000 then there is a wage component, see IRS Premium Table (Publication 15-B) that needs to be included as taxable wages on his Form W-2.

- **Disability** – Usually based on income (salary/housing).
- **403(b) Retirement Plan with Guidestone Financial Resources** – 10 percent of salary/housing. You may also want to match the pastor's voluntary contribution with an additional five percent. Also, if the church contributes \$50 per month to the pastor's retirement plan, then the pastor and his family are all eligible for the Supplement Disability and Survivor benefits offered by the state convention and Guidestone.

These figures are recommended minimums and are pretty much in line with coverage offered to management personnel in most businesses. Guidestone offers all these options and can help you with premium rates, or you may call the Compensation and Benefit Services group with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. If the church pays these premiums and contributions directly to the carrier, they can be considered tax-free benefits. However, the tax laws are complex and constantly changing, so I would suggest your church seek professional guidance and advice in these areas before proceeding.

### 3. MINISTRY-RELATED EXPENSES

- Travel/automobile
- Continuing education and training
- Conventions/conferences
- Hospitality
- Books, periodicals, counseling supplies

All the above items should be considered church expenses and not items to be paid from the pastor's pocket. They are the church's costs of doing church business and should be shared by all the members through the church's budget. The items shown above are like the pastor's tools — they are necessary to do

an adequate job. Yes, the pastor may benefit from education, books, etc., but it is the church that is really reaping the benefit in the long run by having a well-equipped pastor who is able to carry out church tasks effectively and efficiently.

The church needs to have a written accountable reimbursement plan in place to be able to reimburse a minister for any and all of these expenses that he pays out of his wages. Additionally, if the pastor is being reimbursed for formal education (e.g. an advanced degree), then a separate policy needs to be in place with a maximum annual benefit of \$5,250 per year.

The church should reimburse the pastor for the above items by requiring that receipts be turned in monthly indicating the amount, type of expense, business purpose and persons entertained (in the case of lunch, hospitality, etc.). The church should have a policy of reimbursing the pastor at the IRS-approved rate per mile for church-related use of a personal automobile. Of course, commuting miles are excluded. The church may choose to obtain a credit card for the pastor to charge certain budgeted items. In any case, expenditures for reimbursement should not be made unless approved receipts are provided to validate the expense and its business purpose.

To determine how much to allocate to these ministry-related items, the church should determine an estimate based on past experience plus projected need. The pastor is in the best position to give direction on these projected costs. But, like other budgeted items, these costs can be adjusted during the year with the approval of the finance team and/or the church.

### SUMMARY: TOTAL COST OF MINISTRY

When the above three areas have been considered, individual lines can be totaled to get a grand total. The question then arises as to what to do if the total does not seem to be an amount that can be handled by the church budget. One alternative is to scale back certain lines. This might be effective on some of the ministry expense lines, but it will have a dramatic impact if it means cutting the cash pay or benefits sections. Rather than have the pastor be the one to bear the

brunt of a “cut,” perhaps this should be spread out over the entire budget. Challenge each person and family to increase their giving to provide adequately for their pastor. This is much more equitable and healthier for the church.

### **HOUSING — PROVIDE HOUSING OR A PARSONAGE?**

There are obvious benefits to providing a parsonage for pastoral housing; however, there are also major reasons not to provide a dwelling for the pastor:

#### **BENEFITS**

1. Pastor has no need for concern about finding suitable housing.
2. Pastor has no need for concern about selling the house when leaving.
3. It may be initially more economical for the church (although not necessarily in the long run).
4. Church members always know where the pastor lives.

#### **CONCERNS**

1. Pastor builds no equity toward future retirement, and the family has no guarantee of housing should death or disability occur.
2. Housing can be used as a power play over the pastor when there is church conflict.
3. The church is responsible for maintenance and repairs.
4. Conflict can arise as to who can paint, landscape or even hang pictures on walls of a parsonage.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

Churches are moving away from providing a parsonage for the pastor and family. It is certainly not in the pastor’s best interest to live there; it is an ongoing financial burden on the church; and it prevents the pastor’s family from having the pride of ownership.

When the church already has a parsonage, the congregation might consider selling the house to the pastor at its current appraised value. This would mean, of course, increasing the salary to cover the cost of making monthly housing payments. One possibility is to allow the church to finance the sale itself so that principal plus interest is paid back to the church. The pastor would benefit by not having to pay a normally high down payment.

A second alternative is to provide a housing equity trust fund that would provide opportunity for money to accumulate for the ordained pastor to use at some time in the future for a housing down payment. Ideally, it should be set up through the Baptist Foundation of North Carolina and, thereby, be portable when the pastor moves.

*Sample*

# PASTOR-CHURCH COVENANT

## 1. THE PASTOR'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE CHURCH

1. To proclaim the gospel with the goal of reaching persons and making disciples for Christ and fostering biblical, emotional, social and spiritual growth.
2. To love individuals and families within the fellowship without bias or prejudice.
3. To provide counseling to members and nonmembers and to keep this communication confidential.
4. To serve as administrator of church programs and ministries by facilitating communication and recommending appropriate ministries/programs to the appropriate persons.
5. To work with committees, teams, organizations and groups in the development and implementation of programs of ministry and mission. Chairpersons of committees, organizations and boards are to have the responsibility of their offices with the counsel of the pastor as desired or needed. All committees, organizations, and groups are ultimately responsible to the church, from which their authority is derived and their responsibilities are defined.
6. To be ex officio member of all committees including the personnel committee and the deacon fellowship. The pastor shall, as a member of said committees, offer expertise and advice but shall not be entitled to vote.
7. To give primary oversight and direct the church office, supervising other paid church staff, overseeing that the church calendar is maintained, representing the church to visitors and other persons who might come in contact with the church, advising other church members of information they need to carry out their duties as church officers, and serving in other reasonable activities relative to the church office.
8. To establish and announce church office hours. Generally, seek to maintain those office hours for the benefit of all church members and the related business of the church; in times of absence, the church secretary should be informed as to how to contact the pastor.
9. To visit the sick, the elderly and the bereaved and to maintain contact with the membership as a whole.
10. To be an encouragement to persons, programs and ministries of the church family.
11. To be actively involved in and supportive of the local Baptist association, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and the Southern Baptist Convention in its life and work.

## **2. THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PASTOR**

1. To show sensitivity to the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of the pastor and his family.
2. To pray for the pastor's ministry, affirm efforts and work with the pastor toward the end of accomplishing God's will in the church and the community.
3. To allow the pastor full responsibility for the preaching program of the church with the privilege of calling on others for participation.
4. To allow the pastor responsibility for the administration of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper as shared in the fellowship and to receive new members and assist in their discipling and orientation.
5. To support the pastor in the church's preaching ministry and to cooperate with the pastor by suggesting programs and providing groups such as the deacons to act as ministry providers.
6. To acknowledge that we are all imperfect human beings seeking to serve a perfect God.
7. To be willing to inform the pastor of misunderstandings so that wrongs may be righted.

## **3. WORKING GUIDELINES**

1. A call to serve as pastor will also include a signed covenant agreement that has been read and approved by the members and signed by the deacon chairman or moderator of the church.
2. The church shall be responsible for insurance on contents of the pastor's study at the church and malpractice insurance as appropriate.
3. The church will provide the pastor with appropriate technological resources to facilitate church leaders and the church secretary in contacting the pastor.
4. The pastor search committee/pastor's prayer team will meet with the pastor quarterly for evaluation, feedback and prayer support during the first year of service. ]
5. This covenant agreement shall be reviewed annually and renegotiated as necessary. The pastor and congregation must concur on any change.

## **4. EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES**

1. The pastor is directly responsible to the congregation in the performance of ministry. The pastor shall, with the deacons, oversee the pastoral care and nurture of the church members and provide for a continuing, diversified program of ministries among the members.
2. If the pastor is asked as a courtesy to always assure that a church leader or the secretary can reach the pastor in case of an emergency.
3. The pastor is expected to give the church forty hours of his time during the week (sometimes more, as needed) and to be on call for emergencies twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week.
4. If the pastor is to be away for more than thirty-six hours, church leaders should be told how to reach the pastor, or the pastor should provide a plan for a qualified person to serve during the absence.

5. When the pastor is away from the church field for more than three days, the deacons should be made aware so that crises can be covered by other leaders.
6. The pastor will give the deacons a monthly report on visits, membership and personal needs and church activities. After particularly strenuous times that demand excessive work hours during the church year, the pastor is encouraged to take time off for rest and relaxation.
7. The pastor will be allowed four weeks of vacation, including four Sundays.
8. The pastor is allowed thirty days per year as sick leave with full salary and benefits. For a prolonged illness, continued payment will be at the discretion of the church.
9. The pastor is allowed two weeks per year for revivals or continuing education; the latter may be paid for from convention expense funds.
10. The church will provide the pulpit supply in case of illness, bereavement and vacation. The pastor is responsible for the supply when preaching in revival elsewhere.
11. The church will initiate a sabbatical plan that allows for the pastor to be away for an extended period for every seven years of ministry. The length of time and other details will be agreed to by the pastor and church leadership.

## **5. FINANCIAL CARE**

1. The church agrees to pay for all moving expenses incurred, including a mover of the pastor's choice. The pastor shall obtain at least two competitive bids for this expense.
2. The church agrees to allow the pastor to choose and purchase or rent a home or use the church-owned parsonage.
3. The church agrees to begin the pay period as of the last day of the pay period in the previous church: i.e., July 31/August 1; and the pastor agrees to begin new duties on that same day.
4. Regular pay periods will fall on the fifteenth and last days of each month.
5. In case of termination, care will be given to minimize trauma to the pastoral family and to the church's witness in the community. A severance package of one month for every year of service will be provided with a minimum of three months.



Sample

# PASTORAL INSTALLATION SERVICE

Prelude

Scriptural Call to Worship

Member of Pastor Search Committee

Invocation

Member of Pastor Search Committee

Congregational Hymn

Introduction of the New Pastoral Family\*

Chairman of Pastor Search Committee

Worship in Music

Children's Choir or Student Ministry

Scripture

Member of Pastor Search Committee

Pastoral Prayer

The New Pastor

Congregational Hymn

Offertory Prayer

Member of Pastor Search Committee

Offertory

Worship in Music

Introduction of the Church to the New Pastor Family\*\*

Deacon Chairman

Signing of the Covenant Agreement

Pastor and Deacon Chairman

Installation Message by a Pastoral Friend or by the New Pastor

Invitation Hymn

Presentation of Gift\*\*\*

Deacon Chairman

Fellowship Hymn as Benediction

"Blest Be the Tie"

\* 1. The chairman of the pastor search committee introduces the new pastor and his family to the church using biographical information.

\* 2. In introducing the church to the new pastor and family, the deacon chairman briefly recounts highlights from church's history.

\* 3. It would be most appropriate to present the new pastor some tangible gift to mark the beginning of this new relationship.



# *Recommended Resources*

## FOR THE PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

### BOOKS

Richard Blackaby, *Your Next Pastor: A God-Centered Guide for Pastor Search Committees*. Blackaby Ministries International, 2022.

Chris Brauns, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search: Biblical Principles and Practices to Guide Your Search*, Moody Publishers, 2011.

Gregory Frizzell, *Seeking God to Seek a Pastor: Vital Steps for Search Committees and Their Congregations*. Bethany Press, 2003.

Jason Lowe, *The Church During the Search: Honoring Christ While You Wait for Your Next Pastor*. Aneko Press, 2020.

William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*. B&H Publishing Group, 2016.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

Dr. Chuck Lawless: [chucklawless.com](http://chucklawless.com) – visit to find these articles:

- 8 Reasons Pastorless Churches Should Consider an Interim Pastor
- 6 Reasons Pastor Search Teams Don't Always Work – and What to Do about it
- 14 Mistakes Search Committees Make
- 12 Questions I Might Ask a Pastor Search Team
- 2 Reasons It's Taking Longer to Call a Pastor

Dr. Joe McKeever: [joemckeever.com](http://joemckeever.com) – visit to find these articles:

- The hardest job you will ever love: Serving on a Pastor Search Committee
- What pastor search committees fear most
- What that Pastor Search Committee is looking for
- Dear Pastor Search Committee
- Pastors: What not to do regarding search committees
- The pastor goes before a search committee

### RESUMÉS ONLINE

Visit the NC Baptist JobBoard for ministry positions: [jobboard.ncbaptist.org](http://jobboard.ncbaptist.org)





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