



# PASTORAL TRANSITION

Revised 2025-5-14

## Wyoming Ministry Network OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD

350 Kati Lane / Casper, WY 82601  
PO Box 2988 / Casper, WY 82602  
[office@wyomingministrynetwork.com](mailto:office@wyomingministrynetwork.com)  
307.234.4102

A PRACTICAL  
REFERENCE FOR  
PASTORAL TRANSITIONS

**"May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things,  
appoint someone over this community to go out and come in  
before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the  
Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."**

**- Numbers 27:16-17 -**



## CONTENTS

A Note from Network Pastor/Superintendent Nicole Heidt.....	5
1. <a href="#">Advantages of This Resource</a> .....	6
2. <a href="#">So Long, Farewell</a> (Saying Good Bye to Your Resigning Pastor).....	7
3. <a href="#">Stages of the Search Process</a> (12 Steps to Finding a Senior Pastor) .....	12
4. <a href="#">Characteristics of Congregations in Transition</a> .....	21
5. <a href="#">Essential Qualities of Search Team Members</a> .....	23
6. <a href="#">The Pastoral Search Team</a> (Purpose, Selection, Roles, and Responsibilities) .....	27
7. <a href="#">The Importance of A/G Credentials</a> .....	35
8. <a href="#">Search Team Meeting Sample Agenda</a> .....	43
9. <a href="#">Do We Need an Interim Pastor?</a> .....	44
10. <a href="#">Communication Plans</a> (to the congregation and to pastoral candidates).....	51

## APPENDIX & RESOURCES

A. <a href="#">Parting Well</a> .....	56
B. <a href="#">Sustainability Initiative</a> .....	66
C. <a href="#">Mobilizing Prayer</a> .....	68
D. <a href="#">Pastoral Search Team Job Description</a> .....	72
E. <a href="#">Board/Pastoral Search Team Commitment</a> .....	74
F. <a href="#">Church Member Commitment</a> .....	76
G. <a href="#">Board/Search Team Planning Retreat</a> (The Most Important Part of Preparation).....	77
H. <a href="#">Transition Budget</a> .....	79
I. <a href="#">Church, Neighborhood, Community Profile</a> .....	83
J. <a href="#">Desirable Qualities of a Pastor</a> .....	89
K. <a href="#">Job Description</a> .....	94
L. <a href="#">Pastor Profile</a> .....	96
M. <a href="#">Congregational Survey</a> .....	102
N. <a href="#">Advertising the Ministry Opening</a> .....	107
O. <a href="#">Recruiting Candidates</a> .....	110
P. <a href="#">Candidate Questionnaire</a> .....	112
Q. <a href="#">Candidate Cover Page</a> .....	113
R. <a href="#">Exposure to Speaking Ministry</a> (Evaluating Sermons).....	114
S. <a href="#">Categorizing and Evaluating Résumés</a> ) .....	116
T. <a href="#">Checking References</a> (includes reference check forms) .....	119
U. <a href="#">Sample Letters</a> .....	126
V. <a href="#">The Last Face-to-Face Interview</a> .....	140

W. <a href="#">Interview Questions for Candidates</a> .....	142
X. <a href="#">Interview Questions for Boards/PST's</a> .....	151
Y. <a href="#">Presenting a Remuneration Agreement</a> .....	156
Z. <a href="#">Hosting the Candidate</a> .....	163
AA. <a href="#">Electing a Pastor</a> .....	166
BB. <a href="#">Preparing for the Pastor's Arrival</a> .....	174
CC. <a href="#">Checklist by Stages</a> .....	189
DD. <a href="#">Church Boardsmanship</a> .....	198

*(Much of this manual has been adapted from the book, **Rise Up**, by Gene Roncone, used with permission)*

**HYPERLINK NAVIGATION TOOL:** If you are using the PDF version of this resource, utilize the hyperlinks to easily navigate through the document. Click on the chapter and appendix titles listed in the Table of Contents to go immediately to their place in the document. To return to the Table of Contents from anywhere in the document, click the “(back to contents)” hyperlink at the top of the page and after each chapter heading. You can also use the search bar in the upper right-hand corner to quickly find topics or resources of your choice.

## DIGITAL RESOURCES ON THE WMN WEBSITE

All of the resources in this manual can be found on the WMN website, categorized under these headings:

- Pastoral Transition Manual
- Stages of the Search Process Diagram
- Stages Checklist
- Parting Well *(multiple documents)*
- Preparing for the Search *(multiple documents)*
- Tools for Evaluating Candidates *(multiple documents)*
- Sample Letters *(multiple documents)*
- Interview Questions *(multiple documents)*
- The Pastor's Compensation Package *(multiple documents)*
- The Candidating Visit *(multiple documents)*
- Preparing for Your New Pastor's Arrival *(multiple documents)*

Feel free to download and customize them for your church's needs. They can be accessed at:  
<https://www.wyomingministrynetwork.com/pastoral-transition/>

## FROM NETWORK SUPERINTENDENT, NICOLE HEIDT



If you are reading this, you are probably either a board member or a member of a pastoral search team. Your church is now looking to you for leadership, and it is time to begin the task of ensuring a successful transition. The unfortunate fact is not that churches experience pastoral transitions but that they get little to no training on how to do it well. By the time a board learns the pastor is leaving, there is little time to educate oneself, develop systems, and learn from experts. That is why we have assembled this pastoral transition resource.

The first section contains short chapters on important issues and steps for your church to take. The insights and information shared are practices that have been gleaned from hundreds of churches that have experienced what you are going through now—looking for a new leader. The second section is full of helpful resources, forms, sample letters, etc. to help you conduct a healthy search process. Take what is helpful, customize it, or even ignore what is not relevant.

I make myself available to you as you move forward. I would enjoy meeting with church leaders to review this manual or to simply have some dialogue with you. I understand that each church and each circumstance is unique. What this resource offers is certainly customizable to fit your needs.

I have great respect for the variety of history, styles, and organization represented in each church. What I envision is cooperative teamwork, seeking to find the pastor who is called to your community and the best fit for your church.

I commit to pray for you, and to be available upon your request.

God will provide!

Nicole Heidt

[nicole@wyomingministrynetwork.com](mailto:nicole@wyomingministrynetwork.com)

307-371-6026

# 1. ADVANTAGES OF THIS RESOURCE [\(back to contents\)](#)

This resource helps you leverage several advantages as you navigate a pastoral transition:

**1. Scriptural intentionality** – It has been said that when you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Some believers mistakenly think that strategic planning is a lack of faith and smothers the Spirit's spontaneity. However, Scripture reveals that God has often used intentional planning to accomplish His will. Some of these examples were ordered by God and others were initiated by spiritual leaders and then blessed by God's favor and effectiveness.

- Joseph's strategy saved Egypt from famine and economic collapse (Genesis 41).
- The Lord gave Moses a detailed plan about how the twelve tribes of Israel were to set up camp, organize their society, and march into battle (Numbers 2).
- Moses sustained his effectiveness as a leader by creating an organizational plan to delegate authority and appoint leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (Exodus 18:13-26). God instructed Moses to select seventy leaders to help him govern (Numbers 11:16-17). The people of God found these structures to be good and effective (Deuteronomy 1:14).
- Before rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah surveyed the damage and then developed a plan for separating tasks, mobilizing a work force, and reconstructing Jerusalem's wall (2:11-16).
- Before feeding the 5,000, Jesus gave instructions on how the crowds should be divided into groups of hundreds and fifties (Mark 6:39-40).
- The apostles laid out the strategy of deacon ministry to take care of practical needs in the church so they could focus on prayer and the Word (Acts 6).
- Paul gave Titus and Timothy a plan for appointing leaders in new church plants (Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3). He learned the importance of this from his time with Barnabas (Acts 14:23).

Clearly, having a plan is not "unspiritual." The same kind of Spirit-driven intentionality is embraced in this resource.

**2. Shortened learning curve** – most churches facing pastoral transition spend the first thirty days or so gathering materials, reading books, or participating in training to acquire knowledge regarding transition. This manual has done the work for you.

**3. Exposure to best practices** – This resource is the compilation of the best resources, books, manuals, thinking, and practices of board-led succession plans.

**4. Practical resources** – the appendix contains surveys, forms, letters, evaluation tools, a congregational prayer guide, plus many other resources so you don't have to reinvent the wheel. These are provided in an electronic format that can be copied or modified to help you succeed.

We realize that each church is unique. What works for one, may not work for another. So make the manual work for you. Prayerfully draw from the resources that fit your context, feeling free to customize anything for your needs.



## 2. SO LONG, FAREWELL ([back to contents](#))

The song, "So Long, Farewell" is one of the most memorable scores of the 1965 film, *The Sound of Music*. Performed by the Von Trapp children, it has only one main chorus that is repeated several times. It is a lot like pastoral departures. They are filled with both excitement and sadness and involve many repeated "goodbyes." For the church to prepare for their next pastor, they first need to properly process the loss/departure of their resigning pastor. Here are a few necessary things the board must do after the resignation and before the departure of the lead pastor. They are important because well-planned endings are necessary for successful beginnings.

- A. Clarify important dates and times of departures.** Pastoral departures involve lots of "last things." This includes things like last sermon, day in office, day on signature cards, possession of keys and equipment, final paycheck, and much more. A checklist for these types of items is in the appendix entitled, "[Parting Well](#)."
- B. Send an initial letter of affirmation, encouragement, and update to the congregation plus a transition questions and answers sheet.** Within a week of the pastor's resignation the board should send a letter to the church. This letter should affirm the prior leadership (if possible) and outline the general steps the board will be taking. An example of such a letter and the question and answer sheet can be found in the appendix entitled, "[Parting Well](#)."
- C. Organize farewell event(s) before the official last day.** Although there are several unknowns that may affect the pastor's departure date, it is important to determine what audiences require a special farewell date and time. These items are the most overlooked because no one has been charged with their execution. It is best to appoint groups or people close to the outgoing pastor to plan these events. Make these events a celebration, and be careful that they do not have the morbid feel of a funeral. They can range from a dessert function to a meal event. Here are a few questions that may help the board determine appropriate farewell events.
  - 1. What groups (board, small group, church as a whole, staff, etc.) warrant a special farewell event and when will those take place?
  - 2. What types of gifts or expenses need to be approved, planned, and executed for each occasion?
  - 3. What guidelines or agreements will need to be negotiated to ensure the events are uplifting and beneficial?
  - 4. Who will be responsible for each occasion and take responsibility for their execution?
- D. Hold a board meeting to update and freeze the membership roster.** One of the most important governance tasks the board must do before your pastor leaves is to update and

freeze the membership roster. Failing to do this is one of the most common mistakes search committees make. Updating your roster is extremely important for the following reasons:

- 1. You want to achieve quorum for your business meeting to elect a new pastor.** If your membership roster contains several people who have died, moved, or no longer attend, it may be difficult to have enough members for quorum so that you can have a business meeting to vote on a candidate. You don't want anything to hinder you from electing God's person for your church.
- 2. You only want active members voting on your new pastor.** The membership roster will determine who is eligible to vote for your new pastor. You want that voting constituency to include those who are presently in the church, active as members, supportive of its finances and ministries, and familiar with the church's needs. The names of people who are deceased, have left the church, or have moved should be purged from the list to ensure it accurately reflects the current membership. Former Rocky Mountain District Superintendent Bob Cook said it best: "There will always be those who say, 'I really didn't think about membership seriously, but NOW I really want a voice. Please let us vote!' I really believe it is important not to cater to those who were flippant about membership in the past but now are eager to vote."<sup>1</sup>
- 3. You want the new pastor to receive an accurate reflection of the sentiment of the church's members.** Chances are your new pastor will have a predetermined percentage of votes they feel are needed to lead successfully. If the names of deceased, departed, or relocated members are still on your roster, it will cause the final vote to be a lower percentage of the total membership. You will want to do your best to ensure your primary candidate receives the highest percentage of votes as possible.
- 4. You want to protect the unity of the church.** Unfortunately, business meetings can be a breeding ground for division and church politics. If any of your members have left the church for several months and ceased to participate in its ministries, there is no reason they should be given the same rights as those who have remained to support and carry the church through the transition. Removing the names of those who have left the church does three things: helps protect the unity of the church, ensures disgruntled members cannot return with the same level of influence they had when they left, and gives existing members a high level of confidence that the election accurately reflects the will of participating members.
- 5. You want to safeguard the legitimacy of a future election.** Over the years, we have seen and heard several examples of members who did not like the candidate and challenged the legitimacy of an election by claiming new members were either added or removed



after a candidate was introduced and before the scheduled election. Updating and freezing your roster will protect you from this possibility.

Passing an official board motion to update your membership roster now and freezing it until after the election of the new pastor will help achieve the objectives mentioned above. Remember, your church bylaws will prescribe specific guidelines concerning how the membership roster should be updated and who is eligible to vote on a new pastor. You will want to take great care to ensure they are followed.

Updating and freezing the roster is very simple:

- Print a current membership roster for each board member.
- Look at your roster and at your bylaws for the reasons to remove members.
- Go through and cross off all the names of those who no longer attend, who've left the church, moved, died, etc.
- Then put a question mark by the names – there may be some who send a check once every three months, they don't show up, don't attend – there might be good reasons for that like they are homebound, senior adult, etc. and those you want to keep. But then there are others that do not have a legitimate reason. Those you want to remove.
- To remove names—the entire board, by motion, votes to take the name off the membership roster. It must be an official board action recorded in your minutes with the specific names of those to be removed, not a random decision by one board member.
- When this is finished, pass a motion to freeze the membership roster until after the election of a new pastor. No new members will be allowed to join until that happens.

This issue is so important that we encourage you to listen an audio resource produced by the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network entitled “Episode 5: Why and How to Update the Membership Roster.” It can be found on the *Rise Up* audio resource site at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

- E. Plan a “Sustainability Initiative.”** Statistics show that most churches in transition experience a substantial decline in morale, attendance, and giving.<sup>2</sup> Instead of just accepting that, the board should consider launching a sustainability campaign. The purpose of this kind of initiative is to encourage adherents to recognize change is part of God's growth process, and that to benefit from it they should stick around and sustain current levels of giving and participation. A description of what that may look like can be found in the appendix entitled, [“Sustainability Initiative.”](#)

- F. Set boundaries for ministerial etiquette concerning the transition.** It is basic ministerial etiquette that the outgoing pastor should exit with dignity, grace and integrity. The General Council of the Assemblies of God states the following guidelines concerning ministerial ethics.

*“All discourteous conduct is disapproved, and all ministers are advised against interfering with pastors in charge of assemblies, whether it be by going in upon their work without consent or by such correspondence with members of the assembly as will hurt the influence of the leader. All correspondence which concerns the whole assembly shall be addressed to the one in charge and not to individual members. Where there is no pastor, letters concerning the work shall be addressed to the officers of the assembly. Any minister who so offends shall be subject to discipline.”<sup>3</sup>*

Despite the ministerial ethics required by the General Council bylaws, there can be conflicting expectations concerning things like interaction with individuals and board members in the church, fundraising, correspondence, titles, roles, levels of influence and participation in church events. It is preferable that all departing ministers (staff and lead pastors) embrace a conservative interpretation of generally accepted standards of ministerial ethics. Unless specifically asked by the acting chairman of the board (in the interim) or the newly elected pastor, one should assume their help, input, or participation is not needed. However, it would be wise for the entire board and the departing pastor to discuss this topic and come to an agreement before a pastor’s departure.

- G. Exit interview.** An exit interview is an informal dialogue between the church board and the departing pastor. The purpose of an exit interview is to glean spiritual feedback in order to improve aspects of the church, better retain staff, and reduce future turnover. These interviews are generally conducted in a neutral setting for the purpose of gathering vital information about the former leader’s experience and to get honest feedback about the vision, mission, and current health of the church. A sample list of questions for this interview can be found in the appendix entitled, [“Parting Well.”](#)

- H. Blessing service.** The Scriptures give us several examples of believers blessing each other when the circumstances of life caused them to part ways.

- Moses pronounced a blessing on Israel before his death - Deuteronomy 33:1-29
- In his farewell speech to Israel, Samuel encouraged and prayed for them - 1 Samuel 12:23
- Before ascending to heaven, Jesus blessed the disciples - Luke 24:50-51
- The Antioch church prayed over Barnabas and Paul in their new assignment - Acts 13:1-3
- Many of Paul’s epistles conclude with a prayer or blessing over the recipients

The departure of a pastor is a wonderful opportunity to honor this scriptural tradition and model scriptural departures for our people. A time of prayer in the pastor’s final service or a prayer meeting with the lead pastor, their family, and the board to pray and bless one another

as they part ways would not only be productive but would honor God and His church. If a successor has been identified by then, including them in this service would echo Biblical tradition. An sample blessing service can be found in the appendix entitled, "[Parting Well](#)."

I. **Severance.** The departure of a pastor raises the matter of severance. If you decide to consider severance the following factors should be considered.

- **Tenure:** The number of years the pastor has served your church.
- **Subsequent employment:** Whether the pastor will be going directly to a new position.
- **Special circumstances:** If there are any special circumstances regarding the pastor's resignation. This may include but not be limited to illness, death, moral or ethical issues, marital difficulties, mental health issues or other considerations.
- **Available resources:** The current financial position of the church.

The Oregon Ministry Network suggests the following as best practices for severance<sup>4</sup>:

- **Generous:** One month pay for each year of service to the church, up to six months.
- **Normal:** Three months of salary, if service was for more than five years.

The recommended bylaws from the General Council of the Assemblies of God specifically mentions severance in the context of termination: "In the event a pastor is removed from office by a vote of the active voting membership of the church, or shall fail to be sustained by a vote of the active voting membership at the end of a term, he shall be given a minimum of 2 months regular or average remuneration as severance pay, except in the case of moral turpitude."<sup>5</sup>

It should also be noted that severance is not the same thing as receiving a "love offering" or compensating your pastor for unused vacation/sick time. Those are separate items.

---

<sup>1</sup>May 1, 2019, email from Bob Cook to Gene Roncone, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network Superintendent

<sup>2</sup>Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, New Jersey, pp. 29-40.

<sup>3</sup>General Council of the Assemblies of God, Constitution and Bylaws, Bylaws, Article IX. Doctrines and Practices Disapproved, Section 8. Violations of Ministerial Courtesy, Revised August 7–11, 2017, Anaheim, California, p. 171.

<sup>4</sup>Oregon Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God, A Guide to Healthy Senior/Lead Pastor Transitions, Keizer, OR, 2019, p. 7

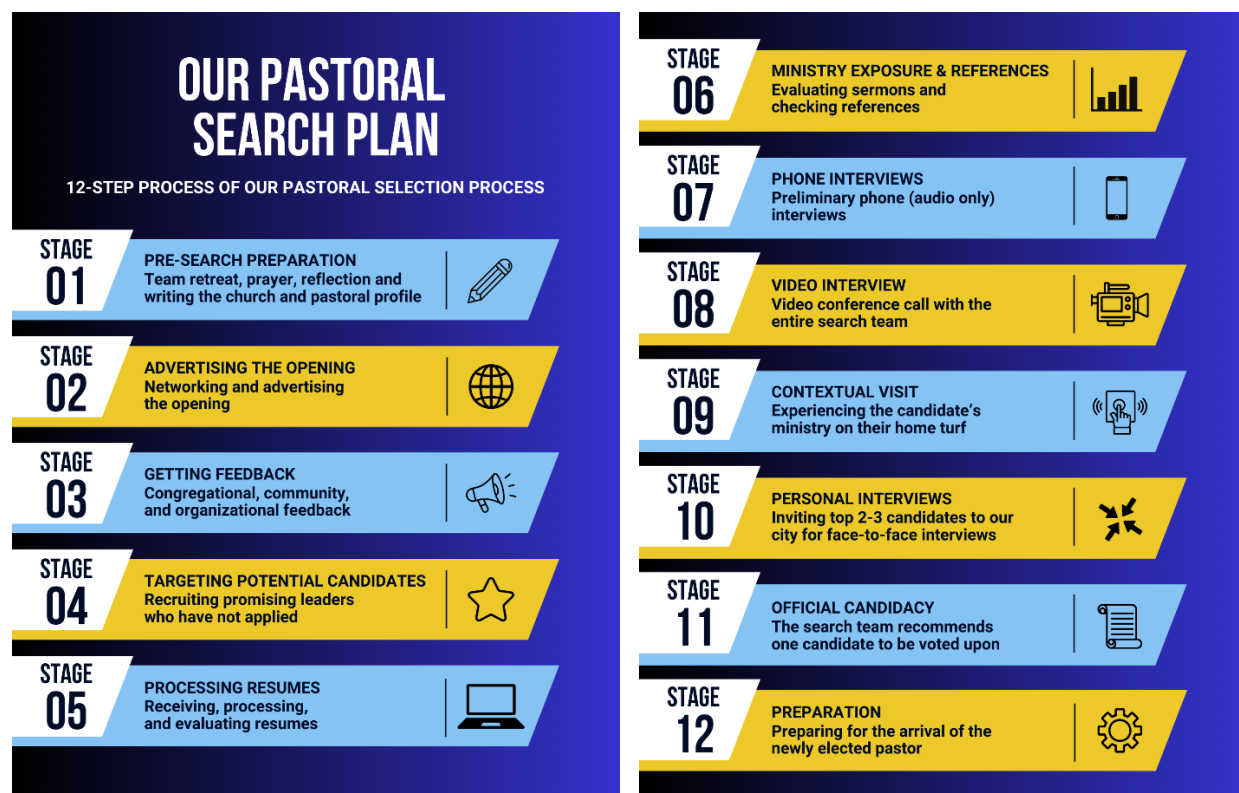
<sup>5</sup>Recommended Bylaws of the General Council of the Assemblies of God, Article XI, Section 3, subsection c, <https://ag.org/About/Leadership%20Team/General%20Secretary#ByLaws>

### 3. STAGES OF THE SEARCH PROCESS ([back to contents](#))

Below are 12 common steps to identifying a pastoral candidate. The process may require flexibility, not following a set order. It is also possible for several stages to be happening at the same time. Since there are multiple tasks to be completed in each of the 12 stages, a [checklist](#) has been included in the Resources section to help you keep track of what needs to be done for each. General Council churches are sovereign and have the freedom to determine their own process; however, Network affiliated churches are under the supervision of the Network and must conform to established policies and procedures of the Network Council Presbytery. Both are summarized below.

#### **General Council Churches and a Suggested Pastoral Selection Process**

Following is a brief description of each stage and where to find additional resources concerning their execution in the appendix section. Feel free to customize this for your needs.



#### **Stage 1: Pre-search preparation.**

Before starting the search process, focus on three things:

- Prayer & Fasting – use the [Mobilizing Prayer](#) section in the appendix to enlist the church to pray daily. Schedule church-wide prayer meetings (weekly, biweekly, monthly—whatever works in your context). Pray as a search team collectively and individually.
- Select Members and Establish Roles for a [Pastoral Search Team](#) (PST) – decide who will do what and [sign confidentiality/member agreements](#) (located in the appendix).

- Schedule two half-day planning meetings or a two-day retreat for the PST - The best and most important way to begin this process is for the Pastoral Search Team to have two half-day planning meetings or a two-day retreat. Teams that avoid this in the interest of being too busy or saving time will find themselves victims to chronic stalls in the process. No meeting will be more important than this one for it is where the PST will go over this resource, determine roles, strategize, write up a church bio, job description, and profile of the ideal candidate. They will also determine a search budget; and sign confidentiality/member agreements (if they haven't done so yet). The PST leader should determine a structured meeting schedule and collaborate with team members to select a date that works best for everyone. Although it is preferred that all members be present, not everyone may be able to attend. To keep the process moving forward, the PST will need to accept the fact that not all members will be able to participate in each segment of the process. However, the planning meeting/retreat is the most important meeting, and a venue that is close but feels far would serve best.

See the appendixes entitled "[Board/Search Team Planning Retreat](#)," "[Transition Budget](#)," "[Church, Neighborhood, and Community Profile](#)," "[Desirable Qualities of a Pastor](#)," "[Job Description](#)," "[Pastor Profile](#)," and "[Congregational Survey](#)" for a practical example of a planning meeting agenda and the items that are in it.

It is common for pastoral and support staff to experience anxiety during a pastoral transition. The Church Board can head this off quickly by sending them a letter expressing appreciation for their faithfulness and asking them to stay on during the transition period. It is important, however, that this letter does not commit to securing long-term employment or financing large initiatives requested by them. Your new pastor must have the freedom to build their own team and finance new vision. See the "[Letter to Current Staff during Transition](#)" in the Sample Letters appendix for an example.

**Stage 2: Advertising the opening.** After the board has compiled the church profile and candidate profile, the most important thing is to get the word out. This will help to maximize networking potential and get others working for you. This can be done by creating a shared internet folder, central website, or blog informing influential people about the opening and posting it on several ministry job sites. See the appendix entitled "[Advertising the Ministry Opening](#)" for a list of options to accomplish this task.

**Stage 3: Seek counsel.** Scripture repeatedly teaches us that the best wisdom comes when people are humble enough to seek advice from knowledgeable advisors.

- *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel* - Proverbs 12:15 NASB 1995
- *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed* - Proverbs 15:22 NIV

- *Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory*  
- Proverbs 11:14 NASB 1995

Unfortunately, more than one search team has proceeded in their search alone, without listening to those who could have given them godly and wise counsel, only to find themselves with a pastor who does not possess the qualities they had hoped to find. A discerning search team will talk to individuals who care about the health and future of the church and have walked with teams through several pastoral searches. There are three important sources of advice and critical feedback that are needed early in the process.

- Network Superintendent.** Network superintendents spend much of their time coaching churches and candidates through the pastoral selection process. Their wisdom and advice can spare the board and the church much heartache, regret, and wasted time. Be sure to notify your superintendent about the opening and invite them to a board meeting to give the board advice, offer resources, and answer questions. At some point, you will need technical advice about your church bylaws so emailing your superintendent a copy now will save time later. When considering a pastoral candidate, always request a letter of good standing from the Superintendent of the Network/District that your candidate resides in.
- Community leaders.** Important and actively engaged leaders in your community may also be able to help you determine what kind of church your community needs. To keep a pulse on his community, one pastor used the following list of questions to interview city leaders every 2-3 years. He says, “I always looked forward to these responses and, even at times, felt convicted that they were unknown to us as a church.” Those questions have been crafted into this sample email that can be sent to key community leaders.

*Dear Community Leader:*

*Our church is presently in a leadership transition and searching for a new lead pastor. We believe in community engagement, and you were among a short list of community leaders we wanted to reach out to for input. We feel confident we have a handle on the spiritual qualities we are looking for but would value your input concerning the city’s current and future needs. Would you mind replying to this email with brief answers to the following questions:*

- *What is the most pressing spiritual, personal, and social needs people have in our neighborhood?*
- *What gaps need to be filled in our city that only a faith-based work can do?*
- *How would you describe the city as a culture?*
- *What are our city’s greatest needs?*
- *What are the greatest dangers or threats our city is facing?*
- *What are our greatest strengths as a city?*
- *What are ways you have seen our city change over the past five years?*

- *What significant needs do you think our city will have five years from now?*
- *What are the different subcultures that exist in our city?*
- *What needs do most organizations in our part of town feel unqualified for or unable to meet?*
- *From your perspective, how can a community-minded church best help our city?*

*Thank you for helping us better serve our community.  
John Deacon, Chair of the Pastoral Search Committee  
First Assembly of God*

A customizable version of this letter can be found in the appendix entitled “[Letter to Community Leaders](#)” in the Sample Letters section. Emailing this list of questions to your mayor, city council members, police and fire chiefs, school superintendent, principals of nearby schools, and your city’s neighborhood services departments will reveal needs most church people do not think about. They will help you know the kind of spiritual leader you will need to make a true impact upon the community.

- c. **Congregational survey.** The board should also give the congregation the opportunity to submit input concerning the state of the church and pastoral selection. There are many advantages to this including:
- **Peace.** People tend to be less anxious about change if they are part of the process.
  - **Equitability.** People will want a fair and equitable opportunity to express what is important to them.
  - **Ownership.** People will be more likely to support the board/search team’s final candidate if they have been given a voice in the process.
  - **Cooperation.** The survey may reduce the amount of campaigning or lobbying within the church if people have been given the opportunity to voice their opinion.
  - **Confirmation.** The results will be helpful in confirming, expanding, or challenging the board’s existing assumptions about what kind of pastor is needed or wanted.

Taking a congregational survey or “self-study” is one of the best ways this can be done and is easily accomplished by creating an online survey in [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), google forms, or by passing out a paper survey that can be filled out and returned in a sealed box. Please see the section entitled “[Congregational Survey](#)” for an example that has been used in many other churches.

**Stage 4: Targeting potential candidates.** Soon after the resignation announcement, the board/search team will begin to receive recommendations of possible candidates and inquiries of interest. However, the team will also need to recruit possible candidates as well. This will require them to initiate contact with potential candidates that were referred or recommended by others.



It is important that every contact with a potential candidate be professional, organized, and show respect for their privacy. See the appendix entitled “[Recruiting Candidates](#)” for suggestions on how to navigate this process.

**Stage 5: Receiving résumés.** As a church receives résumés, they should go straight to the search team. The search team will then sort through the list, organizing candidate résumés in categories of A, B, and C.

A = Strong candidate to contact and explore.

B = Possible candidate to be revisited or considered later.

C = Unqualified or undesirable candidate to be notified immediately.

It is important that the team do this as a whole and have consensus on every name. This task should NOT be delegated to a smaller group. See the appendix labeled “[Categorizing and Evaluating Résumés](#)” for additional information and form letters.

**Stage 6: Ministry exposure and references / Lobby God—not one another.** In this stage, members of the committee review résumés and audio and video sermons or internet links as well as any other helpful information about “A-List Candidates.” Because the lead pastor is the primary communicator in the church, it is important that the board/search team be exposed to their preaching and teaching ministry. See the appendix labeled “[Exposure to Speaking Ministry](#)” for advice on what to look for.

As you listen to the messages, be sure to look for a leader who can preach. Churches can fall prey to a pastor who is an eloquent speaker, but who has poor leadership skills. Being a charismatic speaker does not guarantee growth. Good leadership skills, even with modest speaking abilities, are more of an asset to future church growth. Therefore, look for a leader who can preach.

Reference, reference, reference. In all cases, check references. All candidates should provide a list of references. Your line of questioning with references should be behavioral in nature. Question what the candidate has done, and not merely their ministry philosophy.

LOBBY GOD, NOT ONE ANOTHER. As search team members are gathering facts and listening to messages, it will be tempting to talk about your findings and to share your opinions with other team members. All discussion about candidates should happen during search team meetings. All communication regarding candidates should be contained to these settings. Outside of team meetings, talk to God about His will for your church instead of trying to persuade others to what you want.

See the appendix labeled “[Exposure to Speaking Ministry](#)” for advice on what to look for as well as the one labeled “[Checking References](#)” for additional information and form letters.

**Stage 7: Preliminary phone interviews.** In this phase, members of the committee or a sub-committee interview potential candidates on the phone to assess qualifications and competency. If they are still interested in the candidate after the first interview, a second phone interview is set up. See the two appendixes entitled “[Interview Questions for Candidates](#)” and “[Interview Questions for Boards/PST’s](#)” for suggested questions that candidates may ask boards and boards can ask candidates at this stage and others. Be sure to allow time for the candidate to ask questions. They are interviewing you just as you are interviewing them.

**Stage 8: Video interview with the entire committee.** In this stage, the entire search team (plus any board members not on the team) interviews potential candidates and their spouse using online meeting applications to gain additional personal, family, and ministry information. Gotomeeting.com ([www.gotomeeting.com](http://www.gotomeeting.com)), Apple Facetime (iPhone or iMac applications), Zoom ([www.zoom.com](http://www.zoom.com)), or Google Hangout (<https://hangouts.google.com>) all have free or affordable entry level options. See the two appendixes entitled “[Interview Questions for Candidates](#)” and “[Interview Questions for Boards](#)” for suggested questions that boards/PST’s can ask candidates and that candidates may ask boards/PST’s. Again, allow time for the candidate and spouse to ask you questions also. LOBBY GOD, NOT ONE ANOTHER.

**Stage 9: Contextual visit.** In this phase, a member or small team visits the church where the candidate ministers to personally see, hear, and feel the candidate in real-time ministry. No contact should be made with the candidate, nor should they receive prior notice. It will be necessary for the committee to call the church and find out if the candidate will be preaching that Sunday and is not out of town or out of the pulpit (do not disclose that you are a search team coming to hear the preacher, that is breaking confidentiality). When you arrive, the group should not cluster together or do anything to draw attention to themselves. Slip in right when service is starting and leave the service promptly. If asked where you are from, just say you are visiting with friends in town (with your friends being the other committee members joining you). The team will also want to drive by the facility after hours to see how well things are kept up and get a feel for the life of the church.

**Stage 10: Personal interviews.** The search team should narrow down their list of potential candidates to two (2) or preferably three (3) who will be invited to visit with their spouse (at the church’s expense) to interview in person (if the couple has an infant or small children that need to come with, the church should pay for their expenses also). This gives the board/search team and their spouses and the candidate and their spouse the opportunity to meet as a group and interact together. The couple should be given free time to enjoy margin while they are in the community to look around, pray together, and reflect upon the visit. They may even explore

housing options and try to experience the vibe of your community. There may be a temptation to minimize costs by using video conferencing instead of face-to-face interviews; however, experienced search firms have learned the hard way the price of cutting out face-to-face interviews. You cannot read body language, hesitation, or a person's spirit over a phone or video interview. It is also important that a candidate's spouse be part of this interview process. See the appendixes entitled "[The Last Face-to-Face Interview](#)" and "[Interview Questions for Candidates](#)" for more information on this step. Continue to LOBBY GOD, NOT ONE ANOTHER.

Somewhere in this step, the board will need to put together a written remuneration agreement that lays out the compensation and benefits of the position. It should be approved by the full board in the form of a motion and signed by its officers. You may want to present the agreement to your candidates before they come to the face-to-face interview which would allow you to work out and discrepancies in person. Or you may wait until your team decides on "the one" and then present it to them alone. After reviewing the agreement, your candidate(s) may want to discuss certain aspects of it. **The main thing is that before you bring in "the one" to candidate, that they agree to the terms you come to and sign the remuneration agreement before they come.** Imagine the disappointment, regret, and embarrassment, not to mention the time and resources of presenting your final candidate to the congregation, and they turn you down due to a disagreement about the financial arrangement. See appendix entitled, "[Presenting a Remuneration Agreement](#)." Moving expenses budget should also be discussed and included in this package.

**Stage 11: Official candidacy.** At this stage, the search team invites their best candidate, spouse, and family to return (at the church's expense) as the board's nominee to meet key leaders, interact with the people, and be voted upon. See the appendixes entitled "[Presenting a Remuneration Agreement](#)" and "[Hosting the Candidate](#)" for more information on logistical matters concerning this important step. Be sure to abide by your bylaws and keep your network leadership apprised.

Note: some churches include an additional return visit before inviting someone in to candidate. After they have narrowed their options down to one primary candidate, they invite that candidate and spouse to return with their family (at the church's expense) to meet the board and staff. During this time, they can ask any questions they would like as well as have free time to explore the city, tour ministry sites, spend time with staff, check out schools, and get a "boots-on-the-ground" feel for the ministry and community. This also gives you the opportunity to see how the family relates to each other. While this has some benefits, having a candidate visit three times is expensive, and it may be difficult for some to take that much time away from their church (and job if they are bi-vocational) without it raising questions from their current congregation.

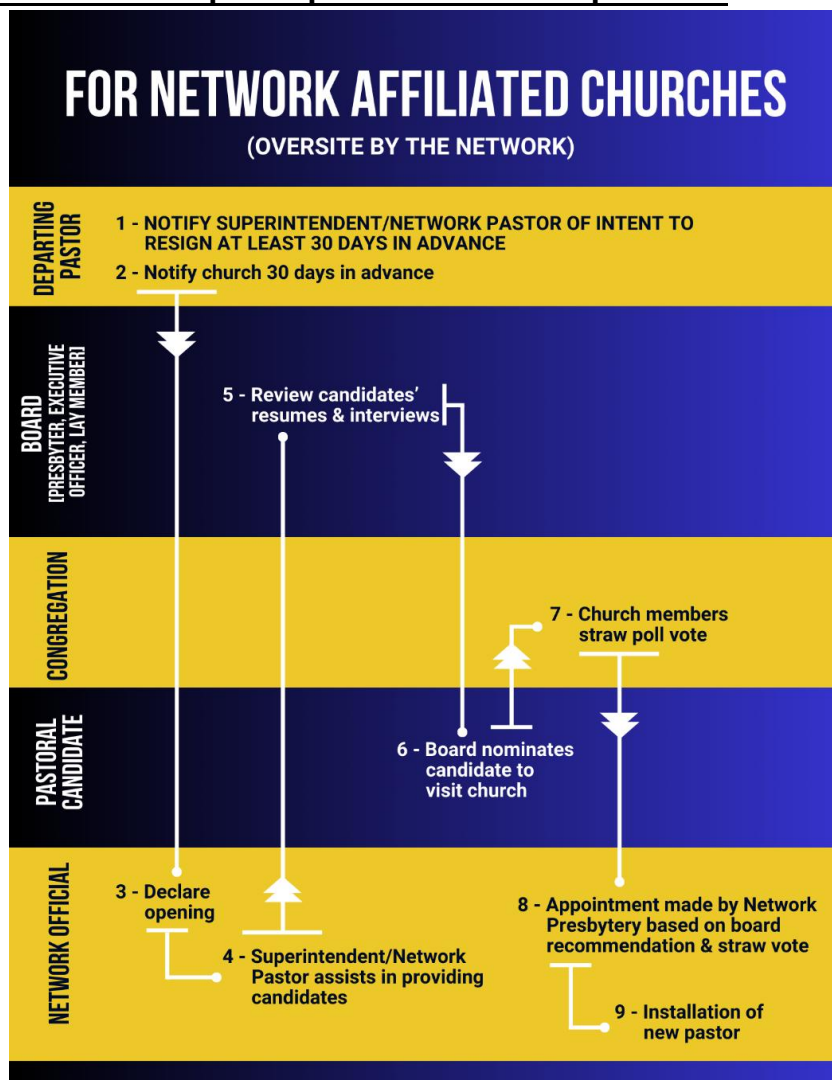
**Stage 12: Preparation.** In the last phase, the board prepares for the arrival of the newly elected pastor and helps provide a smooth transition by planning for logistics. The board should also be prepared to provide the newly elected pastor an official letter confirming their election and the remuneration package. This will assist their new first family with finding temporary housing/obtaining a mortgage. IRS language for housing allowance and ministry expense reimbursement need to be board minutes before the pastor starts. In addition, the board will also need to mobilize teams to help them move in, provide meals, prepare for a welcome day, and explain office logistics. It is critical that your new pastor not have to set up his office. All the office preparations including computers with all needed programs, applications, and access; cell phone; keys; alarm code, email; office orientation; and the unique needs for new pastor should already be in place. There is no better way to show your new pastor that you are committed to their success than to enable them to hit the ground running. See the appendix entitled “[Preparing for Pastor’s Arrival](#)” for ideas on this step.

### **Network Affiliated Churches and the required pastoral selection process.**

Following is a list of stages and steps for Network affiliated churches. Most of the resources and appendixes found in this resource can be applied to network affiliated churches as well.

**Stage 1: Notification of intent to resign.** The departing pastor notifies the network superintendent of their intent to resign at least 30 days in advance in written email form.

**Stage 2: Notify Church 30 days in advance of departure.** After notifying the network superintendent and getting their input, the departing pastor notifies the church’s local advisory committee and the church at least 30 days before their last Sunday.



**Stage 3: Opening declared.** The network superintendent will declare the church as officially “open” and advertise the opening through existing promotional methods.

**Stage 4: Coaching and resourcing.**

In consultation with the executive and regional presbyters, the network superintendent will assist the church by providing résumés for potential candidates.

**Stage 5: Review of candidates.**

The church board—the Regional Presbyter, a Network Executive Officer, and the local lay board member will review résumés and interview potential candidates. (Normally, the pastor is on the church board also, but since they are no longer at the church, they are not part of the process.)

**Stage 6: Candidate selection.** The church board will select a candidate and gain preliminary approval from the Network Presbytery. Then the candidate will be invited to visit the church and present their ministry.

**Stage 7: Church expression through a “straw poll” vote.** After the candidate has met the church and presented their ministry, the church will give their formal approval to the presbytery in the form of a “straw poll” vote. The “straw vote” is not an official election but a recommendation (along with the board) to the presbytery revealing the church’s opinion regarding the possibility of that candidate’s serving as their new pastor.

**Stage 8: Official appointment or denial.** After evaluating the local church’s “straw vote” and board’s recommendation, the network presbytery will either approve or deny the appointment of the candidate. If approved, the candidate is appointed as the new pastor. If denied, the process will start over.

**Stage 9: Installation of new pastor.** The new pastor, church board, and network superintendent will collaborate to select a day and time when a network official can officiate the installation ceremony of the new pastor.

***A visual illustration of each stage overlapping others and those responsible for initiation is above.***

## 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF CONGREGATIONS IN TRANSITION

[\(back to contents\)](#)

Here are some common characteristics and emotional reactions churches tend to have during pastoral transition. These are not all-inclusive and will vary from church to church, but it gives one an idea of what to look out for, good and bad. Some of them are opposites of each other.

### A. Organizational tendencies.

1. **Receptivity to change.** Congregations in transition may be more open to trying new things and accepting change than during other seasons of organizational life.
2. **Openness to outside assistance.** Congregations in transition are more open to outside help, assistance, and advice. They are more open to seek the assistance of denominational leaders, interim pastors, consultants, and helpful resources.
3. **Increased levels of commitment.** Congregations in transition may “circle the wagons” and experience increased levels of commitment, sacrifice, involvement, and volunteerism.
4. **Dealing with grief.** Congregations in transition experience some degree of grief over the loss of a pastor who has served more than ten years. The loss of a pastor who has become a friend, confidant, community leader, and participant in some of the happiest and saddest times of life can affect the morale of a church.
5. **Potential for conflict.** Congregations in transition have an increased potential for conflict. The leadership vacuum often results in minor interpersonal problems, angry factions, and the emergence of domineering personalities with competing interests.<sup>6</sup>
6. **Magnification of weaknesses.** Congregations in transition find their weaknesses become magnified. Weak or ineffective staff members, neglected policies, declining income, neglected facilities, and other mediocre traits become magnified. It is not that these things become worse as much as the attention given to them becomes less in the absence of a leader.
7. **Decrease in attendance, morale, and giving.** Churches in transition usually experience lower levels of morale, enthusiasm, and a 15-20 percent decrease in attendance and income. First-, second-, and third-time visitors tend to decline by at least 50 percent due to their reluctance to commit to a church without knowing who the next pastor will be. Others who came to the church because of the unique style, vision, and personality of the previous pastor may fade away. The lack of promising candidates, length of the search process, and decreased momentum can also become discouraging.
8. **Staff turnover.** Pastoral staff members need a connection with their lead pastor to facilitate long-term commitment. Without a leader or knowing what direction the church

may be headed, many staff members will put their feelers out, update their résumés, and explore options. It is not uncommon for a church to continue experiencing staff turnover a year after the transition is completed. People who were attached to those staff members may depart also.

- 9. Loss of momentum or vision.** In nearly every unplanned transition, church vision and momentum come to a screeching halt. Without a lead pastor at the helm, there is a very high likelihood that the overall voice of vision will be absent during the transition period. Pastorless churches will begin to see a loss of momentum in the church body and paid staff. As the interim period lengthens, many of the church's ministries can experience decline due to a lack of clear vision and energetic leadership from the top.
- 10. Change brings growth.** Scripture teaches us that God uses change to bring new life: *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?* (Isaiah 43:19 NIV). When change is embraced with faith, trust, and optimism, God begins to write new chapters in the life cycle of the church.

## **B. Individual tendencies.**

- 1. Grief.** When a departing pastor has been there several years, they will have touched many lives and ministered to people in the best and worst of situations (weddings, dedications, funerals, etc.). Grief is a natural and normal process for both the people and the pastor. It may be even more difficult for the minister's spouse and children.
- 2. Anxiety, fear, and/or panic.** These come from the thought that the church will face a difficult time without an experienced pastor giving direction.
- 3. Guilt and self-doubt.** Some may feel guilty for criticizing the pastor, causing conflict, or failing to help create a more fulfilling work environment for the pastor.
- 4. Anger.** This may occur especially if the pastor leaves under negative circumstances. Anger often is directed toward persons who are perceived as "the ones who made the pastor leave" and, therefore, can create deep scars and group departures. Also, people may be angry at the pastor, feeling he/she betrayed them.
- 5. Understanding and self-confidence.** Others, though sorry to lose a minister, may see it as the pastor's "graduation" to a new and perhaps greater opportunity.
- 6. Feelings of relief.** If a pastoral resignation is due to illness, overdue retirement, or prolonged ineffectiveness no strong reaction at all will seem quite natural.

<sup>6</sup>Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015, p.4.



## 5. ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF SEARCH TEAM MEMBERS

[\(back to contents\)](#)

Potential members of the Pastoral Search Team (PST) must possess these qualities to contribute to a positive transition process:

- A. Humility.** If you are reading this, you have been selected because of your proven service as a volunteer. However, be careful not to let your occupational or spiritual history deceive you. Chances are you have never been in the ministry, served as, or hired a lead pastor before. A church board/search team can be compared to first class passengers on an airplane. The frequency of their travel and proximity to the cockpit make them familiar with planes, airports, and even flight crews. They may even have a general knowledge of standard flight procedures, equipment, and terminology; however, that does not mean they know how to fly the plane, hire a pilot, or run an airline. Your familiarity with church life cannot be mistaken for expertise in pastoral ministry or even the search process. Author Chris Brauns warns search committees about a lack of teachability and humility: “If a person does not think he or she needs to learn—and to learn a great deal—about calling a pastor, then he or she will be much more of a hindrance to the pastoral search than a help.”<sup>7</sup> Stay humble and allow God, Network leaders, and others on the committee to help you learn and discover God’s will.
- B. Spirit-Driven.** Stay prayed up, in your Bible, and open to the Holy Spirit’s leading. There will be times you will feel unqualified or unprepared for this assignment. There may be times the Holy Spirit closes doors you want open and opens doors you would prefer to be closed. However, it is important to remember that God’s Spirit can compensate for any limitations you or the search team may have. Follow the Spirit’s lead and keep in step with His pace.
- C. Sacrifice.** Although this season is temporary, it will require your undivided attention and diligent commitment. You may even need to take a few things off your plate to create more margin in your life. Stay engaged in the process, keep up with your reading and research, and be flexible in accommodating the need for extra meetings and assignments. Remember, everything great thing in your life required sacrifice. The same is true about God’s church.
- D. Availability.** It is paramount that the entire board/search team participate with an “all-hands-on-deck” attitude. The process will require the commitment and availability of all members. The group’s efforts will become compromised by impatience, over-delegation, or the team’s leaning on a few of its members to do all the work. The best result will require everyone to be equally committed to the task and attend regularly scheduled meetings. Transition specialist Ryan Austie identified regularly scheduled meetings as one of the seven best practices of search committees and the lack of them as one of the primary reasons for failure. Schedule meetings well in advance and prioritize their attendance. Austie said, “Countless search teams leave scheduling until the last minute, which invariably leads to a significant lag

in progress. It is near impossible for a team to be effective in searching for the next pastor if the best they can do is occasionally attend sparse meetings.”<sup>8</sup>

- E. Thoroughness.** Authors Jim Ozier and Jim Griffith compare the importance of this process to the “changeover zone” in a relay race. The changeover zone is the place where the baton is passed from one runner to the next. Ozier and Griffith stress the importance of the entire team’s working hard to master passing skills.<sup>9</sup> We wish we could tell you that this process is easy and has shortcuts, but it does not. Take the time to study, confirm facts, ask questions, and do things right. Many people will claim to know what you need and whom you should select. Remember the advice of Solomon: *The first to speak in court always sounds right—until the cross-examination begins* (Proverbs 18:17 NLT).
- F. Integrity.** This process will challenge the depth of your integrity. From curious friends who want the “inside scoop” to minister acquaintances asking you to put in a “good word” for them, your commitment to confidentiality and collaboration will be tested and revealed. Some candidates may ask very penetrating questions that will tempt you to answer in vague, exaggerated, or even less than honest ways. Always be honest. God cannot and will not bless dishonesty, exaggeration, or intentional deception. Remember, you were selected because people trust you. You will have no greater opportunity than now to show them that you are worthy of their confidence.
- G. Patience.** According to succession expert William Vanderbloemen, most pastoral searches take 12-24 months from start to finish.<sup>10</sup> Although this resource will place you months ahead of schedule, do not be in a rush. It never pays off. In his book, *A Change of Pastors*, Loren Mead warns boards not to allow strong and impatient personalities to rush the process. “Those people are not necessarily your friends. The pressure for quick action needs to be heard but not heeded. ‘Marry in haste; repent at leisure’,” says Mead.<sup>11</sup> Don’t let the timetables of others dictate your agenda. Patience is faith in its working gloves.
- H. Confidentiality.** Warren D. Bullock in his book, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God’s Person for Your Church*, says nothing can destroy a pastoral search process more than a person with “loose lips.” A breach of confidentiality will jeopardize a candidate’s present ministry, spread distrust, politicize the process, and unleash “confusion, animosity, and contention.”<sup>12</sup> If you or your board/pastoral search team lacks confidence in one of its members in this area, it would be wise to address it now for the sake of the church, the candidates, and the kingdom. That is why it is important for each member to sign a confidentiality agreement and for those agreements then to be scanned, provided to the entire board, and a sample made available to the church and its members. This helps to prevent church people from asking inappropriate questions and keeps the board accountable to standards that have been made public.

It may also help to prepare yourself for this challenge by understanding how the enemy will present opportunities for you to compromise confidentiality. Most breaches of confidentiality are the result of one or more of the following tactics of the enemy:

- **Social engineering.** This breach of confidentiality is the result of busybodies shopping for information like honeybees pollinating flowers. They may pretend to know a smaller piece of information and reveal it hoping to bait you into going deeper, or they may try to get twenty pieces of information from twenty different people in hopes of having enough to assemble the entire puzzle.
- **Relational leveraging.** This breach comes from people you love, trust, or admire. They may try to leverage your relationship to learn more than they should know.
- **Prying eyes.** This violation of confidence occurs when people who have access to your office, computer, email, or home cross the line by helping themselves to your pastoral search notebook, mail, or copies of your board minutes.
- **Hacking.** This breach of privacy is the result of someone's hacking into your computer, smart phone, text messages, or email because they illegally or dishonestly gained access.
- **User error.** This most common breach in confidentiality occurs for no other reason than a person has loose lips and lacks self-control. Personal insecurities, fear of rejection, the need for recognition, or the inability to deny inquisitive friends can cause you to cross the line and compromise the entire process.

Jesus warned His disciples to be preemptive and prepared: *Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves* (Matthew 10:16 NIV). This warning is good advice regarding this issue as well.

- I. **Self-control.** Word will travel fast, and the PST will be tempted many times to act before they are ready, prepared, or have had time to pray and deliberate. Desperation is your enemy. You must resist the impulse to act before you have compiled a church profile, done your research, established group chemistry, and agreed on a plan.
- J. **Faith.** This process is impossible without faith. People will make mistakes, and nothing is certain. Your best talents, skills, and screening processes are fallible. There are future challenges you cannot see or understand, but God knows whom you need and why you need each other. You simply must be convinced that God is in this and trust Him to guide the process. He can compensate for any weaknesses, mistakes, and obstacles. It was Paul who confidently said, *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness"* (Romans 8:26 NIV).

It is imperative that the board/search team understands this to be a spiritual process by which God uses imperfect instruments to achieve His perfect will. You can set up the best screening

systems, check references, listen to sermons, and ask perfectly phrased questions; but at the end of the day, the board/search committee must make a call. Nowhere do we see the partnership of the human and divine played out more in the decision-making process than in Acts 15. The leaders of the early church assembled to address a challenge, review facts, and pray for God's will. In the end, they issued a statement which said, *It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us* (Acts 15:28 NIV). As they waited on God, He guided them to the appropriate consensus. This is the same type of process in which you find yourselves. As you present yourselves to God, submit to Him, and seek the direction of the Holy Spirit, He will bring His will to culmination in your hearts.

---

<sup>7</sup>Chris Brauns, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search, Practical Principles & Practices to Guide Your Search*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, Illinois, 2011. p. 60.

<sup>8</sup>Ryan Austie, *Search Team Best Practices, & Things Pastoral Search Teams Can Start Doing Today*, M3M Matched by Mission Publication, Kindle Edition, 2019, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup>Jim Ozier and Jim Griffith, *The Changeover Zone: Successful Pastoral Transitions*, Abington Press, Nashville, TN, 2016, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup>Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastors*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD, 2012, p. 21.

<sup>12</sup>Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 40..

## 6. THE PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM ([back to contents](#))

### Purpose of the Board During Transition

Some churches/boards make the mistake of using pastoral transitions as an opportunity to set new vision, determine long-term goals, and make significant financial decisions (building expansion, staff enlargement, salary adjustments, and the increase of debt and financial commitments). These decisions will only prolong the process, distract the church, and cripple the new pastor. Instead of helping, they only make another pastoral transition more likely. Since most churches and even their bylaws hold the lead pastor responsible for setting vision, the board's primary role during this transition is to identify a qualified pastoral candidate (through the assistance of the pastoral search team if one is created) and manage the church in the interim. Setting vision and then trying to find a pastor who will buy into and execute that vision is not only unbiblical but also unwise and unlikely. It is important that the board knows their purpose for existence:

***The purpose of the board during this pastoral transition is to identify the best candidate, manage existing ministries, remove obstacles, and postpone expansion in a way that creates margin, options, and opportunity for our future leader.***

There are four priorities listed in the above purpose statement:

- A. Identifying a candidate.** The first priority should be to fulfill their duty to the people, Scripture, and the bylaws by identifying the most capable candidate.
- B. Managing ministries.** The second priority is to empower the staff and existing ministries to keep systems running, momentum moving, and morale high.
- C. Removing obstacles.** The third priority should be to resolve all conflicts that may threaten the health of the church, the selection process, or the smooth acclimation of the new pastor.

Do not start interviewing candidates until ALL significant decisions regarding salary ranges, roles, and privileges are agreed upon in writing by all parties, signed, and documented by official board minutes with approval by the full board (not small committees or representatives) in a regular meeting. You need clarity as you talk to candidates.

Instead of allowing problems to grow or accumulate during the interim period, deal with them now. It is better to step on crocodiles when they are small rather than to expect the new pastor to jump into the swamp and wrestle a twenty-foot man-eater! Dealing with debilitating or divisive conflict before the arrival of the new pastor gives a honeymoon period for the new pastor to build credibility and learn the church, its people, and the community. "No one wants to inherit a mess! Do whatever is in your power to position them (the new pastor) to walk on the smoothest possible path."<sup>13</sup>

**D. Postponing expansion.** The fourth responsibility is to postpone expansion. Pastoral transitions are vulnerable times for a church. Activists and strong personalities can see this as an opportunity to advance their own agendas, ministries, or passions. There will be a temptation for everyone to add their own “wish list” to the board agenda. However, this is not the time for the board to start new ministries, introduce personal preferences, or initiate sweeping change. Instead, they should ensure that the day-to-day operations and management of the church is done in a way that sustains momentum and creates opportunity, not obligations, for the new pastor.

### **Selection of the Pastoral Search Team (PST)**

Each church is different, and their bylaws usually prescribe the details concerning the composition and duties of the pastoral search team (may be called pastoral search committee, pastoral selection committee, pulpit committee, etc.). Basically, there are two primary options for establishing a PST:

- **Option #1: Existing board as search committee**
- **Option #2: Mixed search committee (board and non-board involvement)**

As a general rule, the PST should have no less than five people but no more than ten. Attention should be given to the inclusion of women, diverse age groups, and members of both short and long tenures in the church.<sup>14</sup> Generally speaking, avoid conflicts of interest in the PST. Credentialed ministers may advise, but usually should not be committee members. The same is true for family members related to each other on the PST, or persons related to other pastoral staff members at the church, or anyone who would have a difficult time in being objective or conflicted in their loyalties. Here are some tips on selecting PST participants:

**1. Appoint people who meet the specific qualifications prescribed in your church’s bylaws.**

The constitution and bylaws of the church usually give direction as to who will serve on the PST. Transitions can be a time when churches are tempted to ignore their bylaws in the name of progress. Some mistakenly think they can even override their bylaws with a vote of the membership in a business meeting; however, *Roberts Rules of Order* clearly states that the bylaws cannot be suspended without the instance being prescribed in the bylaws.

*The Bylaws “cannot be suspended (with the exception of clauses that provide for their own suspension under specified conditions)”.*<sup>15</sup>

*Rules contained in the bylaws (or constitution) cannot be suspended—no matter how large the vote in favor of doing so or how inconvenient the rule in question may be—unless the particular rule specifically provides for its own suspension.*<sup>16</sup>

That is why it is imperative to start the process right and meet all requirements your church bylaws may prescribe concerning the selection and size of your search team as

well as how it selects a chair. Where the bylaws may be silent or may not be prescriptive, the official board or church members then can determine the makeup of the search team. All members of the PST should be respected, mature, and spiritually discerning.

- 2. Appoint people who do not have a propensity for conflict.** One of the most common mistakes made during a pastoral transition is to invite discontented, critical, fringe, and unsupportive people to be part of the pastoral search committee. This is often done in hopes that these individuals will be more likely to accept the result if they have a voice in the decision. While this appears reasonable at first, research provides repeated warnings regarding this mistake.<sup>17</sup> The Apostle Paul would seem to agree as he told the Corinthians that one of the reasons God allows conflict is to reveal who is mature and qualified for increased responsibility in the community of faith: *There must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized* (1 Corinthians 11:19 ESV). Paul is teaching us that God has permitted conflict so we may identify who is qualified to serve during critical times. The Apostle Paul and the experts in pastoral transition are saying that a person's propensity towards conflict and criticism has already revealed what can be expected of them in the future. There will come a time for them to earn the trust of the new pastor; but for now, the search team should be confined to those without a prior history of conflict. The following questions may help you gain clarity regarding such individuals:

- Do they talk more than they listen?
- Do they oppose more than they support?
- Do they seem to be more articulate about what they are against than what they are for?
- Do they divide more than they unify?
- Do their expectations seem higher than their commitment level?
- Do they criticize more than they encourage?
- Do they tend to find problems instead of solutions?
- Is their history more associated with organizational wins or conflict?
- Have they had conflict with more than one pastor?
- Are they quick to take offense or get their feelings easily hurt?

In addition to the PST—prayer coordinators, Q&A moderators, hosts for home meetings, and those involved in other important roles should be reserved for individuals without a prior history of conflict.

- 3. Appoint people who have proven themselves to be spiritually mature.** Many churches make the mistake of assembling a PST that is full of successful, strong-willed personalities. However, pastoral search expert William Vanderbloemen suggests we remember a different set of spiritual criteria: "Who will serve on your committee is quite possibly the most important aspect of forming a pastoral search committee as whomever you put on the



committee will shape the direction of the church.”<sup>18</sup> That is why it is important to select people who are mature in their Christian walk. Having a successful career is not a good enough qualification. They should have undeniable evidence of spiritual disciplines in their lives like faithful church attendance and giving, prayer, Bible reading, and outreach—along with wisdom and the fruit of the Spirit. Spiritually mature people create spiritually mature results. Mature believers will embody the characteristics shared in the section, “[Essential Qualities of Search Team Members](#).”

**4. Appoint people who have skills that are strategically aligned with the task.** William Vanderbloemen’s book recommends you appoint people who have the following qualities:<sup>19</sup>

- They have no personal or hidden agenda.
- They have spiritual depth.
- They have the best interests of the church at heart and a broad view of its mission.
- They are available for meetings and committed to the process.
- They live out the church’s mission and vision.
- They reflect the culture of the church and staff.
- They are aware of the unique needs of the church.
- They exude calm, peacefulness, and patience.
- They are supportive but can think independently.
- They show no propensity to micromanage the church.
- They have leadership experience.
- They get along with others and can collaborate as a team.

**5. Appoint a person to lead the pastoral search committee who also serves on the board.**

Unless directed otherwise by your bylaws, the church board will be wise to select a person to lead the PST who is also a board member.<sup>20</sup> This will ensure the committee has access to information, budgets, and decisions of the board that may affect their deliberations. The church should also provide the office of the network superintendent with the name, address, and phone number of the chair of the PST so proper communication may be maintained.

Once the pastoral search committee is appointed, the congregation should be informed of who they are and how they can be contacted. Each member of the search committee should be given a copy of this resource to help them be successful in fulfilling their role.

### **Responsibilities of the Search Team**

The duties of the PST may be outlined in your bylaws. In most cases, they will include:

- 1. Seek the advice of the network superintendent.** After a vacancy has occurred in the office of the pastor, the board and pastoral search committee should seek the advice of the network superintendent. There are several reasons why this is beneficial:

- a. **Experience.** Network superintendents are much more experienced in the process of finding a pastor. Most churches assemble a pastoral search committee once every 5-7 years. However, your network superintendent may see this occur multiple times in any given year. It is not uncommon for a network to see 27 percent of its churches experience a pastoral transition in a three-year period.<sup>21</sup> Repeated exposure has given them a unique perspective on everything from the most regrettable mistakes to the most effective practices.
- b. **Resources.** Network superintendents have access to resources, networks, and inside knowledge. Books, manuals, succession models, and relationships with other network superintendents are just a few of the things a network superintendent can bring to the table.
- c. **Information.** Network superintendents often know ministers who feel released from their current ministry but are still waiting for God's direction. In some cases, they may already have résumés in their files. They also know who has a track record of success and who does not.
- d. **Recommendations.** Network superintendents can provide a list of ministers who may be available to serve as an interim pastor or provide insight into the kind of person your church's situation may require.

Some boards may fear a superintendent's lack of recent pastoral experience or service in a large church setting, inability to sustain confidentiality, or potential bias might disqualify them from being a valuable resource. However, the only way to test those fears is to request a preliminary meeting. The results of that meeting can then help set expectations for future involvement.

2. **Consider securing the services of an interim pastor for the duration of the search.** While most churches can experience several pastoral turnovers in a decade, some churches enjoy a string of long pastorates.<sup>22</sup> If your church has enjoyed a long pastorate, it also means you have lacked the opportunity to develop transitional skills. An interim pastor could play to your strengths and give the board time to focus on the process and create space for reflection. In most cases, the interim pastor's unbiased service will require them to remove themselves from consideration as a pastoral candidate. The reasons, responsibilities, and benefits of an interim pastor are covered in a separate chapter entitled "[Do We Need an Interim Pastor?](#)"
3. **Call the church to pray for a pastor.** See the appendix chapter entitled "[Mobilizing Prayer](#)" for examples of effective ways this can be accomplished.
4. **Make a prayerful determination of the goals and needs of the church.** There are several chapters in the appendix with resources and helpful ways to accomplish this.

5. **Seek out, screen, interview, and evaluate potential candidates.** The board or PST is to screen pastoral candidates as to their compatibility with the unique culture, goals, and needs of the church in mind. Again, the appendix offers many helpful resources.
6. **Recommend one candidate to be voted on by the membership.** Candidates should only be presented one at a time and not in competition with each other with multiple names on the same ballot. The appendix entitled "[Electing a Pastor](#)" has many proven suggestions concerning this subject.

It is important for the committee to remember that they are not given the authority or expectation to select the next pastor. They are only charged with serving as a nominating/selection committee to present the most available and qualified candidate. In most cases, the church members are the only ones empowered to vote on, elect, and invite an individual to be the lead pastor.

### **Roles of the Search Team**

Delegating roles and tasks on the search committee is an opportunity for your PST members to share the burden and split the load. A few suggested roles are as follows:

1. **Team Lead (Chair).** This person must have the time, availability, and talent to lead. They should be respected among the board/search committee, have strong collaborative skills, and be a decisive leader. This person should also be somewhat comfortable with technology, saving and sending electronic documents, email attachments, shared files on the cloud (Dropbox, Google docs, or others), and video conference calls on the internet. Confidentiality will require them to communicate with others without needing an administrative assistant. They should be the only person interacting with applicants prior to selecting a candidate. The church should provide the office of the network superintendent with the name, address, and phone number of the chair of the pastoral search committee so proper communication may be maintained.
2. **Secretary/Communications.** This person must have strong organizational skills, be available, and feel comfortable with email and technology. They should coordinate meetings, email the chair's agendas, take minutes, organize candidate files, distribute all the notes following a meeting, coordinate with an approved person at the church office, and set up confidential folders the committee can access on Dropbox. This person should also be responsible to lead the board's/search team's communications efforts in keeping the congregation informed. They should make sure that all communication accurately reflects the decisions of the entire board/search committee and not their personal opinions, preferences, or private interpretation of the committee's decisions. They should work under the direction of the Team Lead and the liaison with the church office or whoever prints the weekly bulletin.

3. **Prayer Lead.** This person should lead the prayer efforts of the church and take responsibility for collaborating with the board, interim pastor, and staff to help the church remain focused on prayer.
4. **Networking Lead.** This person will carry out assignments given by the Team Lead. These may include posting job openings on the appropriate websites and seeking out recommendations from key pastors and ministry leaders. They should also do research over the internet to identify associations, involvements, articles, or books written by “A-list candidates” to share with other board members. They are also responsible for ensuring background checks have been conducted on candidates who are being seriously considered.
5. **Hospitality Lead.** Stories about pastoral transitions can be inspirational while others are disappointing. One ministry couple arrived in town to candidate, and—like Jesus—there was no room at the inn. The person making their travel plans booked the wrong dates for their arrival, and it just happened to be the same week that all the students from the local college arrived to start a new semester. Every hotel in town was booked. They had to split their time between staying with a family from the church and a hotel farther away that could accommodate part of their stay. The night before their candidacy, they had no other option but to stay with a family in the church which deprived them of the privacy they needed to process the weekend, pray, and discuss God’s will together.

That is why your team needs a detailed person to plan for and entertain candidates who come in for interviews. This includes everything from airline reservations, car rentals, hotel reservations, dinner plans, itineraries, and all the logistics of the visit. They should be the only liaison between the interviewee and the accounting department to get receipts for reimbursement. They should also guarantee that those who are being interviewed will have a reimbursement check for any approved expenses BEFORE they leave the interview. *(If reimbursements are slow or overlooked, a candidate who is still uncertain about God’s will may be scared off and the church will lose the opportunity of considering a good candidate.)* Although the hospitality lead may want to take them to meetings, a car should be rented for or loaned to the candidates. They will need to have the freedom to explore, check out housing, and get a feeling for the geography of the city.

## **Decision Making**

The PST will need to decide how they want to make decisions regarding the search process.

1. **Types of votes used to make decisions.**
  - A unanimous vote: Every member present votes the same way (yes or no).
  - A consensus vote: All members consent to the decision even if some may not prefer the decision.

- A majority or two-thirds vote: A number greater than half of those present with 51% is known as a simple majority while 66% is known as a two-thirds majority.

## 2. The minimum vote needed for various decisions (which type to use for each).

- What vote will be required for normal administrative decisions?
- What vote will be required to invite a candidate for a phone or live interview?
- What vote will be required to select a candidate to be voted upon by the membership for the office of lead pastor?
- Other \_\_\_\_\_.

---

<sup>13</sup>Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 2015, p. 137.

<sup>14</sup>Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 2:8, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup>*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 25:7, p. 248.

<sup>17</sup>The following authors (listed in alphabetical order) had consensus regarding the negative effect this has upon the search: Alaska Ministry Network, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Year, p. 5; British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 9; Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 24; Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 3; William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, pp. 39, 44.

<sup>18</sup>William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 37.

<sup>19</sup>William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, pp. 38-45.

<sup>20</sup>Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 26.

<sup>21</sup>David L. Bittinger, "A Model of Interim Pastoral Coaches for Ohio Assemblies of God Churches in Pastoral Transition," DMin dissertation, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri, 2007, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Thom S. Rainer, *Six Reasons Pastoral Tenure May Be Increasing*, March 15, 2017, <https://archive.thomrainer.com/2017/03/six-reasons-pastoral-tenure-may-be-increasing/>.

## 7. THE IMPORTANCE OF AG CREDENTIALS [\(back to contents\)](#)

Why is it important for a pastoral candidate to hold a General-Council-issued credential with the Assemblies of God? That is an honest question that deserves a thoughtful answer. The current leadership of the Assemblies of God in our network and on the national level values flexibility and freedom to lead the local church in the power of the Spirit. To accomplish this, we lean toward a pastor-led model while affirming the autonomy of the local church to select a credentialed leader and a system of governance that works best for them. Our Movement has chosen to embrace minimal requirements for a General Council affiliated church as it applies to their selection of a credentialed minister. One of those requirements is that General Council churches be pastored by ministers who hold an AG credential. ***One of the agreements that occurred when your church was granted the privilege of self-governance as a General Council church was the selection of a credentialed AG minister to serve as lead pastor.***

### **BENEFITS OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD**

Sometimes people wonder “What are the benefits of being a part of the Assemblies of God?” or “What does the Network do for us? How do they help us?” Here are a few of the many benefits derived from being affiliated with the Assemblies of God:

1. **Support & Guidance**—churches and pastors may find themselves facing difficult circumstances. Network leadership can provide wise counsel and emotional & prayer support to encourage and guide our pastors and churches.
2. **Training & Mentorship**—the Network provides various growth opportunities at Network Conference, Minister’s Retreat, and through special guests that are brought in.
3. **Assistance in handling inter-church issues and conflict**—sometimes churches experience inner conflict that escalates into unhealthy situations. The network can assist to help work things out. The pastor, a majority of the board, or a petition by 30% of the active membership can invite the Network to come and assist a church to help it resolve its issues (Network Bylaws, Article XII. Section 2.B.).
4. **Provide Trustworthy, Quality Missionary Endeavors that we can support** – we all want to fulfill the Great Commission, not just in our Jerusalem but around the world. There are many organizations and individuals who solicit for funds. How do you know who is reliable and good stewards of the money we send them? The Assemblies of God vets missionary candidates, trains and supports them, and provides accountability in finances.
5. **Provide catalytic events for our Men, Women, Youth, & Children that spiritually challenge and encourage them.** People go to special events with an anticipation of God doing

something. It is a concerted effort to get away from the normal routines and spend extended time with God in worship, the Word, and fellowship with other followers of Christ. In these atmospheres, people are highly receptive and open to God speaking into their lives. If a church does not promote Network events, the church is missing out on a great opportunity for spiritual renewal and refreshment and shorting its people from personal renewal and recalibrating.

6. **Provide vetted pastoral candidates** – when a church receives résumés of Assemblies of God ministers, they know that that when the individuals applied for each level of credential—those people have been screened, background checked, theological trained, and evaluated for doctrinal soundness and spiritual and emotional health. While no one is perfect and people do stray from initial convictions and commitments, if you are not part of a denomination, how do you find healthy, viable candidates?
7. **Accountability & Covering**—the network provides accountability and a covering for its pastors to help them maintain integrity spiritually, doctrinally, and ethically. This is a protection for the local church in case their leader gets off track.
8. **Relationships**—being part of a fellowship is an avenue for developing relationships with other pastors who have a common heart and purpose. Being in ministry consumes much of our time. If we are honest, one of the first things we let slip when we get busy is our relationships. Network events provide opportunity for connection and community that is so easily neglected in our lives but is so necessary for emotional and spiritual health. Those relationships with other Network ministers provide enrichment, encouragement, and support if we are willing to initiate and reciprocate relationship.
9. **Synergy** – we can do more together than we can alone. When we combine together to do conferences, camps, missions trips, Jump Start projects, etc.—we can accomplish so much more than the efforts of our sole, individual church. We get to be part of something bigger than ourselves!

## **POTENTIAL RISKS**

There are considerable risks a church exposes themselves to when electing a minister that does not have credentials with the Assemblies of God. Although unknown to most pulpit committees, Network officials have witnessed the realities of unpleasant consequences resulting from an Assemblies of God church electing a non-AG minister to serve as their lead pastor. Please understand that non-AG ministers are not bad, substandard, or even dangerous in and of themselves. However, in many cases, there are undeniable and unintentional consequences with electing a non-AG pastor to lead an AG church.



1. **Decreasing exposure.** As the new pastor introduces the church to their own preferred associations and culture, the church will gradually experience less and less AG associations through theology, governance, guest speakers, missionaries, ministry programs, regional events, and interchurch activities. The above-mentioned benefits erode away.
2. **Organizational drift.** When it comes to pastoral transitions, churches are a lot like wood chips in a river. They tend to go with the flow, force, and direction of the current. In the same way, churches led by non-AG pastors will slowly start to be carried downstream by the new leader's past associations, preferences, governance, relational circles, and doctrine. As an extreme application of decreasing exposure mentioned above, the worst-case scenario of this consequence can result in disaffiliation. Investing time and prayer is important for the church to make sure they want and need to go where the current will carry them.
3. **Inadequate accountability.** Accountability is greater and most effective on all fronts when a church and its lead pastor share the same credentialing authority, ecclesiastical governance, and doctrinal statements. When the lead pastor is not under the same ecclesiastical authority as the church they pastor, there is a greater propensity for a lack of accountability, doctrinal deviation, abuses in authority, and financial indiscretion. In addition, should there be any impropriety on the part of the church's future leadership, the Network or General Council will have no way of addressing the church's concerns, disciplining, or restoring the pastor to ministry.
4. **Irreconcilable incompatibility.** Every church culture involves a triad of doctrine, governance, and vision. Disparity in any of these three components can create problems. The likelihood of incompatibility increases exponentially when interdenominational and independent crossbreeding occurs. For instance:
  - The Assemblies of God and Foursquare have nearly identical doctrinal statements but very different governance structures and convictions about the sovereignty of the local church.
  - The Seventh Day Adventist and the Assemblies of God share a common governance structure and respect for the sovereignty of the local church but have diametrically different doctrinal beliefs.
  - Spirit-filled ministers from independent/nondenominational churches may share similar Pentecostal doctrines but prefer systems offering less accountability when it comes to finance, membership, and decision-making.

When a candidate holds an Assemblies of God credential, the likelihood of doctrinal, structural, and cultural compatibility is greatest.

5. **Legal exposure.** If the church's Articles of Incorporation, constitution, or bylaws require that the lead pastor be credentialed with the AG, those in authority cannot ignore them without being complicit in an illegitimate election. No vote, no matter how large, can suspend, ignore, or conflict with the bylaws regarding the election of the lead pastor, chair of the board, or president of the corporation. Again, *Robert's Rules of Order* says:

*Rules contained in the bylaws (or constitution) cannot be suspended—no matter how large the vote in favor of doing so or how inconvenient the rule in question may be—unless the particular rule specifically provides for its own suspension.*<sup>23</sup>

Should any member of the church at any time feel disillusioned, misled, or concerned enough to challenge the validity of the election, the decision may cause a lack of trust in the leadership community, unnecessary conflict within the church, and potential litigation regarding the legitimacy of the election. Should the election be contested legally, the courts will most certainly examine compliance with the church's bylaws as well as the previous consent to be governed by the Assemblies of God's criteria for all General Council affiliated churches. Furthermore, if the church's insurance company's investigation reveals that the church ignored or violated their own bylaws or those outlining criteria for the church's affiliation (General Council bylaws), they will most likely decline to cover expenses related to the church's claim.

6. **Jeopardize General Council status.** The only body authorized to grant a church a Certificate of Affiliation with the Assemblies of God is The General Council of the Assemblies of God. The General Council has outlined a short list of minimal governance requirements for all churches affiliated with the Assemblies of God. This document has only seven minimal governance requirements of which the second reads:

*A General Council affiliated church must accept the Assemblies of God tenets of faith and be amenable to applicable General Council and district council constitutions and bylaws to include the provision for a lead pastor who is credentialed with the Assemblies of God.*<sup>24</sup>

In addition, the General Council constitution requires all affiliated churches to be led by senior pastors who are credentialed when it requires each church to:

*Make provision for a pastor who is a credentialed minister in good standing with the General Council and a district council.*<sup>25</sup>

In the event the "minimal requirements" have not been attained, the General Council Constitution requires the church to:

*Revert to district affiliated status until the minimal requirements for General Council affiliation have been attained, unless an exception has been granted by the district in accordance with the provisions of General Council Constitution.*<sup>26</sup>

In addition, should the pastor, a majority of the official board of the church, or a petition signed by 30 percent of the voting members challenge the validity of the election based upon the qualifications of the pastor, the district and/or General Council:

*May act to bring the church under district supervision and, when necessary, revert it from General Council status to district affiliated status until the governing entity considers the problem resolved.*<sup>27</sup>

## **TYPES OF AG CREDENTIALS**

Although your church may appreciate and want your new pastor to be theologically prepared, most search committees are unfamiliar with the different levels and requirements of an Assembly of God credential. Ministerial credentialing is the method by which an ecclesiastical authority acknowledges the divine call and qualifications of a person to serve in ministry. In most denominations, credentialing is only available to men or women who meet the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. These people fulfill one of the types of equipping ministries described in Ephesians 4:11. In the Assemblies of God, this endorsement is usually in the form of certification, licensing, or ordination.

If an applicant has graduated from an accredited Assemblies of God school with a degree in Bible, theology, ministerial studies, or other church-related major, they may have already satisfied some or all the educational requirements for credentialing. There are also some cases in which life experience or the transfer of a ministerial credential from another denomination may meet some or all the Assemblies of God requirements. In most cases, however, those achieving these levels will have fulfilled the following requirements:

**1. Certified.** The entry level credential in the Assemblies of God is called certified. Those who are granted certification have met the minimal educational requirements for that level, shown promise of usefulness for gospel work, exhibited evidence of a divine call, and been actively engaged in some aspect of ministry. Those who are certified have successfully completed the following classes:

- New Testament Survey
- Old Testament Survey
- Christ in the Synoptic Gospels
- Introduction to Hermeneutics
- Relationships and Ethics in Ministry
- Beginning Ministerial Internship

- Introduction to Pentecostal Doctrine
- Intro to Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective
- Assemblies of God History, Missions, and Governance
- A Spirit-Empowered Church

In addition, they have also passed the Bible Knowledge and Doctrine exams as well as credit and background checks and have been interviewed and recommended by the Network Presbytery, and approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. Certified ministers holding current ministerial credentials are eligible to vote in Wyoming Ministry Network business meetings, but cannot do so at General Council, nor can they serve as Network officers, General Council officers, executive directors, Executive Presbyters, and General Presbyters. However, they are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church.

In the Wyoming Ministry Network, certified ministers are eligible to participate in most of the normal resources, training, and seminars provided by the Network office and vote as stated above.

Someone who is not credentialed with the Assemblies of God can gain the education needed for this lowest level of credential in about three months through Berean School of the Bible's online correspondence if one assertively pursues it.<sup>28</sup>

2. **Licensed.** The intermediate level credential in the Assemblies of God is called licensed. Those who are granted this credential have met the minimal educational requirements; have shown clear evidence of a divine call, character, and preparation suitable for that calling; have practical ministry experience; and have shown an evident commitment to devote their life in service to the proclamation of the gospel. Those who are licensed have also successfully completed the classes for the certified level as well as the following classes:

- Acts
- Prison Epistles
- The Local Church in Evangelism
- Romans
- Introduction to Homiletics
- Effective Leadership
- Intro to AG Missions
- Conflict Management
- Intermediate Ministerial Internship
- Eschatology

In addition, they have also passed the Bible Knowledge, Doctrine, and AG Polity exams as well as credit and background checks and have been interviewed and recommended by the Network Presbytery, and approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. Licensed ministers holding current ministerial credentials are eligible to vote in the business meetings at Network and General Councils but ineligible to serve as Network officers, General Council officers, executive directors, Executive Presbyters, and General Presbyters. However, they are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church.

In the Wyoming Ministry Network, licensed ministers are eligible to participate in most of the normal resources, training, and seminars provided by the Network office.

- 3. Ordained.** Ordination is the highest and most significant level of credential. Those who are granted ordination have met the minimum educational requirements for that level, shown evidence of a divine call, possessed a ministerial license, been observed for a period of at least two years and found to have met the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Those who are ordained have successfully completed the classes for the certified and licensed levels as well as the following classes:

- Corinthian Correspondence
- Pentateuch
- Poetic Books
- Preaching in the Contemporary World
- Church Admin, Finance, and Law
- Pastoral Ministry
- Advance Ministerial Internship
- Prayer and Worship

In addition, they have also passed the Bible Knowledge, Doctrine, and AG polity exams as well as credit and background checks and have been certified and licensed, interviewed and recommended by the Network Presbytery, approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God, and recognized in a formal ordination service involving an ordination charge and the laying on of hands by the Network's Presbytery. Ordained ministers holding current ministerial credentials are eligible to vote in the business meetings at Network and General Councils and eligible to serve as Network officers, General Council officers, executive directors, Executive Presbyters, and General Presbyters. They are also authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church.

When selecting a candidate, your team will want to know what level of ministerial credential is needed to pastor your church, what level of credential your candidate has, and what plan

they may have to advance in ministerial training. You will also want to check your bylaws to see if they prescribe a specific level of credential your lead pastor will be required to have. For additional information concerning how to apply, advance, transfer, or renew a ministerial credential, contact the WMN office: 307-234-4102.

When you receive a candidate's résumé, always check with their Network/District office to verify their credential status. In the Wyoming Ministry Network, you can verify the AG credential status of any applicant by calling the number above.

---

<sup>23</sup>*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 25:7, p. 248.

<sup>24</sup>"General Council Affiliated Church Governance Minimums," 2019, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed December 19, 2019.

<sup>25</sup>"Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Constitution, Article XI, Section 1, subsection a (6), <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

<sup>26</sup>"Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Bylaws, Article VI, Section 5, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

<sup>27</sup>"Constitution & Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Constitution, Article VI, Section 4, subsection c, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

<sup>28</sup>Information regarding how to become a certified minister through Global University's Berean School of the Bible can be found at [https://www.globaluniversity.edu/berean\\_index.cfm](https://www.globaluniversity.edu/berean_index.cfm).

## 8. SEARCH TEAM MEETING SAMPLE AGENDA [\(back to contents\)](#)

To stay on top of pastoral search issues, the search team should be prepared to meet at least weekly for 1½-2 hours. Failure to set a regularly scheduled weekly meeting can drag out and stall a pastoral search process.<sup>29</sup> Churches can lose great candidates because the committee did not meet regularly enough to process résumés and communicate with applicants. The best strategy is to have a regularly scheduled meeting like every Monday at 7 p.m. This keeps things moving forward without having to constantly try and coordinate schedules. To ensure confidentiality, it may be preferable—when the church is populated with other functions—to meet outside the church in someone’s home or in a rented meeting room to interview candidates.

If your official board also serves as the pastoral search committee, it is wise separate the board’s two functions into separate meetings. Generally, regularly scheduled board meetings should focus on normal church management. Pastoral search team meetings should be separate and deal with matters relevant to the board’s responsibility to identify a candidate. Following is an example of a standard search committee meeting agenda that can be modified and used as a template. A customizable digital version is also available as a download at this link, [“Digital Resources”](#) on the WMN website.

**January 4, 2025**

### **Pastoral Search Committee Meeting**

#### **A. Prayer (5-10 minutes)**

#### **B. Meeting Objectives (5 minutes)**

- Specific tasks or objectives that must be accomplished in this meeting

#### **C. Process Update (5-10 minutes)**

- A big picture update on what has transpired since the committee’s last meeting
- Where the church is in the pastoral search process
- Any additional updates
- Report of past actions (previous motions) or assignments to different individuals

#### **D. Specific Updates (20-35 minutes)**

- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| • Prayer focus               | • Reference check updates                        |
| • Churchwide updates         | • Recruitment updates                            |
| • Candidate-specific updates | • Candidate assignments to categories A, B, or C |
| • Résumé updates             |  |

#### **E. Post-Meeting Objectives (10-15 minutes)**

- Tasks to be assigned
- Brainstorming

#### **F. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

---

<sup>29</sup>Ryan Austie, *Search Team Best Practices, & Things Pastoral Search Teams Can Start Doing Today*, M3M Matched by Mission Publication, Kindle Edition, 2019, p. 7.



## 9. DO WE NEED AN INTERIM PASTOR? ([back to contents](#))

Churches find themselves in a variety of situations during a pastoral transition. Often, the pastor has had long-term, successful ministry and the church is mourning the loss of a spiritual mentor and friend. At other times the pastor's departure has resulted from a problem in the church and the congregation and pastor are experiencing spiritual and emotional pain. In some of these situations, it is helpful for the church to have some time to process issues between pastoral leadership; while in others, it can be positive to have a shorter transition so as not to lose momentum. Whatever your particular situation, it is most important to trust God and His timing as He brings your new pastor to your church.

Often, a staff pastor's responsibilities expand during the transition. A pay increase is not recommended at this time. Instead WMN recommends consideration of a bonus for such a staff person upon the incoming pastor's election.

Some churches find that an interim pastor can be very helpful to fill the pulpit during the transition. A person serving as interim typically should not be considered as a pastoral candidate. One exception may be if the interim is going to move out of the community because they desire to be a lead pastor and will continue their search if your position does not materialize. Allowing an interim pastor to be a candidate can make things messy if they are not hired:

- They may undermine the ministry of the incoming pastor (consciously or unconsciously).
- It can cause comparison by the congregation between them and the new pastor, dividing the body's loyalties by remaining in the church.
- It may create trust issues with the new pastor—"Can I trust someone who wants my position?"

Some churches choose to simply fill the pulpit with special speakers throughout the transition. This is certainly an option, but often proves to require more time and effort as different speakers are contacted each week. The Network may be able to assist in locating potential interim pastors and special speakers.

### **Interim Pastors**

An interim pastor is someone who helps fill the leadership gap during a pastoral transition. They can be one of the most valuable resources but are often overlooked. The Presbyterian Church of America has conducted thorough research about transitional pastors. It gives the following five scenarios that justify considering an interim pastor:<sup>30</sup>

- When a pastor leaves due to duress, termination, or moral failure.
- When a congregation is experiencing significant conflict.

- When a pastor who served the church for many years retires.
- When a pastor dies unexpectedly or must resign unexpectedly due to medical issues.
- When a pastor who served the church for many years accepts another call.

Interim pastors allow the board to focus on identifying qualified candidates and the staff to continue focusing on their ministry portfolios. It is a temporary position that reports directly to the board in carrying out a written job description. For the first 4-8 weeks, scheduling local guest speakers who have a positive rapport with your church will give your team time and margin to consider and select an interim pastor. However, those speakers will need guidelines if they are to be productive. For an example of a confirmation letter with guidelines, see “[Letter to Guest Speakers](#)” in the appendix entitled Sample Letters is also available as a download at this link on the WMN website, “[Digital Resources](#).”

Following are some points and a draft job description to consider:

**A. Biblical precedent for an interim pastor.** Scripture gives us many examples of spiritual leaders God used to provide interim ministry during times of transition, crisis, or emergency.

#### In the Old Testament

- Moses served as an interim leader transitioning the people of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. He helped Israel transition from a nomadic people to a structured society.
- Jehoiada the priest hid Joash, the last remaining heir, when Athaliah tried to assassinate the entire royal family (2 Kings 11). God used Jehoiada during this temporary period to secretly mentor Joash in the things of God until he was old enough to become king.
- Nehemiah was called by God to bring focus, leadership, and scriptural teaching to the people returning from Babylon as they transitioned into their new lives in Jerusalem.

#### In the New Testament

- John the Baptist was called to “prepare the way” for the Messiah (Matthew 11:10).
- Titus was appointed by the Apostle Paul to serve in a temporary role at Crete to bring order to the church and raise up leaders (Titus 1:5).
- Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica for a temporary time to provide sound teaching and protect new converts from false doctrine (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

**B. Benefits of an interim pastor.**

- 1. Preaching consistency.** Gives consistency in the preaching and teaching ministry as well as the economy of resources in not having to search, secure, and host a different person each week.
- 2. Board focus.** Gives the board the freedom to focus on the pastoral search instead of providing for weekly ministry.

3. **Guest consistency.** Offers weekly consistency, leadership, and exposure to regular attendees and visitors.
  4. **Board monitoring.** Gives the board hands-on representation in the office and day-to-day operations of the church.
  5. **Minimizes loss.** Minimizes the loss of momentum, decrease in attendance, and the stagnation of giving commonly experienced in pastoral transitions.
  6. **Provides stability.** Gives the members a sense of confidence that wisdom and restraint will be applied to the managing of the church during the interim time because interim pastors are usually semi-retired ministers with a lot of lead pastoral experience.
  7. **Neutrality.** Gives an interim pastor the ability to interact with the outgoing pastor concerning needed information without seeming insensitive. Post-departure interactions regarding things like file locations, keys, historical documents, and other items can be overlooked by even the best planners.
  8. **Staff focus.** Allows the staff to focus on keeping existing ministries running and effective instead of being distracted by additional duties that were once carried out by the lead pastor.
  9. **Change preparation.** Gives the people, staff, and board a chance to increase their capacity for change. Instead of the church being pushed into the cold water of change all at once, it is exposed to new interim leadership that helps them wade into the pool slowly. Because interim pastors have minimal concern about being fired or voted on, they are in an ideal position to confront systemic problems or decline in the church.<sup>31</sup>
- C. **Determine the portfolio.** The role of an interim pastor is determined either by the bylaws, the board, or the unique needs and culture of the church. Following is a list of the most common models in ascending order of the time, skill, and involvement necessary:
1. **Preaching only.** The interim arrives each week and preaches according to the order of service. Others plan the service. His goal is to feed the sheep and build morale.
  2. **Pastoral care only.** The interim pastor's sole responsibility is to provide pastoral care in the form of hospital calls, counseling, weddings, baby dedications, funerals, and care for the elderly. Preaching and teaching is provided by others.
  3. **Preaching and pastoral care.** This role combines #'s 1 & 2 above.
  4. **Preaching, pastoring, and coaching.** This role adds being a resource to the board in their role as the search committee.

5. **Interim executive leadership.** The interim pastor serves as the “acting lead pastor”: maintains office hours, leads the paid staff, does most of the preaching (teamed with guests and staff), provides pastoral care, and serves as a staff liaison with the board. This ensures that the ministries of the church function but in a way that keeps the board informed and ensures the staff is not launching new ministries, changing direction, or neglecting normal functions. It also helps provide continuity with the search process.
  6. **Specialized interim ministry.** It should be mentioned that the situation in some churches may warrant a prolonged interim period to resolve systemic problems, organizational dysfunction, or debilitating obstacles before a new pastor can be secured. Examples of these kinds of obstacles may be deep-seated division, moral failure, unexpected death of the pastor, church split, unforeseen tragedy, or recurring turnover in short periods of time. Those experienced in interim pastoral ministry recommend postponing the pastoral search until these deep-seated dysfunctions and obstacles are successfully addressed and overcome.
- D. Qualifications of an interim pastor.** Wally Weber is a retired minister who has spent much of his retirement serving as an interim pastor. He has developed many helpful resources for churches and recommends the interim pastor have the following qualifications:<sup>32</sup>
1. **Recommended.** One who has served as a lead pastor (and preferably has training and experience in serving as an interim pastor) and is recommended by the network superintendent or other denominational leaders.
  2. **Unbiased.** One who can be unbiased in all matters pertaining to the selection of a lead pastor, the management of the church, or personal preferences. They should also be willing to voluntarily waive the right to submit a résumé or be considered as a candidate.<sup>33</sup> Because many interim pastors can be retired ministers who miss the opportunity to lead, they should be individuals who are secure in themselves at their stage of life. They should not view their role as an opportunity to introduce sweeping change, start ministries, implement new operational procedures, or seek the loyalties and affections of the congregants.
  3. **Communicator.** One who is a competent communicator and can preach/teach on a weekly basis if need be.
  4. **Management skills.** If the church is a larger congregation, one who has prior experience in overseeing and managing paid staff and volunteers.
  5. **Administrative ability.** One who can assist the church by setting up structures and policy when needed.

6. **Pastoral.** One who is spiritually gifted in practical pastoral ministry and exudes a pastoral heart. It is preferred that they have decades of pastoral experience in the local church—not as an associate, home or foreign missionary, or parachurch leader.
7. **Wise.** One who asks probing questions, listens well, is objective, understands issues, discerns the source of problems, and recommends solutions.
8. **Diplomatic.** One who can facilitate dialogue, resolve conflict, and address sensitive matters with grace, diplomacy, and clarity. Pastoral transitions can be inviting to strong personalities who seek to take advantage of the leadership vacuum. The most common instances are:
  - Church leaders and members who seek to advance their personal agenda or ministry preferences.
  - Ministers within the congregation who want to be considered for the position, influence the search committee, recommend friends, submit résumés, or fill the pulpit.
  - Individuals who privately lobby search committee members on behalf of ministry friends, relatives, or associates.
  - Missionaries, parachurch leaders, and business people who desire to raise funds during the interim.
9. **Humble Flexibility.** One who subordinates their own preferences and seeks to serve the interests of the church. One who is capable of being flexible and understands that each church has different needs and history. They must not lead from nostalgia and try to recreate structures used in past situations but should seek to understand the culture of the church and community.
10. **Cooperative.** One who recognizes the board's authority, can have a good working relationship with the board, and be willing to carry out their desires.
11. **Motivated.** One who has sufficient energy levels to cope with the mental, physical, and emotional stresses of interim ministry.
12. **Optimistic.** One who has a positive attitude and can create organizational trust and anticipation for the next pastor.

**E. Interview questions of an interim pastor.** A board should not assume an interim pastor has the unique qualities, temperament, and experience for their needs. They should interview potential candidates for this role. When interviewing potential interim pastors, it is important to listen with three ears: 1) to what candidates are saying, 2) for what candidates are not saying, and 3) for what candidates would like to say but cannot put into words. Following are a few suggested questions that can help determine situational fit:

1. Tell us about your conversion and call to ministry and give a summary of your ministry experience and the reason you enjoy interim ministry.
2. Briefly summarize all your past experiences as an interim pastor—what size churches they were and the result of the ministry there.
3. Explain the type of training have you have had for interim ministry (formal, experiential, reading).
4. Elaborate on your past involvement in any of the following capacities of interim ministry:
  - **Preaching only.** The interim pastor's sole responsibility is to give the church a consistent preaching ministry during the duration of the search.
  - **Pastoring only.** The interim pastor's sole responsibility is to provide pastoral care in the form of counseling, hospital calls, weddings, baby dedications, funerals, and care for the elderly.
  - **Preaching and pastoral care.** The interim pastor's role consists of preaching each week and giving attention to pastoral care (counseling, hospital calls, weddings, baby dedications, funerals, care for the elderly).
  - **Preaching, pastoral care, and coaching.** The interim pastor's role consists of giving the church a consistent preaching ministry, pastoral care (see above), and being a resource to the board in their role as the search committee.
  - **Interim executive leadership.** The interim pastor maintains office hours, leads the paid staff, does most of the preaching (teamed with guests and staff), provides pastoral care, and serves as a staff liaison with the board.
5. Are you more of an introvert or an extrovert?
6. What topics do you usually address from the pulpit (teaching and preaching) during a pastoral interim?
7. How do you handle situations when the board does not take your advice?
8. Are you willing to remove yourself from consideration as the lead pastor?
9. How do you manage people who try to insert their influence in the selection process, lobby for churchwide change, or actualize their personal preferences?
10. How do you respond when you become aware of divisive behavior among church members?
11. Have you ever left an interim assignment before the new pastor was elected or appointed? If so, what was the reason?

12. How long are you able to commit to being an interim pastor? / Are you able to make a commitment as an interim pastor for approximately \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the estimated range of transition, for example 6-12 months) months?
13. What kind of remuneration or unique accommodations would you require?
14. What are three of the most important principles you have learned concerning interim ministry?
15. Could you give us a list of references from churches where you have served as an interim pastor?
16. What questions do you have for us?

It would be reasonable for the board to request résumés, interviews, recommendations, and preaching tapes/links of those considered to serve as interim pastor.<sup>34</sup> The interim pastor should be given a short job description and offered a generous salary in proportion to their responsibilities. When a church is large enough to have a full-time pastor, then a reasonable “rule of thumb” is to pay a **full-time interim pastor** 75 percent of the permanent pastor’s full-time salary and use the remaining 25 percent to cover commuting and local housing expenses. When the church is smaller and normally led by a bi-vocational pastor, then an interim pastor can be paid according to the capability of the church and the agreed-upon role and responsibilities.

---

<sup>30</sup>“Interim/Transitional Ministry,” Presbyterian Church (USA), <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/ministers/interim-pastors>, accessed January 10, 2018.

<sup>31</sup>Michael Durall, *Don’t Wait until the Pastor Leaves: Planning for Ministerial Transitions Helps Ensure That One Successful Minister Follows Another*, Common Wealth, Golden, CO, 2015, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup>Three-hour interview Gene Roncone, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network Superintendent, had with Wally Weber, January 22, 2018.

<sup>33</sup>Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God’s Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, pp. 31-32.

<sup>34</sup>Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God’s Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 30.



## 10. COMMUNICATION PLANS [\(back to contents\)](#)

Two key groups to communicate well with throughout the transition process are:

- 1) Your congregation
- 2) Pastoral candidates who apply for your open pastoral position.

Having a predetermined communication strategy for keeping the congregation informed and connecting with prospective candidates is vital to the pastoral search process. Good communication produces security. Poor communication with candidates may cause them to disregard your church while those who attend the church will want to know what is happening and the progress that is being made in the selection process. Your plan should include the following information:

- Identify a primary spokesperson for the church/church board (this person gives updates to the church and may be the same person for the PST spokesperson).
- Identify a primary spokesperson for the pastoral selection team (this person, the chair of the PST, communicates with those applying for the position.) In his book, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Warren D. Bullock states that under no circumstances should anyone other than the chair contact those interested in the position. If a candidate bypasses the chair and attempts to communicate with a committee member, the church's office secretary, the candidate should be referred to the chair.<sup>35</sup> This ensures that all candidates are hearing the same thing and that candidates are not trying to unduly influence members of the PST.
- Determine the frequency of updates on the pastoral selection process.
- Choose the type(s) of communication (media) to be used: platform announcements, print, email, church website, Facebook, etc.
- Clarify where to direct questions or to express concerns.
- Decide when or if you will hold information meetings (for voting members).
- Decide what type of information will be released externally (outside the church) regarding the transition.
- All communication should be focused on being brief yet thorough.

**NOTE:** *Be careful to distinguish information that is internal (for the PST and/or board only) vs. external (shared with congregation and/or community) and how you share that information. Emails and social media posts forwarded inappropriately can be detrimental to the process. Do not record conversations using devices unless all parties are informed and agree. Motions and decisions should be recorded in PST minutes, **but not entire discussions**. By distinguishing what*

*should and should not be shared externally and recording the decisions but not the discussions, you may protect your church from gossip, slander, and potential misinformation.*

**A. Updating the Congregation.** How often will the board give a pastoral search update and on what regular day of the week? Will it be every third Sunday? Once a month? Every week? Among the nonconfidential things the board can report on include:

- 1. Committee composition.** The names and bios of those on the board or pastoral search committee.
- 2. Process updates.** A general summary of the 12 different stages of the process and then identifying in what stage they are currently engaged.
- 3. Progress updates.** A summary of developments over the past few weeks such as:
  - “We met with the superintendent of the Wyoming Ministry Network.”
  - “The PST has met four times this past month.”
  - “We have visited three different churches to listen to prospective candidates.”
  - “We have narrowed our list down to three persons.”
  - “We interviewed five candidates this month.”
- 4. Prayer updates.** Request prayer for the specific stage the committee is in or may be moving into over the next few weeks.

Current information updates keep anxiety at bay and breeds confidence, patience, and trust among the membership. It is recommended that the board release a weekly update on Tuesday mornings via a website or email and regularly in Sunday services.

**\*\*Note:** Never publicize the names of any candidates who have applied to protect their privacy. The only time you share a candidate’s information with the congregation is when they are coming to candidate for the position.

**B. Communication with Candidates.** How will potential candidates send résumés and correspondence to the search committee? Who will receive that communication and be responsible to respond? It is recommended that one email address be set up that is forwarded to each committee member with the understanding that only one person is authorized to respond. This will ensure accountability, clear communication, and that nothing falls between the cracks. The email should be placed on all updates and advertised as the preferred method of official communication.

**C. Candidate information page.** A web page, splash page, or google blog should be created for those interested in applying for the position. Posting all the church’s information that candidates would want to know in one place will save many hours of fielding phone calls,

texts, and emails from interested candidates. It also helps get the word out by only having to share one link. Many churches call this a “candidate’s page.” You can see an example of one at <http://www.agspe.org/rutour.mp4>.

Google Blogger might be a better place because it can offer a site independent of the church’s official website and allow the board to manage the content personally as it is rather simple to use. At any rate, the location should contain a link to each of the following:

1. A welcome from the pastoral search committee.
2. The pastoral search plan (a brief outline of the stages of the process). If you are using this research, then it would be the 12 stages mentioned earlier.
3. Commitments made to participants (confidentiality agreement by committee members, member commitment, and commitment of privacy to potential candidates).
4. A summary of your church, its previous pastors, governance, number of members, number of board members, the name of the board chair, and the name of the president of the nonprofit corporation. It should also give service times and statistical averages for total constituents and attendance as well as the annual income, missions giving, debt, and mortgage payment.
5. A neighborhood, community, and city profile. This kind of information can usually be found at the reference desk of your city hall or online presence and includes population, demographics, and things that make your city a unique place to live.
6. A brief history of your church.
7. A brief bio of your previous pastor so candidates may know what type of education, experiences, passions, and hobbies they had that would likely have influenced the church.
8. The church’s current mission or purpose statement.
9. A link to the church’s bylaws and other important policies.
10. A short bio on any staff members and the area of the church to which they give leadership.
11. A profile paragraph outlining the desired skills, qualifications, and experience the church desires potential candidates to have.
12. Photos and a floor plan of your facility.
13. An email address for applicants to send résumés to or for others to recommend or refer potential candidates to the committee.
14. A list of any awards or community commendations your church has received.
15. A place for status updates by the pastoral search committee.

You are basically using a blog format to create an online résumé for the church. At first it may seem like too much information; however, creating a separate online page with this information helps you in two important ways. It saves time in communicating with potential

candidates. Instead of sending each applicant individual email attachments, you can simply copy and paste the URL for the page. Also, all this information is bound to be requested by several candidates. Gathering it early and making it readily available allows you to focus on more important issues than customized information requests.

<sup>35</sup>Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 42.

# APPENDIX

## RESOURCES FOR PASTORAL TRANSITION

## A. PARTING WELL [\(back to contents\)](#)

This section gives greater detail about how to write the first letter to the congregation, conduct an exit interview, use an employee checkout form, access issues, and plan a blessing service.

- A. Lead Pastor's farewell letter to the church.** Immediately after the pastoral transition has been announced, the lead pastor should write a letter. Following is a sample of what your letter could look like:

Greetings ABC Church Family,

On Sunday, (month) (date), I announced in our worship service that I will be leaving ABC Church to take on a new assignment the Lord has called us to. (Briefly describe the new assignment.)

I write with a deep sense of sadness that our time together as a pastor and congregation is ending after (insert number) years. However, I know that the same God who is calling me forward has new and exciting plans for ABC Church. Scripture teaches us that God uses change to bring new life: *"See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?"* (Isaiah 43:19 NIV). When change is embraced with faith, trust, and optimism, God begins to write new chapters in our lives and church.

I want to assure you that ABC Church's Board of Deacons is fully capable and resourced to lead the church through this transition. They have already begun executing the directives outlined in our bylaws concerning pastoral transitions and have a plan to call the church to prayer, appoint an interim pastor, assess the unique needs of our church, and begin a national search to identify God's person to lead ABC Church into the future. The board will be using a Pastoral Transition Manual prepared by the Wyoming Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God. The manual contains twelve steps to help identify God's will for a new pastor. With your prayers and support, I am confident God will lead ABC Church in this new chapter.

During this time of transition, the board and I are calling our church to 40 days of prayer and fasting. Collectively, we will be using a prayer guide that focuses on a specific aspect of the search process over each of the next 40 days. Continue to rotate through the list until our new pastor is identified. The prayer guide is available (list how people can obtain a copy – church website, hardcopy at the information center, etc.)

My last Sunday will be (month and day). Until that time, (spouse's name if applicable) and I pledge our deepest commitment to prepare the church for your new pastor. Serving the people of ABC Church for the past (insert # of) years and loving this great city of (city's name) has been a privilege (spouse's name) and I will cherish throughout eternity. You have allowed us to share in your lives, feed your souls, dedicate your children, marry your

young, and grieve together when losing loved ones. We have reached out to our community and city with the love of God and accomplished so much together. It has been a joy. However, now it is time to embrace the commitment needed to ensure a successful transition of leadership. Like always, ABC Church will rise to the occasion and be amazed by what God does!

May the Grace and Peace of Christ be with you,

Pastor (your name and spouse's name)

**B. Board's letter of affirmation and encouragement to the congregation / Transition Questions and Answers Sheet.** Within a week of the pastor's resignation, the board should send, post, or email a letter to the church. This letter should affirm the prior leadership (if possible) and outline the general steps the board will be taking for the search process. The Alaska Ministry Network provided a wonderful example of such a letter. Following is a customized version of that letter which you can amend as needed. An editable digital copy can be found on the WMN website, "[Digital Resources](#)."

Greetings,

As you know, Pastor (insert pastor's first name) resigned as lead pastor due to (insert specific scenario) effective (insert date). We appreciate Pastor (insert first name) and (insert spouse's first name) and their contribution to the church over the past (insert number) years, and we will be announcing ways we hope to express our appreciation to them before they depart.

In the meantime, we wanted to let you know of our immediate plans to secure a new lead pastor. To guide us in this process, we have chosen to use an excellent resource provided by the Wyoming Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God. The resource contains several time-tested steps to help identify God's will for a new pastor and identifies the best practices in pastoral transitions. Our bylaws also provide specific instructions concerning the process of selecting a new lead pastor. Article (insert reference) says:

*(insert text from bylaws prescribing the process your church has for a pastoral search and election).*

Although it is not possible to know exactly how long the process will take, the average pastoral search takes about 8-12 months. However, we believe our prior planning and preparation through the resource may enable us to identify a candidate in approximately (insert your projection) months. As a board, we will be:

1. Seeking the counsel of the Network Superintendent.



2. Appointing an interim pastor to allow us to put our full attention and focus on the pastoral search process and permit the staff to continue providing effective leadership to our ministries.
3. Calling the church to 40 days of prayer with a daily focus.
4. Making a prayerful determination of the goals and needs of the church.
5. Screening, interviewing, and vetting potential candidates concerning their compatibility to serve.
6. Selecting the best-qualified candidate to be presented to the membership for election.
7. Presenting the candidate to the congregation over a weekend which will include a social event on a Saturday, preaching on Sunday morning, and a business meeting in the evening.
8. Throughout the entire process, we will keep the church informed of our progress and prayer needs.

Please pray for the board and search team and allow this process to come to a satisfactory conclusion without lobbying or division (Ephesians 4:3-4). This process has proven to work effectively and is the normal method for Assemblies of God churches across the United States. We will be sure to keep you updated as to our progress.

Sincerely,

The Board of Deacons

(list each deacon's name)

## **Transition Q & A Sample Document**

Church leadership needs to remember that informed people are generally happy people. Information (as much as possible without violating confidentiality or ethical rules) is your friend and can help ease questions and fears from congregational members. For example, if a pastor's departure, resignation, or removal is sudden, this document can be distributed following the Sunday morning service (or services) in which the pastor's resignation is presented.

A well-prepared Q & A document can answer many of the common questions congregants will likely have following the pastor's resignation. They will want to know what the future will look like, especially over the next weeks and months. Remember, the pastor's resignation is a change. But transition is a process. So be prepared to help the congregation process both the change and transition by considering a Q & A document to be distributed. (Sample document is compliments of Don Detrick, Secretary Treasurer - Northwest Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God.) You can modify it to fit your situation. A digital copy is on the WMN website, "[Digital Resources](#)."

## Q & A Example ABC Church Pastoral Transition

***Q: Why didn't we receive notice of Pastor's resignation until today?***

A: (Give reasonable explanation without too many details concerning how resignation came about. Depending upon the circumstances, this question may not be necessary to include.)

***Q: When is Pastor's resignation effective?***

A: (Give effective date and any other pertinent details, including severance pay information—but without dollar details—if applicable.)

***Q: How will a new pastor for ABC Church be selected?***

A: We are governed by our church legal documents (Articles of Incorporation, Constitution and/or Bylaws), and they provide specific instructions for the process of selecting a new senior pastor. In short, here is the process:

- Here are our bylaw provisions for the pastoral search process, along with a list of our pastoral selection committee members. (Provide these details to your congregation.)
- These committee members will seek counsel from the Wyoming Ministry Network and others of their choosing. They will set criteria for candidates and follow best practices for a successful pastoral transition. (You may want to specify some of those: for example, candidate must be an ordained Assemblies of God credentialed minister.) The committee will keep in mind our past history, present circumstances, vision statement, purposes, core values, and ABC Church ministry model. As part of the process, they will review résumés, check references, and select candidates to interview.
- The committee will periodically announce its progress to the congregation but keep specific details in confidence until one candidate is agreed upon. From the interviews, the committee will ultimately select one candidate to be announced and presented to the congregation.
- Here is our specific pastoral presentation process. (For example: “The candidate will present his/her or her ministry to the congregation over a weekend, including a dessert social on Saturday afternoon and preaching on Sunday morning. Following the Sunday morning services, a business meeting will be held for the purpose of an election. The candidate must receive a two-thirds majority vote of the members present [or whatever your bylaws state].)”
- This process is proven to work effectively and is the normal method for Assemblies of God churches across the United States.

***Q: Who will be eligible to vote for the new senior pastor?***

A: Only official members of ABC Church in good standing (or your bylaw provision).

***Q: What if I want to become a member so I can vote?***

A: (State your policy. Normally, best practice is to receive no new members during a pastoral transition.)

***Q: What will happen with the rest of our staff?***

A: (Provide necessary details, if applicable.)

***Q: When will we have a new senior pastor?***

A: (Provide a projected date, if you wish.)

***Q: Will one of our present staff pastors become the new senior pastor?***

A: (Answer, if applicable.)

***Q: Who will lead the church in the meantime?***

A: (Provide details about day-to-day operations and Sunday pulpit supply—or information about an interim pastor if applicable.)

***Q: How can I help?***

A: Please pray for the pastoral selection team and allow this process to come to a satisfactory conclusion. Please be patient, because thoroughly vetting and interviewing candidates can be very time consuming, and members of the pastoral selection team also have families, day jobs, and other obligations to consider, so give them the gifts of encouragement and prayer. Also, continue to support the church through consistent attendance, ministry involvement, and financial giving. This puts us in a position of strength and sets us up for success in the future.

***Q: What if I have a friend or relative I would like to recommend as a candidate to be our new senior pastor?***

A: If he or she is a qualified, ordained Assemblies of God minister, you should encourage him or her to send a résumé, complete with photo, biography, references, and either an audio or video example of their preaching to:

**ABC Church**

**ATTN: THE PASTORAL SELECTION COMMITTEE**

**ADDRESS**

**CITY, STATE ZIP**

**Or give the email the Pastoral Search Team will use for communication**

**C. Exit interview.** An exit interview is an informal dialogue between the church board and the departing pastor. These interviews are generally conducted for the purpose of gathering vital information about the former leader's experience and to obtain honest feedback about the vision, mission, and current health of the church. Following are a few suggested ground rules to keep these meetings productive:

1. The meeting should be attended by the full board, not a subcommittee. This ensures everyone hears the same information firsthand without the need for summaries by others.
2. The discussion should be positive and productive. It should not be used as a platform to take parting shots or release frustration. The goal is to get information that will help the church transition well and avoid obstacles.

Most of the questions below are from two outstanding resources produced by the British Columbia and Yukon Districts of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and Robert Kaylor's book on pastoral transitions entitled *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*.<sup>36</sup> For the best results, they should be given out ahead of time and serve as an agenda for the face-to-face meeting. This will give the departing pastor time to properly process the questions and prepare a response. A digital copy is located on the WMN website, "[Digital Resources](#)."

#### **Lead Pastor Exit Interview**

Some of the questions in this survey will deal with the personal observations of your tenure in ministry with this congregation. Other questions will ask you to reflect on the character and culture of this congregation and its strengths and weaknesses to prepare their next pastor for future ministry and leadership.

1. What do you feel were the greatest accomplishments in your goals and objectives for this congregation during your tenure?
2. What will you miss about your ministry here? What will you not miss?
3. What was the best thing about serving here? What was the most difficult thing about serving here?
4. How effective has this congregation been with accomplishing their mission over the past two or three years?
5. What two or three congregational needs required a major portion of your time and energy during this tenure in ministry?
6. To what degree do you believe the leadership supported your passion for the vision, values, and mission of this church? Congregational support?
7. What important aspects of the work do you believe are "in progress" or unfinished and need continued guidance for long-range success?
8. What future challenges do you consider "must-win battles" for the church to be effective in the future?

9. Were there any critical issues that sidetracked your ministry or leadership?
10. How adequate was the salary and benefits of this pastoral appointment during your tenure?
11. What is our church's three greatest needs?
12. What are the three greatest dangers or threats our church is facing?
13. What are our church's greatest strengths?
14. What changes are taking place in our church that have the potential to impact our future needs?
15. From your perspective, how can our church better reach its immediate community?
16. What financial or organizational commitments (missionary pledges, love offerings, facility commitments, or staff and volunteer obligations) have you made as a leader that remain outstanding?
17. What missionaries, guest speakers, or guests have been scheduled that we need to know about?
18. What wounds have you received here that still require healing? How can we heal together?
19. How can we best support your successor?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell us in confidence about this congregation?

**D. Employee checklist.** This departure checklist can be amended to accommodate your needs. It should be given to the outgoing pastor well ahead of time so the following items can be attended to before the Day of Checkout. A digital copy is available on the WMN website, ["Digital Resources."](#)

### **Church Employee Departure Checkout**

- 1. Day of Checkout:** Employee checkout will be conducted on a day determined by the board. This will require you to come prepared to return all church property and equipment. All departing employees should have removed all personal belongings from their work space prior to their last day in the office.
- 2. Checkout Procedures:** Before a final paycheck can be authorized, the employee should come to the scheduled meeting prepared to return the following items and information:
  - ☐ **Ministry Expense Reimbursement Reports:** All Ministry Expense Reimbursement Reports need to be brought current and any unused allowance by the pastor needs to be returned to the church. Make sure both the pastor and a church official have signed the expense reimbursement reports for tax purposes and both the pastor and church keeps a copy.
  - ☐ **Keys and entry access codes:** All keys (including those you may have loaned or given to others) have been labeled and returned to the board. Do not give others (staff or volunteers) your keys. They will be reissued as needed and approved by the business office.

- ☐ **Cell phone(s):** If the employee (or employee's spouse) has been issued a company cell phone, the phone(s) will be returned as well as the code to change and access voicemail. Employees are not permitted to keep company phones or dedicated numbers unless authorized by the board.
- ☐ **Electronic logins:** All computer, electronic, and internet/App logins—including the vendor's names—will be turned over to the board.
- ☐ **Medical & dental:** Medical, dental, and COBRA responsibilities will be communicated.
- ☐ **Outstanding educational balances:** Check for any balances due for reimbursements or the purchase of prearranged and authorized educational equipment.
- ☐ **Outstanding postage and phone balances:** Check for any balances due for postage or long distance.
- ☐ **Electronic equipment returned:** All electronic equipment and church property will be returned to the board during this meeting unless other arrangements have been authorized by the board.
- ☐ **Remote access:** Remote access disconnected (if applicable).
- ☐ **Passwords and vender information:** List of current passwords for work-related /ministry websites and other vender related items.
- ☐ **Key ministry leaders:** List of names/contact info for key ministry/department leaders.
- ☐ **Change of signature cards:** the pastor's name is removed from all bank accounts (checking, savings, credit cards, investments at AGFS/CEP/HIS Fund/etc., legal documents, and others.
- ☐ **Forwarding address:** Forwarding address/information for mail and last check.
- ☐ **Paid time off status:** Review of used paid time off and vacation schedule. Upon termination, employees receive pay for earned unused vacation.
- ☐ **Last check:** Review arrangements for the date and location the last check(s) will be sent via mail.
- ☐ **Signature of recognition:** Sign document outlining things that were covered in the checkout meeting.

**3. Insurance Coverage at the End of Employment:** Regardless of the reason, when employment ends, church group health coverage terminates on the last day of the month in which your employment ceased. For example, if your last day of work will be June 13, your health coverage will terminate June 30. Dental insurance terminates on your last day of employment.

**4. Reference Requests:** The church does not furnish open letters of recommendation addressed "To Whom It May Concern." Only the lead pastor or chairman of the board (when without the lead pastor) has the authority to respond to such inquiries.

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary of the Deacon Board \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

- E. Outstanding access issues.** The board will want to ensure that the following access issues are addressed before the pastor's last day:
1. Final payment of salary, bonus, love offering, and/or unused vacation days.
  2. Termination of any existing benefits (health, dental, retirement, or transportation).
  3. Location of important records, legal documents, corporate seal, passwords, or files that were managed by the lead pastor. See the checkout form for more details.
  4. Change of signature cards on all bank accounts (checking, savings, credit cards, legal documents, and others).
- F. Blessing service/Commitment Sunday.** The need for a church to leave behind their bond to a former pastor and freely "cleave" to the new pastor is similar to the requirement for marriage given in Genesis 2:24. Transition specialist Joseph Umidi writes, "Saying farewell, accomplishing good closure, and praying for the blessing of a commission in a corporate prayer time are important to your church members and the departing leader. Well-managed closure prepares the congregation for beginning the new courtship process and helps them remain open to receiving and accepting the unique ministry of the new leader."<sup>37</sup> The following can be used as a guide for an informal blessing service. The service can take place informally in a room of the church or publicly as part of a church service, generally at the very end.

This final service is also a great time to encourage the church body to remain committed during the transition. Members can be asked to sign the [Church Member Commitment](#).

### Board and Pastor's Blessing Service

**READING BY BOARD MEMBER:** Scripture gives us several examples of believers blessing each other when the circumstances of life caused them to part ways.

- Before his death, the last thing **Moses** did was to pronounce a blessing on each of the tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 33:1-29).
- While concluding his farewell speech to the children of Israel, the prophet **Samuel** encouraged them in the Lord and said, *As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you* (1 Samuel 12:23 NIV).
- The Bible tells us that before ascending to heaven, **Jesus** blessed the disciples: *When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven* (Luke 24:50-51 NIV).
- After recognizing a new assignment for Barnabas and Paul, the **church at Antioch** laid hands on them and sent them off with prayer (Acts 13:1-3).
- While saying goodbye to the Ephesian elders, **Paul** spoke blessings upon them, and they knelt to pray and cry together (Acts 20:32-36).
- Many of Paul's epistles conclude with a prayer or blessing for the recipients.

**READING BY OUTGOING PASTOR:** A blessing is the act of declaring favor and goodness upon others. A blessing was one way of asking for God's divine favor to rest upon others. Probably the most famous blessing in the Bible is found in Numbers 6:22-27.

*Then the LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron and his sons to bless the people of Israel with this special blessing: ‘May the LORD bless you and protect you. May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.’ Whenever Aaron and his sons bless the people of Israel in my name, I myself will bless them” (NLT).*

God told Moses to teach Aaron’s sons to bless others and, in return, God would bless them. There are five things this blessing asks God to do in the life of another:

- God to give His favor and protection – “*May the LORD bless and protect you*” (v.24)
- God to be pleased – “*May the LORD smile on you*” (v.25)
- God to be merciful and compassionate – “*May the LORD be gracious to you*” (v.25)
- God to give His approval – “*May the LORD show you his favor*” (v.26)
- God to give peace – “*May the LORD... give you his peace*” (v.26)

**LAYING ON OF HANDS – BOARD PRAYS:** The board lays hands on the pastor and family and prays for them.

#### **PASTOR’S PRAYER & BLESSING**

The outgoing pastor then leads the church in prayer for the board and the church and concludes with the following blessing:

I want to pray a blessing over you today. "May the Lord bless you and keep you; may He smile on you and be gracious to you; may He look your way and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26)

---

**A digital copy of the blessing service is available on the WMN website, “[Digital Resources](#).”**

<sup>36</sup>British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 41; and Robert Kaylor, *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*, Seedbed Publishing, Wilmore, KY, 2013, p. 71.

<sup>37</sup>Joseph Umidi, *Matching Pastoral Candidates and Churches, A Guide for Search Committees and Candidates*, Kregel Publication, Grand Rapids, MI, 2020, p. 18.



## B. SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE [\(back to contents\)](#)

In his leadership teaching, *What Every Leader Should Know About People*, the first thing John Maxwell shares is that “people are insecure, give them confidence.”<sup>38</sup> Few things cause more insecurity in the life of a church than a pastoral transition. No wonder statistics repeatedly reveal that churches in pastoral transition experience a substantial decline in morale, attendance, and giving.<sup>39</sup> However, instead of just accepting the gravitational pull of transition, why not believe God to sustain or even increase resources and engagement during this time? Why not step out like Joshua and believe God to operate beyond what is normal like when “*the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies*” (Joshua 10:13 NIV).

Launching a sustainability initiative promotes confidence in your people and encourages them to recognize that change is part of God’s growth process, and to benefit from this time, they should stick around and sustain current levels of giving and participation. It is a wonderful opportunity to be intentional about making your church stronger rather than weaker. It can also leverage the trust, loyalty, and respect people have for the outgoing pastor to create sustainability through the transition. This would include some or all the following six components:

- A 40-day churchwide prayer focus
- Churchwide podcast distribution
- Creating a solid communication plan to keep people updated
- Modeling a positive and biblical transition
- Commitment Sunday where the church consecrates themselves for the journey
- Ensure existing ministries continue with quality

There is no “one way” or “silver bullet” when it comes to a sustainability initiative. Each church has a unique set of circumstance that will influence the strategy they adopt. Go through the list of options below and customize an intentional sustainability campaign that works for your church.

1. **A 40-day churchwide prayer focus.** The entire church is called to individual prayer. This is accomplished by using the prayer guide explained in the appendix entitled, “[Mobilizing Prayer](#).” This guide gives the entire church one practical thing to pray about each day. It can also be repeated as many times as needed throughout the duration of the transition.
2. **Churchwide podcast distribution.** To help give hope, faith, and practical instruction to your church members the week after your pastor departs, we have access to a special podcast by Superintendent Gene Roncone of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God. Roncone interviews transition specialist Jason Lowe as they discuss six things your

people can do to help the church and board in this transition. You can send the link via email or text to all your church members; and by simply clicking a hyperlink, they can listen to the audio interview on their smart phone or computer. You can also print the link in your church bulletin. The link is: [www.agspe.org/RUready.mp3](http://www.agspe.org/RUready.mp3).

3. **Creating a solid communication strategy to keep people updated.** See the chapter "[Communication Plans](#)."
4. **Healthy modeling.** A healthy transition will require your leaders to model the traits of a biblical changeover with faith, optimism, and mutual respect. This would include having the board, staff, and outgoing pastor meet and be the first ones to sign the "[member commitment](#)" and implement the concepts outlined in the appendix entitled "[Parting Well](#)."
5. **Commitment Sunday/Blessing Service.** On the pastor's final Sunday, the board, staff, and outgoing pastor stand together on the platform and explain the member commitment. The service will end by asking each member to personally sign the [member commitment](#) and then conclude with the Blessing Service described in the appendix in the "[Parting Well](#)" section.
6. **Ensure existing ministries continue with quality.** Great insecurity is created during pastoral transition if a church discontinues existing ministries or there is a sharp decline in the quality of ministries. If people feel that "the sky is falling, the sky is falling," it may not be long before they will fall away from the church and look elsewhere for a place to worship. Great care must be given to trying to maintain existing ministries with excellence, particularly those associated with weekend services and youth and children's programs. Before your resigning pastor leaves, develop a plan to keep things as normal as possible. Note: it may be necessary to scale back or discontinue ministries in certain situations such as but not limited to—
  - The church is in crisis mode—maybe a number of people have already left for some reason and there are no workers to continue ministries or operate them at existing levels. It is important not to burn out your remaining volunteers trying to keep everything going.
  - A certain ministry that is toxic or no longer effective that should have been shut down but hasn't been. If a ministry is harmful or a drain, it may be wise to bring it to a close.

A goal during pastoral transition is to help the church be healthy and give people confidence that the church is headed in a positive direction.

<sup>38</sup>John Maxwell, *What Every Leader Should Know About People*, Injoy Life Club, Vol. 13, No. 8.

<sup>39</sup>Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, New Jersey, pp. 29-40.

## C. MOBILIZING PRAYER ([back to contents](#))

Next to the Spirit's divine leading, prayer is the most important resource for a successful pastoral transition. The prophet Samuel not only understood the importance of prayer during leadership transitions, but perceived a lack of prayer as sin. That is why in his farewell speech to the nation he stated—

***“As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you”***

**- 1 Samuel 12:23**

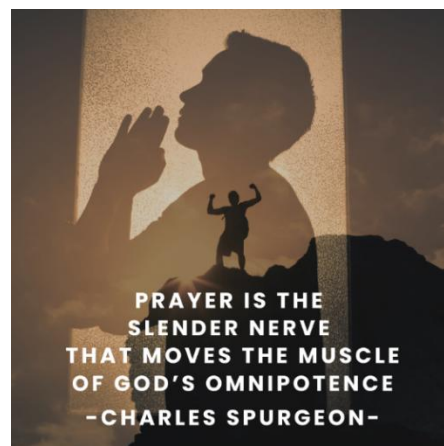
Prayer is the one thing God expects you as a board to bring to the table. But not just you, the entire church!

### PRAYER STRATEGIES

As a board/search committee, try to implement the following elements of prayer into your process:

- Always start your meetings with prayer for wisdom, discernment, unity, and divine direction for you, the staff, the interim pastor, and your people.
- Incorporate prayer for God's direction in Sunday services during the interim period.
- Call all-church prayer meetings to build a sense of community and faith.
- Mobilize any existing prayer groups to give exclusive and confidential prayer support to the board's/search team's search process.
- More importantly, call the entire church to prayer on an individual basis. Utilize the list below by either sending out one prayer focus each day or customize it in the form of an electronic or paper version and make it available to your people. Promote it each week during the search process to mobilize the people to prayer.

The prayer guide is located on the next three pages and can be copied as needed or a customizable digital version can be downloaded from the Network website, "[Digital Resources](#)." [Note: Day 18. Resources mentions a transition fund in the last sentence. If your church is not doing a transition fund, then remove that sentence before printing the prayer guide. The transition fund is explained in the appendix entitled "[Transition Budget](#)."]



**40 DAYS OF PRAYER**  
**Pastoral Search Prayer Initiative**

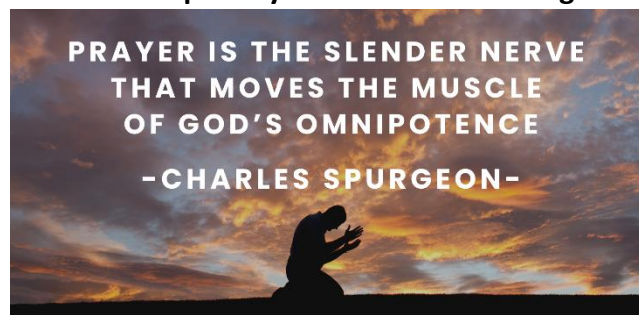
Knowing that the most underutilized source of spiritual power in ministry is the intercession for Christian leaders, the Board would like to call the church to pray and fast for each of the following items each day of the month during this transition. Continue rotating through the list until our new pastor is identified.

- 1. FAMILY DURING TRANSITION:** Pray for our future pastor's family during the leadership transition that they would experience a smooth changeover, build new friendships, and discover their place of ministry. Especially pray for their children (if applicable) as their lives are uprooted, that they can feel connected and settled quickly.
- 2. STRENGTH FOR TRANSITION:** Pray for our future pastor and family to have strength to endure the changes of transition (relocation, selling/buying a home, moving, packing, and unpacking).
- 3. UNITY:** Pray for our church to be united during the pastoral transition.
- 4. TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP:** Pray for our board, staff, interim pastor, and guest speakers during this transition.
- 5. CHARACTER:** Pray for all those involved on both sides of the transition process to have integrity, honesty, and trust in God.
- 6. COURAGE:** Pray for our Board/Search Team to have the courage to make decisions, take unfavorable positions if necessary, uphold standards, and to act decisively without fear.
- 7. WISDOM:** Pray for our Board/Search Team and future pastor to have wisdom to ask the right questions and discern between better and best.
- 8. AFFECTED MINISTERS:** Pray for the staff ministers and their families on both sides of this transition. Pray that God would give them faith, trust, rest, and the ability to bless our church in this transition.
- 9. AGREEMENT:** Pray the Board/Search Team would be in agreement regarding the background and experience needed by the next pastor.
- 10. SENSITIVITY TO NEEDS:** Pray that the Board/Search Team can place the church's needs before their own as they read applications, listen to sermons, and talk with candidates.
- 11. SITUATIONAL WISDOM:** Pray for our future pastor to have the ability to address critical needs and make wise decisions in a short period of time.
- 12. INSIGHT:** Pray the Board/Search Team will be led by God's Spirit and know the right questions to ask as they represent the church in the interview process.
- 13. FAITH AND OPTIMISM:** Pray for our church to have unusual faith, patience, and trust that God is leading and guiding this process.

- 14. JUDGMENT:** Pray the Board/Search Team will have clarity as they interview, eliminate, and move forward with candidates in the interview process.
- 15. HONESTY:** Pray that the Board/Search Team will represent the church accurately, truthfully, and attractively.
- 16. TEAM BUILDING:** Pray for our future pastor to have the ability to quickly find, appoint/hire, and delegate tasks to the right people.
- 17. WISDOM TO NETWORK:** Pray that those outside the church who will be assisting the Board/Search Team to be sensitive to and led by the Holy Spirit.
- 18. RESOURCES:** Pray for our people to remain faithful in their tithes, offerings, and missions giving during the pastoral transition. Also pray that God will lead and enable others to give to the transition fund so our new pastor has resources to implement vision.
- 19. SURRENDER:** Pray that those with influence in the search process subordinate their personal agendas to what is best for the church and for God's will.
- 20. STAMINA:** Pray for our Board/Search Team to have physical, mental, and emotional endurance to handle all the necessary demands of this process.
- 21. DISCERNMENT:** Pray for our Board/Search Team to have discernment in sorting through all the various styles, philosophies, and ministry models represented by pastoral candidates.
- 22. AFFECTED MINISTRY:** Pray for the church or ministry that our future pastor will be leaving to have healthy transition. Pray for them to have faith, wisdom, and divine leading in their own search. Pray for their search team to have wisdom, clarity, and unity; and for their denominational executives to be led by the Lord to assist them.
- 23. PATIENCE:** Pray for our church to have the ability to trust God and others while investing the necessary time and resources in the pastoral search.
- 24. REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS:** Pray that the Board/Search Team would not settle for too little or aim too high thereby setting unreasonable or unattainable expectations.
- 25. SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE:** Pray for our Board/Search Team and future pastor to be led by and walk in the Spirit.
- 26. GOD'S WILL:** Pray for God's will to give us the pastor that He knows we need, not necessarily what we think we want.
- 27. TEAM CHEMISTRY:** Pray for our future pastor to have deacons, staff, and employees who genuinely support their ministry values, philosophy, and initiatives.
- 28. PEACE:** Pray the candidate and their family will have clarity during their visits with the church and know whether or not this is the next step of ministry to which God is calling them.

- 29. WISDOM IN EVALUATING NEEDS:** Pray for our Board and interim pastor to have discernment in evaluating the needs and opportunities in this transition.
- 30. AFFECTED FAMILY:** Pray for the ministry staff and family members who will be affected by the departure of our new pastor to assume their new role.
- 31. FORWARD VISION:** Pray for our future pastor to receive a divine burden and direction, as well as outreach to our community and city.
- 32. DIVINE CALL:** Pray that our future pastor will sense an irresistible call and mandate from God to lead this church.
- 33. OPENNESS TO CHANGE:** Pray our leadership and congregation are not resistant to the direction our future pastor receives from the Lord. Pray for God's timing in implementing the change and for unity as we all strive to move the church forward.
- 34. ROLE CLARIFICATION:** Pray the Board/Search Team will have clarity as to the characteristics, goals, and responsibilities that should be included in the position description for the next pastor.
- 35. MULTI-GENERATIONAL:** Pray that our future pastor will be able to relate to the various generations and cultures represented in our church.
- 36. SUSTAINABILITY:** Pray that our church will not experience declines in attendance, giving, volunteerism, and morale during this pastoral transition.
- 37. PROTECTION:** Some individuals may choose to use this leadership vacuum as a time to promote their own agenda and preferences. Pray for the church to be protected from selfish ambition and that those attempting to do so will be lovingly corrected by the Holy Spirit.
- 38. SENSITIVITY:** Pray the Board/Search Team will hear God's voice with clarity and have peace concerning who should be interviewed.
- 39. OPTIMISTIC ANTICIPATION:** Pray that the future pastor, spouse, and family would feel the same peace and excitement that the Board/Search Team feels about the candidate.
- 40. MUTUAL CONFIRMATION:** Pray the entire congregation would feel a sense of peace and confirmation as the new pastor is confirmed through the vote of the official membership.

**Few things can help our church overcome obstacles, find God's will, and be led by the Spirit like prayer. Partner with us to make it a priority for our church throughout the entire transition.**



## D. PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM JOB DESCRIPTION ([back to contents](#))

*The purpose of the Pastoral Search Team (PST) is to identify the best candidate to serve as our new senior pastor. The search team members are accountable to each other and the board.*

### **Responsibilities of the Search Team**

1. Faithfully attend search team meetings. Meeting frequency, location, and time will be determined by the team as a whole to best accommodate everyone's schedule. We realize that every team member may not be able to attend all meetings, but one must have margin in their schedules to regularly participate.
2. Agree to and sign the Board/PST commitment which lays out many necessary qualities including confidentiality through out the whole search process.
3. Read the Pastoral Transition Manual provided by the Wyoming Ministry Network. This manual explains the process we will be using and contains many helpful, practical aids. It is recommended to download it to a laptop for ease of reference.
4. Fulfill basic PST functions: evaluate candidate resumes, listen to their sermons, participate in interviews, etc.
5. Be willing to serve in one of the capacities listed under the roles of the search team. Depending on your skills/interests and those of the other PST members, you may or not serve in one of these roles, but we do need a person for each one.

### **Roles of the Search Team**

Delegating roles and tasks on the search committee is an opportunity for your PST members to share the burden and split the load. A few suggested roles are as follows:

1. **Team Lead (Chair).** This person must have the time, availability, and talent to lead. They should be respected among the board/search committee, have strong collaborative skills, and be a decisive leader. This person should also be somewhat comfortable with technology, saving and sending electronic documents, email attachments, shared files on the cloud (Dropbox, Google docs, or others), and video conference calls on the internet. Confidentiality will require them to communicate with others without needing an administrative assistant. They should be the only person interacting with applicants prior to selecting a candidate. The church should provide the office of the network superintendent with the name, address, and phone number of the chair of the pastoral search committee so proper communication may be maintained.
2. **Secretary/Communications.** This person must have strong organizational skills, be available, and feel comfortable with email and technology. They should coordinate meetings, email the



chair's agendas, take minutes, organize candidate files, distribute all the notes following a meeting, coordinate with an approved person at the church office, and set up confidential folders the committee can access on Dropbox. This person should also be responsible to lead the board's/search team's communications efforts in keeping the congregation informed. They should make sure that all communication accurately reflects the decisions of the entire board/search committee and not their personal opinions, preferences, or private interpretation of the committee's decisions. They should work under the direction of the Team Lead and the liaison with the church office or whoever prints the weekly bulletin.

3. **Prayer Lead.** This person should lead the prayer efforts of the church and take responsibility for collaborating with the board, interim pastor, and staff to help the church remain focused on prayer.
4. **Networking Lead.** This person will carry out assignments given by the Team Lead. These may include posting job openings on the appropriate websites and seeking out recommendations from key pastors and ministry leaders. They should also do research over the internet to identify associations, involvements, articles, or books written by "A-list candidates" to share with other board members. They are also responsible for ensuring background checks have been conducted on candidates who are being seriously considered.
5. **Hospitality Lead.** Stories about pastoral transitions can be inspirational while others are disappointing. One ministry couple arrived in town to candidate, and—like Jesus—there was no room at the inn. The person making their travel plans booked the wrong dates for their arrival, and it just happened to be the same week that all the students from the local college arrived to start a new semester. Every hotel in town was booked. They had to split their time between staying with a family from the church and a hotel farther away that could accommodate part of their stay. The night before their candidacy, they had no other option but to stay with a family in the church which deprived them of the privacy they needed to process the weekend, pray, and discuss God's will together.

That is why your team needs a detailed person to plan for and entertain candidates who come in for interviews. This includes everything from airline reservations, car rentals, hotel reservations, dinner plans, itineraries, and all the logistics of the visit. They should be the only liaison between the interviewee and the accounting department to get receipts for reimbursement. They should also guarantee that those who are being interviewed will have a reimbursement check for any approved expenses BEFORE they leave the interview. *(If reimbursements are slow or overlooked, a candidate who is still uncertain about God's will may be scared off and the church will lose the opportunity of considering a good candidate.)* Although the hospitality lead may want to take them to meetings, a car should be rented for or loaned to the candidates. They will need to have the freedom to explore, check out housing, and get a feeling for the geography of the city.



## E. BOARD/PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM COMMITMENT [\(back to contents\)](#)

It is important that each member of the board and pastoral search committee (if you have one) sign a confidentiality agreement like the one **on the next page**. Those agreements should then be scanned and provided to the entire board and search team. A sample of this agreement should also be made available to the church and its members. This helps to prevent people from asking inappropriate questions and to keep the board/PST accountable to standards that have been made public.

Make one copy for each board member and pastoral search team member.

A customizable digital version is also available as a download at this link, "[Digital Resources](#)" on the WMN website.

## BOARD/PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM COMMITMENT

To help ensure the success of the pastoral search process, each member must agree and commit to God and the other members to hold one another accountable to the following agreements:

- A. Prayer.** To pray earnestly daily for God's direction, the church, the board, the search team, and its work.
- B. Focus.** To assist the group by staying focused on the primary purpose: *The purpose of the board during this season without a pastor is to identify the best candidate, manage existing ministries, remove obstacles, and postpone expansion in a way that creates margin and opportunity for our future leader. The purpose of the Pastoral Search Committee is to identify the best candidate.*
- C. Availability.** To make this process a priority, fulfill my duties, and be an equal contributor to the pastoral search process.
- D. Confidentiality.** To keep confidential from family and friends all information disclosed, discussed, or learned at its meetings. This includes but is not limited to the identity and current ministry of potential candidates, comments, opinions, or votes of other committee members as well as the leanings or intentions of the committee.
- E. Honesty.** To be entirely honest and forthright in representing the church, its current financial situation, attendance, challenges, history, culture, and previous commitments.
- F. Sensitivity.** To protect all prospective candidates by not jeopardizing their privacy, job security, current position, or other opportunities being presented at the same time. I also agree to seek the candidates' written permission before contacting references.
- G. Clarity.** To provide clarity to the process by creating a clear and reasonable job description, church bio, and pastor profile before interviewing any candidates.
- H. Surrender.** To subordinate my own personal preferences, agenda, or priorities to the will of the committee as a whole and to support the committee's final decision and candidate.
- I. Thoroughness.** To vet the final candidate to the best of our reasonable abilities through interviews, references, and background checks.
- J. Transparency.** To not deprive the team of context by trying to represent any "anonymous" opinions of people or groups in our deliberations. To be open with team members.
- K. Faithfulness.** To prioritize Bible study and prayer, keeping my heart clean to hear God's voice. To remain faithful to the church and its ministries so church members will continue to have confidence in the team, and I can effectively and honestly assess the process.

I understand that a breach of these agreements, unintentional or otherwise, will be brought to the full board who will determine whether the violation disqualifies me from continued service.

---

Name

---

Date

## F. CHURCH MEMBER COMMITMENT [\(back to contents\)](#)

In addition to calling the church to prayer, it would be wise to request your church members and attendees to make a formal commitment to help sustain the church through the transition. This is a powerful way to build hope, confidence and a sense of unity—that we are in this together. A customizable template of the member commitment in Microsoft Word format can be downloaded from the “[Digital Resources](#)” on the WMN website. Following is an example of what that commitment might look like:

### Church Member Commitment

The Apostle Paul mentions two different types of commitment in 2 Corinthians 8:5, “*First they gave themselves to the Lord; and then, by God's will, they gave themselves to us as well.*” While becoming a Christian means to commit ourselves to Christ, being part of a church means we commit ourselves to other Christians. As our church begins our pastoral search, I agree and commit to God and the other members of our church community to the following:

- 1. Prayer.** I will pray daily for our board, search team, staff, volunteers, church, and future pastoral family.
- 2. Trust.** I will trust God to use the search process to identify our future pastor.
- 3. Faith.** I will have faith and stay optimistic and spiritually expectant.
- 4. Commitment.** I will sustain my commitment, faithfulness, attendance, giving, and service during the transition.
- 5. Patience.** I will have fair expectations, be patient, and give our future pastor and family the time needed to adjust to a new community, church, and work environment.
- 6. United.** I will seek to build unity and resist selfishness, division, and the desire to force my preferences on others.
- 7. Sensitivity.** I will be sensitive to our staff, volunteers, and workers by supporting and encouraging them during this interim time.
- 8. Hope.** I will trust our deacons to be led by the Holy Spirit, sensitive to the needs of our church and community, and be unified as they seek God’s will.
- 9. Cooperative.** I will take responsibility for the final decision that the members make in selecting our new pastor.
- 10. Support.** I will support our new pastor and seek to understand the vision and burdens the Lord will place upon their heart.

---

Name

---

Date

## G. BOARD/SEARCH TEAM PLANNING RETREAT ([back to contents](#))

The best way to start the process well is for the search committee to have a two-day retreat at a nearby hotel or bed and breakfast. The purpose of this time is for the search committee to get away and hear from God and give concentrated focus on determining a plan of action. This can also be accomplished through two separate half-day Saturday meetings as well. **Requiring members to read this resource before the retreat will help make the time more profitable.**

Instead of having to use time to explain the process, members should show up already having a general understanding of the process. The time can then be better used for strategy and collaboration. Each PST member should also bring a laptop with a digital copy of this manual for quick access to the internal and external links listed.

During the retreat, you will go over this resource; determine roles; strategize, write up a church bio, job description, and profile of the “ideal candidate”; determine a search budget; and sign confidentiality agreements. Your board officers or search committee chair should determine a retreat schedule and collaborate with the committee to select a date that works best for everyone. Although it is preferred that all members be present, not everyone may be able to attend. To keep the process moving forward, the fact must be accepted that not all members will be able to participate in each meeting. The board officers should have a pre-meeting huddle the day before to come up with an agenda and game plan, provide hard-copy manuals for everyone, and access the needed resources. Following is a proposed schedule you can amend:

### Search Team Retreat

#### Friday Evening

5–6:30 pm	Dinner together.
6:30–7 pm	Prayer (use copies of the guide in the section “ <a href="#">Mobilizing Prayer</a> ”).
7–10 pm	Manual orientation: the group goes over the retreat agenda and each part of the succession resource and determines a committee purpose statement. (See example in the chapter entitled “ <a href="#">The Pastoral Search Team</a> ” though the one listed there is if the only the board serves as the PST. It will need to be modified if the PST is a mixed search committee. See letter B. Focus on the “ <a href="#">Board/Pastoral Search Team Commitment</a> .”)

#### Saturday

8–9:45 am	Assign committee roles and responsibilities and determine what kind of vote is desired for different decisions (see the chapter entitled “ <a href="#">The Pastoral Search Team</a> ” to see additional information on this topic).
9:45–10 am	Break.

10–11:45 am	Write church summary/bio. See the appendix entitled “ <a href="#">Church, Neighborhood, &amp; Community Profile</a> .”
11:45 am–1 pm	Lunch together.
1–1:30 pm	Review of biblical qualifications and characteristics form. See the appendix entitled “ <a href="#">Desirable Qualities of a Pastor</a> .”
1:30–2:30 pm	Group discussion regarding biblical qualifications and desired qualities to isolate common denominators.
2:30–3:30 pm	Group writes pastoral job description. See the appendix entitled “ <a href="#">Job Description</a> .”
3:30–3:45 pm	Break.
3:45–4:15 pm	Group writes profile of ideal pastor. See the appendix entitled “ <a href="#">Pastor Profile</a> .”
4:15–4:30 pm	Group reviews, explains, and signs the “ <a href="#">Board/Pastoral Search Team Commitment</a> ” containing the confidentiality agreement if they have not already done so and discusses consequences of a breach.
4:30–5 pm	Group determines meeting frequency, location, and time. They also begin discussions that will be revisited later concerning the search budget. See chapter entitled “ <a href="#">Search Team Meetings Sample Agenda</a> ” and the appendix entitled “ <a href="#">Transition Budget</a> ” for more information. <i>Note: in some cases, the board may decide the transition budget apart from the PST.</i>
5–6 pm	Prayer together.
6–7:15 pm	Dinner together.

## Dismissal

For an editable copy of this, see the “[Digital Resources](#)” on the WMN website.

## H. TRANSITION BUDGET [\(back to contents\)](#)

Searching for a pastor is a significant expense worthy of the benefits it brings. Cutting corners only results in depriving your committee of the experiences and resources needed to make wise decisions and identify God's will. The Bible encourages us to be as strategic with our budgeting as we are with our process:

*For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish."*

(Luke 14:28-30 ESV)

When anticipating expenses, it is important to distinguish between hard and hidden costs. Hard costs include expenses directly related to the search process while hidden costs include expenses indirectly related to the transition as a whole.

**A. Hidden costs.** Many churches fail to consider the indirect costs of a pastoral transition. Authors Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree dedicated an entire chapter of their book to warning church boards of the staggering financial impact of a pastoral search. As consultants specializing in pastoral transitions, they listed some of the following considerations among their list of hidden costs:<sup>40</sup>

- 1. Attendance.** Nearly all churches in pastoral transition experience a 10-15 percent decrease in attendance that will take the new pastor one to two years to regain. This exodus may take place in two phases. First, some people leave when your existing pastor departs because they don't like the uncertainty or lack of forward movement a transition can bring. A second migration can take place after your new pastor begins their ministry and people realize they prefer a different style/personality or they don't like the changes or new direction that is taking place.
- 2. Income.** Nearly all churches in pastoral transition experience a 10-15 percent decrease in tithes and offerings that will take the new pastor between one to two years to regain.
- 3. New members.** Within the first six months of a pastoral transition, churches experience a 50 percent decrease in visitors, new members, and families deciding to make your church their new church home.
- 4. Transition expenses.** Most churches experiencing a pastoral transition will end up spending at least 125% of the previous pastor's salary between decreased giving and expenses related to the entire transition process from beginning to end. The expenses include things like farewell expenses related to the exiting pastor, interim pastor, guest speaker

costs, searching for candidates, interviewing candidates, relocating a new pastor, assimilating the new pastor into the work environment, and the possible loss of revenue related to decreased attendance and giving.

**5. Salaries.** Most churches experiencing a pastoral transition (especially those losing long-term pastors) find their current salary is around ten percent lower than the industry norm and needs to be increased to appeal to competent candidates.

**6. Staff adjustments.** Most churches with multiple staff members who experience a pastoral transition will also experience expenses related to additional staff turnover both before and after the placement of a new pastor. This second wave of change is normal and part of the process.

**7. Morale.** Most churches experiencing a pastoral transition will experience a drop in morale during the search process. This momentum usually takes one year to totally recover.

Weese and Crabtree warn that unreasonable expectations of the new pastor during the vulnerable three years that follow a transition can also create a recurring cycle of transition and financial limitations. These unrealistic expectations commonly include things like launching new ministries, exceeding past attendance, income and ministry involvement levels, and launching capital/building campaigns before the church has recuperated from the three-year transition cycle. They estimate that the total financial cost between expenses and loss of income will exceed twice the annual compensation package of the lead pastor—10-15 percent of a church's total operating budget.<sup>41</sup> Another study reported that the hidden costs, unrealistic expectations, and transitional challenges alone result in 40 percent of new leaders failing within the first eighteen months of entering a new leadership role.<sup>42</sup> The takeaway seems to be three things:

- **Commitment.** The committee must be willing to invest the time to do a pastoral transition right.
- **Initiative.** The church board and search committee must be willing to take the initiative in removing apparent obstacles before the new pastor arrives.
- **Patience.** The church must give the new pastor two to three years to help the church recover and navigate the learning curve of a new culture, city, and community.

Pastor Jeff Harlow said it best: "Our churches simply do not have the margins in missional momentum, money, and people to suffer a botched handoff."<sup>43</sup>

**B. Hard costs.** Because transition is inevitable, expenses related to it are also unavoidable. Any transition is going to involve "best case," "likely case," and "worst case" scenarios. Your team should spend time looking over the Microsoft Excel worksheet Transition Budget template in

the “[Digital Resources](#)” section of the WMN website to help you estimate and budget transition expenses for your church. When doing so, we suggest basing it off the following assumptions and a “worst case” scenario.

- 1. Feasibility study.** Research and bidding based on actual expenses at the time of your estimation.
- 2. Eight to twelve-month process.** This budget should assume the entire search process from start to finish will be approximately eight to twelve months. Although research reveals the national average for a pastoral transition is 12-24 months, the use of this manual’s resources can empower you to do a very thorough job in hopefully a shorter amount of time.
- 3. One-time expenses.** On the Transition Budget template, one-time expenses that occur all at one time are not listed in the monthly column but carried over to the column labeled “12-month total.”
- 4. Economic variables.** Your budget should assume individual expenses will be on the higher end of available options at the time of your estimation. However, several factors may result in lower estimates. For example, the process may be shorter and actual expenses may be less due to less travel, shorter distances, smaller family size, economic realities, cost savings, or the possibility of a strong internal candidate. Be sure to check your church credit card rewards program as some give points for travel expenses which can result in free airfare, lodging, and car rental. There is also the possibility that the data used to determine this budget will become obsolete or that an unforeseen event may lengthen the process. Consequently, the budget would need to be increased.

A customizable Excel template of the transition budget can be downloaded from “[Digital Resources](#)” section on the Network website.

**C. Transition fund.** As stated, your transition is going to involve a “best case,” “likely case,” and “worst case” scenario. You should hope for the best, but it’s wise to plan for the worst by facilitating a transition fund equal to at least one month of the church’s total income.

This money can come from various sources. One is to look at your reserves and pull that money from there and set it aside. Another is receive a transition fund offering. In doing so, it is wise to ask the board and search team to be the first ones to significantly contribute BEFORE you ask the church to support the fund later. In the Old Testament, the waters of the Jordan did not part until the leaders walked in first (Joshua 3:13). Members and adherents can then be asked to join the leadership community and contribute to the fund above their normal tithes and offerings as part of the sustainability initiative.



The transition fund should be used frugally. “*The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down*” (Proverbs 21:20 NIV). That is why the board is encouraged to use the fund moderately to ensure a significant amount is left to finance the new pastor’s first initiatives. That will be a great incentive for potential candidates.

Having a budget and a transition fund is as important to this process as the Holy Spirit’s direction. Proverbs 27:12 reminds us that “*A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences*” (NLT).

<sup>40</sup>Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NY, 2004, pp. 29-40.

<sup>41</sup>Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NJ, 2004, p. 31.

<sup>42</sup>Ira M. Levin, *New Leader Assimilation Process: Accelerating New Role-Related Transitions*, Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research 62.1, 2010, p. 61.

<sup>43</sup>Jeff Harlow, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading A Healthy Church Transition*, Epiphany Publishing, Indianapolis, IN, 2017, p. viv.

## I. CHURCH, NEIGHBORHOOD, & COMMUNITY PROFILE [\(back to contents\)](#)

To keep the process moving forward without getting bottlenecked by information requests from candidates, the search committee will need to appoint a team to write a church and community profile. A church profile is a written summary describing your church, neighborhood, and city to prospective candidates. This is where most search committees fail due to procrastination and not assigning the task to a specific team. Remember, EVERY serious candidate is going to want this information. Taking the time now to provide it will help you in the following ways:

- It will show candidates that you are serious, helpful, and prepared.
- It will save time because this information can be attached to emails or made available online.
- It will facilitate more meaningful communication by allowing candidates to have read it and come with more reflective questions.
- It may give you a competitive edge over other churches who have contacted the same candidate but have yet to invest the time in completing good profiles.

Although the Network will put this information on our open church list, the search committee may want to consider making this information available through a web page, blog, or shared folder. A sample and short video tour of how one church did this can be viewed at <http://www.agspe.org/rutour.mp4>.

Whether you use a document, shared folder, or website, your profile should contain up-to-date and accurate information about your church and community. We suggest you create a document with the following headings and then type in your own information after them:

- **Church summary.** A summary of your church, its history, previous governance, number of members, number of board members, name of board chair. It should also give service times and statistical averages for total constituents and attendance as well as the annual income, missions giving, current debt/mortgage, and mortgage payment. Include photos of your facilities and floor plans along with square footage as well as any future expansion options (blueprint, visual renderings of a future building or pictures you may have with existing or unused land).
- **Community profile.** A description of your church's neighborhood, surrounding community, and city profile. This kind of information can usually be found at the reference desk of your city hall or on county or city websites. Include population, demographics, and things that make your city a unique place to live.
- **Previous pastor.** A brief bio of your previous pastor so candidates may know what type of education, experiences, passions, and hobbies they had that would likely have influenced the church.
- **Vision statements.** Your current mission, purpose, vision, or values statement.

- **Governance and policy.** A link to the church's bylaws and other important policies: financial, child protection, etc.
- **Staff bios.** A short bio on any paid staff members and what area of ministry they give leadership to.
- **Recognition.** Include a list of any awards or community commendations your church has received.

Knowing it is easier to improve something than create it from nothing, we have provided an example of a fictional church profile below that comes from the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network transition manual, Rise Up. **We realize the scale of this fictional church does not fit the context of many Wyoming churches, but it does give you an idea of the multiple different things a church can provide in its profile.** You can also download a customizable Microsoft Word version from the "[Digital Resources](#)" section on the network website. Seeing these will help you design your own.

### **Vista Community Church, Vista, Colorado**

- A. Summary.** Vista Community Church is a Spirit-filled evangelical church affiliated with the Assemblies of God. The church feels more like a Spirit-filled interdenominational community church, and its constituency comes from very diverse ethnic, spiritual, and social backgrounds made up of primarily middle-aged professionals and young families. All of Vista Community's efforts center around the four core values of worship, discipleship, service, and outreach. The church worship is led by a band and worship team that facilitates a more contemporary style of worship, primarily geared for those between the ages of 35-55. As a Spirit-filled church, Vista Community embraces a more conservative expression of Spirit-filled faith. The gifts operate occasionally followed by a biblical explanation and invitation for salvation. Its discipleship centers around small groups, and its community involvement and outreach produce an above-average participation level of service opportunities. Vista Community has an excellent reputation in the city and is often called upon by city leaders to assist in community problem solving.
- B. Governance.** The pastor is elected to an indefinite term. Find out more about Vista's governance, bylaws, and policies at ([insert your website, shared internet folder or document link here](#)).
1. Voting members: 182. Individuals requesting membership must attend a formal membership class.
  2. Official board: 7 members consisting of 1 senior pastor and 6 deacons
  3. Elected deacons: 6 with 3-year terms with annual vacancy rotation of 2, 2, and 2
  4. Board chair: Senior Pastor (with voting privileges)
  5. Chief executive officer: Senior Pastor

6. Board officers: President (senior pastor), vice president, secretary, and treasurer (elected from existing board members)

**C. History.** Vista Community was first organized in 1965 under the leadership of Rev. and Mrs. C. N. Preacher who served from 1965-1970. The church's early meetings were held at 45 Church Street in Vista, Colorado. Rev. and Mrs. C. L. Longwinded came and served from 1970 to 1971. Rev. and Mrs. T. P. Shortsermon served from 1971 to 1991, and the congregation grew consistently. W. L. Jogger was elected pastor in 1991, and the church purchased property at 231 Worship Street. By New Year's Day 1992, the church was completed and dedicated—debt free. Under the leadership of W. L. Jogger, the church continued to grow and thrive until 2000. In 2001, Pastor Hipster was elected. Under his leadership, the church focused on community outreach and doubled in size. Pastor James Hipster and his wife Julie resigned for the mission field in 2011. In early 2012, Pastor Kurt Egghead was elected pastor and started the daycare, elementary and high schools by building a separate school facility. The church and school continued to grow until his resignation in 2019.

**D. Previous pastors.** Vista Community Church has had six pastors in its history:

1. Rev. C. N. Preacher who founded the church in 1965 and served until 1970.
2. Rev. C. L. Longwinded who served from 1970 to 1971.
3. Rev. T. P. Shortsermon who served from 1971 to 1991.
4. Rev W. L. Jogger led the church from 1991 to 2000.
5. Rev. James Hipster led the church from 2001 to 2011.
6. Rev. Kurt Egghead led the church from 2012 to 2019.

**E. Vision, mission, and values.** Vista Community Church seeks to usher people into spiritual maturity by:

- Experiencing God in worship. Creating a community to worship.
- Learning and living God's Word. Learning and living the teachings of Jesus.
- Serving God and others. Identifying and using our spiritual gifts to serve.
- Loving our world. Providing opportunities for outreach and evangelism.

**F. Statistical averages.**

Constituents who call Vista Community their home church: 400

Sunday total average attendance: 350

Service times: 9:00 and 10:30 a.m.

Small group participation: 150

Total number of members: 182

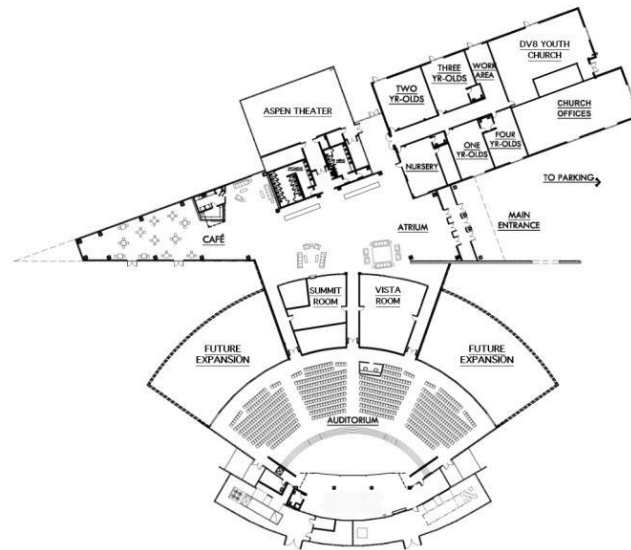
**G. Church budget.**

1. Annual income: \$660,000

2. Missions giving (city, state, region, and international): \$105,000
3. Debt: \$900,000 financed through Church Extension Plan
4. Monthly mortgage payment: \$15,000

**H. Church property.** Vista Community Church is located at 50 S. Vista Parkway, Vista, CO 86017.

1. **Facility.** The facility is a total of 40,000 square feet consisting of the main auditorium with a maximum seating of 500, chapel with a maximum seating of 120, educational wing with 6 classrooms, office space, and a dedicated children's meeting space. The current property is 20 acres with about 3 acres suitable for future buildings and an additional 4 acres for parking expansion.
2. **Parking:** Five parking pods with a total of 180 parking stalls.
3. **Future expansion:** In addition to an unused 3 acres, the educational building has existing wall and roof structures that can facilitate a future second story (12,000 sq. feet).
4. **Appraised value:** In January 2019, the facilities (land and buildings) were appraised at \$4,615,000.
5. **Photos:** Pictures of the interior and exterior of the facilities can be viewed at ([insert your link or document file location here](#)).



**I. Staff.**

- **Full-time staff:** Lead pastor, associate pastor, and children's pastor.
- **Part-time staff:** Receptionist, bookkeeper, and lead pastor's administrative assistant.
- **Contract services:** Janitorial, exterior grounds, maintenance, and snow removal.

**J. Primary ministries.**

1. Worship team and band. The worship is contemporary with an occasional infusion of relevant hymns. The team is led by a worship leader who leads the team, makes schedules, and assigns tasks. The instruments include a keyboard, bass guitar, two electric guitars, drums, acoustic guitar, and vocalists.
2. Children's, Student, Young Adult, Men's and Women's Ministries.

3. Missions. Foreign missions is specifically focused on supporting AG missionaries. U.S. missions is strategically focused on reaching our state's Chi Alpha and inner city and urban areas in the United States.

**K. Immediate neighborhood.** Vista is a growing community that is the tenth largest city in Colorado. Although the church's primary target area is the I-64 corridor from Jones to Highway 34, it is in the 86017 zip code in Iron County, Colorado, which has a population of 143,044 (51 percent female and 49 percent male). The total number of households is 10,042 with 2.86 people per household on average. Regarding education, 39.7 percent of the zip code has at least a bachelor's degree, 21 percent has a graduate degree, and 25 percent has some college. The average household income is \$68,990, and the median home sale price is \$242,784. Total household expenditures are right at the national average. The median age of the current population is 36.25 with 66.5 percent being married and 24 percent never married. The employment numbers show that 56 percent are white-collar employees and 44 percent are blue-collar. The recorded weather temperatures oscillate between a high point in July of 86.9° F and a low point of 20° F in January. The air pollution index is 96. Additional demographics concerning housing, education, income, and spiritual trending can be accessed online.

**L. City profile.** Once a budding frontier town of farmers and ranchers, Vista is Colorado's tenth largest city with a diverse population of more than 143,000. The city of Vista is now a full-service city governed by a council/manager form of government which combines the political leadership of elected officials with the managerial expertise of an appointed local government manager. At 75 square miles, the city is in Iron County. Vista's strategic comprehensive plan emphasizes the formation of livable, full-service neighborhoods. Vista also provides access to quality education with one school district and six campuses of higher learning meeting the instructional needs of residents and those beyond the city limits. Just an hour away from Denver International Airport, Vista is home to a growing business environment including major industries of health care, transportation, and logistics. Businesses large and small are welcomed and nurtured through such programs as the Vista Advantage 4 Business and the Vista-Metro Small Business Development Center. Tree-lined streets, open prairie, majestic views of the mountains, and ample neighborhood parks make Vista neighborhoods a comfortable place to call home. More than 100 neighborhoods complete the fabric of the community. Vista's climate is mild and dry with more than 300 days of sunshine a year offering residents and visitors ample opportunity to get outside, stay fit, and enjoy all that Colorado living has to offer. Vista has 1 golf course, 1 reservoir, more than 30 parks, and over 1,000 acres of open space and trails. Situated at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Vista is a gateway to all Colorado has to offer. Each resident has a right to expect a safe city and trust that they will be helped in an emergency. Nearly 50 percent of the city's general fund budget supports Vista's public safety functions.

**M. Online presence.**

1. Website: [www.vistachurchco.com](http://www.vistachurchco.com)
2. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/vistacommunity>
3. YouTube: Vista Church
4. Instagram: vistacolorado

## J. DESIRABLE QUALITIES OF A PASTOR [\(back to contents\)](#)

You will soon discover that the search committee has different ideas about the kind of leader your church needs. Personal preferences, unfamiliarity with biblical qualifications, past experiences, and many other things can make consensus difficult at first. Author Chris Brauns calls out the true but uncomfortable fact that many search committees are so busy talking about what they want in a pastor that they never spend time as a group reading the scriptures that outline the Biblical qualifications for this spiritual role. “Let’s consider what the Bible says about what a pastor should be and do so that your church can be sure that God is building your house when you call your next pastor,” says Brauns.<sup>44</sup> It is inconsistent to want a Word-centered pastor without a Word-centered process. Keeping our expectations grounded in Scripture is not a new challenge. Over 1600 years ago church father John Chrysostom complained that one of the early church’s greatest problems was that, “No one will look for the best qualified man.”<sup>45</sup>

At first, your list of desired qualities will probably be long and unreasonable; but as time goes by, the committee relearns something they already knew: There is no perfect candidate; and every minister has different strengths, weaknesses, and leadership abilities.

The questions the board and search committee need to answer are what characteristics are principal, what characteristics are preference, and what characteristics are innate?

1. **Principal qualities** are qualifications God’s Word requires pastors to have. Most church bylaws and the Assemblies of God require ministers to fulfill the biblical role as pastor and overseer of the church (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
2. **Preferred qualities** are those you want a candidate to have but do not demand. These qualities may even be developed or learned after a pastor is elected (skills, education, or giftings).
3. **Innate qualities** are those a person is born with and cannot be taught. A person either has them or not.

Following are a few questions that may help individuals on the search team process desired traits on the worksheet below:

- What level of ministerial credential and education is desired? When selecting a candidate, your team will want to know what level of ministerial credential your candidate has, and what plan they may have to advance in ministerial training. The chapter on “[The importance of an Assemblies of God credential](#)” explains each of the three levels and the educational preparation associated with each. You will also want to check your bylaws to see if they prescribe a specific level of credential your lead pastor will be required to have.



- Are there qualities, skills, or giftings that the former pastor had that the board, search committee, or congregation would also like to see in the new pastor's life and ministry?
- What are the characteristics of the ideal candidate for this position that cannot be compromised because they cannot be taught?
- Does the candidate have the capacity to get the job done, and have they already demonstrated these skills in the past? Past behavior is an indicator of future behavior.
- What expectations could be suspended considering the candidate's other strengths and giftings?

Following is a comprehensive list of biblical and logical qualities a lead pastor should have. The list may help the board or search committee identify common needs, wants, and observations. Your team can identify ones that are critical at this time in your church's journey.

### **BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ To administer the ordinances (Matthew 28:19-20)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be a person of prayer (1 Timothy 2:1)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To warn the flock (1 Timothy 4:1, 6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To study the Word (2 Timothy 2:15)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2; Acts 6:2-4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To exhort and rebuke (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Titus 2:15)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To watch over souls—their own and the souls of others (Acts 20:28-31; Colossians 4:17; 1 Timothy 4:6, 6:11; Hebrews 13:17)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To feed and lead the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be an example to all (1 Corinthians 11:1, 4:16, Philemon 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Timothy 4:12; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To have personal character above reproach from within and without the church (1 Timothy 3:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be temperate (1 Timothy 3:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be thoughtful, dignified, and self-controlled (1 Timothy 3:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be respectable (1 Timothy 3:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be gentle in his dealings with people (1 Timothy 3:3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not given to drunkenness/not a substance abuser (1 Timothy 3:3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not violent, quick-tempered, quarrelsome, arrogant, or overbearing (1 Timothy 3:3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not a lover of money or a pursuer of dishonest gain (1 Timothy 3:3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To manage their family well/have a healthy marriage (1 Timothy 3:4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To have children who are obedient and respectful (1 Timothy 3:4)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not a recent convert (1 Timothy 3:6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To have a good reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:6)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To be a shepherd of God's flock (1 Peter 5:2)
- \_\_\_\_\_ To serve out of willingness and initiative (1 Peter 5:2)

- \_\_\_ To be eager to serve (1 Peter 5:2)
- \_\_\_ Not eager for money (1 Peter 5:2)
- \_\_\_ Not overly authoritarian— “lording it over” (1 Peter 5:3)
- \_\_\_ To be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3)

### **PREACHING AND TEACHING**

- \_\_\_ Arouses interest and gets attention
- \_\_\_ Biblically-based and theologically-sound sermons
- \_\_\_ Interesting topics that are relevant to life
- \_\_\_ Good use of time, focused, does not ramble
- \_\_\_ Points or principles that are stated in a clear, concise, and complete way
- \_\_\_ Conclusions bring sermon to an effective close and move people to action
- \_\_\_ Sermons show evidence of deep study
- \_\_\_ Maintains focus and avoids detours, tangents, and repetition
- \_\_\_ Illustrations have direct correlation to text

### **PASTORAL SKILLS**

- \_\_\_ Pastoral counseling
- \_\_\_ Visiting the sick
- \_\_\_ Availability to talk
- \_\_\_ Likeable and personable
- \_\_\_ Compassionate and empathetic
- \_\_\_ Initiates relational connections

### **CULTURAL RELEVANCE**

- \_\_\_ Relevant to the culture of the city
- \_\_\_ Relevant to the culture of the immediate community or zip code
- \_\_\_ Relevant to the culture of the church
- \_\_\_ Respected by outsiders and recognized as a community leader
- \_\_\_ Builds relationships with the community, other leaders, and other organizations
- \_\_\_ Involves church in solving community problems

### **LEADERSHIP OF CHURCH**

- \_\_\_ Able to challenge organizational ineffectiveness and bring needed change
- \_\_\_ Has willingness to take risks and act in faith
- \_\_\_ Has willingness to admit and learn from mistakes
- \_\_\_ Sees and articulates vision for the future
- \_\_\_ Casts vision, communicates clearly
- \_\_\_ Able to translate that vision into a concrete plan
- \_\_\_ Able to enlist, motivate, and attract others to purpose through healthy means
- \_\_\_ Able to get people to work together
- \_\_\_ Equips, resources, and shares information with others
- \_\_\_ Leads by example in important areas
- \_\_\_ Shows appreciation to others

- \_\_\_\_\_ Celebrates organizational accomplishments
- \_\_\_\_\_ Trains, mentors, and equips other leaders
- \_\_\_\_\_ Invests in personal growth and development
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has the ability to foresee possible problems
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identifies battles that need to be fought
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has good conflict resolution skills
- \_\_\_\_\_ Makes good use of organizational resources
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has willingness to take responsibility as a leader
- \_\_\_\_\_ Able to make and stay within a realistic budget
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has willingness to make personal sacrifices
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leads paid staff
- \_\_\_\_\_ Communicates expectations of performance (uses job descriptions)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Addresses problems with staff as needed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Delegates to middle management
- \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitates growth and expansion

### **EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Must have graduated from high school
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must have some college education
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must have at least a four-year degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must have at least a master's degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must have at least a DMin or PhD
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must be certified with the Assemblies of God (lowest level of credential)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must be licensed to preach with the Assemblies of God (intermediate level of credential)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must be ordained by the Assemblies of God (highest level of credential)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must have been in the full-time ministry at least \_\_\_\_\_ years
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must have been at least an associate pastor in a church as large or larger than our current church
- \_\_\_\_\_ Must have senior/lead pastor experience

### **ADMINISTRATION**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Plans strategically and is intentional before moving forward
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stays on top of details
- \_\_\_\_\_ Initiates good policies and procedures
- \_\_\_\_\_ Has ability to create and execute a plan

### **BOARD CHAIRMANSHIP**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitates meetings and uses time wisely
- \_\_\_\_\_ Formulates agendas and addresses issues
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keeps members informed of issues
- \_\_\_\_\_ Is skilled in parliamentary and deliberative procedures
- \_\_\_\_\_ Provides pre-meeting information
- \_\_\_\_\_ Executes board decisions
- \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitates group discussion of issues

## SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

- \_\_\_\_\_ Conversions and decisions for Christ
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leadership of morning services
- \_\_\_\_\_ General direction to age-level ministries
- \_\_\_\_\_ General direction to worship services
- \_\_\_\_\_ Clearly articulates Spirit-filled distinctive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Leads and explains the supernatural manifestations that occur in the worship service
- \_\_\_\_\_ Evangelism and outreach

It is also important to consider compatibility and fit. Author Tom Brennan reminds search committees, “A potential candidate may have a wonderful family, be a fabulous preacher, mostly share in the church’s doctrine and practices, and yet ruin the church anyway if they do not fit.”<sup>46</sup> Sam Hamstra in his book, *Questions to Ask Before Searching for Your Next Pastor*, refers to this compatibility as “important intangibles.”<sup>47</sup>

**Group interaction exercise.** One exercise that may help your team discover how united they are concerning desirable qualities and priorities is to play the “lay your cards on the table” game. Give each member of the committee nine (9) index cards with one of the bold and capitalized headings from the list above written across the top. Then ask them to write on the cards to clarify their personal expectations in each category. Then have them privately rearrange the cards into prioritized order with their highest priority on the top and their lowest on the bottom. Conclude by asking them to “lay your cards on the table.” The exercise will help you better understand the diversity of your group and their general agreement regarding what kind of pastor your church needs. It may also reveal a need to revisit the scriptural qualifications of a pastor as listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

<sup>44</sup>Chris Brauns, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search, Practical Principles & Practices to Guide Your Search*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, Illinois, 2011. p. 15.

<sup>45</sup>John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996, p. 79.

<sup>46</sup>Tom Brennan, *Next, A Manual for Pastoral Transitions*, Xulon Press, Maitland, FL, 2021, p. 110.

<sup>47</sup>Sam Hamstra, *Questions to Ask Before Searching for Your Next Pastor*, Vervante Publishing, Springville, UT 84663, 2022, p. 41.

## K. JOB DESCRIPTION ([back to contents](#))

Candidates will need to know the expectations that the board and church will have of them. The official board will also need to establish reasonable expectations for the new pastor while leaving room for their unique giftings and temperament. The best way to do this is by making a short summary job description. Kenneth Russell, district superintendent of one of Canada's largest districts, gives the following advice to boards when they are drafting a pastoral job description:

*When a Search Committee sits down to decide what kind of pastor they want, they have a tendency to want everything they can think of. Each church has its own unique strengths and weaknesses; your task is to find someone who is capable of meeting the needs of your assembly. It is a fallacy to expect one person to have all the qualities related to the pastoral role and task. Beware of asking for one person to embody all the talents and giftings which your church needs. Keep in mind that the church is a composite; the body of Christ has many members to do the work of the ministry. What you need to look for is the key leadership abilities needed for your church.<sup>48</sup>*

In every church, some of the pastor's responsibilities are direct (performed by the pastor) while others are indirect (delegated by the pastor but performed by staff and volunteers). Most bylaws of Assemblies of God churches clearly require the lead pastor to have some kind of credential with the General Council in addition to those listed in scriptures like 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. If your bylaws require your pastor to have a credential, you cannot violate them by presenting a candidate who does not or is "almost there." Consequently, be sure your job description is not in conflict with your bylaws.

Making a job description is easier if you focus on the major categories of the lead pastor's biblical and organizational responsibilities. These are usually things like:

- A. Leader/overseer of the church.** As the overseer of the church the lead pastor is responsible for setting vision and directing staff and ministries as well as managing the day-to-day operations of the church (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4) as set forth in the bylaws. In addition, the lead pastor provides executive leadership to manage the staff, board, and volunteers. In most cases, they are both the chair of the board and president of the nonprofit corporation.
- B. Preaching and teaching.** The lead pastor is the primary preacher/teacher on Sunday morning services and supervises the doctrine taught in any discipleship applications the church may have. It would also involve, either directly or indirectly, approving all guest speakers, substitutes, and curriculum on a church-wide level.
- C. Establishing and communicating vision.** The lead pastor is responsible for setting, casting, mobilizing, and communicating new vision.

- D. Administration and accountability.** The lead pastor ensures that effective policies, procedures, and accountability structures are in place to manage the ministries, finances, facilities, and governance of the church.
- E. Pastoral care.** The lead pastor mobilizes people, platforms, and volunteers to provide care, counseling, weddings, funerals, baptisms, baby dedications, and other needed ministries.

Obviously, no one person can do all these things well. The finances and size of the paid staff will also greatly influence a pastor's ability to lead well. It is also important to remember that high-capacity candidates are not looking for a role to fill but a mission to be joined; therefore, be careful not to create an endless list of impossibilities. Nor should your board try to micro-manage your pastor. Shorter job descriptions are best. Following are some questions William Vanderbloemen suggests boards ask themselves after drafting a job description:<sup>49</sup>

1. Is the job description appealing to high performers while also being true to the character and culture of the church?
2. Did you give potential candidates a clear picture of the community your church is in as well as the unique culture of the church?
3. Is the job description clear, thorough, and concise?
4. Would this job description be appealing to the type of pastor you think you need?
5. Did you place a link to the church website on the job description and church profile?

A sample job description in the form of a Microsoft Word file can be downloaded from the "Preparing for the Search" section on the "[Digital Resources](#)" on the WMN website. It can then be customized to fit your unique situation.

<sup>48</sup>British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 20.

<sup>49</sup>William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 94.

## L. PASTOR PROFILE [\(back to contents\)](#)

Before considering any candidate, the pastoral search committee, in conjunction with the board, should develop a profile of the type of pastoral leadership they believe their church needs. Sometimes members of the selection committee may be tempted to allow the preferences of one or two strong personalities in the group to dominate the list. Kenneth Russell, district superintendent of one of Canada's largest districts, gives great advice to boards writing a pastoral profile:

*Make sure that as a committee, there is consensus on this matter. If you don't, it will lead to frustration later in the process. Remember, this is a good tool but don't be rigidly bound to it. A candidate may come your way which may not fit the rigid guidelines of your Pastor Profile. The value of the Pastor Profile is that it is a concise summary of your self-study results and what you may feel the Holy Spirit has been saying to you.<sup>50</sup>*

It is also important to be realistic. It has been estimated that 50 percent of all pastors reach a point of emotional burnout by the fifth year of their ministry. Another sad statistic suggests that 80 percent of all pastors leave pastoral ministry before retirement.<sup>51</sup> Another authoritative study found that the average tenure of a pastor in America is six years.<sup>52</sup> The main reason is related to not being able to meet the increasingly high and unreasonable expectations of boards and congregants. Following are some additional points to consider:

### A. Matters to be considered.

- 1. Past history, present condition, future vision.** Where is the church spiritually at this point in its history and where does it wish to go are essential questions to be considered. For instance, if the previous pastor was strong in outreach, you may want a pastor who can continue with that same emphasis; or you may want one with a strong teaching or discipleship ministry. A key question to ask is, "Where does the church need to go?" When you discern that, then you look to see if prospective candidates can take you there.
- 2. Experience, education, preparedness, and level of ministerial credential.** What kind of experiences and skills do you want the new pastor to have? What is required and what is preferred? Also, see the [Experience and Education](#) checklist under Desirable Qualities of a Pastor section. As mentioned before, make sure you abide by your bylaws regarding the level of credential needed.
- 3. Leadership style.** Each minister is unique and has a different set of spiritual gifts, temperament, and talents. The expression of that blend results in a particular style of leadership. The committee may feel that a change of leadership style is needed; but they

are cautioned not to radically change the style, especially if the church is doing well. Abrupt change can create instability, uneasiness, and defections.

4. **Communication.** What kind of preaching and teaching style are you looking for in your new pastor?
5. **Church style.** Each church has a certain style. People are attending because they like that style of ministry; consequently, selecting a pastor who will create substantial deviation from the accustomed approach can be counterproductive. However, when a church has reached a plateau or is declining, a change may be in order.
6. **Community culture.** Some ministers will fit more comfortably in a rural setting and others in a suburban or metropolitan culture. Some know how to fit in, but others struggle to adapt. Some thrive in an isolated setting while others are always yearning for the city. Know your culture and the candidate well enough to know whether they can adjust. Which of these six ministry contexts does your church best align with?
  - **Rural.** A rural area or countryside in a geographic area that is located outside of larger towns and cities. Typical rural areas have a low population density and small settlements.
  - **Sub-rural.** Geographic areas with larger populations that exist in-between metropolitan areas and rural communities. They feel sort-of country but are not officially considered country.
  - **Suburban.** Areas that are usually smaller cities that exist outside, but immediately adjacent to, a larger metropolitan city. They generally consist of residential districts with single-family dwellings, have a lower population density, their own governing municipalities and community services.
  - **Urban.** Communities that exist within the boundaries of a large city, are highly congested and often contain redeveloped high-rises and pricy real estate.
  - **Inner city.** An area near the center of a city, especially when associated with social and economic problems. These areas have a higher density of buildings, lack open spaces, have gridiron street patterns, as well as low-cost and poor quality of housing.
  - **Tourist.** Once thriving, mining, logging, trading, or geographically unique towns that are tourist, gaming, or outdoor enthusiast destinations. These towns tend to have a small population whose work is connected with the particular tourist economy that may exist there.

Not every applicant will feel comfortable in all of these unique cultures. Identifying those who do will help. Remember, past performance is the best predictor of future success.



7. **Other considerations.** The board may want to prioritize other considerations like theology, spiritual disciplines, marriage health, creativity, charisma, compassion, sense of humor, collaborative skills, learning capacity, builder, strategic, or administrative.
8. **Spousal expectations.** Typically, pastor's spouses are willing to give of themselves to the work of the church; however, this should not be taken for granted. If she/he is expected to perform a specific function in the church, it should be communicated clearly and whether this is to be financially remunerated or not. As you consider this, ask yourself, "Would my spouse want to be forced to do a task/some ministry?" The answer probably is no. They would want to be involved in the areas of their giftedness and passions. The same holds true for most anyone, including a pastor's spouse.

Once a pastoral profile has been developed, the committee can use it as a grid by which to evaluate prospective pastors. The profile should never be so rigid as to disallow promising candidates. It should not be so detailed and lofty that only Jesus would be able to measure up, but it can be a helpful tool in the selection process. Gene Roncone, district superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, notes that he has seen several pastoral profiles over the years. He's noticed that those of larger and growing churches tended to be shorter, tighter, and more concise while those of smaller and plateaued churches were often longer, detailed, and more verbose.<sup>53</sup>

**B. Sample pastoral profiles.** Your pastoral profile can be listed by desired qualities in prioritized order or by categories as exemplified below.

1. **Organized by desired qualities.** Following is a sample lead pastor profile that was used for a church of about 150 people in Windsor, Colorado. The ideal profile for this church consisted of the following characteristics in prioritized order:
  - Ordained and in good standing with the Assemblies of God
  - Lead pastor experience
  - Strong family and core values
  - A person of faith and prayer
  - Loves people
  - Inspirational communicator
  - Outstanding leadership skills
  - Able to mentor and develop leaders
  - Creative
  - Able to resolve conflict
  - Education (college/seminary or equivalent)
  - Cultural fit

- Contemporary ministry philosophy
- Experienced in church growth
- Missions minded

**2. Organized by category.** Another possible way to organize the profile is by categories like the following sample.<sup>54</sup>

**Position Summary:**

The lead pastor of CPC is responsible for the overall spiritual and executive leadership of CPC's congregation and staff, the fulfillment of CPC's purpose and mission, the alignment of CPC's values, and the realization of CPC's goals. Position is accountable to the CPC Leadership Team (Board).

**Lead Pastor Qualifications:**

- Has a heart for worship, evangelism, teaching, and revival.
- Called and determined to see the establishment of God's Kingdom in our Assembly, in our community, in our country, and in our world.
- Is a visionary leader of leaders and a builder of people who can employ, develop, and release people in their areas of strength.
- Meets the scriptural prerequisites found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5:2, and Matthew 28:19-20.
- Holds credentials with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), the Assemblies of God (AOG), or one whom the executive officers of the BC/Yukon PAOC District approve.
- Has a proven track record of pastoral leadership, preferably having served as the lead pastor

**Worship Style:**

- Does not necessarily have to possess musical skills or vocal ability; however, they must be a fervent, Spirit-filled, charismatic worshipper who is supportive of contemporary and culturally relevant expressions of biblical worship.
- Endorses the use of various worship teams within the church and campus locations.
- Seeks to encourage the use of the manifestation gifts of the Holy Spirit within corporate worship.

**Pulpit Ministry and Communication Skills:**

- Can motivate our congregation to fulfill the eternal purposes of God and the vision of our assembly through the preaching of anointed, life-applicable, and scripturally based sermons.

- Is the main speaker at services but shares the pulpit and provides opportunity for others to develop.
- Is passionate about sharing and teaching God's Word in a multicampus environment where sermons are recorded and distributed through video links and the website.
- Can develop and clearly communicate the vision and missional priorities of the church.
- Is proficient in all forms of communication and supporting technologies.
- Demonstrates effective communication and public relations skills.
- Demonstrates proficiency with conflict resolution and has strong people skills.

#### **Administrative and Leadership Skills:**

- Can develop a management leadership team to lead and execute CPC's global activities, ensuring that all required skills are developed.
- Can establish and promote teamwork and relationship as core values of staff and volunteers.
- Possesses efficient time management skills required to accomplish objectives in a fast-paced environment.

#### **Pastoral Care and Focus:**

- Can build, teach, and develop a core group of leaders who would assist in meeting the needs of our people and extending God's Kingdom.
- Is a visionary leader who can deploy people in their areas of strengths and keep them accountable to the vision and goals of CPC.
- Can nurture strong relationships with the CPC Leadership Team members and together pursue a healthy, functioning team environment.
- Champions and guards the spiritual and doctrinal values of CPC.

#### **Community Involvement, Evangelism, and World Missions:**

- Considers local, national, and international missions and community outreach a priority and a core value of the church.
- Encourages the church to be involved with community events that impact the lives of all the people in the local communities that CPC serves.
- Embraces a cross-cultural ministry context.
- Promotes and expands the work of world missions and the regular support of CPC's missionaries.

In closing, one of the most regrettable mistakes search committees make is to start receiving résumés and talking with candidates before they have written and agreed upon a pastoral profile. The entire search committee must give whatever time and attention is needed to construct their own pastoral profile. That profile should summarize the kind of pastor they feel would best fit

their church. However, after the search committee creates one, they should feel free to amend the profile to reflect results of the congregational survey or significant insight acquired during the search process.

<sup>50</sup>British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 19.

<sup>51</sup>British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 30.

<sup>52</sup>Thom S. Rainer, *Six Reasons Pastoral Tenure May Be Increasing*, March 15, 2017, <https://archive.thomrainer.com/2017/03/six-reasons-pastoral-tenure-may-be-increasing/>.

<sup>53</sup>Gene Roncone, *Rise Up: A Practical and Comprehensive Reference for Pastoral Transitions and Successions*, 2023, p. 134

<sup>54</sup>British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 71.

## M. CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY ([back to contents](#))

A 2019 research project by the Barna Group on pastoral transitions found that the higher the degree of congregational involvement, the more positive congregants feel about the outcome.<sup>55</sup> Some search committees and boards make the mistake of thinking their history with the church automatically ensures that they know what the church wants and needs. Others may pridefully assume their own opinions represent those of the entire church. Joseph Umidi's research found that 12 percent of new pastors claim the search committee misrepresented the most pressing needs in their church.<sup>56</sup>

That is why the search committee should give the congregation an opportunity to submit input concerning the pastoral selection. Taking a congregational survey or "self-study" is one of the best ways this can be done. This can be easily accomplished by creating an online survey and asking congregants to participate by answering questions and giving feedback.

An online platform like Survey Monkey is one of the best ways to accomplish this for the following reasons:

- **Convenience.** It allows you to send an internet link to your people so they could take the survey from their desktop, laptop or smart phone.
- **Privacy.** Online surveys can be taken from the privacy of one's own home, are not turned in or handled by others and offers the purest form of confidentiality.
- **Participation.** More people will participate because the link can be emailed to them as opposed to passing out paper copies and having to explain it in church when some will not be there.
- **Data entry.** Having people type their own responses into the system will enable you to have the data in a digital format that can be stored, shared, and configured in different reports.
- **Evaluation.** Using an electronic format allows you to sort and filter data by different criteria (age, tenure in church, common responses, and prioritized preferences). With a click of a button, it will allow you to identify trends, patterns, and relationships in responses.
- **Cost savings.** Using the electronic format saves paper, photocopy expenses, time, and payroll costs by not having to input data or create, print and distribute reports.
- **Team briefing.** Because Survey Monkey automatically compiles results in the form of charts, graphs and online summaries, all members of the pastoral search team can read the same data and responses to open-ended questions. Google forms does something similar.

- A. Best practices survey questions.** Following is a compilation of the best survey questions that were discovered in research followed by information on how to access an electronic version.<sup>57</sup>

### **Your Church Congregational Survey**

As a part of our work in finding a new pastor, the Pastoral Search Team would like your input in describing our church as you presently experience it. We would like your thoughts about its strengths, its weaknesses, the needs you foresee for our church in the next five to ten years, the priorities you think our next pastor should have, and the qualities you believe our next pastor should possess.

It will probably take between 20-30 minutes to thoughtfully answer the questions on this questionnaire. Please consider this as an investment in helping us identify God's person to effectively lead our church in the next phase of its growth. Try to be as honest as you can. Your questionnaire will remain anonymous unless you choose to sign it.

This survey was created exclusively for current attendees and members. Please do not share this link or ask friends or family members outside our church family to participate.

Thank you for your thoughtful input. It will be carefully reviewed by the team.

Gender: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_

Age Group: 15-20 \_\_\_\_\_ 21-35 \_\_\_\_\_ 36-50 \_\_\_\_\_ 51-64 \_\_\_\_\_ 65+ \_\_\_\_\_

# of years a Christian \_\_\_\_\_

# of years you attended our church \_\_\_\_\_ # of years a member \_\_\_\_\_

- 1. Strengths.** Please identify three or more areas in which you believe this church meets your needs or the needs of others well.
- 2. Challenges.** Please identify one or more areas in which you believe this church is not meeting your needs or the needs of others well.
- 3. Outstanding problems.** Are there any problems within the congregation you believe the board or the next pastor should attempt to address? If no, leave blank. If yes, please be specific in explaining them.
- 4. Future ministries.** What ministries will the church need in the next five to ten years that it does not have now?
- 5. Christian growth.** In what areas of Christian living do you think you need to be challenged to grow by the ministry of the next pastor?

**6. Church health and interim priorities.** To help your board better understand the congregation's assessment of the church's health, a special segment of questions has been added to the online survey. The section reflects some of the thinking behind Ken Moberg's intentionality grid and covers the following categories.<sup>58</sup>

*(Examples of these are given on the sample survey listed further in this section)*

- Relationship between leadership
- Pastor's departure
- Length of pastor's tenure
- Location of former pastor
- Unity within the church
- Maturity of leadership
- Nature of leadership
- Leadership meetings
- Clarity of vision
- Annual business meetings
- Growth history
- Effective evangelism
- Priority of vision
- Willingness to change
- Multi-generational
- Intentional discipleship
- History and vision relationship
- Inward and outward focus

The responses are scored in a way that will help your team determine if an interim pastor is needed, what issues may need to be addressed, and your congregation's general assessment of the church's health.

**7. Pastoral priorities.** Pastoring has never been more difficult, and ministers are often expected to do much more than their time will permit. Consequently, they often must choose between competing priorities. In this process, it is helpful for them to know what their congregation views as the most important priorities. This question lists the most time-consuming pastoral duties and asks your congregants to prioritize them as either a low, moderate, or high priority.

- **Preaching and teaching** (study, preparation, and sermons)
- **Pastoral care** (hospital, emergencies, and in-home visitations)
- **Officiating** (weddings, baptisms, baby dedications, and funerals)
- **Counseling** (One-on-one pastoral care)
- **Volunteer development** (recruiting, motivating, and training volunteers)
- **Service planning** (planning all-church worship and social meetings)
- **World missions** (missions awareness, speakers and fundraising)
- **Outreach** (community outreach and evangelism efforts)
- **Discipleship** (classes, curriculum, and small groups)
- **Leading** (staff, board, committees, and ministry leaders)
- **Church administration** (finances, facilities, policies, and structures)
- **AG networking** (participation in denominational meetings, events, and gatherings)
- **Conflict resolution** (intervention, confrontation, and resolution)
- **Fundraising** (developing tithes, offerings, and missions giving)

- **Pastoral development** (training, seminars, books, and conferences)
- **Crisis management** (unexpected emergencies and developments)
- **Exterior meetings** (outside requests for donations, support, partnerships, or volunteer sharing)

**8. Female pastors.** Would you be willing to consider a woman as your lead pastor? Please explain your reason for either yes or no.

**9. Rehabilitated leadership.** Would you be willing to consider a minister who has been successfully rehabilitated and restored to ministry after a moral failure? Please explain your reason for either yes or no.

**10. Divorce.** Would you be willing to consider a minister who has been divorced? Please explain your reason for either yes or no.

**11. Desired qualities.** Based on your knowledge of our church, its present strengths and weaknesses, and the needs we may have in five to ten years, please identify the qualities you think are important for our next pastor to have.

**12. Additional comments.** Do you have any additional comments you would like the Search Team to consider? If so, please write them here.

Please leave your name below if you feel comfortable doing so. Your name will only be used in the event we need to get clarification regarding any of your responses. Your name will only be known to the Search Committee, and your answers will be kept strictly confidential. We very much value your candor and input.

Thank you for your time. Your responses will be carefully considered by the Search Team.

**B. Free online version.** The Wyoming Ministry Network has an electronic document that can be used as a template for an online version of a congregational survey. Directions are given on how to create it on google forms. You can customize it with your church name, logo, and color scheme. See the “Sample Congregational Survey” on the “[Digital Resources](#)” section of our website.

**C. Invitation to participate.** Remember, you only want current church members and not those who left the church or are from outside the church taking the survey. So, be careful not to advertise it too widely outside the church as that will only skew the authenticity of the feedback. Customize the text below and use it to send an invitation to your congregants to participate in the congregational survey.



## THE PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM WANTS YOUR FEEDBACK

As a part of our work in finding a new pastor, the Pastoral Search Committee would like your input in describing our church as you presently experience it. We would like your thoughts about its strengths, its weaknesses, the needs you foresee for our church in the next five to ten years, the priorities you think our next pastor should have, and the qualities you believe he/she should possess. This survey was created exclusively for current attendees and members. Please do not ask friends or family members outside our church family to participate or share this link.

<<<< insert your customized hyperlink here >>>>

<<<< also insert your QR code here >>>>

Thank you for your thoughtful input. It will be carefully reviewed by the committee.

The Pastoral Search Committee

Insert your church name here

The above text can be used in the following ways:

1. **Electronic messages.** Copied and pasted to an email, e-zine, website, private Facebook group or any other application.
2. **Paper publications.** Copy and paste the link in the Sunday bulletin, mailing or letter.
3. **Sunday announcements.** Create a QR code to the survey's URL and put the code on the screen while announcing it on a Sunday morning. That way, members can simply use the camera app on their smartphone and scan the code by pointing their camera at the screen. This will automatically take them to the survey.

**D. Sample of generic version.** You can view an example of the survey that has been created on surveymonkey and even take the survey at the link below. This can give you an idea of how to format your survey. Please DO NOT share the link below with your church. It is only a sample survey. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/riseupsample>

Congregational surveys are the best, fastest and most confidential way to involve your people in the feedback loop.

<sup>55</sup>Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 24.

<sup>56</sup>Joseph Umidi, *Matching Pastoral Candidates and Churches, A Guide for Search Committees and Candidates*, Kregel Publication, Grand Rapids, MI, 2020, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup>Gene Roncone, *Rise Up: A Practical and Comprehensive Reference for Pastoral Transitions and Successions*, 2023, p. 137-141

<sup>58</sup>Ken Moberg, *Help, We Just Lost Our Pastor* 3rd Edition, EFCA Publications, Minneapolis. MN, 2021. p. 116

## N. ADVERTISING THE MINISTRY OPENING ([back to contents](#))

After the search committee has compiled the church profile and candidate profile, the most important thing to do is to get the word out by advertising your pastoral opening. This will help to maximize networking potential and get others working for you. Following is a list of options to accomplish this important step:

- A. **Church search site.** Create a Google blog to use as the committee's primary communication platform with potential candidates. If you turn the comments off, a new discussion thread can be used for each important category listed at the end of the chapter entitled "[Communication Plans](#)" (Candidate Information Page). More information can be found at <https://www.blogger.com>. You can also watch a short video tour of this kind of blog application to advertise the opening and help educate potential candidates at [this link](#).
- B. **Open ministry websites.** Use online ministry job sites to advertise your pastoral opening. There is a cost to use them, but they can really help stir interest and spread the word. REMEMBER, your bylaws require the pastor to hold credentials with the Assemblies of God. If you do not mention that in the ad, you will be inundated with résumés from every denomination or affiliation under the sun. It would be wise to place an ad for three to four months on at least four of the following sites. You can always cancel them when they are no longer needed. [Note: sometimes the weblinks are finicky and you need to cut and paste them into your browser.]
  1. Christian Jobs.com <http://www.christianjobs.com/jobs/category/church-ministry/>
  2. Church Staffing.com <http://www.churchstaffing.com>
  3. Ministry Jobs.com <https://ministryjobs.com>
  4. Indeed.com <https://www.indeed.com/q-Ministry-jobs.html>
  5. Church Job Finder.com <https://churchjobfinder.com>
  6. Zip Recruiter.com <https://www.ziprecruiter.com>
  7. Monster.com <https://www.monster.com>
  8. Slingshot <https://slingshotgroup.org/succession/senior-leadership/>
  9. Red Letter Jobs [www.redletterjobs.com](http://www.redletterjobs.com)
- C. **Network/district superintendents and officials.** Few people know who is doing well, is available, or is seeking a new ministry assignment better than network/district superintendents. Taking the time to email each one of them will not only help you get recommendations but will also help spread the word that you are looking. This will take time, but it is well worth the effort. The search committee could hire a research assistant for 5-10 hours to gather the data. Use the following steps:
  1. Go to [www.ag.org](http://www.ag.org).
  2. Click the "RESOURCES" tab on the top.
  3. Click the "MORE RESOURCES" tab.

3. Click the "DIRECTORIES" option.
4. Click the "DISTRICT/NETWORK OFFICE DIRECTORY" option.
5. Several pages will appear listing each district/network in the Assemblies of God in alphabetical order. Click the desired district/network and a link to their website will appear.
6. Right click the website for each and open it in another window. This will take you to the website for that district. Find the place on the site that lists the district/network leadership team with their email addresses. Try to send an email to at least three leaders (district/network pastor, assistant superintendent, and secretary/treasurer).
7. Click the email address and copy and paste the following text:

*My name is (insert name), and I am on the pastoral search committee for (insert church name), an Assemblies of God church in (insert city, state). You were referred as someone who may be able to recommend a candidate to us. I have attached a bio about the church and the type of candidate we would like to connect with (or say, I have included a link to a pastoral search website that will tell you a little more about our church and the type of person we are seeking). Should you have any ideas or know anyone who would, please feel free to reply and let me know.*

Even if you do not hear back, you will at the very least have informed an influential leader of your ministry opening. They will most likely bring it up in a discussion with someone else which will result in an expansion of your information network.

- D. Top 100 pastors.** If you are a larger church, another way to get the word out is to seek recommendations from the top 100 pastors in the Assemblies of God. This has the potential to help you in two ways:
1. One of them may know of a friend who feels released from ministry and will let them know.
  2. One of them may know of a very sharp associate pastor from a larger church who may be an ideal candidate and is now ready and eager to lead their first church.

Again, use the same text you used for network leaders above. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. You can also send the email to senior staff serving at these churches. They may know of friends who feel released from their current ministry. The list of top 100 churches can be found by googling the phrase "Largest 100 Assemblies of God churches." You will then need to go to their websites to find the most recent email or contact information.

- E. Network's open church list.** The Wyoming Ministry Network has a list of open churches on our website. We will advertise your opening by listing your church, provided you submit the following items to the Network Superintendent's office.

1. Pictures of the interior and exterior of your facility that are clear and attractive.
2. Church profile with an email address where applicants can send a résumé.
3. Community profile

We then put a picture of your church and a short summary paragraph with a hyperlink to a shared internet folder. The shared internet folder contains the items listed above. This helps in several ways.

1. **Potential candidates.** It enables potential candidates to get a better feel for your church and answers to the most common questions.
2. **Increase efficiency.** It helps you save time by not having to respond to several emails from potential candidates asking the same questions.
3. **Exposure.** It helps you gain maximum publicity by leveraging the Network's exposure in other states, districts, and social media outlets.

You can see samples of listings on our open church list at this link:

<https://www.wyomingministrynetwork.com/open-churches/>

## O. RECRUITING CANDIDATES [\(back to contents\)](#)

You can't limit your pool of candidates to unsolicited résumés you receive from interested individuals. Due diligence will require you to also recruit candidates who have not contacted you.

It is important to remember that some of the most effective pastors are not looking to leave their current ministry. God sometimes uses an unexpected contact from a pastoral search team to start the process of releasing them and causing them to be open to praying about a change. Consequently, it is helpful to identify potential candidates. This will require that you initiate contact with potential candidates who were referred or recommended to the committee. It is important that every contact you have with candidates be professional, organized, and respectful of their privacy. The Wyoming Mountain Ministry Network has recommended the following considerations regarding this kind of contact:

*Most of the work of the committee is confidential until a candidate for the pastorate is presented to the congregation. By confidential, we mean that what takes place in the pastoral selection process is not shared with others, even best friends or spouses. It is a matter of integrity. Confidentiality is essential for the sake of potential candidates. A pastor may presently have a position. He may or may not be ready to leave but wants to explore a pastoral opening as part of the process for determining the will of God. If word of his inquiries to an open pastorate gets back to his congregation, his present position could be at risk. Confidentiality is essential for the integrity of the selection process. If word gets out to the congregation who the different candidates are, it is possible that some members may begin to "campaign" for a particular minister being considered. We would like to think that would never occur, but experience has proven otherwise. It puts additional pressure on the committee that is trying to make unbiased, objective, and Spirit-directed decisions.*

Following are some helpful tips to accomplish this:

1. **Call on the phone first unless a potential candidate initiated an email.** Because some pastors manage their many emails through administrative assistants, it is not wise for your first contact to be by email unless they have sent you an email first. When you call, it is likely you will be directed to an administrative assistant. If this occurs, say,

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_; and I am calling Pastor regarding a confidential matter that (he/she) is aware of. Would it be possible to schedule a short phone appointment with them or leave my phone number for them to return my call at their earliest convenience?*

2. **Ask the pastor if they are willing to "explore the possibility" of a ministry change.** When you do speak with candidates, do not ask if they would like to "be considered" or "leave their church." That is too abrupt; instead, say something like:

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_; and I am a member of the pastoral search committee from (insert the name of your church) in (insert city, state). You were recommended to us as a potential candidate, and I wondered if I could send some information about our church to your private email in the event you are open to exploring the possibility of a ministry change? We wanted to call first to respect your privacy.*

- 3. Send information to their private email only.** If the candidate expresses an openness to exploring the possibility of a ministry change, email them the church profile and pastor profile along with a request that they reply with their résumé. A sample letter can be found in the section entitled “Sample Letters” as well as a download in the “[Digital Resources](#)” on the network website.

## P. CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE [\(back to contents\)](#)

When you receive a résumé from a strong candidate (in the “A” category – for explanation see [Categorizing and Evaluating Résumés](#) in the appendix) it is good to obtain more information from them to get things moving forward quickly. A written questionnaire can give you an overall picture of promising candidates. Send the following candidate questionnaire and the [accompanying letter](#) in the Sample Letters section of the appendix. See the [“Digital Resources”](#) for an electronic copy of this questionnaire on the WMN website.

### **Your Church Name**

#### **Pastoral Candidate Questionnaire**

1. Describe how you came into a personal relationship with Christ.
2. Describe your call to the ministry and what motivates you to stay in ministry.
3. Tell us a little about your family, their interests, and ministry involvement.
4. Tell us about your favorite hobbies and interests outside of ministry.
5. Describe your goals in the next 5 to 10 years—touching on your personal goals, educational goals, marriage and family goals, ministry goals.
6. What formal education do you have?
7. What is your current credential status with the Assemblies of God (certificate of ministry, licensed, or ordained), and how long have you been at this level?
8. Why have you chosen to do ministry through the Assemblies of God?
9. Please comment on the growth your current ministry has experienced under your leadership.
10. Please tell us about the primary demographic of the community your current ministry is in.
11. Every pastor has ministry priorities that tend to follow them wherever God may call them. What are yours?
12. Every pastor seems to have a “life theme” that overlaps their preaching, leadership, and communication. What is yours?
13. What are your primary spiritual gifts, and how have you seen the Lord use them in pastoral ministry? What are your spouse’s primary spiritual gifts and in what ways have they been involved in ministry over the last two years?
14. What primary methods do you use to achieve corporate worship, discipleship, service, outreach, and international missions?
15. If numerical values did not characterize either good or bad and Spirit-filled ministry were represented on a scale of 1-10 with a more seeker-sensitive model being on the lower end of that and an aggressive revival model being on the high end, where (what number) would you find yourself most comfortable?
16. What do you feel are the core responsibilities of a lead pastor?
17. How do you preach (e.g., expository, topical, doctrinal)?
18. How have you led your church to reach nonbelievers in your community?
19. How have you intentionally discovered the unique needs, characteristics, and emerging trends within your community? How have you led the church to meet those needs?

## Q. CANDIDATE COVER PAGE [\(back to contents\)](#)

If you feel overwhelmed by résumés, a candidate cover sheet may help you keep track of the progress of each candidate. This can be an electronic document kept in candidate folders or a paper version placed in a three-ring binder with dividers labeled A, B and C. Following is a sample that can be modified or even downloaded in the section entitled, "[Digital Resources](#)."

Candidate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_  
Current District \_\_\_\_\_  
Current District/Network Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Source (applied, recommended, or enlisted): \_\_\_\_\_

### **List Date**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Pastor's résumé with references received
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Letter acknowledging receipt of résumé sent
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Internet links with sermons received
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Second verification letter sent
5. \_\_\_\_\_ First elimination decision
6. \_\_\_\_\_ If definite "no," send non-acceptance letter
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone references completed
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Superintendent reference completed
9. \_\_\_\_\_ Sermon evaluations completed:  
    Committee member 1 (Initials) \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_  
    Committee member 2 (Initials) \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_  
    Committee member 3 (Initials) \_\_\_\_\_ Score \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_ Second elimination decision
11. \_\_\_\_\_ Candidate questionnaire sent to "A" list candidate/Questionnaire received \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule of first phone interview
13. \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule of second phone interview
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule of phone video interview
15. \_\_\_\_\_ Run Background check if a top 3 candidate (be sure to have them sign the release)
16. \_\_\_\_\_ Contextual visit to candidate's church to observe their ministry
17. \_\_\_\_\_ Schedule of personal interview
18. \_\_\_\_\_ Decision based on personal interview
19. \_\_\_\_\_ Notification of decision sent

SPECIAL NOTES:

---

---

---

---



## R. EXPOSURE TO SPEAKING MINISTRY [\(back to contents\)](#)

If the lead pastor is to be the primary communicator of your church, it is important that the search committee be exposed to the preaching and teaching ministry of serious candidates. It would be wise for the search committee to request that links to the preaching ministry of all candidates be imbedded as hyperlinks right into the body of the candidate's résumé. Your team will want to listen to as many sermons as possible for candidates in the "A" category. Do not interview anyone until you have been exposed to their speaking ministry in some way, shape, or form *more than one time*.

- A. **Sources of exposure.** Go to the church's website to view or listen to sermons. Googling different variations of the person's name may also give you access to podcast, audio, or video files from previous ministry positions or speaking engagements. Be sure to check their church and personal social media pages as well.
- B. **Review team.** Appoint different members of the search committee to listen and watch sermons and report their thoughts and impressions back to the committee. A sermon evaluation form is on the next page or can be downloaded from the "[Digital Resources](#)" section of our website. Printing it out and recording your impressions of the message will help your team remember this candidate's communication style should you need to reference it later.
- C. **Live experience.** For candidates who make your final list of two or three, it is important to hear them live in their own setting. A member or small team should visit the church where the candidate ministers to personally see, hear, and feel the vibe of the candidate in their own ministry setting. Before planning your trip be sure to call the church and find out who is preaching the Sunday you plan to be there. When you arrive, the group should not cluster together or do anything to draw attention to themselves. No contact should be made with the candidate, nor should they receive prior notice. Slip in right when service is starting and leave the service promptly. If asked where you are from, just say you are visiting with friends in town (with your friends being the other committee members joining you). The team will also want to swing by the facility after hours to see how well things are kept up and to get a feel for the life of the church.
- D. **Perspective.** It is important to remember that you cannot judge a person's preaching ministry by one sermon. That is why the same people who are evaluating should also listen to more than one message from the same person. You will also want more than one person from the committee to do this as we all have different preferences and tastes.

## SERMON EVALUATION TOOL

As members of the search committee, listen to or watch the candidate's sermons and report back to the committee with your prevailing impression regarding the following questions.

Candidate's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Video or Audio \_\_\_\_\_  
 Message Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Message \_\_\_\_\_

Style of Message: (check one)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Expositional (explaining the biblical context, meaning, and application of the passage)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Topical (on a topic supported by various Scriptures)

Was the sermon primarily based on: (circle one)

Scripture                      Enthusiastic passion                      Storytelling                      Personal experiences

For the next questions, use the following scale, then compute the average at the bottom.

Exceptional - 5                      Average - 3                      Serious Deficiency - 1  
 Above Average - 4                      Below Average - 2

CRITERIA	RATING
<b>Introduction:</b> captures my attention and interest, makes me want to hear the rest of the sermon.	
<b>Use of Scripture:</b> uses scripture to make, clarify and illuminate points, seem to be used in context. The message is scripturally sound.	
<b>Logical continuity:</b> points of the sermon build logically and follow one another. The message was easy to follow.	
<b>Clarity:</b> the points of the sermon are clear.	
<b>Theme:</b> were you able to identify one "big idea" of the message?	
<b>Use of illustrations:</b> illustrations are captivating and used to clarify or deepen the impact of a point.	
<b>Use of humor:</b> humor, if used, is appropriate to the setting and points of the sermon.	
<b>Use of self-disclosure:</b> if speaker uses him or herself as an illustration, it helps make the sermon more meaningful.	
<b>Use of vocal inflection:</b> adds appropriate emphasis and interest to the sermon, does not scream or scold audience.	
<b>Mannerisms:</b> (If video) mannerisms/gestures enhanced presentation, not distracting.	
<b>Length:</b> was the message too short, too long, or just right?	
<b>Relevance:</b> the theme and message were relevant to real life.	
<b>Our Church:</b> would our church like, understand, and support this type of preaching?	
<b>Interest level:</b> I want to hear more from this candidate.	
<b>TOTAL</b>	
<b>AVERAGE</b> (TOTAL DIVIDED BY 14)	

## S. CATEGORIZING & EVALUATING RÉSUMÉS [\(back to contents\)](#)

If networking, advertising, and recruiting is done properly, the search committee should expect to receive several résumés. Out of the résumés received, small churches can expect to connect with at least three worthy candidates. Medium sized churches can expect to get between 15-20, and larger churches will receive between 25-50 résumés from worthy candidates.

Several dynamics have converged to create a national shortage of lead pastors.

- **Boomer retirement.** The present and future wave of baby boomer ministers retiring<sup>59</sup>
- **Covid burnout.** The exodus of younger and near-retirement age ministers in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis.
- **Skyrocketing cost of education.** The cost of Bible college has skyrocketed in the last four decades. Superintendent Phil Schneider of the Illinois Assemblies of God notes that, “A college education, adjusted for inflation from 1980 should cost \$45,000, instead of the \$160,000 it costs today.”<sup>60</sup> A minister’s salary just can’t service student loan payments for a debt that high.
- **Neglect of local churches.** Most local churches no longer preach, teach, or invite people to explore the call of God as a vocation.

That means you will need to do three things:

- 1) You should manage expectations regarding the number of résumés you receive.
- 2) You must be prepared to act swiftly when engaging promising candidates.
- 3) You should remember you’re probably not the only one talking to an outstanding candidate. *So be prepared, don’t waste time, and make a good first impression.*

You will also need to be prepared for the evolution of the résumé. Résumés are no longer confined to paper or electronic documents. Some candidates may have created a splash page, web-résumé, or YouTube channel to introduce themselves. Those electronic sources will enable you to download their résumés, listen/watch sermons, and get other valuable information about the candidates. If not, be sure to request a résumé in PDF format. The committee should then go through the process of organizing candidates in categories of A, B, and C.

**A = Strong candidate worthy of contact and exploration.** These are candidates the search committee feels have great potential. The candidate matches the pastoral profile well, has experience that is beneficial to the church, and is highly regarded by others. A letter or email is immediately sent to the candidate informing them that their résumé has been received and giving them a brief description of your church’s search process. This [receipt of résumé letter](#) is found in the “Sample Letters” in the appendix. Should the search committee find immediate interest in a résumé and want to accelerate the process, we would suggest sending a letter that combines the receipt of résumé letter with [one that asks the candidate](#)

[to return](#) a “[Candidate Questionnaire](#)” which is explained in the appendix of the same title. It is also available as a document download in the “[Digital Resources](#)” section.

There should never be more than five (5) candidates in your “A” category. If you already have five “A list” candidates and want to add a sixth person, the committee must come to agreement on one person who will be downgraded to the “B list.”

**B = Possible candidate to be considered later.** These are candidates the search committee feels have merit or that the committee does not have consensus concerning their potential. They seem to have a few of the characteristics mentioned in the profile but less than others. They are not dismissed but rather placed “on hold” until the committee feels they merit reconsideration. A letter or email is immediately sent to the candidate informing them that their résumé has been received and giving them a brief description of your church’s search process. Your “B” category should also never be more than three-five people.

**C = Unqualified or undesirable candidates to be dismissed immediately.** These are candidates whose résumé and information immediately reveal that they do not show compatibility with the pastor profile, experience required, or culture of your church and community. They may lack the education, experience, or maturity to lead your church. A letter or email is immediately sent thanking them for applying and informing them that the committee feels led to move in a different direction. See the example in the appendix entitled “[Sample Letters](#)” as well as in the “[Digital Resources](#)” section.

It is important that the search committee decide to which category each candidate will be assigned as a whole and not delegate this task to a single member or smaller group. Each categorization decision should be made by an official vote of the committee. For sample letters to confirm receipt of a résumé and notification of concluding interest, see the appendix entitled “[Sample Letters](#).” These are also available as downloads in the “[Digital Resources](#)” section.

The North Texas District of the Assemblies of God recommends an excellent form to help search committees evaluate résumés. Each member of the committee should be given a copy of the résumés and complete the evaluation form on the next page.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup>Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 10.; Expand Consulting Partners, *Tsunami, Open Secrets to Pastoral Succession & Transition*, Expand Publishing, 2022, pp 15-16; Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. xix.

<sup>60</sup>August 28, 2022, email from Superintendent Phil Schneider of the Illinois Assembly of God in response to a discussion thread on the AG District Superintendents private Facebook group.

<sup>61</sup>Mike Harper, *Passing the Baton: Transition in Leadership*, North Texas District, p. 62.

## Candidate Résumé Evaluation

Name of Candidate \_\_\_\_\_ Date Received \_\_\_\_\_

- Give your perception of the candidate based on the following indicators below.
- A score of 1 is the lowest and a score of 5 the highest.
- If you are vacillating between scores, you may average the two (example: 2.5, 4.5).

**Poor = 1 / Fair = 2 / Average = 3 / Good = 4 / Exceptional = 5**

1. How well does the candidate portray spiritual insight/wisdom?..... \_\_\_\_\_
2. How would you evaluate the candidate's character/integrity? ..... \_\_\_\_\_
3. How well does the candidate communicate verbally or in writing? ..... \_\_\_\_\_
4. How well does the candidate exhibit organizational/administrative skills? ..... \_\_\_\_\_
5. How capable does the candidate seem at managing others? ..... \_\_\_\_\_
6. How well does the candidate recruit, assess, and train leaders? ..... \_\_\_\_\_
7. How would you evaluate the candidate's ability to relate with other  
spiritual, secular, and governmental entities? ..... \_\_\_\_\_
8. How well does the candidate meet the qualifications for the position? ..... \_\_\_\_\_
9. How do you rate the candidate overall? ..... \_\_\_\_\_

**Total score out of a possible 45: \_\_\_\_\_**

## T. CHECKING REFERENCES ([back to contents](#))

One of the most important but overlooked tasks of the search committee is doing thorough reference checks on candidates they are seriously considering. Neglecting or glossing over the reference process has the potential to sabotage the entire search. Gene Roncone, Superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network shares this story:

*I remember one instance where a candidate from another state applied for every open church in our Network. In addition to receiving positive references, three of the churches asked me to contact the candidate's District Superintendent to confirm that the success reflected in the résumé and references were accurate. In each case, I learned the candidate had a track record of negligent leadership and declining churches. The churches that double-checked ended up dodging a bullet that another church would have been wise to duplicate. But one did not. Instead of calling my office to get a reference, they scheduled the minister to candidate and then informed me after he had already been elected. My heart sank when I read their email informing me of the name of their new pastor. I wish the story had a happy ending, but it did not. The candidate resigned after two months and plunged the church right back into the pastoral search process.<sup>62</sup>*

Author and search specialist Robert Dingman suggests the following reasons why search committees neglect due process.<sup>63</sup>

- **Naivety.** Christians are inclined to believe the best about people, and search teams assume the information ministers give is accurate.
- **Pretentiousness.** The search committee and candidates put their best foot forward and conceal their flaws and limitations.
- **Laziness.** Good reference checking takes time, courage, and skill. Some just don't want to do it.
- **Pride.** Search committees have members who have hiring experience and overestimate their intuition and ability to "read people."
- **Weariness.** Some search committees get tired of looking and want the search to be over.
- **Ostrich effect.** The committee becomes too vested in a candidate to risk hearing anything that might disqualify them and cause the search process to go longer.

To avoid these tendencies, it would do your team well to appoint someone from your committee who has the courage and time to ask probing questions and follow up on all references.

It is very important that the committee call possible ministry, employment, and character references for all candidates in the "A" category. It is also important to do background checks on the final three candidates. Do not agree to ANY in-person interviews before all references are checked. In addition, do not forget to do reference checks on any candidates from the "B"

category that the search committee decided to revisit later in the process. Following are some suggestions on how to check references:

- A. Calling references.** In most all cases, references provided by the candidate will produce positive recommendations. That is why you must take the time to dig deeper. Author Henry Virkler gives excellent advice when calling references for pastoral candidates:

*Many Pastoral Search Committees fail to fulfill their mandate by not checking references which the candidate has supplied. Several things need to be kept in mind. First, the ones who are listed as references are most likely friends of the candidate and would not wish to hinder their chances to be involved in any ministry position. Secondly, people are fearful of relational or legal repercussions if their comments were misrepresented. With these things in mind, be encouraged to do all your reference checks by phone. When speaking to a reference, the first task is to assure him or her of complete confidentiality. Nothing that they say will get beyond the committee or to the candidate without the reference's expressed permission. The telephone conversation includes a lot of communication which a letter fails to achieve. The confidence, hesitation, or tone in the voice of the one giving the reference when responding to questions by the committee member can be a means to gaining a fuller understanding of the candidate in question.<sup>64</sup>*

When choosing those who will contact references, pick one or two team members who are skilled in expressing themselves well and have a disarming demeanor about them. Those with good “telephone presence” and the ability to convey warmth and genuineness through their words and voice tone can help the reference to loosen up and be candid. See possible questions on the [“Reference Interview Form”](#) or on our website’s [“Digital Resources”](#) section.

- B. Calling the candidate’s network superintendent.** Whether the candidate lists their network superintendent as a reference or not, the board and search committee should seek to secure a reference from that person and not a subordinate. Request your Network Superintendent to contact A-List candidates’ district/network superintendent to get a verbal reference over the phone. See the [“Superintendent Interview Form”](#) for possible questions or download a copy from the [“Digital Resources”](#) of our website.
- C. Interpreting vague, cautious, or negative reviews.** Although most references will be hesitant to say anything negative about a potential candidate, you will need to read between the lines and look for red flags. Following are a few suggestions as to how to navigate these times:
- 1. Listen carefully.** It is common for references to try to tell you something without actually saying it. That’s why it is important to listen carefully to what they might be trying to tell you. Take note of intentional vagueness, pauses, or redirection.

2. **Tone of voice.** A lack of interest, excitement, or a generally apathetic tone can be an indirect warning sign. On the other hand, if a reference is upbeat and positive, it is a good sign.
3. **Hypothetical language.** Some references will talk in theoretical terms saying things like, “If Steve put in more time and effort, he could be a successful pastor,” or “Jan could be a huge asset to a church if she found the right role.” When you hear these types of statements, the reference is often trying to tell you to be cautious and ensure they are right for this position.
4. **Holes and inconsistencies.** Be on the lookout for anything that is inconsistent with the candidate’s résumé, what other references tell you about them, or what the candidate said about their duties, skills, and experience. If there are significant differences, you should consider asking the candidate to explain them before you move forward.
5. **Pseudo references.** Sometimes a candidate may imply that a reference is their supervisor when in reality they are more like a peer or respected colleague. If they do not enjoy the favor of their lead pastor or executive leadership, they may provide the name of a colleague at the same church who likes them but has little to no supervision over their ministry. In this case, it is best to request another reference from the candidate.

Denominational leaders can be cautious about giving detailed recommendations so it will be important to notice the absence of positive comments regarding the candidate. You may also stumble across negative or overly cautious reviews. However, it should be noted that many successful and high-octane leaders can be viewed as mavericks and even experience jealousy or resentment from their peers. It is important to ask the Holy Spirit to give you discernment and not allow one negative review to overly influence your opinion. It is patterns and repetition that should give the search committee a reason to pause.

- D. **Checking social media outlets.** Your committee will also want to review the presence, comments, and pictures of your “A list” candidates on social media outlets. You will learn an awful lot about what is important to them, how they spend their time, and any strong opinions they may have. Should you find anything surprising or alarming, do not rush to a decision prematurely. We have all said and done things we regret. Instead, use the instance to create a diplomatic and nonjudgmental question that can be asked later in a phone or live interview. You may learn an admirable or human side to the candidate you otherwise would not have known. This task is as easy as assigning a member of your committee the task of going to the major social media sites and searching different variations of the candidate’s name. Following is a list of the most popular social media networks and their web pages at the time of this writing:



1. Facebook: [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
2. YouTube: [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)
3. WhatsApp: <https://www.whatsapp.com/>
4. Instagram: [www.instagram.com](http://www.instagram.com)
5. Twitter: <https://x.com/>
6. TikTok: [www.tiktok.com](http://www.tiktok.com)
7. Snapchat: [www.snapchat.com](http://www.snapchat.com)
8. QZone: [www.qzone.qq.com](http://www.qzone.qq.com)
9. Sina Weibo: [www.weibo.com](http://www.weibo.com)
10. Reddit: [www.reddit.com](http://www.reddit.com)
11. Pinterest: [www.pinterest.com](http://www.pinterest.com)
12. Ask.fm: [www.ask.fm](http://www.ask.fm)
13. Tumblr: [www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com)
14. Flickr: [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)
15. LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)
16. Meetup: [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com)

**E. Background check.** It is important that your church do a comprehensive background check on your top three candidates. Unfortunately, we would also recommend that your church do a background check on both the minister and minister's spouse. One church overlooked this important step only to be surprised to learn after their new pastor arrived that his spouse had been found guilty in a court of law for embezzlement. Sadly, that church did not survive a string of moral and financial accusations that continued to surface years after their arrival.

A church can use the same background service they already use for volunteers; however, it is unethical to check without the written consent of the candidate. Following is an example of text that can be used on such a waiver or it can be downloaded from our [website](#):

#### **Background Check Information Release**

I hereby authorize (insert church name) to check my background and legal history with all appropriate sources. Such information may be obtained for the years of \_\_\_\_\_ to the present.

**Minister's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

(Other names minister has used, if appropriate, such as maiden name, prior married name, etc.)

Minister's Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Current address going back 5 years

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

---

---

---

---

Minister's Driver's License Number \_\_\_\_\_

Minister's Social Security Number \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Minister's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Minister's Spouse's Name** \_\_\_\_\_

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

Spouse's Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Driver's License Number \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Social Security Number \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### **How to Conduct a Background Check on a Candidate**

First, contact your insurance company to get their recommendations. Most insurance companies use a specific background check company. We encourage you to follow their recommendations, since they will be your insurers in the event that any unfortunate event would occur regarding your new pastor. If your insurance company does not offer any specific recommendations, here are a few companies that we would recommend:

<https://checkr.com/>

<https://onesourcebackground.com/>

<https://www.protectmyministry.com/>

<sup>62</sup>Gene Roncone, *Rise Up: A Practical and Comprehensive Reference for Pastoral Transitions and Successions*, 2023, p. 154

<sup>63</sup>Robert W. Dingman, *In Search of a Leader: The Complete Search Committee Guidebook*, Lakeside Books, Benton Harbor, MI, 1994, p. 154.

<sup>64</sup>Henry A. Virkler, *Choosing a New Pastor: The Complete Handbook*, Wipf & Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR, 2006, p. 117.

## **Reference Interview Form**

Candidate's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Reference's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you known this person?
2. What is your relationship?
3. How well do you know the candidate? \_\_\_\_ Slightly \_\_\_\_ Moderately well \_\_\_\_ Very Well
4. Would you recommend this candidate as a lead pastor? If yes, why?
5. What are the candidate's greatest strengths as a pastor?
6. In what areas is the candidate "still growing?" (This is better than asking for weaknesses.)
7. Describe the candidate's leadership style.
8. What are the candidate's primary passions or core values in ministry?
9. How does the candidate cast vision?
10. How does the candidate build a team?
11. Is the candidate more collaborative or independent?
12. How would you describe the candidate's marriage?
13. Does the candidate normally do \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in some of the church's greatest expectations of a pastor's role)?
14. To your knowledge, has the candidate or their spouse had any questionable behavior with the opposite sex or been unfaithful to their spouse?
15. Does either of them have difficulty handling anger or frustration?
16. Any evidence of substance abuse by pastor or spouse?
17. Spending beyond one's means in either personal or church situations?
18. Low energy level?
19. Low self-esteem? Unusual need for approval?
20. Manipulative?
21. Tends to get into power struggles?
22. Overly sensitive to criticism?
23. Can you give me the name and contact information for a couple of other people who can provide a reference for this candidate?

## **Superintendent Interview Form**

Candidate's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Superintendent's Network/District \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Interview \_\_\_\_\_

What is the candidate's current credential level? Ordained / Licensed / Certified

1. How long have you known this person?
2. Is the candidate a member in good standing in the district/network?
3. Does the candidate tithe or pay district/network dues regularly?  
*(Some networks operate on a tithe system while others require a set amount as dues.)*
4. Is the candidate known to be cooperative with the district/network?
5. Have you seen them bring new health and growth to the church they lead?
6. What adjectives or descriptive phrases come to your mind when you think of this individual?
7. What style of leadership does this individual have?
8. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the candidate's effectiveness in their present pastorate?
9. Is there anything in the candidate's past our church should know about?
  - Previous disciplinary action?
  - Voted out of another church?
  - Church split while pastoring?
  - Financial indiscretions?
  - Marital discord?

Thank you for your time.

## U. SAMPLE LETTERS ([back to contents](#))

During the course of the pastoral search, it will be necessary to communicate with candidates, references, network/district officials, and others. It is important that all potential candidates receive communication in a timely manner. Word gets out if search committees fail to update candidates or confirm receipt of résumés, emails, or letters. Be sure to be polite, timely, and efficient in communication. Realizing it's easier to make something better than to create it, we have provided several form letters that can be used as templates for the following occasions:

- [Letter retaining paid pastoral and support staff during the transition](#)
- [Letter to community leaders](#)
- [Letter to guest speakers](#)
- [Letter asking Network/District Offices & other people for recommendations](#)
- [Letter to a person recommending a candidate](#)
- [Letter to acknowledge receipt of résumé](#)
- [Request to complete pastoral questionnaire](#)
- [Letter to non-selected candidates](#)
- [Letter to recruited candidate who expresses interest after church initiates a phone call](#)
- [Letter to candidate dismissed after interview\(s\)](#)
- [Notification of candidate to the church body](#)
- [Notification to the Wyoming Ministry Network](#)

In addition to the sample correspondence on the following pages, each letter can be downloaded as a customizable Microsoft Word document in the Sample Letters section of the “[Digital Resources](#)” on the WMN website. Feel free to tailor them for your own needs.

## **Letter Retaining Paid Pastoral and Support Staff during the Transition**

It is common for pastoral and support staff to experience anxiety during a pastoral transition. The search committee can head this off quickly by sending them a letter similar to the one below. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear (Insert staff person's name here)

The resignation of a lead pastor is always a little unsettling and creates many challenges. We are sure it has raised a few questions in your own mind as well. One question we do not want you worrying about is your job status.

On behalf of the church board, I am asking that you stay on in your present position during the transition period. We need you now more than ever. We do not know how long this interim period will be, and circumstances could change should it be prolonged. However, at the present time we believe keeping the staff intact will help provide stability during this season of change.

Of course, the new pastor will have the prerogative of selecting his or her own team, and you could well be part of that team. In the meantime, we are grateful for your contribution and faithfulness to our church and the Lord.

Sincerely,

(Insert first and last name here)

Acting Board Chair

(Insert your church name)

## **Letter to Community Leaders**

Emailing this list of questions to your mayor, city council members, police and fire chiefs, school superintendent, principals of nearby schools, and your city's neighborhood services departments will reveal needs most church people do not think about. They will help you know the kind of spiritual leader you will need to make a true impact upon the community.

Dear Community Leader:

Our church is presently in a leadership transition and searching for a new lead pastor. We believe in community engagement, and you were among a short list of community leaders we wanted to reach out to for input. We feel confident we have a handle on the spiritual qualities we are looking for but would value your input concerning the city's current and future needs. Would you mind replying to this email with brief answers to the following questions:

- What is the most pressing spiritual, personal, and social needs people have in our neighborhood/community? *(select appropriate word(s): using both may be suitable for a large city while just using "community" is good for a small town)*
- What gaps need to be filled in our city that only a faith-based work can do?
- How would you describe the city as a culture?
- What are our city's greatest needs?
- What are the greatest dangers or threats our city is facing?
- What are our greatest strengths as a city?
- What are ways you have seen our city change over the past five years?
- What significant needs do you think our city will have five years from now?
- What are the different subcultures that exist in our city?
- What needs do most organizations in our part of town feel unqualified for or unable to meet?
- From your perspective, how can a community-minded church best help our city?

Thank you for helping us better serve our community.

Sincerely,

*(Insert first and last name here)*

Chair of the Pastoral Search Committee

*(Insert your church name)*

## **Letter to Guest Speakers**

Scheduling local guest speakers for the first four to eight weeks will give your team time and margin to consider and select an interim pastor. Guest speakers should have a good rapport with your church and will need guidelines if they are to be productive. Following is an example of a confirmation letter that can help you do that.

Dear Rev. (insert last name):

Thanks for getting back to me on your availability to preach at (insert your church name here) during the transition period. The Board wanted to schedule familiar faces and personalities that will give our people a sense of calm and confidence. The schedule will help give them time to determine what type of interim pastor they will need and may be changed to accommodate current needs. Here are a few points of information:

- 1. YOUR PREACHING DATES.** We would like to schedule you on the following dates you had open.

Date	Schedule
Sunday, June 1, 2025	name
Sunday, June 8, 2025	name
Sunday, June 15, 2025	name
Sunday, June 22, 2025	name
Sunday, June 29, 2025	name
Sunday, July 6, 2025	name
Sunday, July 13, 2025	name
Sunday, July 20, 2025	name
Sunday, July 27, 2025	name
Sunday, August 3, 2025	name
Sunday, August 10, 2025	name
Sunday, August 17, 2025	name
Sunday, August 24, 2025	name
Sunday, August 31, 2025	name

- 2. SERVICE TIMES.** Our services are at 9 and 10:30 a.m. Please report to the media team at the sound booth at 8:30 a.m. to receive your preferred microphone and get a sound check. The service team will then meet with you behind the stage at 8:40 a.m. for a team huddle, briefing, and prayer.
- 3. TEACHING NOTES.** We like to keep our teaching slides simple, so please email a brief outline of your message to (insert coordinator's name here) by the Monday before you



Speak so (he/she) can make the sermon slides early in the week. (His/her) email is (insert email address here).

4. **HONORARIUM.** We will provide a (insert amount) check for each Sunday you minister.
5. **LUNCH.** (insert name), our current chair of the search committee, will take you and your spouse to lunch following the services or arrange for someone else to do so.
6. **REQUESTS.** The Board would request that you give special attention to the following requirements that will help our transition go more smoothly:
  - We ask that you preach positive, encouraging, and faith-building messages to inspire the hearts of our people.
  - Without our prior permission, we ask that you not subcontract this invitation, trade, or introduce a co-presenter while part of the interim preaching team.
  - We ask that you be careful not to make any statements that may be interpreted as speaking on behalf of the (insert your church name here) board. If asked for updates by anyone, it would be better to reply with a comment like, “I am not a member of the search committee and am unaware of their deliberations. The search committee has been updating the church regularly, and you probably know more than I do.”
  - When your ministerial peers learn that you are part of the interim preaching team, some may press you for inside information or updates. We ask that you refrain from giving information that ministerial colleagues or potential candidates may request from you.
  - We ask that any questions you have or clarification you need regarding Sunday ministry go through (insert service coordinator’s name here) at (insert their email address here).

I cannot thank you enough for your help and am thrilled the board decided to include you in the transition plan.

(Insert first and last name here)

Chairperson, Pastoral Search Committee

### **Letter Asking Network/District Offices & Other People for Recommendations**

The following letter can be used as a generic email to send to district/network offices and the staff of the larger churches to request leads or recommendations. This can also be a creative way to identify someone who may feel released from their current ministry. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

(Insert your church name), an Assemblies of God church in (insert your city, state), is in the process of seeking a new lead pastor. As an influential leader in our Fellowship, we thought you may have a recommendation or could forward this email to someone who may qualify.

We have (attach information or create a special website) where potential candidates can learn more about (insert your church name) and our search process at (insert web address for your web/blog info page). Please feel free to forward this information to anyone you may feel meets these needs.

Sincerely,

(Insert first and last name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert your church name)

### **Alternate Version if the person was referred as a person who can recommend someone**

My name is (insert name), and I am on the pastoral search committee for (insert church name), an Assemblies of God church in (insert city, state). You were referred as someone who may be able to recommend a candidate to us. I have attached a bio about the church and the type of candidate we would like to connect with (or say, I have included a link to a pastoral search website that will tell you a little more about our church and the type of person we are seeking). Should you have any ideas or know anyone who would, please feel free to reply and let me know.

### **Letter to a Person Recommending a Candidate**

Over the course of the search, you will receive résumés and name recommendations from district officials, other pastors, members of the church, missionaries, and others. Following is a sample letter that can be used to confirm receipt of their recommendations. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Thank you for your willingness to submit the name of a possible pastoral candidate to the Pastoral Search Committee. We value your input and the committee will consider your suggestion.

We have developed a pastoral profile that we believe will help us evaluate candidates in relation to the type of pastor (insert church name here) needs in the immediate future. We will use that as an objective guide when looking at the candidate you have recommended. Please pray that the Lord will give the committee clear guidance through this process.

Sincerely,

(Insert first and last name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert church name)

## **Letter to Acknowledge Receipt of Résumé**

A letter or email should be sent within three days to all candidates who have submitted their résumés. The letter should thank them for their interest and inform them that all applications are under review, and they will be informed if further consideration will be given to them. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Pastor (insert candidate's last name):

Thank you for your interest in being considered as a candidate for the position of senior pastor at (insert church name). It is still early in the process, and we have made your résumé available to members of the Search Committee. We are prayerfully reviewing your résumé along with others we have received and wanted to assure you we will give attention to the information you have provided.

We will contact you should the Search Committee desire additional information.

Sincerely,

(Insert first and last name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert church name)

## **Request to Complete Pastoral Questionnaire**

Before conducting phone/in-person interviews, it may be wise to consider asking promising candidates to respond in writing to a list of questions to gain an overview of who they are. This allows you to hear from several candidates quickly and use time in other interview formats for follow-up questions. Caution: Do not ask all of your questions in this written questionnaire. You want to be able to ask questions in a way (on the phone or in person) that allows you to experience the candidate's spontaneous response.

Following is an example of a letter requesting a written response to a list of questions. ***This should be emailed to the candidate's personal email account*** with an electronic document of the questionnaire (see the appendix entitled "[Candidate Questionnaire](#)" for a sample questionnaire that can be used or the "[Digital Resources](#)" on the WMN website). This form helps you to see more quickly if a candidate is strategically aligned with your pastoral profile. If you like what you read, you can extend an invitation to interview. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Pastor (insert candidate's last name):

Thank you for your willingness to work with the Pastoral Search Committee of (insert church name) in the pastoral selection process. We are seeking to be thorough while at the same time praying for God's clear direction.

We are at a point where we are asking a few selected candidates to consider responding to some written questions our team has drafted. Our desire is to keep the questions pointed and succinct so that large blocks of time are not needed for their completion.

We have attached these questions; and if you are willing to take another step with us, we would appreciate your response in writing and then emailed to us by (insert deadline here). Feel free to use a Word document if that is convenient. We will look forward to receiving your response. (The next sentence is optional, depending on what the candidate has already received. Use the appropriate language if it is an email attachment or link to a website.) Also included is a brief description of/link to our process and a profile of our church and community.

May God's blessing be yours.

Sincerely,

(Insert first and last name here)  
Chair, Pastoral Search Committee  
(Insert church name)

### **Letter to Non-Selected Candidates**

During the process, candidates who are no longer being considered should be sent a letter apprising them of the decision **immediately**. A word of encouragement to dismissed candidates would be appropriate and go a long way to alleviate any emotional letdown they may experience. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Pastor (insert candidate's last name):

You will recall that we were recently in touch with you concerning your interest in our need for a senior pastor. Your résumé was one of a large number that we have carefully and prayerfully reviewed in light of our selection criteria.

However, as we have walked through the pastoral selection process, we have moved in the direction of other candidates. Thank you for allowing us to consider you as a possible candidate. We wish you God's blessing and leading as you seek where He would have you serve.

Sincerely,

(Insert first and last name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert church name)

## **Letter to a Recruited Candidate Who Expresses Interest**

If a recruited candidate expresses an openness to exploring the possibility of a ministry change, email them the church profile and pastor profile along with a request that they reply with their résumé. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Pastor (insert candidate's last name):

Thank you for your time on the phone this week. Our Pastoral Search Committee is currently seeking God's will for capable leadership for (insert church name). You were recommended as someone who may have the leadership and spiritual giftings to lead our church. I appreciate your openness to explore the possibility of God's will and have attached a church profile describing (insert church name) as well as a pastor profile describing the type of leader we believe can lead our church into the future.

We have also created a special website/blog where potential candidates can learn more about (insert church name) and our search process at (insert web/blog address). If after reviewing this information you are open to discussing this matter in greater detail, we would appreciate you sending your résumé so we may share it with the other members of our committee.

Sincerely,

(insert name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(insert church name)

## **Letter to Candidate Dismissed After Interview**

This is a template that can be used to release a candidate that is no longer in consideration following one or more interviews. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear (insert candidate's name):

The Pastoral Search Committee of (insert church name) sincerely appreciates your time, effort, and interest in the position of senior pastor.

While we were impressed by (insert a comment of some of the things the committee especially appreciated in this candidate; e.g., your heart and desire for our community and church), we have identified another candidate whose background and experience better matched our profile and the needs of our church (or: we have decided to pursue other candidates).

We pray for the Lord's direction in your life and ministry.

Sincerely,

(Insert name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert church name)



## **Notification of Candidate to the Church Body**

After the board has approved the one candidate (recommended by the search committee) to be voted upon by the membership **and the candidate has signed off on the remuneration package and agreed to be voted upon**, the board should send a letter to the church informing them that they have identified a candidate. The letter should inform the church of the candidate's name, the date they will be presented to the church, and how they can become better acquainted with the candidate. The candidate's background info and your bylaws specific requirements will need to be included in with this notification. Following is a template that may be helpful. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly. Besides sending this to all members, it can be printed along with the background information and bylaw requirements, and set out for people to pick up.

Dear (insert church name) Family:

For some time now, the Pastoral Search Committee has been reviewing résumés and interviewing prospective candidates for the senior pastor position at (insert church name). It is with joy and anticipation that we announce to you that we have invited (name of candidate) to visit our church and speak on Sunday morning, (insert date).

To allow the church an opportunity to become personally acquainted with (him/her) and (his/her) family, we have planned a dessert social at 2 p.m., Saturday, (insert date). Bring your family, and let's enjoy this time together.

A special business meeting of the membership has been called for Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m. on (insert date) for the exclusive purpose of voting on (insert name of candidate).

In addition, the following things are enclosed for your convenience:

- Background information about (his/her) ministry experience, personal background, and family.
- Helpful reminders of specific requirements in our bylaws concerning senior pastor.

Please continue to pray with us through the coming days for God's will to be done.

Sincerely,  
The Board of Deacons  
(Insert church name)

## **Notification to the Wyoming Ministry Network**

After your new pastor is elected, use the template below to notify the Network office. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Superintendent (insert first and last name of superintendent)

The Wyoming Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God

PO Box 2988

Casper, WY 82602

Dear Superintendent (insert last name):

At an official business meeting of the membership of (insert church name) in (insert city, state), held on (insert date), in full accordance with the bylaws of the church, Rev. (insert first and last name of new pastor) was elected as senior pastor by a (insert percentage) vote. Pastor (insert last name) will assume pastoral responsibilities on (insert date).

We are thankful for the leading of the Lord in this direction and the assistance of the network leadership. Feel free to contact me if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

(Insert first and last name)

Acting Chair of the Board

## V. THE LAST FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW ([back to contents](#))

After your phone and Zoom interviews, your committee should narrow down their list of potential candidates to one person who will be invited to your city with their spouse (at the church's expense) to interview in person. ***Larger churches should bring in at least three potential candidates for a face-to-face interview at different times before narrowing it down to one candidate.*** In some cases, the family may come with to this interview (at the church's expense), though parents many times do not wish to bring their children at this point for various reasons:

- Children are not the best at keeping confidentiality. When they return home, they may spill the beans about a potential transition making things difficult for the candidate, especially if either one of you discerns this is not God's will.
- Just the thought of moving to another place can upend a child's world. Leaving their friends, school, everything that is familiar can be quite unsettling. Many candidates prefer to not subject their children to this emotional turmoil until the process is at the official candidating stage.
- When the kids are with, it can be distracting for the parents as they are mindful of their children's needs. For them to be completely dialed in on the interview, any interactions with your search team, and to have the ability to process the visit together without thinking about their children, they may wish to come without their kids.

**This last face-to-face interview should not be confused with the final visit where the candidate will be voted upon by your members.** Some churches try to save money by combining the last face-to-face interview with the official candidacy. Believe us when we say this is a mistake. Should the interview convince you or the candidate that this is not God's will, you will have set your church up to be disappointed and to question your team's discernment and effectiveness. The last face-to-face interview should be just that, an interview and not a try out.

When candidates and spouses are invited, they should be housed in a nice hotel instead of a church member's home. This gives the couple private time to talk, pray, and process the visit openly without concern of being overheard.

The search committee should plan a loose itinerary that will accomplish the goals of this trip. If needed, childcare should be arranged ahead of time so the candidate's spouse can be available for the interview without being distracted. Since this interview will likely produce the lead candidate, this trip should accommodate three important things:

1. **An opportunity to deal with outstanding issues, questions, or concerns.** This would provide an opportunity to speak with the candidate and their spouse in person to address any outstanding issues or clarify past discussions. In most cases this would include any questions

the candidate may have, estimated start date if elected, finalizing agreement on written remuneration package, remaining questions, and any other outstanding issues.

2. **An opportunity for the candidate to discern God's will within the context of your surroundings.** This should be an opportunity for the candidate and the candidate's spouse to enjoy margin while they are in the community to look around, pray together, and reflect upon the visit. They may even explore housing options and try to experience the vibe of your community.
3. **An opportunity for the search committee and the candidate couple to interact.** This visit will provide a rare opportunity for the candidate and the candidate's spouse to have an informal Q&A with the search committee/board with their spouses and see how the couple functions together. In his book about pastoral transitions, Tom Mullins stressed the importance of including the candidate's spouse in the interview saying, *Years ago we realized how important it was to not only interview the candidate himself, but to invite his spouse to an interview as well. It's possible to learn so much more from the people who live with the candidate day in and day out. During the interview, ask a lot of interactive questions so you can observe how the two of them interact with each other as well as others.*<sup>65</sup> You may also want to schedule separate simultaneous fun events for "men-only" and "women-only" with the search team/board and spouses in a relaxed social setting to see how the candidate and their spouse interact with others individually.

This is a critical stage because it will most likely confirm future direction and result in the emergence of a front-runner. It will also be the search committee's last opportunity to reflect, pray, and follow up on any concerns they may have. Following this stage, the search committee should pause and complete any due diligence (background, credit, criminal, and educational reference checks) before moving forward and committing to an individual.

**NOTE: It would be best to have all due diligence completed before bringing the candidate and spouse in for the face-to-face interview as you may turn up something that your team is uncomfortable with. It would save you a lot of time and money.**

<sup>65</sup>Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 2015, pp. 78-79.

## W. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES ([back to contents](#))

The interview process can be intimidating. Knowing it is easier to make something better than to create it, we have provided an extensive list of possible questions the search committee might ask in this chapter as well as ones that the search team/board should be prepared to answer in the next chapter. If you try to use them all, you will need an overnight bag for your meeting. That is why it would be good to eliminate ones you do not like or add others you would like to address. Following are some suggestions to consider when coming up with a strategy:

- **Listen to the short coaching podcast on how to interview pastoral candidates.** It will help your team function as a group, avoid pitfalls, and host effective interviews. The link can be found on the *Rise Up* audio resource site at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>. Look for Episode 7: Five Keys to a Successful Pastoral Candidate Interview.
- **Your attitude is more important than your questions.** The spirit in which you ask questions can be more important than the questions themselves. While interviewing a candidate, be careful not to come off as condescending or as though you are relishing the opportunity to put them on the spot.
- **Everyone has weaknesses that God can compensate for and even use.** Like you, every candidate will have strengths and weaknesses. Believe it or not, God can use both to grow a healthy church.
- **Interviews are a two-way street.** It is important to remember that a sharp candidate is going to expect to be given as much opportunity to interview you as you are to interview them. Be sure to accommodate time to be fair and create a win/win situation as both sides explore God's will. The next chapter has questions that a candidate may ask you.
- **Select your questions wisely for each candidate.** Time will not permit you to ask every question on this list. They are there to help you compile a list and then assign them to different members of the search committee to ask at the appropriate time and place. You should customize your selection to match both the candidate and time you have allotted for the interview.
- **You need a plan BEFORE the interview.** It is imperative that the search committee have a plan. One way to do that is to select questions as a group as well as the order in which they will be asked. Avoid having one person ask all the questions. Each member should be assigned a topic or series of questions with others feeling free to chime in or request clarification.

- **Suspend judgments until the end of the interview.** Do not make premature decisions based on the first few minutes of the interview. Consciously try to suspend making a decision about the applicant until you have had time to reflect upon the interview.<sup>66</sup>
- **Written responses can supplement the process.** In addition to the interviews, it may also be wise to consider asking candidates to respond in writing to a list of 8-12 questions prior to the interview. This allows you to hear from several candidates and use time in other interview formats for follow-up questions. However, it would not be wise to do this with all the questions. Remember, you want to be able to ask questions in a way that allows you to experience the candidate's spontaneous responses. See the "[Request to Complete Pastoral Questionnaire](#)" in the Sample Letters appendix for an example of a letter requesting a written response to a list of questions. You can also download the letter from the hyperlink in the "[Digital Resources](#)" on the WMN website.
- **Do not drag things out unnecessarily.** Do not allow your series of interviews to drag on so long you lose potential candidates to competing job offers. On the other hand, do not move so fast that you overlook red flags.
- **Set a time schedule and agenda for the interview.** Having an agenda for the interviews will help keep them focused and succinct. The total length of any one session should not be longer than three hours with one break halfway through. A possible agenda should include:
  - Welcome
  - Opening prayer (by one of your team members)
  - Introductions
  - Questions by the committee
  - Questions by the candidate
  - Concluding comments and process update
  - Closing prayer (by the candidate)
- **Listen, listen, and listen.** It is important to listen with three ears: to hear what candidates are saying, for what candidates are not saying, and for what candidates are having a hard time saying.
- **Be prepared to ask follow-up questions.** When you'd like more information than the candidate initially offers be ready to reframe or say, "Tell me more about that."
- **Plan time to debrief as a group.** After the candidate leaves or the phone interview is finished, the committee should stay back and debrief for 15-20 minutes while things are fresh in their minds and spirits.

## **Stages of the Interview Process**

Before any kind of interviews take place, each candidate that you are seriously considering should have already completed the [Candidate Questionnaire](#) found in the appendix.

Each stage of the interview process should focus on gaining knowledge about specific themes in a logical sequence.

- **The first phone interview** should focus on identifying immediate disqualifications concerning ethics, education, experience, and doctrine and gaining a feel for the candidate's spouse and family relationships.
- **The second phone interview** should focus on the candidate's ministry values, and philosophy of ministry.
- **The third interview** over a video conference call should include the candidate's spouse and focus on the candidate's ministry focus, leadership style, and overarching ministry preferences that could be expected to be seen in any ministry position they serve.
- **The fourth interview** should be face-to-face and focus on getting a feel for the candidate's compatibility with the church culture, chemistry with other leaders and staff, their appearance, and the general vibe they leave behind. The search committee will need to come to an agreement on the date, time, place, travel, and lodging required, hosts, dress, and the reimbursement for any expenses the candidate may have. It is also important that the entire board/search committee agree and have approved a written remuneration and benefits agreement *before* this time. You want to be prepared if the candidates ask questions about the compensation and benefits.

**A. Interview #1: Phone interview.** This interview should focus on getting to know the candidate and the candidate's family, ministry experience, preferred work environment, personal convictions, and spirituality as well as identifying possible disqualifiers.

### **1. You, your spouse, and family.**

- Please tell us about the home in which you grew up. What are some memories of your parents and peers that significantly shaped your attitudes toward God, work, and the values you presently hold?
- Tell us about your spouse, how you met, how long you have been married, and how you function as a ministry team.
- Does your spouse have a career outside the home? If so, tell us about it.
- Tell us about your children, their ages, passions, and involvements. ***(Only ask this one if the candidate was very vague about the similar question on the questionnaire.)***
- Are you more task-oriented or people-oriented?

- What are three things you do to find balance and rhythm between family and ministry?
- How have you dealt with the pressures of the ministry and the high expectations of church people?
- What are a few ways you maintain a quality relationship with your spouse?
- How do your spouse and family feel about the possibility of a ministry change?
- What are ways the Lord and past experiences have prepared you for ministry in our context?
- What project or achievement do you see as your greatest accomplishment? Why do you think you were successful?
- Are you bilingual? If so, what other language(s) do you speak?

## **2. Ministry preparation and experience.**

- Tell about a significant idea you have had that you built from the ground floor up.
- Before you were a lead pastor, in what areas of ministry were you involved as an associate or assistant pastor?
- What experience do you have in leading other full-time staff?
- How many paid full-time and part-time staff do you presently supervise?
- Have you ever been under any kind of discipline with the Assemblies of God? If so, for what and what was the result?
- How have you related to the Network/District and General Council in the past?

## **3. Work environment.**

- What kind of computer skills do you have, and what software programs or computers do you use?
- Do you have a paid administrative assistant in your current position?
- What type of personal administrative support do you require?
- What office hours do you normally keep, and how many hours a week do you usually put in to facilitate ministry?
- With what personality type do you work best, and with what type do you struggle?

## **4. Doctrine & Personal convictions. (Ask all of these over the phone)**

- Are there any points in the Assemblies of God official doctrinal statement that you struggle or disagree with?
- Tell us about your view of the baptism and infilling of the Holy Spirit?
- What is your opinion about females serving in leadership and teaching positions (ministry leaders, deacons, and pastors)?
- How do you feel about political and social action in the church?



- What are your theological views on the following subjects: divorce, LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual), marijuana, and abortion?
- How do you feel about alcohol and tobacco use?
- Some people believe that when Jesus said in Mark 11:24, “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them,” it means that we can pray for healing, financial well-being, etc. and it will happen. How do you explain that some people are not healed, that we don’t always receive what we pray for?

#### **5. Personal spirituality.**

- What are the last five books you have read?
- How have you reconnected with Jesus when you feel drained?
- Which of the spiritual disciplines come naturally for you and which ones are more difficult?
- Tell us how you seek and find God’s direction.
- How do you maintain your spiritual, emotional, and physical health?

***Do you have any questions for us? Would you like to submit a list of questions you may have for us to respond to as a group? [At this point, allow the candidate to ask questions and/or submit a list of some.]***

**B. Interview #2: Phone interview.** The interview should focus on learning the candidate’s theology, ministry values, and philosophy as well as identifying possible disqualifiers.

#### **1. Influencers and role models.**

- Who in ministry has been an important mentor to you, and what have you learned from them?
- Who are your heroes and why?

#### **2. General philosophy.**

- What do you believe your primary calling is as a minister of the Gospel?
- What do you perceive the prime directive of the church to be? What do you see as your role in that prime directive? What have you done to prevent mission creep from that directive in the past?
- What are your views about how the following ministries contribute to growth: children, youth, single adult, senior adult, missions, small groups, outreach, worship?
- What do you see as the primary purpose for the Sunday morning services (evangelism, equipping, worship, etc.)? How do you prioritize resources and staff in these areas?
- What are your views on the relationship between the staff and the board/deacons?

- How have you handled disagreements with the board as well as individuals on the board?
- How would you like the board and individuals on the board to handle disagreements they may have with you? How would you prefer they express disagreement or concerns?
- What has been your predominant style of leadership (hands-on, laid-back, fast-paced, facilitator, CEO)? Give us an example of how that has played out in the past.
- What expectations do you have of the board in this type of church?
- What expectations do you have of the church concerning your family?

### **3. Ministry passions.**

- What would you identify as your three greatest passions in ministry?
- What is the most enjoyable part of your current ministry position?
- In what areas of ministry do you feel most experienced and competent?
- In what areas of ministry do you feel most inexperienced or unskilled?

### **4. Discipleship.**

- How do you personally define “discipleship?” Tell us how you have intentionally ushered people through different levels of spiritual growth.
- Do you see small groups fulfilling a specific role in the church? If so, how?
- What experiences have you had with small groups?
- How have you handled pastoral counseling in the past? How much time (weekly) have you carved out of your schedule for counseling?

### **5. Service.**

- How have you helped people identify their spiritual gifts, ministry passions and talents?
- What are three different ways you have recruited volunteers in the past?
- How have you trained and empowered people for Christian service?
- Describe your best example of a ministry, project, individual, or group that went on to reproduction and what you did to influence that reproduction?
- How do you link service opportunities with outreach?

### **6. Outreach.**

- How do you articulate the heart of the Gospel in today’s culture?
- What have you done to personally connect with nonbelievers in your community?
- What role do you see evangelism playing in a believer’s life?
- How would you go about learning the unique culture of our city, community, and church?

***Do you have any questions for us? Would you like to submit a list of questions you may have for us to respond to as a group? [Allow the candidate to ask and/or submit questions.]***

- C. Interview #3: Video interview.** This interview should be with the candidate and candidate's spouse and use video conferencing software to help identify the candidate's leadership style and overarching ministry focus. It will also help you interact with the candidate and their spouse in a way that helps you experience body language, appearance, and communication styles. For example, one video interview a search committee had with a candidate helped identify a person's inability to make eye contact and maintain a relational connection with others while talking. Another video interview helped the committee see how much a candidate relied upon their spouse to answer difficult questions. A résumé and unaccompanied phone interview never would have surfaced these traits.

**1. Reflective learning.**

- What are ways your theology changed or matured in the past five years?
- How has your ministry focus changed or matured in the past five years?
- Tell us about a time when you tried to do something and failed. How did that affect your leadership style?
- As you think about your ministry over the past few years, what tends to bring you the most joy? What tends to be areas of frustration?

**2. Roles and governance.**

- What do you feel are the core responsibilities of a lead pastor and the core responsibilities of a deacon/board?
- What is your preferred model of church governance?
- After reading our church bylaws, governance, and/or policy manual, do you have any questions? Concerns? Suggestions?
- How do you interact with the following leadership communities: staff, board officers, full board, and volunteers?

**3. Change.**

- How have you identified the need for change in past ministries?
- Tell us the steps you followed when developing a new area of ministry?
- What steps do you take when implementing change?
- Tell us about the last time you tried to implement significant change in your church. What strategy did you use? How did it turn out?

**4. Spousal Cooperation. (Ask these to the spouse)**

- Do you have a personal call to ministry? (If they do, have them tell you about it)
- How do you like to utilize your gifts and talents in ministry, what do you enjoy doing?

- What rules or agreements do you have about your spouse working at home? (doing church work)
- How has your spouse (the pastor) prioritized time with you and your children?
- What boundaries have you established to prevent the ministry from having negative consequences on your family?
- What are you most concerned about in this ministry venture?

## 5. Leadership.

- What would the first ninety days look like in this new role?
- What opportunities at our church are most exciting to you, and which would be the most challenging?
- Which pastoral traits do you feel are your strengths and which do you feel are more difficult?
- What steps would you take in addressing an unexpected budget shortfall?
- What is your philosophy of missions, and what might that look like in our church?
- How would you personally prioritize the following list of pastoral duties:
  - \_\_\_\_ Preaching and teaching
  - \_\_\_\_ Community involvement
  - \_\_\_\_ Creating new ministry applications
  - \_\_\_\_ Administration and strategic and detailed planning
  - \_\_\_\_ Pastoral care (counseling, hospital calls, weddings, and funerals)
  - \_\_\_\_ Big event planning
  - \_\_\_\_ Local outreach and evangelism
  - \_\_\_\_ Foreign missions and missions trips
- When you must make an important decision, what are the first five things you do?
- How do you delegate?
- How do you cast vision?
- How do you develop leaders in your ministry?
- How do you encourage the people who work with you?
- How do you handle mavericks?
- Do you see yourself as the main speaker, or do you build a preaching team?
- How much debt do you have and what kind of financial package are you looking for?

***Do you have any questions for us? Would you like to submit a list of questions you may have for us to respond to as a group? [Allow the candidate and spouse to ask and/or submit questions.]***

**D. Interview #4: Face-to-face interview.** This interview should be face-to-face with the candidate, the candidate's spouse, and the board and search team. It should seek to identify

compatibility, chemistry, and the general vibe of the ministry couple before deciding if they will be a candidate. In addition to the following questions, you may pull some questions from previous lists that you did not have a chance to ask.

- What is your plan for personal growth and development?
- Tell us about your most challenging ministry position. What was it like, and why was it challenging?
- Is practicing church discipline important to you? Why or why not?
- Describe your most effective time of taking a group which had low morale and the steps you took to build positive morale?
- Describe a time when a group you were leading experienced significant conflict. What did you do to bring that group into harmony and what were the results?
- Tell about a time you were significantly criticized. How did you respond?
- Based on your current knowledge of our church and community, how would you describe it to someone who has never been here?
- How do you feel about our church's current situation? Is there anything that you still need us to clarify for you?
- How would you see our church involved in the Network and General Council?
- What age category do you see yourself most comfortable with?
- After viewing our facility, did you notice anything that you feel is lacking or necessary for effective ministry?
- How do you keep the board informed and involved in the decision-making process?
- By now you have seen the written remuneration package. How do you feel about that?
- What kind of things do you feel are important for the pastor and board to work together on?
- Would there be any unique challenges you would need to overcome in relocating that we would need to know about? Examples would be spouses' job, selling house, children's education, and others.
- If you were selected as the candidate, what day would you be able to start as the lead pastor? Would your family relocate at the same time?
- Would you choose to live in the same community that the church is located?
- What are your concerns about a possible move?
- Is there anything about our church that would cause you apprehension if you were called to come here?

<sup>66</sup>A *Pastor Selection Process Model*, Ministerial Enrichment Office of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, PDF, p. 11.

## **X. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BOARDS/PST'S** [\(back to contents\)](#)

Warning! Times have changed, and the interview process is now a two-way street. Pastoral candidates are expecting the same type of due diligence, disclosure, and transparency that search teams want from them. There was a day when the search process focused entirely on the candidates. Churches expected to be able to call references, ask penetrating questions, verify facts, and do extensive background and credit checks. Candidates, however, had to take the search committee at their word and had no way of verifying attendance, financial statements, accessing references, talking with staff, and confirming the current involvement and commitment level of board members. Now the interview process goes both ways. The search committee should be prepared and expect candidates to do as much due diligence as they intend to do. This may involve a candidate's requesting:

- Current financials and a signed statement by the board officers verifying their truthfulness and accuracy.
- A bio on each board member, their level of current ministry involvement, education, and history with the church. They may also request a signed statement verifying that each board member practices the spiritual disciplines of tithing/stewardship, commitment, and active involvement in the church's ministries.
- A list of community leaders and ministers who can be called to give a reference on the church.

This is often a surprise to boards who are used to being in the driver's seat. We personally think it is a healthy development as it requires both sides to meet halfway on the journey of transparency, honesty, and disclosure. In an email correspondence about this topic with Maggie Richter, marketing assistant for the Vanderbloemen Search Group, she said, "Smart candidates will want to do their homework, ask about tangible things such as attendance and financials, and generally want to know more about the church for which they are applying. The church's response and preparedness will ultimately come down to its desire to recruit a certain candidate."<sup>67</sup>

It should be remembered that although the church is looking for a pastor, a potential candidate may not necessarily be looking for a church. The search committee should prepare themselves for any of the following questions. It is recommended that the search team request a list of questions from candidates and appoint a small team to draft answers. They should then submit them to the full committee for amendment and approval. That will allow them to be readily available as talking points or copied and pasted to emails if needed. You may also want to consider impressing candidates by providing your answers to some of these questions as an FAQ document for those who are serious contenders.

**A. Questions concerning the pastor and the pastor's family.**

1. What tasks do you feel are critical for the pastor and cannot be delegated?
2. What are your expectations of the pastor's spouse and family?
3. When should the pastor be expected to seek the board's counsel regarding day-to-day operations, repairs, purchases, or expenses related to situational and creative ministry applications?
4. Does the church have a written pastor profile or position description outlining ministry expectations for the lead pastor?
5. What are the three most important things you want from your pastor?
6. Has the church ever given their pastor a sabbatical? If so, what kind (working, study, or full) and how long?
7. What would be the two biggest challenges your next pastor will face?
8. What were the outstanding strengths of your previous pastor?
9. Will the pastor be given freedom to shape a ministry team and board that are supportive and committed to the pastor's vision?

**B. Questions concerning the interim period.**

1. What policy, financial, ministry, or staff changes has the board initiated since the previous pastor departed?
2. What leadership responsibilities has the board taken over between the time the pastor resigned until now?
3. What financial commitments has the board made between the time the pastor resigned until now?
4. What resources (books, manuals, and mentoring) has the board used to prepare themselves for the interim period?
5. How have any retired missionaries or ministers or other credential holders within the church been used during the interim period?

**C. Questions concerning the church board.**

1. Has the board received board training? If so, what kind?
2. How has the board led the church in showing appreciation to its pastoral staff over the years?
3. Do all members of the board believe in and practice tithing?
4. How will board members respond when people complain to them about a decision the pastor has made? When they agree with the person? When they disagree?
5. Is the entire board committed to faithful church attendance and participating in "all-church" events?
6. How many hours a week (outside of church service times and board meetings) has each member of the board volunteered in the church four months before they were without a pastor?

7. Has the board made any changes in governance, bylaws, or ministry structure during the time the church has been without a pastor? If so, what kind and why?
8. What made you interested in talking with me as a candidate? What is your biggest concern about me?
9. Would you describe your church as more “risk-taking” (daring) or “caretaking” (cautious)?

**D. Questions concerning church leadership.**

1. Have ministry leaders and volunteers been exposed to leadership training? If so, what kind and how often?
2. How long has each major ministry leader been in the church, and how long have they led their respective department/ministry?
3. Do any members of the board have family members who have applied or expressed interest in being the next pastor?
4. Are any of the previous pastor’s family still in the church? Do they serve in a leadership position?
5. Does your church have or has your church had women in leadership on the following levels: pastoral, deacon, ministry leader or lay leadership?

**E. Questions concerning church finances.**

1. Does the church have an annual budget? Who determines it and how?
2. What policies are currently in written form? May I have copies of them?
3. What is the church’s financial condition?
4. May I review your financial statement for the last quarter, the annual report, and the audit?
5. How does the church raise money?
6. Has the board made any financial commitments since your previous pastor’s resignation that are still outstanding?
7. Does the church have any outstanding debts over 30, 60, or 90 days? If so, to whom and for what amount?
8. Does the church have any private, institutional, or public debts?
9. Are any notes/certificates, bonds, or balloon payments due in the future?
10. Does the tithe from any one or two families of the church make up more than 15 percent of the total annual tithing income?
11. How are missions and outreach funded, and what was last year’s expenses/giving?
12. How are the ministry departments funded and empowered for ministry?
13. Over the past twelve months, what percentage of the church’s tithes and offerings (not counting other ministries or departments) is spent in each of the following categories?
  - Wages and compensation (salaries, housing, medical, dental, life and disability insurance, Social Security, other taxes, workers’ compensation insurance)



- Office management (supplies, postage, equipment, repair and maintenance, stationery, printing, information technology, communications)
- General operations (vehicles, advertising, printing, literature, entertainment, equipment, and other general ministry expenses)
- Facilities (mortgage, insurance, property tax, interior and exterior maintenance, equipment, janitorial and maintenance salaries, garbage, workers' comp, heating and cooling expenses)
- Departmental and ministries (age-level, discipleship or affinity groups)
- Organizational development (books, conferences, and other leadership development opportunities for entry level lay leaders, ministry leaders, board, staff, and lead pastor)

**F. Questions concerning the church.**

1. How long has the church been without a pastor?
2. Describe the church's greatest strengths?
3. Where do you see opportunities the church is not taking advantage of?
4. What are the three greatest threats the church is facing?
5. What is the church doing well?
6. What is the church doing poorly?
7. What improvements, if any, must be made immediately?
8. What is the average attendance for each of the services over the last three months?
9. How many tithing units does the church currently have?
10. Besides finding a pastor, what are the church's greatest needs?
11. Does the church have any policies regarding divorce, remarriage, membership, or qualifications for holding leadership or an official office?
12. How open is the church to change and growth as well as community, national, and foreign outreach?
13. Has anything ever occurred that has negatively impacted the church's reputation in the community?
14. If a call to the church were accepted, would it be for a term or an indefinite period of time?
15. What is the church's theological position on the following subjects: divorce, LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual), marijuana, and abortion?
16. How is the church different from the others in your city?
17. How are ministry, staff, and financial decisions made?
18. Does the church work with other organizations in the community? Please give examples.
19. How are newcomers assimilated into the church family?
20. What are the best things the church has done in the last five years?

21. What are the three areas you feel must be changed in the church? What are three areas that should not be changed?
22. What new ministry initiatives has the church launched in the last five years? What existing ministries have been closed in the last five years?
23. What are the statistics on church attendance for the last five years?

**G. Questions about staff.**

1. What has been the tenure of previous pastors/staff members?
2. Who are the staff and support staff responsible to?
3. Does the pastor have the freedom to hire and fire staff?
4. Do any of the staff, members, attendees, credential holders in the church, or leaders entertain personal aspirations concerning the pastoral selection?
5. What staff turnover do you think may occur as a result of this transition?

**H. Questions regarding salary and remuneration.**

1. What salary is offered?
2. What benefits are paid by the church (medical, health, dental, car, gas, other)?
3. How many work days are included in the pastor's annual vacation?
4. In addition to vacation, what holidays are included in the package?
5. Is the pastor permitted to preach at other churches, conferences, etc., a few times a year without counting it as vacation time? If so, how much?
6. Does the church make provision for moving expenses? If so, how is that determined?
7. Does the church have a policy of reviewing the pastor's salary package each year? Has it been followed?

<sup>67</sup>Email correspondence with Maggie Richter, Marketing Assistant, Vanderbloemen Search Group, January 2, 2018.

## Y. PRESENTING A REMUNERATION AGREEMENT ([back to contents](#))

At some point, the search committee will invite their best candidate to return as the committee's nominee to meet key leaders, interact with the people, and be voted upon. However, there are some important logistical matters that must be finalized ***before*** this takes place. A candidate ***must not*** be invited to be voted upon until there is a mutually agreed total remuneration package that has been approved by the entire board through a motion and signed by the candidate. *You will save yourself a lot of disappointment, regret, and embarrassment by having the candidate sign off on the remuneration package before they leave their hometown to be voted upon by your members.*

Transition specialist Jason Lowe encourages boards to err on the side of generosity, reminding them of the biblical admonition, "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14 NIV).<sup>68</sup> Art Rainer seems to support Lowe's advice noting that most ministers are underpaid with 80 percent surveyed saying they minister under personal financial burdens.<sup>69</sup>

Following is some advice on how to prepare for that.

**A. Provide a written remuneration agreement.** It is important that the search committee provide a written remuneration agreement that has been approved by the full board in the form of a motion and signed by its officers. A failure to do this accurately can start things off on the wrong foot.<sup>70</sup> Following are some things to consider while determining pastoral remuneration:<sup>71</sup>

1. Gross income of the church
2. Your community's cost of living and housing expenses
3. The average median family income in the zip code of your target area
4. Overall church debt and financial responsibilities
5. The pastor's:
  - Education and past ministry experience
  - Longevity in ministry
  - Needs in terms of family size
  - Unique needs regarding medical insurance
  - Preferences for retirement planning (Social Security/MBA/CEP)<sup>72</sup>
6. The current inflationary spiral
7. Appropriate housing allowance to live in the same community as the church
  - If a parsonage is provided and the pastor is obligated to live in it, then the minister builds up no equity. This places a hardship on the pastor upon retirement as they have no where to live. An equitable evaluation of what it would rent for can be

given to the minister to compensate for lost equity to prepare for their future.

8. Travel allowance for Network and General Council meetings
9. Expenses for attending conferences and seminars within and outside of the Network.
10. A minimum of 70 cents per work-related mile should be considered if the church does not provide a vehicle.<sup>73</sup> Since this is a business-associated expense, it should not be computed in the net income of the pastor.
11. Educational and book allowance to improve ministry skills
12. Financial and numerical growth of the church
13. Annual or semiannual review

It is also important to remember that there may be circumstances where a pastor needs additional financial compensation to assist with relocation expenses. This may involve short-term rent/mortgage assistance, reimbursement for the extra travel expenses until the pastor is able to permanently relocate to the community, rental deposits in expensive communities, and other unique needs. Talking about these needs and expectations before the election will usually lead to a resolution that is acceptable to all parties.

**B. Contents of a remuneration agreement.** A good remuneration agreement contains the following:

1. Term of office: Indefinite or voted on every (insert number) years
2. Start date for office hours and start date for first Sunday ministry
3. Base salary and housing
4. Policy for reviewing the pastor's salary
5. Participation in Social Security (paid by church or paid by individual)
6. Retirement contribution from the church
7. Moving expenses paid by the church and how they are paid
8. Convention expenses: District/Network Council (annual), General Council (biennial), Minister's Retreat (annual), Other Conferences for Ministry/Leadership development.
9. Provision of a church credit card
10. Provision of a private study or office at church
11. Policy regarding reimbursements (Including accountable plan for ministry expense reimbursements that include ministry dues to the network and General Council, and other ministry-related expenses. See [Ministry Expense Reimbursement](#) and [Ministry Expense Report](#).)
12. Hospitality allowance (include the yearly limit)
13. Mileage allowance (include the yearly limit)
14. Time allowed and frequency of sabbaticals
15. Paid time-off policy (can vacation time be divided, how much carried over, etc.)
16. Number of days for paid time off (vacation, personal, or sick days provided annually)

17. Holidays that are included and that if they fall on a day where they need to minister (like a Sunday) they can take it another day.
18. Retirement planning reimbursable expense
19. Number of days allowed to minister outside of the church (conferences, other churches, etc.) that do not count against vacation.

Preparing your new pastor's remuneration agreement is a wonderful opportunity to make an investment into future transitions. Transition and succession specialist William Vanderbloemen claims that one of the biggest obstacles to succession is the outgoing pastor's failure to plan for retirement. Vanderbloemen believes one of the best things a board can do is to invest in future transitions by including \$2,000-\$3,000 each year in the annual budget for the current pastor to receive professional coaching for retirement planning. Vanderbloemen advises boards to set this up as a reimbursable expense requiring receipts from a certified financial planner of the pastor's own choice. He also warns boards not to assign a consultant or use one from within the church. If a church is unable to afford that much on an annual basis, it would at least be wise to consider funding a small savings account of \$500 a year. This would then allow your lead pastor to access the balance every five years to evaluate their retirement plan with a professional. This kind of thinking makes future transitions easier on everyone.

- C. Document total cost to church and not just salary.** A remuneration agreement should outline all benefits, not just "take home pay," because they more accurately portray the lead pastor's total cost to the church. Use the template on the next page to create a remuneration agreement. You can also download it as a customizable Microsoft Excel file from the "[Digital Resources](#)" section of the PDF version of this manual.

<b>[INSERT YOUR CHURCH NAME HERE]</b> Remuneration Package for Lead Pastor Approved by the Board by motion on <b>(insert date)</b>	Annual	Month	Total Annual
<b>Cash Remuneration</b>			
Salary (cash benefit paid on 1 <sup>st</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> of each month)	\$	\$	
Housing (cash benefit paid on the 1 <sup>st</sup> & 15 <sup>th</sup> of each month)	\$	\$	
<i>Total Cash Remuneration</i>			\$
<b>Health and Medical Benefits</b>			
Medical (noncash benefit for individual and eligible family)	\$	\$	
Dental (noncash benefit for individual and eligible family)	\$	\$	
Life Insurance (noncash benefit for individual and eligible family)	\$	\$	
Vision Insurance			
<i>Total Health and Medical Benefits</i>			\$
<b>Other Benefits</b>			
Ministry Expense Reimbursement (Check paid on 1 <sup>st</sup> of the month)	\$	\$	
Cell Phone (noncash benefit)	\$	\$	
Car Allowance	\$	\$	
State Taxes Paid by Church	\$	\$	
Federal Taxes Paid by Church	\$	\$	
Retirement Contribution	\$	\$	
Disability Insurance	\$	\$	
Reimbursable Annual Retirement Planning and Consultation	\$	\$	
<i>Total Other Benefits</i>			\$
<b>TOTAL REMUNERATION PACKAGE</b>			\$
MILEAGE: reimbursement for ministry use of personal vehicle @ IRS rate <b>(set limit if applicable)</b>			
VACATION: 28 days annually (not to exceed 5 Sundays, may be combined w/ days off & holidays)			

HOLIDAYS: (List holidays included here)
MINISTRY ENRICHMENT: Conferences and seminar approved by the board
WEEKLY DAY OFF: As communicated to the board
OUTSIDE MINISTRY: (List number of days allowed per year)
EMPLOYMENT EFFECTIVE: (insert date here)

Again, do not set a date to vote on your candidate until the entire board has agreed upon a remuneration agreement, and it has been signed by the candidate. A customizable Microsoft Excel file of this remuneration agreement is available in the “[Digital Resources](#)” section of network website.

**D. Avoiding snags in salary negotiations.** In some rare cases salary negotiations can end up sabotaging the process. Following are three suggestions given by William Vanderbloemen to consider if this becomes a risk:<sup>74</sup>

- 1. Give a signing bonus instead of increasing the annual salary.** Sometimes the board may find their salary is slightly below that required to secure a candidate. Consider creating margin and putting the candidate at peace by offering a one-time signing bonus in the amount of the short fall. This gives the board budgetary peace of mind and the candidate an opportunity to prove themselves and grow the income.
- 2. Spend a little more because restarting the search process is expensive.** One of the most regretful mistakes a search committee can make is not accounting for the immense amount of time and loss of momentum accumulated during the search process. A disagreement over a few thousand dollars is not worth restarting the process and spending more in time and money.
- 3. Do not be held hostage by someone who “needs more money.”** If a candidate presents a last-minute surprise for more money, be very careful. It may be an indication of their inability to live within their means and a tendency to see the church as responsible for accommodating wants rather than needs. John R. Cionca and Fred Prinzing wisely advise churches to “*compensate the pastoral task, not the clergy’s lifestyle.*”<sup>75</sup>

We would also suggest using a cost-of-living study by zip code, NOT by city or state. Some zip codes have a considerably higher cost-of-living index than the city or state they are in. If you want your new pastor to be part of the community, interact with neighbors, and know the needs of the surrounding neighborhood, provision should be made for the family to be able to live, work, and play as close to the church address as possible.

**E. Remember your spiritual obligation to care for your shepherd.** God has entrusted you with the care of His shepherd. It is important to remember that financial burdens will only exacerbate the pressure your pastor is already feeling. God has charged the church and the church has delegated to the board the biblical duty of caring for the gift given to them in the form of the pastor (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 9:14). In a survey of 100 pastors, not one of them had ever asked for a raise. According to Art Rainer, there are five reasons pastors choose to trust their boards to care for them in setting a salary rather than requesting a raise.<sup>76</sup>

- 1. Negative association.** They fear being associated with the few high-profile charlatans that have made the headlines.
- 2. Bifurcation.** Many ministers view money as an earthly matter outside the parameters of their spiritual obligations.
- 3. Aversion to criticism.** They fear requesting a raise will give their critics fodder to further divide the church.
- 4. Guilt.** They feel guilty asking for a raise when they are aware of so many in the congregation who are suffering.
- 5. Loss of confidence.** Church members can perceive a minister's concern over personal finances as a lack of faith.

This means your board must initiate and own the biblical responsibility of reviewing your pastor's salary on an annual basis. If you do not, it will never happen.

Additional coaching can be found in a short podcast created by the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network entitled, "Episode 8: Maximizing Your New Pastor's Salary Package." The link can be found on the *Rise Up* audio resource site at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

- F. Collaborate with the candidate to determine a plan for how a potential election will be announced.** Once your candidate arrives to be voted upon, things will move very fast, and you will have little time to plan out the steps and process for making the announcement of a potential election. Now, while you are agreeing upon the salary, is the best time to do this. Remember, this is a Kingdom development that will impact three ministries. It will impact your church, the church your future pastor is leaving, and the ministry your departing pastor will transition into. Being intentionally sensitive in this matter is so important and it justifies a separate Zoom call to collaborate and determine a plan. Several different announcement options are presented in the appendix entitled, "[Electing a Pastor](#)."
- G. Prepare the Employment Contract.** As mentioned above, when the candidate arrives, things will move very fast. Having the employment contract ready to sign after the candidate is elected and accepts the position is prudent. To do that, the contract will need to be prepared



beforehand. A customizable “Employment Contract Template” can be found in the Pastor’s Compensation Package section of WMN website “[Digital Resources](#).”

<sup>68</sup>Jason Lowe, *The Church During The Search, Honoring Christ While You Wait for Your Next Pastor*, Aneko Press, Abbotsford, WI, 2020, p. 22.

<sup>69</sup>Art Rainer, “*The Minister’s Salary and Other Challenges in Ministry Finance*, Kindle Edition, Rainer Publishing, 2015, p. 47

<sup>70</sup>Gene Roncone, Superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, shares this memory: “In one of my own pastoral transitions, I was informed two weeks after moving to town that the board member responsible to email me the salary breakdown had made an error by sending a figure 5 percent higher than the board had agreed. I was asked if I would absorb the difference and agreed to since we had already moved to town. Looking back, it was not a good way to start the relationship and gave me reasons to lack confidence in the board’s ability to make and carry out financial decisions. Years later, another member of the board brought this to the board’s attention; and they gave me a raise in the amount of the shortfall. His sensitivity was much appreciated.

<sup>71</sup>A *Pastor Selection Process Model*, Ministerial Enrichment Office of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, PDF, p. 14-15.

<sup>72</sup>In addition to Social Security and other personal plans, credentialed ministers in the Assemblies of God have access to outstanding retirement plan options with Church Extension Plan (<https://www.cepnet.com/>) and Ministers Benefit Association (<https://www.agfinancial.org/>), who are both affiliated with the Assemblies of God.

<sup>73</sup>This is the current mileage rate from the Website for the Internal Revenue Service at <https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

<sup>74</sup>William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 116.

<sup>75</sup>John Cionca and Fred W. Prinzing, *Search Counsel, A Devotional Coaching Guide for Call Committees*, Ministry Transitions, St. Paul, MN, 2005, p. 162.

<sup>76</sup>Art Rainer, “*The Minister’s Salary and Other Challenges in Ministry Finance*, Kindle Edition, Rainer Publishing, 2015, p. 47 s

## Z. HOSTING THE CANDIDATE ([back to contents](#))

Once the search committee identifies a primary candidate, they must set the stage for the church to be exposed to the candidate and for the membership to vote upon them.

### A. Schedule.

1. **Wednesday:** The candidate and the candidate's family fly into town. If the family has teenagers, it would be good for them to experience your church's youth service so they may have to fly in Tuesday if the flight does not arrive early enough for Wednesday youth (adjust this if your youth service is on an alternate night). Make sure someone hosts the teens at the youth meeting so they are welcomed warmly. If the family lives somewhat nearby, they may elect to drive; in such a case mileage should be compensated.
2. **Thursday through Friday:** The candidate and the candidate's family can meet with staff, board, or key leaders in the church as well as check out the community, schools, housing options, and any other areas of interest. Maybe do an informal dinner with the church board and spouses. If they have younger children, possibly schedule childcare onsite. For older children maybe a youth outing of pizza and bowling or board games could be planned.
3. **Saturday:** The search committee will host an afternoon dessert social for the church and its members to interact with the candidate and the candidate's family. *Note: You want to leave Saturday night free so that the candidate and their family can be well-rested and ready for Sunday.* The afternoon schedule may consist of:

2:00-2:05 pm	Welcome and opening prayer by a member of the search committee.
2:05-2:25 pm	Introduction of family members and their interests or hobbies. This makes the meet and greet portion of your meeting more prone to interaction.
2:25-3:00 pm	Open meet and greet (dessert served during this time/search team member prays over the food)
3:00-4:00 pm	Q&A with questions prescreened by the search committee that were gathered from the congregation in advance and given to the candidate to prepare responses.
4:00-5:15 pm	Concluding remarks by the candidate
5:15 pm	Closing and a reminder by a member of the search committee of the election on Sunday
4. **Sunday:** While the candidate may visit the Sunday School classes, they should not be asked to speak or teach unless they desire to do so. The Sunday service should be treated like any other regular worship service. Be sure not to add so many components into the

service that your candidate feels rushed and short on time while speaking. Schedule enough time for the candidate to preach a full message and introduce them adequately. The morning service should be led by the chairperson of the Board/PST or an associate pastor. The candidate should only be asked to speak. **Be sure the candidate knows the amount of time they have to speak.** Ask the candidate how they plan on concluding the service and work with your worship leader and band to support that purpose. Remember, all your efforts have worked towards this special moment. Following are some options to accommodate one or multiple services. Customize as needed.

9:00-10:15 am	First service with candidate being introduced by the search committee and then preaching
10:30-11:45 am	Second service with candidate being introduced by the search committee and then preaching
4:00-5:00 pm	Business meeting and election

**B. Suggestions.** Following are suggestions for a smooth visit:

- 1. Be sensitive to the needs of the candidate and the candidate's family.** There is a temptation to smother them or fill every minute of their schedule with activity. However, they will need time alone as a family to pray, talk, and get the feel of the community. Tell them you have left space in the schedule to give them this kind of time. Remember your candidate and your candidate's family need margin to process what God is doing to make important decisions regarding their possible relocation and future.<sup>77</sup>
- 2. Provide a full-size rental car.** A rental car will allow the candidate and the candidate's family to be independent and have the freedom to see the city, check out housing, and explore. If the family drove their own vehicle, give them a gas allowance.
- 3. Protect the candidate from overly ambitious people.** Every church has people who need to dominate the pastor's time, inquire about their opinion on controversial subjects, secure their commitment to a certain ministry, or benefit from the relocation (realtors, missionaries, and others). You may need to protect the candidate by diplomatically interrupting and giving them "an out."
- 4. Appoint a couple to receive and host the candidate and the candidate's family on Sunday morning.** One pastor's wife mentioned how much she would have appreciated a Sunday hospitality team for the candidating family. The church had just survived an attempted coup and split by a disappointed associate pastor. When they arrived for their first Sunday, her husband was off with the board, and they forgot to include her. "I was left on my own to wander and say hello to people. At the time I didn't know it, but the people I would walk up to and greet were the ones who were part of the church's recent

conflict, so my first initial weeks were rough. It would have been so nice to have someone help protect me from those that would eventually leave. I think it made what was supposed to be an exciting time a bit deflating,” she said.

5. **Provide leadership in the services the candidate is to preach.** The morning service should be led by the chair of the board or pastoral search committee. The candidate should only be asked to give the sermon (and the pastoral prayer if they wish). Please do not unnecessarily distract them by asking them to teach a Sunday school class or small group unless they desire to do so.
6. **Screen questions for the Q&A.** If you plan to host a Q&A, ensure that neither the candidate nor the church is embarrassed by frivolous or uncomfortable questions. Provide index cards a few weeks before the candidating visit and require people to write their questions down and submit them to the PST a week before this event. This enables the team to combine similar questions, prune inappropriate questions, and work to make sure there is good representation of the church’s concerns (one individual will not dominate the Q & A time). Then make sure the candidate has adequate time to process them and formulate answers before they are scheduled to do so.
7. **Provide activities or babysitting for their children during interview/Q&A times.** To ensure the candidate and the candidate’s spouse can be fully engaged in the interview, be sure to provide supervision or activities for their children. Another family in the church who have kids the same age could be asked to provide a fun activity (expenses paid by the church) so their children can begin connecting with others their own age.

<sup>77</sup>Gene Roncone, Superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, shares this memory: “During one of my pastoral transitions, we were flown out two times to interview with the pastoral search committee. The church set a very aggressive schedule that left little time to be alone, look for housing, or meet with the board. Meetings with several people (church architect, missionaries, commercial realtor, and others) were scheduled without our prior knowledge. We ended up having to plan an additional trip just to find temporary housing for when we arrived. Looking back, it would have been better to have allowed margin to look at schools for our children, identify temporary housing, and talk alone as a family. Most of those meetings, if not all, could have been scheduled a few months later after our young family had a chance to get settled.”

## AA. ELECTING A PASTOR ([back to contents](#))

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION:** It is important that the board and search committee follow all bylaw requirements concerning the election of a new lead pastor. They must be followed implicitly. Please double check your bylaws regarding the following topics:

1. **Official nomination.** The search committee must make a formal written or verbal nomination of no more than one pastoral candidate to the membership of the church.
2. **Qualifying credential.** If your bylaws require a specific level of ministerial credential with the Assemblies of God (certified, licensed or ordained), be sure to confirm with the candidate's Network Superintendent that they candidate qualify.
3. **Term of office.** Be sure to inform the candidate and church membership beforehand of any reference the bylaws may give concerning the term of office (length or indefinite) the pastor is elected to serve.
4. **Form of voting.** To protect the rights and privacy of all present, be sure the vote is taken by secret ballot.
5. **Type of vote.** Be sure to confirm the type of vote required for an election. Most pastoral elections require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all votes cast. However, some churches may be different. Proxy voting (others voting on behalf of another member) and absentee balloting (turning in a ballot without being in attendance) shall not be allowed in the conduct of business unless the bylaws specifically allow and prescribe how they are received, collected, and counted.
6. **Call to meeting.** The special meeting must be called by an official motion of the board. The meeting notification must list the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting.
7. **Prior notice and venue announcement.** Most bylaws require that special business meetings be announced a certain number of days or Sundays before the meeting. Make sure your meeting notification and the way in which they are distributed (mail or verbal announcement) comply with the requirements of your bylaws.
8. **Agenda restrictions.** No business other than that mentioned in the call to meeting shall be in order or permissible during that same meeting.
9. **Minutes.** A special business meeting to elect a pastor requires official minutes by the corporate secretary. These minutes should record the meeting being called to order, a roster report (number of members present), a summary of its proceedings, the teller's report (ballot report), results of the election, and motion to adjourn. The minutes should then be presented at your next annual business meeting to be received as you would any other minutes for membership meetings.

Please see the letter “[Notification of the Candidate to the Church Body](#)” in the Sample Letters section for an example of how to announce you are holding a business meeting to elect a new pastor.

The bylaws of your church will outline procedures for pastoral elections and must be followed implicitly. Any procedure not outlined in your bylaws must not conflict with the rules contained in the latest edition of your parliamentary authority. Most church bylaws prescribe *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised* as their parliamentary authority. With that said, following are a few questions and answers to common parliamentary situations that might arise in church business meetings:

**A. Why do most bylaws require one candidate instead of voting on multiple candidates?** There are many reasons why most church bylaws prohibit voting on more than one pastoral candidate at a time. Following are just a few:

1. A candidate needs the confidence to lead, and voting on more than one candidate would deprive all of them of the committee’s full endorsement and a majority vote by the entire membership.
2. Voting on more than one candidate causes factions and divisions. It opens the door for peer competition and activism on the behalf of members who favor a specific candidate.
3. The board/search committee has had more exposure to all the candidates’ experience, track records, references, and philosophies of ministry than the membership as a whole. Their exposure and access to information better qualifies them to prioritize available candidates.
4. Leading a church in today’s culture requires strong support and buy-in from those being led. Voting on more than one candidate splits the votes and deprives the winner of decisive support from at least two-thirds (2/3) of the membership.
5. Voting on multiple candidates is a long and outdated practice that has proven to have more disadvantages than benefits.

Author Tom Brennan warns against this approach calling it a “beauty pageant” that turns the pastoral search into a popularity contest, divides the church into cliques, lengthens the search process and turns the entire church into a pulpit committee of the whole.<sup>78</sup>

**B. Why must we follow and be governed by *Robert’s Rules of Order*?** If your bylaws prescribe *Robert’s Rules of Order* as your parliamentary authority, you should have the latest edition of that reference on hand for the business meeting. This will help you deal with any issues that may not be specifically addressed in your bylaws. *Roberts Rules of Order* also says:

*When a society or an assembly has adopted a particular parliamentary manual—such as this book—as its authority, the rules contained in that manual are binding upon it in all cases where they are not inconsistent with the bylaws (or constitution) of the body, any of*

*its special rules of order, or any provisions of local, state, or national law applying to the particular type of organization (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12 Edition, 2:18, p. 15).*

- C. Why can't members who are unable to be present vote by absentee ballot?** Most church bylaws specifically prohibit absentee ballots or proxy voting. If your bylaws are silent on the issue and prescribe *Robert's Rules of Order* as your parliamentary authority, you still cannot use them. *Robert's Rules of Order* states:

*Absentee Voting. It is a fundamental principle of parliamentary law that the right to vote is limited to the members of an organization who are actually present at the time the vote is taken in a regular or properly called meeting, although it should be noted that a member need not be present when the question is put. Exceptions to this rule must be expressly stated in the bylaws (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 45:56, p. 401).*

- D. Can we override (suspend) our bylaws with a vote of the membership in a business meeting?** According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, the bylaws cannot be suspended without that option being clearly prescribed in the church's bylaws.

*The Bylaws "cannot be suspended (with the exception of clauses that provide for their own suspension under specified conditions" (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 2:8, p. 11).*

*Rules That Cannot Be Suspended. Rules contained in the bylaws (or constitution) cannot be suspended—no matter how large the vote in favor of doing so or how inconvenient the rule in question may be—unless the particular rule specifically provides for its own suspension (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 25:7, p. 248).*

- E. Can members nominate candidates other than those presented by the board or search committee?** If your bylaws charge the board or search committee with screening and presenting one candidate to the membership, then a motion to nominate a person other than who was recommended by the search committee is out of order.

- F. What is the default vote needed if the bylaws do not prescribe one?** If your bylaws are silent on the type of vote needed (majority or two-thirds), you are required to default to a "majority vote."

*As stated in 1:6, the basic requirement for approval of an action or choice by a deliberative assembly, except where a rule provides otherwise, is a majority vote. The word majority means "more than half"; and when the term majority vote is used without qualification—as in the case of the basic requirement—it means more than half of the votes cast by persons entitled to vote, excluding blanks or abstentions, at a regular or properly called meeting (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 44:1, p. 379).*



**G. How should blank ballots be handled when recording the results of a vote?** According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, blank ballots should be ignored as though they were not turned in.

*Tellers ignore blank ballots and other ballots that indicate no preference, treating them as abstentions (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 45:31, p. 394).*

**H. What are illegal votes and how should they be tabulated and handled when recording the results of a vote?** According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, the following types of votes should be counted as illegal:

*Unintelligible ballots or ballots cast for an unidentifiable or ineligible candidate are treated instead as illegal votes—that is, they are counted as votes cast but are not credited to any candidate or choice. Similarly, a ballot that contains votes for too many candidates for a given office is counted as one illegal vote cast for that office because it is not possible for the tellers to determine which candidate(s) the voter prefers. Technical errors, like the misspelling of a word or name, do not make a vote illegal if the meaning of the ballot is clear. If the meaning of one or more ballots is doubtful, they can be treated as illegal if it is impossible for them to affect the result; but if they may affect the result, the tellers report them to the chair who immediately submits to the assembly the question of how these ballots should be recorded. When reporting doubtful ballots, the tellers must be careful whenever possible not to show how the decision would affect any of the candidates (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 45:32-33, p. 394).*

The total number of illegal votes is recorded on the report and taken into account when determining the number of votes cast for computing the results.

*All ballots that indicate a preference—provided they have been cast by persons entitled to vote—are taken into account in determining the number of votes cast for purposes of computing the majority (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 45:32, p. 394).*

**I. What kind of outcomes should the board and search committee be prepared to expect?**

There are several possible outcomes to the election process. But here are some tips about the election/announcement process:

- If the candidate is onsite, they should not be in the meeting when the vote takes place. At this point in time, the candidate and their family should be ushered to a private room to await the results of the vote. A nice gesture is to have coffee, juice, water, soft drinks and finger food in the guest room.
- After the voting, the results should be tallied by more than one person.
- The results should be announced in this order:
  - One board member should take the results to the candidate and ask the



candidate if they accept. If they do, the whole board (except the chairman who is still in the meeting) can come in to quickly congratulate them.

- The candidate and their family should then be taken to the outside of the sanctuary/meeting room and the results are taken into the room and read to the body by the chairman.
- The pastor and their family then enter the sanctuary to accept the pastorate.

*Note: in some cases only the candidate or candidate and their spouse may come in while their children remain in the guest room, especially if the kids are older. Realize that they just learned that their whole world has come crashing down as they will be leaving their friends and all they know. Having to process this information in a room full of strangers can be very traumatic. For example, when one minister was announced as the new pastor, the congregation was standing and applauding while his elementary school daughter was bawling and his middle school/high school children were emotionally blank on the outside as anger and sadness swirled within. If he had it to do over again, he would have let his kids remain in private to grieve.*

Following are the most common election outcomes with some suggested advice:

- 1. Nearly unanimous.** Even the strongest candidates are unlikely to receive a unanimous vote (100 percent yes). If they do, it is a marvelous wave upon which to start a new ministry. However, any vote higher than 90 percent should be considered a very strong affirmation of support and confirmation. If the candidate has chosen to be there, they should be asked privately if they accept the results of the vote. If they accept, the vote is announced; and the candidate and the candidate's family are introduced to the congregation as the new lead pastor and given the opportunity to address the membership. If they are off-site, the acting chair of the board should call them to inform them of the decision and inquire as to whether they will accept the vote before announcing the acceptance.
- 2. Barely two-thirds.** There are times when the candidate receives barely enough votes to be elected. In these cases, the candidate may request additional time to pray about the matter before getting back to the search committee with an answer. If so, the acting chair should inform the congregation that the candidate has requested a few days (be specific) to pray about the matter and the members will be notified of the decision in church the next Sunday.
- 3. Failure to elect.** On rare occasions, a candidate may fail to receive the votes required for election. These are almost always the result of either a rushed process by the committee

or a division over an internal candidate. In this instance, the acting chair must inform the membership that there was not an election and lead the committee back into the selection process. These can be awkward decisions to report, but following is a suggested way of informing the membership right after reading the teller's report:

*Unfortunately, our pastoral candidate has not received the votes required for an election. I would imagine we all feel a sense of vulnerability and disappointment. Although we may not understand how this reality fits into God's will, we must trust that God is too wise to make a mistake; and the committee will return to the selection process.*

- 4. Candidate withdrawal.** Occasionally, a candidate will either withdraw from the process or not accept the membership's invitation to pastor the church. This is usually the result of a serious red flag the candidate sensed while there or the failure to receive a specific vote they felt would be required to successfully pastor the church. There is no easy way to announce these decisions, but following is a suggestion:

*Unfortunately, after prayer and reflection, (insert candidate's name) has decided to withdraw (his/her) name from consideration and declined the invitation to be our lead pastor. I would imagine we all feel a sense of vulnerability and disappointment. Although we may not understand how this disappointing reality fits into God's will, we must trust that God is too wise to make a mistake and return to the selection process.*

Should this occur, the committee should at least ask the candidate for a debriefing interview to identify any contributing factors that could be avoided in the next round.

No matter what the outcome may be, the church will need to, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight"* (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV).

- J. Are there resources to help an acting chairman chair the business meeting?** Yes, you can download and customize the documents mentioned below that are on the WMN website "[Digital Resources](#)" in the section called "The Candidating Visit". The chairman's script also suggest scripted responses to possible outcomes of the election.

- **Chairman's script**
- **Business meeting minutes template**
- **Roster report**
- **Teller report**

- K. How can we announce the results of the vote in a way that is sensitive to both churches on each side of the transition?** Social media now enables news to travel at the speed of light. It

is important to be sensitive to both churches involved in this transition. Remember, your announcement will throw your candidate's previous church into the sea of change. A healthy transition will require that they hear about the transition from their own pastor instead of on social media. Here are a few options.<sup>79</sup>

1. **Simultaneous announcement.** Use video announcements to plan a simultaneous release on both sides of the transition.
2. **Delayed announcement.** Do not announce the result of the election the same day it occurs. Instead, inform the congregation that your church is giving the candidate a few days to pray over the matter. Announcing the result and the candidate decision a week later give their church time to mobilize and plan accordingly.
3. **Sequenced announcement.** Interested parties are categorized into four groups and notified within a very tight sequential order. The announcement is scripted, and the order and timing are agreed upon beforehand. Group categories in prioritized order are: 1) immediate family, 2) church boards (on both sides of the transition), 3) congregations, and 4) the general population. The time between each release is under five minutes. For example, announcing the election ten minutes after the departing pastor's service ends gives them the opportunity to tell their congregation themselves firsthand.
4. **Limited announcement.** When making the announcement of a potential candidate coming to try out, only give the first name with generic information about their ministry that would not enable listeners or readers to know their location. Then prior to when the vote is taken, the board publicly requests the church's cooperation in allowing the new pastor to tell his own story to their family and church by: 1) not posting or contacting the new pastor on social media, 2) not sharing the name to others who were not in the meeting, 3) announce that, "Next Sunday, at the end of service, we will take a few minutes to share our new pastor's social media platforms so you can connect with him/her at that time. Please wait to connect with them at that time." 4) Suggest to the pastor that they de-activate their social media platforms for the week before and the week after they are elected. They should turn them back on immediately after their announcement.
5. **Transparent disclosure.** Rich Guerra, Superintendent of the SoCal Network, wisely said, "We live in a day when we cannot guard against social media. Even if a pastor is prayerfully considering making a change, once they show up on the property of an open church, they open themselves up to social media, regardless of if they are a candidate or not." Rich recommends that ministers who are prayerfully considering going to a new ministry, confidentially inform their leadership just in case something should get out on social media.

6. **Invited cooperation.** Another option is to make the announcement and ask the congregation for their cooperation by not posting any news on social media or discuss the result with anyone beyond those present for one entire week.

Whatever model or hybrid version you decide to use it is important to ask anyone involved for a commitment to abide by the agreement and to take into consideration the impact of different time zones when planning the announcement. It's impossible to compete with the speed of social media. But you can use timing to give both sides of the transition time to lovingly inform their respective communities.

### **After the Election and the Candidate's Acceptance – Employment Contract**

If the candidate has been elected and accepts the position, you will want them to sign the employment contract that has been prepared well ahead of the candidating visit. An employment contract protects the church in the event the candidate does not work out. This contract's compensation should match what is on the remuneration agreement. The contract does not lay out the benefits which are detailed in the remuneration agreement. Be sure to give your newly elected pastor ample time to read the contract and ask questions for clarification. They should not be rushed into signing the contract, but it should be done so before they leave town. It may be good to give them a sample copy before they even come for the candidating visit. A customizable copy is in the "[Digital Resources](#)" on the network website under the heading of "The Pastor's Compensation Package."

<sup>78</sup>Tom Brennan, *Next, A Manual for Pastoral Transitions*, Xulon Press, Maitland, FL, 2021, p. 125.

<sup>79</sup>These election announcement options were the result of a collaborative email discussion between Doug Clay, Donna Barrett, Rich Guerra, John Musgrave, Gene Roncone, Phil Schneider, Darryl Wootton, and John Wootton.

## **BB. PREPARING FOR THE PASTOR'S ARRIVAL** [\(back to contents\)](#)

After the new pastor is elected, the board and search committee's work is not done. The new pastor getting a good start will be dependent upon the committee's preparation. The last step is to prepare for their arrival and help provide a smooth transition. Few things will give the pastor a glimpse into the heart and health of the church than how it prepares for the pastor and their family's arrival. Following are some practical ways listed by chronological importance to help the new pastor hit the ground running.<sup>80</sup>

- A. Make the necessary announcements.** Help foster a culture of excitement and anticipation by spreading the good news.
  - 1. Write a short press release for distribution announcing the pastor's election.** Be sure it sounds upbeat and briefly describes the pastor's qualifications and date of arrival. Post it to all your social media outlets and the church's website and distribute it to the local newspapers. Be sure to check with your new pastor to confirm they are comfortable with the timing of that announcement.
  - 2. Notify the network superintendent/pastor of the results of the election within one day.** See the appendix entitled, "[Sample Letters](#)" and the "[Digital Resources](#)" section for an example of a network notification letter.
  - 3. Keep the church informed regarding the pastor and their family's arrival.** Build anticipation by updating them on the pastor's relocation efforts and sharing bios about family members, hobbies, interests, and passions. This will help them connect with others who share similar interests.
- B. Facilitate a "head start."** Instead of waiting for the pastor to request certain necessities, give the pastor a head start by being proactive.
  - 1. Provide for moving expenses.** It is the responsibility of the church to pay all the moving expenses including rental trucks/moving companies, fuel expenses for automobiles, lodging, and food. Once the pastor has selected a moving company, contact the company, and arrange for direct billing to the church. If you cannot afford a moving company and plan to use a rental truck, be sure to send a check to your new pastor now so they do not have to personally finance the move. Let the pastor know beforehand what the budget is so they can begin planning as soon as possible. Also, send a check in advance for estimated fuel, lodging, and food expenses or reimburse them when they arrive. Inform them to retain receipts.

2. **Help the new pastor secure housing by providing a salary confirmation letter.** The letter is more beneficial if it quotes the total remuneration package instead of breaking it up into subcategories. This will help the new pastor to secure a rental or to be preapproved for a mortgage should the family choose. Some home lenders may require employment contracts in order to preapprove an out-of-state home buyer. To accommodate this when hiring staff, one can take the Employment Contract the pastor has signed and give it to them. A digital download of an Employment Contract Template is available under the Pastor's Compensation section of the "[Digital Resources](#)" on the WMN website.
3. **Include IRS language in board minutes for the new pastor's housing allowance and ministry expense reimbursement before they start.** Tax laws are written that give great advantages to ministers. Two such areas are housing allowance and ministry expense reimbursement, but specific language needs to be contained in the minutes of a board meeting before the pastor begins their first official day of ministry at the church.
  - a. **Housing Allowance.** Perhaps one of the least understood tax benefits, a housing allowance (also called a parsonage allowance or rental allowance), is defined as a designated portion of a minister's salary that is used toward expenses incurred in providing housing. This portion of the minister's salary is excludable from gross income for income tax purposes (but should be included in gross income for self-employment tax purposes). The amount paid to the employee for housing allowance is not included in box 1 of the W-2; it is reported in box 14 of form W-2 with the notation "Housing Allowance." A housing allowance may include expenses related to renting, purchasing (which may consist of down payments or mortgage payments), and/or maintaining a clergy member's current home. The "[Digital Resources](#)" on the network website has a document called "Housing Allowance Explained" which gives details on this important tax benefit for pastors. It is found under the section, "The Pastor's Compensation."

Below is the necessary wording that needs to be cut and pasted into the board minutes before the pastor's first day in the office. Obtain the figures from the pastor.

*The Board was informed that under the tax law, a minister of the Gospel is not subject to federal income tax on "the housing/parsonage allowance paid to him as part of his compensation package, to the extent used by him to rent or to provide a home." After considering the estimate of Pastor (insert minister's first and last name) of his/her home expenses, a motion was made, seconded, and carried to pass the following resolution:*

*Resolved that of the total compensation package for Rev. (insert minister's first and last name), as Senior Pastor, for the year (insert year), \$ (insert total amount*

*of housing allowance for the year) for the year (\$ (insert weekly amount) per week) is hereby designated as parsonage allowance. Resolved that as long as Pastor (insert minister's first and last name) is pastor of the Church, the above amount of designated parsonage allowance shall apply to all future years until modified.*

The "[Digital Resources](#)" on the WMN website has an editable document entitled "Housing allowance language for board minutes" under the Preparing for Your New Pastor's Arrival section.

- b. Ministry Expense Reimbursement.** Pastors incur many ministry related expenses as they perform their pastoral duties such as travel, conferences, office supplies, equipment, books and materials for ministry, business meals, gifts and hospitality to congregants, continuing education, or other work-related costs.

One of the largest ministry expenses a pastor incurs is the mandatory dues/tithes that they pay to the General Council and to the Network in order to be credentialed. According to network bylaws, "All credentialed ministers shall contribute 100% of the tithe of their income from the ministry, and 50% of the tithe on their secular employment to the Wyoming Network on a monthly basis, except for each minister's obligation to the General Council" (Article VII. Tithing, Section 1. A.).

According to Clergy Advantage, a tax and financial planning service for ministers, "An Accountable Reimbursement Plan allows part of the minister's total pay package to be designated properly as expense reimbursement... Structuring a pay package properly doesn't cost the church anything but may save the minister thousands of dollars in tax."<sup>81</sup> By setting up an accountable ministry expense reimbursement plan, pastors can be reimbursed for ministry related expenses and the money given to them is excludable from gross income for federal and state income tax and self-employment tax purposes. The amount given to reimburse the minister is not included anywhere on their W-2. This is a huge blessing to a pastor and their family.

Setting up the accountable plan and distributing the ministry expense is very simple:

- The plan and amount of reimbursement must be recorded in the minutes of a board meeting. The exact wording is included near the end of this section.
- A separate check or automatic deposit is dispensed each pay period and should be labeled "Ministry Expense Reimbursement." This distinguishes it from the pastor's salary and housing allowance.

For an expense to be eligible for reimbursement, it must satisfy three requirements:

- 1) A business connection: it must improve professional skills or improve professional relationships. A video explaining what can be claimed as ministry

expense is at <https://www.clergysupport.com/video/ministry-expenses-video/>. The access code is MinistryExpense!

- 2) Expenses must be substantiated: they should be entered on a monthly or quarterly report form and be documented with receipts. Clicking on this link "[Ministry Expense Report Form](#)," will take you to the form at the end of this chapter. A digital copy is available in the section "The Pastor's Compensation Package" of the network's "[Digital Resources](#)." (Note: the mileage rate will need to be filled in according to the changes to the IRS standard mileage rate. The rate is usually adjusted every new calendar year, but sometimes it changes in the middle of the year if gas prices dramatically fluctuate.) The original reports and receipts should be kept on file for at least four years by the church and the minister should keep copies of both the reports and receipts for the same amount of time for tax purposes. The church treasurer or another church officer is to examine the report and receipts for accuracy.
- 3) Amounts in excess of substantiated expenses must be returned to the church within a reasonable time. Details about those time limits are contained in board minute wording at the end of this section.

Note: both unused reimbursement and excess expenses can be rolled over to the next period. However, a minister does not want to accrue too much unused reimbursement because when one leaves the employment of the church, any undocumented, unused reimbursement has to be paid back to the church. At the same time, if one has a lot of excess expenses that are not being reimbursed, then the reimbursement is set too low to cover them and the minister incurs more tax. Therefore, the amount of reimbursement should be examined regularly and adjusted to be in line with the amount of expense.

Many churches do a combination of accountable reimbursement plan and budget limits. For example, a church may set up separate line item budget amounts for their pastors for various categories:

- Travel to conferences and network events (ground/air transportation, lodging, parking, food, registration fees, etc.)
- Mileage reimbursement: for visitation, ministry-related errands around the community, travel to a larger city if someone is hospitalized, etc.
- Cellphone reimbursement
- Resource allowance for books, subscriptions
- Hospitality allowance to take leaders and congregants out for meals or in-home hospitality



- Continuing education (all or part)

The church pays for these directly. The pastor uses a church check or debit/credit card and turns in receipts for bookkeeping purposes. Then the church also establishes the accountable plan that enables the minister to be reimbursed for other expenses like ministry dues, gifts, childcare for ministry events, any expenses that are above the budget limits the church set, etc.

Below is the necessary wording for the accountable plan that needs to be cut and pasted into the board minutes before the pastor's first day in the office. An editable electronic copy can be found under the section, "Preparing for Your New Pastor's Arrival" of the "[Digital Resources](#)" on the WMN website.

*The Board was informed that according to Sec. 62 (a) (2) (A) of the Internal Revenue Code, an employee that adequately accounts to the employer the details of their professional expenses is allowed a deduction from gross income. Sec. 62 (c) further requires an employee to return any excess reimbursement or advance to the employer within a reasonable time. Reg. 1.62 (d) (3) further requires that no part of our employee's salary be re-characterized as being paid under this reimbursement arrangement.*

*A motion was made and passed unanimously to pass the following resolution for the next year:*

*Resolved, it is the policy of (insert name of church) to provide from church funds the ordinary and necessary expenses of ministry that are incurred for the benefit of the church. The church recognizes the professional nature of ministry and recognizes the right of ministers to use professional judgment in incurring ministry expenses within the guidelines set by this policy and the funds allocated for payment or reimbursement of expenses.*

*Ordinary and necessary expenses of ministry include, but are not limited to, the following: on-the-job transportation; out-of-town travel for church assemblies, conferences and continuing education; other professional continuing education locally and by correspondence; professional materials (books, magazines, journals, papers, tapes, films, office supplies, etc.); business meals, entertainment and gifts for conducting church business and developing pastoral relationships; dues and fees for memberships in religious, professional and civic organizations; business use of the telephone; professional equipment (communion, office, library, audio-visual, music, etc.); professional and liability insurance; legal and professional*

*services; and the purchase and cleaning of clergy vestments. Child care expenses are considered to be ordinary and necessary when incurred to enable both minister and spouse to attend church functions for which the presence of the spouse is expected and is vital to the church's ministry.*

*The church, at its discretion may pay ministry expenses by direct billing to the church, by reimbursement upon receiving receipts and vouchers from the minister, by paying an advance for a specific event or activity, and by paying an expense allowance.*

- *Ministry expense allowance for (insert minister's first and last name) will be (insert total annual amount) for the year, ((insert monthly amount) monthly).*
- *This is effective (insert date: month/day/year)*

*Payment is subject to the availability of funds and to the timely and proper accounting by the ministers and staff.*

*The minister(s) and staff members are accountable to the church by properly reporting all ministry expenses. Proper reporting includes the filing of periodic expense reports with substantiating records, receipts, and personal statements showing dates, amounts, and business purposes.*

*Expense reports must be filed no less than quarterly. Monthly expense reporting is preferred and encouraged. Any unused portion of the monthly allowance may be carried forward to apply against expenses incurred the next reporting period. At the end of the calendar year, any unused expense funds belong to the Church and will not be retained by the minister(s) for personal use or paid to him as a bonus or salary, or they may be carried forward to the next reporting period. Excess expenses may be reimbursed, if funds are available and approved, or may be carried forward to the next reporting period. When an advance is given for the expenses of a specific event or activity, an accounting is required within 60 days. Any unused portion of an advance must be repaid to the church within 120 days.*

*It is further understood that the Church Treasurer will examine the adequately accounted records and that the records will be kept for at least four years by the employer.*

*This policy is established in accordance with Internal Revenue Code Section 62 (a) (2) (A) and Federal Tax Regulations 1.162-17 (b) and 1.274-5 (e) (4). It shall remain in effect until amended or rescinded.*

Again, setting up an accountable reimbursement plan is a tremendous blessing to your new pastor, and it needs to be done in a board meeting, recorded in the minutes before your pastor starts his first work day.

4. **Set up the pastor's office with everything needed to be effective the first day.** Instead of the pastor having to spend their first 7-10 days setting up their personal work environment, get it done before they arrive. Have the laptop and/or desktop, cell phone, software applications, programs, keys, email account, voicemail, Wi-Fi, password list, office supplies, bookcases for the pastor's library (ask the size and how much space is needed), and any other unique needs the pastor may have set up and running before the first day. Nothing communicates your enthusiastic anticipation better than your new pastor being met by your preparedness on their first day in the office.

To set your pastor up for success, be sure to ask them about their preferences. If purchasing a new computer for your new pastor, find out what specifications they need, programs loaded, and preferences they have. One pastor asked his church to delay purchasing a new laptop because Microsoft was coming out with a new, better operating system a couple of months after his arrival. He just used an old desktop computer the church had until the updated operating system was released. The church happily agreed. The point is to provide your pastor with the tools to succeed.

5. **List and contact information for key leaders.** Prepare an electronic document listing the names, positions held, and contact information for all staff, board members, ministry leaders, and those who will have regular contact with the pastor and the pastor's family.
6. **Prepare the parsonage (if applicable).** If there is a parsonage, it should be cleaned and inspected to determine repairs and redecorating that may be needed. These should be done while the parsonage is vacant. The new pastor and their spouse should be given consideration and input as to the new decorating (paint and carpet colors), as this will be their home.

- C. **Appoint a transition team.** By the time the new pastor comes, the board can feel exhausted. To be able to "cross the finish line," consider appointing a special transition team of dependable people (non-board/PST members) to help meet logistical needs for the relocation. This team should be given specific responsibilities during the first thirty days following the pastor's election and then be disbanded. Some of their responsibilities could include:<sup>82</sup>

1. **Welcome team.** When the new pastor and family arrive, have a team of people there to help them move in, assemble beds, organize furniture, and get settled for their first week. These people should be conscientious, not reckless, when moving in the family's items.

Having broken furniture, dishes, or personal effects is not a great way to start off the pastor and family's first impression of the church and steals the joy and appreciation of the mover's help. In addition, a team that can have the house or rental cleaned and cabinets lined with new contact paper (shelf liner) before they arrive would be a plus.

2. **Meal provision.** A few gift cards to local restaurants may help your first family until they can get their kitchen set up. Meals are great if people know not to stay too long after delivering them. Dropping a meal off can turn into an entertainment obligation for a new family and become unsettling after a few days. If meals are brought, be sure to inquire about food allergies or special dietary needs. A welcome basket is a classy touch. Some items to consider putting in the basket would be plastic dinnerware, cups, bowls, napkins, paper towels, garbage bags, and a pack of bottled water. It may be a day or two before they are able to unpack their kitchen and having some disposable items handy will be helpful.
3. **Mobilize peers to reach out to the first family.** Recruit others in the church who share the first family's hobbies, family size, or age grouping to invite them to a social or entertainment event. Arrange for a few individuals in the church to invite the pastor's spouse out. If they have children, arrange for other children their age to include them. The sooner they develop initial friendships, the easier the relocation will be, especially for their children or teens.
4. **Children's assimilation.** Set up social interactions so the pastor's spouse and family can interact with others who share their age, school, preferences, or hobbies. If the pastor has elementary or teenage children, this is very critical.
5. **Referral list.** Prepare a referral list of service providers the first family may need. This may include realtors, plumbers, contractors, mechanics, doctors, dentists, schools, hairdressers, clubs, sports programs, and utility providers (cable, internet, gas, water, electric, telephone, and cell phone providers). However, it is important that you not set up appointments, make commitments on their behalf, or introduce them to these people as that would limit their options should they already have someone else in mind. In one instance, a newly elected pastor had already decided upon a realtor; however, a realtor in the church had been given his cell phone number by a board member. The realtor assumed the pastor would want to use her and was deeply disappointed when he informed her that he had already contracted with a realtor. Disappointingly, she ended up leaving the church over the matter.
6. **Sunday hospitality.** The first few Sunday mornings can be hard for a new pastoral family. Assign one or two people to host the pastor's family and help orientate them to the

facility, get children placed in appropriate classrooms, sit by them in church, and introduce them to others. The key is to be helpful without being intrusive. The host person should initiate contact a few days before Sunday and set up a time and place to meet at the church on Sunday morning.

**D. Begin the transition of power.** During the pastoral search, the board and/or search committee will have had more influence, information, and power than in normal circumstances. However, now it is time to transition that influence back to the biblical office of the pastor. This will require both emotional and practical preparation.

**1. Emotional preparation.** The moment your new pastor is elected a spiritual, legal, and organizational change takes place. After their election, the new pastor instantaneously becomes the spiritual overseer of the church, the chair of the board, and the president of the nonprofit corporation. As a committee, you must prepare yourself to willingly transition the influence your team has had back to the biblical office of pastor. Thinking through the mental and spiritual challenges of that handoff will help you contribute to a smooth transition. There are four areas you will need to be prepared to transition.

- **Decisions.** As a member of the board or search committee, you have been one of the primary decision makers while your church has been without a pastor. During that time, you may have been allowed to see some of your personal preferences become a reality. However, the newly elected pastor will now begin to make decisions as the spiritual overseer of the church. You may or may not be given the opportunity to have the same influence you enjoyed in this temporary season. Be preemptive and decide now that you are going to have a humble attitude about this transfer of authority.
- **Information.** As a member of the board or search committee, you have been on the front end of the information cycle. Some of that information was confidential, and some was logistical. Some was exciting, and at other times disappointing. As you step back into your normal role, you will need to understand that, in most cases, you will be receiving information later than you did during this transition. Prepare now for any adjustments this may require on your part.
- **Influence.** During the pastoral transition, you have probably had more influence than at any other time. In normal circumstances, the Bible entrusts that level of influence to a credentialed minister who oversees and directs the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-2). It is important that you do not see this as a spiritual demotion because it is not. You have been faithful and served well. Much like John the Baptist, you have paved the way for God's new leader and set your new pastor up to win. Now your role will be to help support the new pastor achieve the vision God will give for your church.

- **Exposure.** As a member of the board or pastoral search team, you have been front and center during the transition. You were probably assigned a specific area to oversee and have been part of making announcements and updating the church on the search process. Your name has been on the bottom of letters, and people probably became more interested in you and the information you shared. As your new pastor gets settled, it will be important for your church to see one leader at the helm setting direction, speaking on behalf of the church, and making executive decisions. That does not mean you will not be part of those decisions or that there will be less accountability. However, it does mean that you and your team will not be in the spotlight as much as you were during the transition.

These four transitions are part of effective servanthood. That is the kind of Christlike humility Paul was talking about when he said:

*In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:5-7 NIV).*

Several years ago, there was a documentary on the valuable work of a “harbor pilot.” A harbor pilot helps large cruise and cargo ships through the narrow and treacherous waterways of their local harbor. The harbor pilot knows the harbor’s width, depth, and challenges better than anyone because they live there. They ride out on a boat, board the larger ship, and take command until it is safely in or out of the harbor.

A protocol called “repeat to confirm” is used when command of the ship is turned back over to the captain. When yielding back control of the helm, the harbor pilot will say “your ship” to the captain, letting the captain know he is going to step out from behind the helm. The captain will then say “my ship” to confirm that he has control of the helm. The harbor pilot will then confirm this transition by repeating again, “your ship.”

That same kind of transition of authority will require a spiritual protocol like “repeat to confirm” in your church. After safely guiding your church through the transition, you will be required to transfer authority to your new pastor. Then one day each of you will hear Jesus say, *Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!* (Matthew 25:23 NIV).

2. **Practical preparation.** Here are a few important tasks that will need to take place for the orderly transition of authority.

- **Take care of outstanding business.** It is important that your new pastor have a “honeymoon” period to get to get to know the church and establish a pastoral bond. Few things can sabotage that process more than forcing the new pastor to deal with controversial matters, deferred crises, or problem people in the first few months. Some search committees choose to take the path of least resistance by postponing problem solving. However, one area the board or search committee should focus on is dealing with matters they have an overwhelming consensus on when asked, “If I were the new pastor, what five problems would I want solved before I arrived?”
  - **Prepare an accurate and detailed financial briefing.** A lot can change between the time one pastor resigns and a new pastor arrives. The church treasurer, board secretary, and/or bookkeeper should meet with the new pastor after their arrival and prior to their first board meeting to brief them on the church’s financial situation, bank balances, and current financial statements. Written financial reports should be provided. If there are any critical financial issues, this is the appropriate setting to communicate that information if it has not previously been communicated.
  - **Consult the new pastor before making any significant decisions.** According to parliamentary procedure, the new pastor assumes their role and responsibilities immediately upon election no matter when they officially arrive (unless your bylaws state otherwise). That means even though they have not relocated yet, they are immediately the board chair, leader of the staff, and Lead Pastor of the church. No decisions about staffing, salaries, budget, missions support, ministry changes, facilities, or their predecessor should ever be made without their prior knowledge, deliberation, and approval.
  - **Securing confidentiality.** After the new pastor has arrived, the committee will have to sort through all their materials (résumés, reference letters, confidential notes, correspondence, background checks, names of unsuccessful candidates) and decide what information should be immediately destroyed. It is unethical and unwise to hold on to personal information of those who were not selected.
  - **The new pastor is placed on financial accounts and legal documents.** Another thing that needs to occur after the new pastor’s arrival is for them to be placed as a signer on financial accounts: checking, savings, cd’s, investments at AGFS/CEP/HIS Fund/etc., and to obtain a church credit card if your church uses them.
- E. Facilitate relational feedback loops.** A new pastor is a lot like a missionary. They must learn the culture, history, and leadership of the church. They also must sort through the many ideas and suggestions received from many people. Most of the time, the first people who show



initiative in reaching out to a new pastor are those with a particular agenda. A wise mentor once said take note of those who are eager to get you alone and “help you learn the things you ought to know” in your first few weeks. However, the board can assist the pastor in meeting the many wonderful people of your church through a small group tour. A small group tour gives the new pastor the opportunity to visit each existing small group (if you have them) and ask people questions about the church’s strengths. This concept is explained in Robert Kaylor’s book entitled, *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*.<sup>83</sup> This approach is a nonthreatening feedback process called “Appreciative Inquiry” which assumes every organization has strengths and things that have worked well.<sup>84</sup> The questions are designed to help the new pastor appreciate the past while also building faith for the future. Following is an outline of how Kaylor uses this method:

1. **Purpose.** The purpose of the night is not to provide a way for people to ask questions of the pastor but for the pastor to gain information from the congregation.
2. **Setting.** The new pastor and the pastor’s spouse tour every small group in the church (if you have them) with the ideal size being 10-15 people. The host family is only responsible to provide the location, comfortable seating, and refreshments.
3. **Welcome.** The hosts open by greeting everyone and clearly stating that the purpose is for the new pastor and the pastor’s spouse to ask questions that will help them gain a better understanding of the congregation. Those in attendance should be reminded that this is not the time to ask the new pastor questions, but a time for their new leader to get to know the church.
4. **Introductions.** Participants introduce themselves and briefly describe how they became part of the church (but not their life story). The pastor and the pastor’s spouse should go last and share a condensed version of their story and call to ministry. Introductions should take 30-45 minutes.
5. **Pastoral research.** The new pastor then explains that they have a series of research questions that will help them better know the congregation. The questions only focus on the positive aspects of the church and not perceived problems. This helps people start envisioning the future while at the same time helping the new pastor get a glimpse of the past. Kaylor’s suggested questions usually take about an hour to process and are as follows:
  - Remembering your entire experience at our church, when did you feel the most alive, motivated, and excited about your involvement? What made it so exciting? Who else was involved? What happened? What was your part? Describe how you felt.



- What do you value most about our church? What activities or way of life are most important? What are the best features of our church?
- If you could make three wishes for the future of our church, what would they be?

**6. Closing.** When finished, the hosts are thanked for their hospitality and the guests for coming. End in prayer for the new pastor and their family.

It is important to remember that this is ONLY an idea and should not be forced upon the new pastor, planned, or even talked about publicly without their consent. They may have other preferable ways to achieve this goal. If they do, help them make it a reality. If a church does not have small groups, this could be performed by gathering ministry teams (worship, tech, men's, women's, youth, children, usher, greeter, etc.), keeping the groups limited to 10-15 people.

**F. Create a culture of inclusion, appreciation, and faith.**

- 1. Be prepared to support the pastor's preferences for an installation service.** Many churches conduct an installation service for the incoming pastor. Once your new pastor has selected a date, be prepared to support them in making it a reality. One pastor shared his experience that when he arrived at a new pastorate, there was a lot of pressure placed on him to pick a date that accommodated the travel schedules of various VIP's in the church. In looking back, he would have allowed more of his own family to participate. In addition, the Wyoming Ministry Network will want to welcome your new pastor and have an opportunity to participate in a formal installation so be sure to notify us of the date and time well in advance so we can schedule the date on our calendar.
- 2. Maintain a consistent way to show appreciation to the pastor and the pastor's family.** Although giving the new pastor a warm welcome is appropriate, some boards stop at that and do not continue to show appreciation on a yearly basis. One way is to do something during Pastor Appreciation month in the morning service(s). Church attendees need to see the board honoring the pastor and the pastor's spouse and letting them know their hard work is appreciated. You can find a page with creative ideas on <https://blessyourpastor.org/>.
- 3. Trust God for the future.** With the coming of a new pastor, there will be changes. Some changes may be major and others minor, but be patient and allow God to lead the congregation forward in maturity and development. Some members may react negatively to changes introduced by the new pastor, but the board should stand by the pastor and do everything possible to encourage goodwill. God is more than able to compensate for the limitations of all leaders involved.

The best way to accomplish the above is to delegate the items to different members of the board who can report back on the progress to the entire board.

<sup>80</sup>This list was initially created by Rhonda Roncone, wife of Rocky Mountain Ministry Network Superintendent Gene Roncone and then expanded upon by input from pastors who have experienced a relocation.

<sup>81</sup>“Confusion About Ministry Expenses,” Clergy Advantage, Winter 2020 Newsletter Article, <https://www.clergysupport.com/tax/confusion-about-ministry-expenses/>, accessed March 3, 2025.

<sup>82</sup>The concept of a welcome team and their possible duties was compiled by Rhonda Roncone, wife of Rocky Mountain Network Superintendent, Gene Roncone, after reflecting upon how helpful many of the families were to them when they arrived in Aurora, Colorado. The Roncone’s came the week before Thanksgiving and had to acclimate quickly. A few gracious families were quick to connect and help them find their way.

<sup>83</sup>Robert Kaylor, *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*, Seedbed Publishing, Wilmore, KY, 2013, pp. 24-32.

<sup>84</sup>Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*, Alban Institute, 2004, p. 58.

# MINISTRY EXPENSE REPORT

For the period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_

Minister \_\_\_\_\_ Church \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. AUTOMOBILE BUSINESS EXPENSES:

- a. Use of personal car:  
Business miles \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_¢ per mile \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Use of church car: Personal cost \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
times \_\_\_\_\_% actual business use \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Business parking fees/tolls \_\_\_\_\_
- SUBTOTAL AUTOMOBILE EXPENSES \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. MINISTRY PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES:

- a. Professional and liability insurance \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Interest on ministry equipment purchases \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Legal and professional services \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Office expense \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Equipment repair/maintenance \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Books, materials, supplies for ministering \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Travel away from home overnight for assemblies,  
conventions and continuing education:
  - 1) Air/train/bus/taxi/car rental \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) Registration/tuition/materials \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) Lodging/tips/laundry/cleaning \_\_\_\_\_
  - 4) Meals \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Business meals \_\_\_\_\_
- i. Business Phone Calls, Cell Phone, Internet Access \_\_\_\_\_
- j. Dues to religious and civic organizations \_\_\_\_\_
- k. Business gifts to staff, members and other ministry-  
related persons (\$25 maximum per recipient) \_\_\_\_\_
- l. Continuing education – local/correspondence \_\_\_\_\_
- m. Local church & ministry meetings \_\_\_\_\_
- n. Clergy vestments – purchase and cleaning  
(robes, stoles, etc., not business suits) \_\_\_\_\_
- o. Equipment purchases and payments \_\_\_\_\_
- p. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- SUBTOTAL MINISTRY PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. TOTAL AUTO & MINISTRY PROFESSIONAL EXPENSES \$ \_\_\_\_\_

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 4. Plus <u>unreimbursed/excess expenses</u> from previous reporting period | _____    |
| 5. Minus prepaid expense allowances received this reporting period         | (_____)  |
| 6. Minus <u>unused expense allowance</u> from previous reporting period    | (_____)  |
| 7. EXCESS EXPENSES or (UNUSED ALLOWANCE) this reporting period             | \$ _____ |

Excess expenses may be carried forward to the next reporting period. The unused portion of an expense allowance may be retained for expenses occurring during the next reporting period but may not be retained for personal use. Receipts/records of payment need to be turned in with the report to substantiate expenses.

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_  
Minister Church Treasurer/Officer

## CC. CHECKLIST BY STAGES [\(back to contents\)](#)

The following checklist has been created especially for all those OCD detail types on every church board or committee😊. Actually, it is a handy guide to ensure that no important steps are left unattended. It is categorized under headings that correspond with each of the twelve stages of the pastoral search process. It may help your team stay focused on tasks and objectives along the journey.<sup>85</sup>

### Stage 1: Pre-search Preparation

- ☐ After your pastor announces they are leaving, have a board meeting before they leave and update and freeze the membership roster.
- ☐ Board to send current paid pastoral and support staff a letter stating appreciation and requesting them to stay on during the transition time, but not committing to long-term employment. See [“Letter retaining paid pastoral and support staff”](#) in Sample Letters appendix.
- ☐ Select the Pastoral Search Team (PST) according to your bylaws. Give them the PST Job Description and receive a commitment from your selections to be on the team. See the appendix [“Pastoral Search Team Job Description.”](#)
- ☐ Make enough copies of this transition resource and require the board/PST members to read the numbered chapters before the retreat. (Include other resources such as the church’s constitution and bylaws.) Email digital copies of this resource to all board/PST Members, requesting them to download it to a laptop and bring it with to the retreat for easy referencing.
- ☐ Set a date for a two-day board/PST retreat or two half-day planning meetings. Retreat/meetings to be planned even if all cannot attend.
- ☐ Secure a venue for the retreat that is at a nearby hotel or bed and breakfast. Make plans for meals.
- ☐ Listen to podcast entitled, “Episode 3: Common Mistakes Pastoral Search Committees Make” at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
- ☐ Board officers will determine the retreat schedule.
- ☐ Board officers should meet at least a day before the retreat to plan the agenda and game-plan through a pre-meeting huddle. See appendix section entitled, [“Board/Search Team Planning Retreat.”](#)
- ☐ Determine what kind of vote is desired for different decisions. See chapter 6 entitled, [“The Pastoral Search Team.”](#)
- ☐ Board/PST will determine individual roles for pastoral search committee such as team lead (chair), secretary, communications lead, prayer lead, networking lead, and hospitality lead.
- ☐ Write a church/community profile and pastoral profile. See the appendix entitled, [“Church, Neighborhood, & Community Profile”](#) and [“Pastor Profile.”](#)

- ☐ Review of biblical qualifications and characteristics form and discuss common denominators the board shares regarding your future pastor. See the appendix entitled, "[Desirable Qualities of a Pastor.](#)"
- ☐ Determine a search budget and transition fund for the pastoral search process. See the appendix entitled, "[Transition Budget.](#)"
- ☐ Group reviews, explains, and signs the "[Board/Pastoral Search Team Commitment.](#)" See Appendix D), confidentiality agreement and the consequences of a breach of confidentiality.
- ☐ Group to determine meeting frequency, location, and time. See chapter 8 entitled, "[Search Team Meeting Sample Agenda.](#)"
- ☐ The board/PST should share their completed profiles with the network superintendent and seek their advice.
- ☐ Consider securing the services of an interim pastor for the duration of the pastoral search process. See the chapter entitled, "[Do We Need an Interim Pastor?](#)"
- ☐ Activate the 40-day prayer initiative and call the church to prayer. See Appendix section, "[Mobilizing Prayer.](#)"
- ☐ The church should contact the network office with the name, address, and phone number of the chair of the pastoral search committee so proper communication may be maintained.
- ☐ Determine if you will do a sustainability initiative. See Appendix section "[Sustainability Initiative](#)" for details.

## Stage 2: Advertising the Opening

- ☐ Board/PST to complete the church biography/profile by **APPOINTING** a team to write the church profile describing your church, the neighborhood, and the city.
- ☐ Attach this profile for each candidate to review online or through an email.
- ☐ Visit <http://www.agspe.org/rutour.mp4> for a sample and short video tour of how Highpoint Church in Aurora, Colorado did this.
- ☐ Board/PST to complete a candidate job description by establishing reasonable expectations of the new pastor and looking for key leadership abilities needed for the church.
- ☐ Use online ministry job sites to advertise the pastoral opening for at least five months and cancel the ad when no longer needed. See the appendix entitled, "[Advertising the Ministry Opening.](#)"
- ☐ Inform officials from other networks and influential people of your opening. See the appendix entitled, "[Advertising the Ministry Opening.](#)"
- ☐ Consider hiring a research assistant to gather data needed for advertising.
- ☐ The acting chairperson for the search committee should email the network superintendent periodically to update them on your progress and receive help with references.

### Stage 3: Seek Counsel

- ☐ Board should compile a list of questions to ask the network superintendent throughout the process.
- ☐ Invite the network superintendent to attend a church board meeting, offer resources, and answer questions the board may have.
- ☐ Email community leaders such as the town mayor, city council members, police and fire chiefs, school superintendent, principals of nearby schools, and your city's neighborhood services department letting them know of the pastoral opening. See Chapter 3, "[Stages of the Process](#)" for a sample list of questions to be emailed to leaders.
- ☐ Create a congregational survey through [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com), use the Network's template from our "[Digital Resources](#)", or pass out a paper survey for input concerning the pastoral selection. See compilation of questions for this in the appendix entitled, "[Congregational Survey](#)."

### Stage 4: Targeting Potential Candidates

- ☐ Board will need to be proactive and recruit possible candidates and respond to them if they are interested. See the "[Letter to Recruited Candidate Who Expresses Interest](#)" in the Sample Letter appendix.
- ☐ Prioritize a list of possible candidates and those interested initially.
- ☐ Contact possible candidates through a phone call unless they emailed you first. See the appendix entitled, "[Recruiting Candidates](#)".

### Stage 5: Receiving Résumés

- ☐ A letter or email should be sent within three days to all candidates who have submitted their names and résumés. See "[Letter to Acknowledge Receipt of Résumé](#)."
- ☐ Every committee member should be emailed/given a copy of every résumé for evaluation.
- ☐ Begin the process of organizing the candidates' résumés in categories A, B, or C with each category decision to be made by an official vote of the board/PST:
  - "A" = Strong candidate to contact and explore.
  - "B" = Possible candidate to be revisited or considered later.
  - "C" = Unqualified or undesirable candidate to be notified immediately.
- ☐ For candidates from the "A" category, the acting chair of the Pastoral Search Committee is to send an email or letter requesting they complete a candidate questionnaire ([Request to Complete Pastoral Questionnaire](#)), the questionnaire itself ([Candidate Questionnaire](#)), a brief description of the process, and the background of the history of the church ([Church, Neighborhood, Community Profile](#)).
- ☐ "B" category candidates can be considered later. Place "on hold" until the board feels they merit reconsideration. If the board finds that a "B" category candidate merits

consideration, they must be notified immediately and be sent/emailed the letter and information mentioned for “A” category candidates above.

- ☐ “C” category candidates are considered undesirable for the position. Send a letter or email thanking them for applying and informing them that the board feels led to move in a different direction. See “[Letter to Non-Selected Candidates](#).”

#### Stage 6: Ministry Exposure and References

- ☐ Assign a committee member to check the potential candidates’ church or personal social media outlets. Also, Google the candidates’ names to try to find any valuable information on them. See the appendix entitled, “[Checking References](#).”
- ☐ Board/committee will listen to and/or watch the candidates’ sermons and report back impressions to the entire pastoral search committee. See the appendix entitled, “[Exposure to Speaking Ministry](#).”
- ☐ Choose one to three committee members with good people skills and disarming demeanors to make contacts for reference calls. See the appendix entitled, “[Checking References](#)” and the “[Reference Interview Form](#).”
- ☐ Request your Network Superintendent to contact the primary candidates’ district/network superintendent to get a verbal reference over the phone. See the “[Superintendent Interview Form](#)” in the “Checking References” appendix chapter.

#### Stage 7: Preliminary Phone Interview(s) (Audio Only)

- ☐ Board/PST contact candidate requesting a preliminary phone conversation.
- ☐ Listen to the podcast entitled, “Episode 7: Five Keys to a Successful Pastoral Candidate Interview” at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>. Maintain a positive attitude within the board and committee during every interview.
- ☐ Consider providing current financials and a signed statement by the board officers verifying their truthfulness and accuracy. In addition, include a bio on each board member, their level of current ministry involvement, education, and history with the church.
- ☐ Board should be prepared to answer questions from the candidate. See the appendix entitled, “[Interview Questions for Board/PST’s](#).” Plan for time in the interview for the candidate to ask questions.
- ☐ Board should create a list of questions they want to ask the pastoral candidate as a group. See appendix entitled “[Interview Questions for Candidates](#)” for questions for the **first phone interview**. They should also discuss and have a plan BEFORE an interview takes place. Assign different members of the board to ask questions at an appropriate time and place in the interview. ***Be sure to ask all of the questions in section 4. Doctrine and Personal convictions. You want to hear them verbalize answers to these questions.***
- ☐ Suspend judgments until interview is completed.

- ☐ Consider asking the candidate to respond in writing to a list of 8-10 questions (do not include every question from phone interview #1,) prior to another interview. These questions would be some that you did not have a chance to ask. See the appendix entitled, "[Interview Questions for Candidates](#)."
- ☐ Debrief for about 20 minutes as a group upon conclusion of the interview.
- ☐ As interviews take place, send notifications to those interviewed who are no longer of interest. See "[Letter to Candidate Dismissed After Interview](#)."

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> Phone Interview

- ☐ If still interested in the candidate, board/PST contact them requesting a second phone conversation.
- ☐ Board should create a list of questions they want to ask the pastoral candidate as a group. See appendix entitled "[Interview Questions for Candidates](#)" for questions for the **second phone interview**. They should also discuss and have a plan BEFORE an interview takes place. Assign different members of the board to ask questions at an appropriate time and place in the interview.
- ☐ Suspend judgments until interview is completed.
- ☐ Debrief for about 20 minutes as a group upon conclusion of the interview.
- ☐ As interviews take place, send notifications to those no longer of interest. See "[Letter to Candidate Dismissed After Interview](#)."

### **Stage 8: Video Interview with the Entire Committee with the Candidate & Spouse**

- ☐ Background checks should be done on the final three candidates and their spouses before the final candidate is chosen. Secure written consent from candidate(s) before performing a background check. A sample one is at the end of the appendix section entitled, "[Checking References](#)."
- ☐ Video interview should be the third interview and use video conferencing software to help identify the candidate's ministry focus, leadership style, and overarching ministry focus. It should include questions concerning reflective learning, roles and governance, change, ministry preferences, and leadership.
- ☐ When contacting candidates for the video interview make sure that their spouse will be joining them in the interview. Also ask the candidate if they would like to submit a list of questions for the board/PST to respond to during the interview. If the candidate does, set a deadline for them to be sent to you to prepare your responses.
- ☐ Board/committee should narrow down a list of questions for the candidate before the video interview meeting. See the appendix entitled, "[Interview Questions for Candidates](#)," Interview #3: Video Interview.
- ☐ Interviews are a two-way street. A sharp candidate will also want to interview the committee. Accommodate time for this. This is a good time to share your answers to the candidate's written questions sent to you beforehand.



- ☐ Use an online meeting application such as gotomeeting.com, apple facetime (iPhone or iMac), zoom.com (the free version limits you to only 40 minutes so you want the paid version), or google hangout. See Stage 8 in the chapter entitled, "[Stages of the Search Process.](#)"
- ☐ Test video equipment well before the video interview to make sure it is working.
- ☐ Plan BEFORE the interview. Select questions as a group, in the order they will be asked, and by whom.
- ☐ Plan time to debrief as a group after each interview for about 15-20 minutes. Then take time to pray and reflect upon the interview before making a final decision about the candidate.

#### **Stage 9: Contextual Visit – Board/PST to visit and review preaching/teaching of candidates**

- ☐ Be sure to confirm the candidate is preaching on the date you plan to visit.
- ☐ Send two to three people from the board and pastoral committee to make an anonymous visit to hear candidates live in their current church setting. You want more than one person to hear the message since everyone has different tastes and opinions. The goal of the anonymous visit is to see, hear, and get a feeling for the candidate in their local ministry setting. It is best to arrive separately and sit away from each other.
- ☐ No contact should be made with the candidate, nor should they receive prior notice.
- ☐ View the outside of the facility after hours. How does the landscaping and exterior of the building look?
- ☐ If possible, a board member or team of at least three should make anonymous visits to "A" list pastoral candidates' current churches.

#### **Stage 10: Personal Interviews**

- ☐ The board/search team devises a written remuneration agreement that lays out the compensation and benefits of the position. It should be approved by the full board in the form of a motion and signed by its officers. It may be presented to candidates before they come to the face-to-face interviews or to your final candidate that you select after the face-to-face interviews. See appendix entitled, "[Presenting a Remuneration Agreement.](#)" Moving expenses budget should also be discussed and included in this package.
- ☐ Choose two to three potential candidates along with the candidates' spouse (and family if they desire) to interview at different times at the church's expense. Larger churches should bring in at least three candidates for a face-to-face interview at different times before narrowing it down to one candidate.
- ☐ Though these should have already been done, the board/PST is to complete any background, credit, criminal, and educational reference checks before making any contact about the personal interview. You don't want to find out a surprise after you

have invited and made travel arrangements. Make sure the candidates and their spouse have signed the background check release form.

- ☐ Set up a date and time to formally interview the pastoral candidate and the candidate's spouse. Entire board, their spouses, and pastoral committee should be involved so make sure the date works for all of them if possible.
- ☐ Make travel arrangements for the candidate and the candidate's spouse (and family if needed). If out of state, purchase airline tickets for them all. If driving, send an appropriate travel allowance for gas.
- ☐ Set up hotel and expense accommodations for them.
- ☐ Set up childcare for the interview if needed.
- ☐ Plan a loose itinerary that will accomplish goals. Be sure part of it is for the candidate and spouse to tour the building and grounds of the church.
- ☐ Face-to-face interview includes entire board & PST, the candidate, and the candidate's spouse to discuss significant issues not previously discussed. Plan and assign members questions from the appendix entitled, "[Interview Questions for Candidates](#)," Interview #4: Face-to-face Interview.
- ☐ Give candidate/candidate's family an opportunity of margin to explore the city, pray together, and reflect upon their visit.
- ☐ Plan an informal social time with deacons and their spouses.
- ☐ Do not commit to an individual until all critical information has been collected, reviewed, and prayed about.
- ☐ Board/PST should be prepared and expect candidates to interview them. They may request a copy of the church's current financials and a signed statement by the board officers verifying their truthfulness and accuracy.
- ☐ After the couple leaves the building, plan to take 15-20 minutes to debrief. Then take time to pray and reflect upon the interview before making a final decision about the candidate.

#### **Stage 11: Official Candidacy**

- ☐ ***Make sure the remuneration agreement has been signed by the candidate and returned to the search team before coming to candidate.***
- ☐ Set up a schedule for the candidate to be voted on and make travel arrangements for the candidate and the candidate's spouse and family. If out of state, purchase airline tickets for candidate and the candidate's spouse and family. If driving, send an appropriate travel allowance for gas, food, etc.
- ☐ Set up hotel and expense accommodations for them.
- ☐ Announce your business meeting to elect a pastor in the timeframe listed in your bylaws. Also mail to your membership the "[Notification of Candidate to the Body](#)" letter and set out copies for the body to pick up.

- ☐ Schedule and promote a Saturday dessert social at 2 p.m. at the church for the congregation to interact with the candidate and the candidate's spouse and family.
- ☐ Set and announce a deadline for Q&A questions to be submitted so they can be screened and given to the candidate well before the Q&A session.
- ☐ On Sunday, schedule enough time for the candidate to preach a full message and give them an adequate introduction before speaking. A PST member should emcee the service, not the candidate.
- ☐ Provide any needed childcare for candidate's children during interviews and services.
- ☐ Prepare for the business meeting. See WMN website "[Digital Resources](#)" for the document entitled, "Chairing a Business Meeting."
- ☐ If the candidate is elected and accepts the position, have them sign the employment contract that you have already customized for the position. See WMN website "[Digital Resources](#)" for the document entitled, "Employment Contract Template."

### **Stage 12: Preparation**

- ☐ Provide an official letter confirming remuneration package for temporary housing/lending company for family.
- ☐ Before the pastor arrives and starts, record in the minutes of a board meeting the amount of housing allowance and the ministry expense reimbursement. Use the exact wording found in the appendix "[Preparing for the Pastor's Arrival](#)," Look at the section B. 3. a. Housing Allowance and b. Ministry Expense Reimbursement.
- ☐ If there is a parsonage, it should be cleaned and inspected to determine repairs and redecorating that may be needed. These should be done while the parsonage is vacant. Consult with the new pastor and their spouse on decorating choices (paint and carpet colors), as this will be their home.
- ☐ Appoint a transition team of non-board members to help with logistical needs for the pastor's relocation.
- ☐ Schedule a welcome day and be sure their office is ready beforehand.
- ☐ Provide the needed technology, like a computer that is set up with needed programs and access, cell phone, keys, alarm codes, email, office orientation, password list and an onboarding meeting to help them adjust and answer any questions. Be sure to discover the pastor's preferences for technology needs.
- ☐ Write a press release and post to all social media outlets and the church's website and notify local press. Include brief ministry history, education, etc.
- ☐ Notify the network superintendent within one day of election process. In the "Sample Letters" section of the appendix seed "[Notification to Network](#)."
- ☐ Provide a budget for moving/rental expenses before the elected pastor asks what will be provided and before they secure a moving company or rental truck. If the church cannot afford a moving company and will use a rental truck, provide a check beforehand to the new pastor for this expense.

- ☐ Provide a list of key leaders' contact information (staff, board members, ministry leaders, and anyone else needed) via email as well as a printed copy.
- ☐ Create a welcome team to help the family move in, assemble beds, organize furniture, and get settled their first week. They should be conscientious, not reckless.
- ☐ Welcome basket to include disposable cups, plates, plastic ware, paper towels, etc., to help with their first few days in a new home.
- ☐ Prepare a referral list of service providers such as realtors, doctors, contractors, mechanics, schools, hairdressers, clubs, sports programs, and utility providers.
- ☐ Do not set appointments or speak on behalf of the pastor/pastor's family regarding service providers. Let them make their own choices.
- ☐ Sunday hospitality: Assign one or two people to host the pastor's family to help orient them, get their children placed in the appropriate classrooms, sit by them in church, and introduce them to others. The host person should initiate contact a few days before Sunday and set up a time and place to meet at the church on Sunday morning.
- ☐ Begin transfer of church leadership authority and responsibilities from the board to the new pastor.
- ☐ The committee must sort through all materials such as résumés, reference letters, confidential notes, correspondence, background checks, and names of unsuccessful candidates and destroy confidential information accordingly. It is unethical to hold onto personal information of those not elected.
- ☐ Inform any candidates that have not yet been notified that you have elected a pastor.
- ☐ Begin to prepare and support the pastor's preference for an installation service. The new pastor (not the board or church) should select a date and order of service for their installation service.
- ☐ Maintain a consistent way to show appreciation to the pastor and the pastor's family. Consider once a year during Pastor Appreciation Month in the morning service(s). Church attendees need to see their pastor and the pastor's spouse being honored and their work appreciated.
- ☐ Need housing and ministry reimbursement amounts in official board minutes before the Pastor begins. Obtain those figures from your newly elected pastor. See appendix ["Preparing for the Pastor's Arrival"](#) for the language needed.
- ☐ The new pastor is added to financial accounts and legal documents and issued a church credit card.

<sup>85</sup>This task list was originally created by Dawn Bryant and has since been modified.

## DD. CHURCH BOARDSMANSHIP [\(back to contents\)](#)

### The Rules of Engagement

Church boards are an interesting study in group dynamics. They are generally made up of men and women who love God and love their church. They desire to do all they can to serve the church and the pastor. However, there are times when the best of intentions go awry.

Boards are a wonderful asset to the church. They add valuable, wise counsel. Boards who listen, pray, and serve are a pastor's dream.

Here are the rules of engagement for church boardsmanship:

- 1. PRAY FOR YOUR PASTOR.** The best boards are comprised of people who pray and do so fervently. They pray for their pastor daily. They intercede on his or her behalf. These boards pray consistently for the pastor and his or her family. They take nothing for granted in covering their pastor in prayer.
- 2. PRAY FOR EACH OTHER.** When board members pray for each other, discussions at the board table proceed more smoothly. When members hold different opinions, boards who pray regularly for one another seek to hear varying points of view to determine the best course of action for the church.
- 3. PRAY FOR THE CHURCH.** A board should never assume because they have a good pastor and things appear to be in good shape that they can simply coast. Board members must be vigilant in prayer for the totality of ministry of the church.
- 4. ACQUIRE THE MINISTRY SERVICES OF THE PASTOR.** The number one task of any church board is to seek the right person to lead the Body of believers in their local church. Every other board decision pales in comparison to this one. The diligence with which the board navigates this process is directly proportional to the advancement of the mission of the church in the months and years to come.
- 5. RESIST THE URGE TO BE THE PASTOR'S SUPERVISOR.** It is not the church board's responsibility to be sure the pastor is punching the clock and doing all they feel he or she is supposed to do. It is the church board's responsibility to help respond to the needs of the pastor and the church.
- 6. CULTIVATE A SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY.** While always practicing fiscal responsibility, the best church boards look for ways to bless their pastor. They seek to compensate the pastor at the highest possible level.
- 7. PROTECT THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.** The mission of the church will outlive everyone around the board table. The church board and lead pastor must protect that mission.

Reaching people with the Gospel should be the mission of every church as it is our mandate from Scripture. It is a high calling for the pastor and church board to protect that mission.

8. **BE ADVISORY.** Growing and dynamic churches are pastor-led and board advised. However, some church boards see themselves as directing the affairs of the church and supervising the pastor. These churches almost never grow. Every board member should focus on seeking the heart of God to advise the lead pastor.
9. **ALWAYS INTERACT WITH COURTESY.** In all cases, each board member must respond with courtesy to others around the table. Kindness and professionalism are crucial to successful board meetings.
10. **NEVER ALLOW PERSONAL AGENDAS TO FLAIR UP.** Personal agendas do not work for the good of the whole church. Personal agendas should never be part of the church board setting.
11. **ALWAYS DEFER TO ONE ANOTHER.** Everyone has a voice at the table, but focus on the mission of the church and the good of the church rather than working to defend your own opinion.
12. **LISTEN WELL.** One of our greatest needs as humans is to be heard. That holds true for your fellow board members around the table. The best boards listen well. They do not jump to conclusions until hearing all that needs to be said by those around the table.
13. **DO NOT REACT.** When conflicting views present themselves at the board meeting, the spiritually-attuned board member will resist the urge to react. Instead, work to understand differing points of view.
14. **DEMONSTRATE RESPECT.** In all interactions around the board table and outside, it is critically important that you treat your brothers and sisters as Christ demonstrates for us. Practice honor and respect in your words and actions.
15. **NEVER MOVE FORWARD ON MAJOR ISSUES WITH A SPLIT VOTE.** When considering a major decision, such as borrowing a lot of money or selecting the next lead pastor, the board must find a sense of unity to move forward for the health of the church. Never move forward on major issues with a split vote.

These attributes describe for us what a good, godly church board should look like and how it should act. It defines the role of the board in an advisory role and not a directing role. They advise and provide counsel at the highest level. Their focus is prayer. They listen well, maintain respect and they are acutely aware of all the roles and actions above.

Board members play a vital role in the life of the church. What they mean to a lead pastor will only be told in eternity. Display the boardsmanship described herein and you will watch many come to know God.

