**Schedule of Candidating Events**

**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

**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.77

**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.