

# Guidelines in Finding a New Pastor

When a church is without a pastor, either through a resignation, retirement, replacement or death, the church starts looking for a replacement. It is imperative for a church to find a pastor as soon as possible for a number of reasons. A few are listed below:

- The longer the church is without a pastor, the more people will find another place to worship.
- Without a pastor, the church is not fully operational. It seems to work on “*cruise control*” without too much effort on evangelism or a vision to move forward.
- Visitors seeking a church home desire to have a permanent pastor. Your church may be friendly, but people usually settle into a place where they feel comfortable in worship and knowing their pastor.
- The church cannot grow without a leader, especially a spiritual leader. You need to find that special someone who God is calling for your church.

## Procedure in Finding a Pastor

If you are a part of a denomination, most offer a listing of open churches for ministers to consider and turn in a resume for consideration. If you don't belong to a particular denomination, you can go to other independent churches to see whether other ministers may be interested in your church or you can go to our website under resumes and look for other ministers in your area that may be interested and contact them directly.

If your church is receiving several resumes, it is difficult to know which one is best for your church. We recommend some of the following steps:

- Pray for God to send the right person to fill your vacancy. Also be praying for your pulpit committee or board to follow the Holy Spirit in finding the right person for your church.
- It is very important that you find a good interim minister. One that will minister, encourage, and perhaps bring healing to your church while you are in the searching process. It is customary to meet the needs of the interim minister, such as, providing meals, having a place of rest in between services (whether it is a home or motel), and asking whether they need any assistance with any audio\visual setups. A fair customary honorarium is recommended.
- Try to place a short deadline, such as a few weeks to gather the resumes and review them. Through prayer sort out the ones you believe are best suited for your church, selecting possibly the top three.

- Have the pulpit committee or board visit the prospective pastor's current church to hear him/her preach and see how that church is doing. Visiting a church can reveal many issues and concerns. It may enlighten you in your selection. If a group visits a church, be sure to take only a few people at most, and have them sit in different areas of the church. Do not take the church van. This is a dead giveaway for the existing church that their pastor may be looking elsewhere and the pastor needs to have this confidential to continue seeking God's will for his/her lives.
- In your background check, it is permissible to contact the minister's overseeing officials for a reference or to discuss possible concerns. Be very specific and ask whether there is any concerns that your church should need to know about.
- Once you believe that there are a few ministers to consider, set up an interview with them at your church so that they can see your facilities. This is a good time to discuss issues that are very important to your church as well as the pastor sharing theirs. An off night (non-church night) is best for all parties.
- Have a list of questions that make the interview process go as smooth as possible. Be relaxed, making the pastor and family feel as comfortable as possible. Allow them time to respond. It is nice to have a meal with them but it is not necessary.
- Be truthful and honest about your past as well as allowing the prospective pastor share their vision and reason for being your pastor.
- Thank them for coming and share the remaining process of your selection. Give them an exact date and the process. Don't expect them to ask your pulpit committee to come preach for your church. That is definitely a part of your selection process, and may be a week or more until you have done all the interviews or believe one is a definite possibility.
- Once you have gone through the interview process or believe one is best suited for your church, contact him/her church to schedule a time for him/her to preach at your church. Again, if you call the pastor's current church, do not leave a message with them or give them any indication that their pastor is looking elsewhere. It is always best to call the pastor's home for guarantee confidentiality.
- Communicate openly with your church on your selection progress as it is going on to encourage your church members and give them hope that a pastor may be selected soon. This is not a two-three person decision. This is a church decision and members want to feel that they are a part of that process. Encourage your church to remain in prayer for continued success. Some churches have provided "a weekly" report to the church by the chairman.
- Most pastors prefer not to present more than one minister at the church for consideration to eliminate a personality contest. Do not have multiple ministers speak.
- Do not test-drive a pastor. Trust God for a permanent solution.

- Most churches will only select the one they believe is best to try out in your church. This gives the membership an opportunity to hear a sermon and get acquainted with the pastor and family. It is customary to reserve a motel room for the prospective pastor for convenience. It is also customary to have an afterglow in the fellowship hall for others to meet and talk with the prospective pastor.
- Please remember that most pastors will have a number of different strengths and perhaps a few weaknesses. If, during the background check or interview you discover the minister is weak in finances, set a time to go over your procedures for reimbursement and spending. This can eliminate future issues.
- Some pastor request a vote of confidence once they have preached and before they leave to go back home so that they will know what to do next with their current church and as a way of completing God's will. If you do take a vote, have the pastor remain in the pastor's study, a restaurant or motel, or call them when they are traveling home. You might ask which one the minister may prefer.
- If they remain at church, have the head deacon or board member give them the outcome of the vote to see whether they will accept the position. If it is a positive vote and the prospective pastor agrees to fulfill the position, have him/her come back into the church announcing the outcome of the vote and telling the church the decision of the prospective pastor. If the vote is no, graciously share the vote with the prospective pastor. Allow him/her to quietly go out of the church without being seen by the members. Even in a negative vote, most ministers will believe this is God's answer about seeking the will for their ministry.
- Once you have chosen a pastor, it is good to contact remaining applicants to tell them the position has been filled. **Do not** call the church or send mail directly to the church as this may alert them that their pastor may be looking for another place of ministry.

## Questions to Ask a Prospective Pastor

It is customary for the pulpit committee or church board to be prepared to discuss a series of questions in the process of selecting a new pastor. It is more than prudent, it is wise. Your church expects and places their trust in this committee to find the best person for your church, the one that God is sending your way. Some of the questions may include:

1. Why are you interested in our church?
2. Do you feel it is God's will for you and your family to be here and why?
3. How long have you been at your present church?
4. What are the successes you feel you have made at your present church?
5. What are some of the things you wished to accomplish and didn't and why?
6. What is your vision as a pastor?
7. How was the relationship with you and your board?
8. Approximately how much time do you spend in prayer and sermon preparation?
9. Approximately how much time do you spend with your family?
10. Do you believe in small group discipleship, such as Sunday School or school of Bible?

11. What style of music do you prefer, if any?
12. Is any of your family involved in music or participate in any other departments?
13. How involved is your spouse in ministry groups?
14. What is your vision for the other ministry groups, such as children, youth, or seniors?
15. Will you or your spouse be working outside of the church?
16. Be prepared to discuss income/salary with the pastor if asked.
17. Be prepared to discuss benefits/retirement/housing with the pastor, if asked.
18. Be prepared to discuss the committee's or church's goals and visions.
19. Ask whether he/she has looked at the community and what is his/her opinion?
20. What is the first thing you wish to do if you become our pastor?

## Tasks of Pastors

In your judgment how high or low a priority would you like each of the following to be for the (senior) pastor of this church? It is worth remembering that not every task can be highest priority, and that in reality, only 3 or 4 probably can be. You may want to read the entire list, then go back and make your priority rankings.

	Very High Priority	High Priority	Moderately Priority	Low Priority
1. Providing administrative leadership for the congregation's ministry	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
2. Actively and visibly supporting the church's stewardship program	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
3. Directly involving laity in the planning and leadership of church programs and events	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
4. Planning and leading a program of new member recruitment	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
5. Participating in local community activities, issues and problems	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
6. Holding social justice issues before members	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
7. Planning and leading worship sensitive to the needs of the congregation	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
8. Emphasizing the spiritual development of members	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
9. Visiting the sick, shut-in and bereaved	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

<b>10.</b> Visiting members at their homes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>11.</b> Pastoral counseling of members having personal, family and/or work related problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>12.</b> Developing and supporting religious education programs for children and youth	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>13.</b> Developing and leading adult education programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>14.</b> Supporting the world mission of the church	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>15.</b> Participating in denominational activities beyond the local church, that is, at the regional or national level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>16.</b> Preparing and preaching inspiring sermons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Style of Ministry

Listed below are 10 pairs of characteristics of a good pastor. You will probably agree that both traits in each pair are desirable. But if you had to choose, which characteristic of the two in each pair would you prefer in your pastor. Would you prefer the trait on the left, or would you prefer the trait on the right? Check one answer for each pair.

	Strongly Prefer	Slightly Prefer	or Slightly Prefer	Slightly Prefer	Strongly Prefer	
<b>1.</b> Expertise in Biblical and theological matters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong emphasis on spiritual development
<b>2.</b> Interactions tend to be thought-provoking and challenging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interactions tend to be comforting and reassuring
<b>3.</b> Usually emphasizes the Bible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Usually emphasizes contemporary issues
<b>4.</b> Welcomes new	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	or	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does things as they

approaches and ideas				have always been done
<b>5.</b> Tends to be a strong decisive force in decisions regarding policy and program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tends to encourage and defer to the decision-making of congregation and program lay leadership
<b>6.</b> Has a relaxed interpersonal style	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Has a formal interpersonal style
<b>7.</b> Achieves set goals regardless of cost, ends justify the means	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Costs of goals sets priorities, means determine the ends
<b>8.</b> Helps people figure things out for themselves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Advises people what to do
<b>9.</b> Is reflective and reserved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Is outgoing and socially engaging
<b>10.</b> Maintains a private life of family, friends, recreation and personal and professional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Gives whole self to the life of church and work as pastor