

# Handbook for the Search Committee

by David Self

## **I. Introduction**

The following is a brief version of a search process. It is not intended to help the church select someone in particular. Each church must decide for itself, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to whom they will be extending a call. The general purpose here is to help churches do all things in order. Such order breeds trust and will maximize the search process. It is to guide the committee to leave no stone unturned.

There are no guarantees. A committee may do everything right and still not get everything the church hopes for. Just like a dating relationship, one will not completely know the other until marriage. Even if the right person is chosen, each will have to continue to grow together to stay together. The process will enable the committee to make a good selection, not a perfect selection. After all, nobody is perfect.

This booklet presents guidance to a congregational church that is typically regarded as traditional Baptist. Leadership styles vary. Each style has its own set of strengths, as well weaknesses. Elder lead churches or churches with different structures are not addressed.

Committees can use this information to search for a pastor, a minister of youth and students, or a minister of music. Therefore, the language used is not always gender specific.

## **II. Let the Processes Begin**

### **The Search for a Pastor or New Staff Member is a Process, Not an Event**

Pastor Goodman resigned today. Most of the church did not expect this day to come so soon. He had been the pastor at New Towne Baptist for 7 years. How do they find someone to replace Brother Goodman? Is there someone to call and say, "send us a new pastor?" The obvious answer is "no." It would not happen over the phone. Neither would it happen in a week. Some churches have taken 6 months to two years to locate the right person. It is certainly no single event. It is a process.

### **It is a Spiritual Process**

The Search Committee is about to undergo a very difficult process. It would become a team of people with a clear task of finding the best person for the job. This team's journey would begin inside their own hearts. Questions of "who can we get?" become irrelevant and overshadowed by questions like, "Who am I to decide what God wants?"

When Christ came to Earth, the scripture says that He “emptied himself and took upon Himself the form of a servant.” (Philippians 2:7) The Search Committee must do the same. The committee must not ask which candidate pleases them. Rather they must ask which candidate would best benefit the entire body. Like John the Baptist, they must decrease to serve.

This is not “mud-slinging church politics” unless you allow it to be. Stay in the Word and stay on your knees. The outcome belongs to God. Remember that the world is watching. If the church cannot go through this in peace, then we drive people away from the message of salvation. Simply ask if the process is in line with the Great Commission. Do not allow anyone or anything to distract the church.

### **It is a Busy Process**

This may take some time from your schedule. There will be reading, phone calls, and planning. All this is normal. Do not try to rush the process and do not allow anyone to rush the committee. Let the process take its own time. If the committee is in a hurry, a poor selection is possible and the whole process may have to be repeated very soon.

### **It is a Confidential Process**

Secrets can be hard to keep. Everyone must work toward it. Everyone in the church is curious and many will ask the Search Committee to share information. After all, they are friends? They may say, “How was the meeting, dear?” or they may ask, “I’m not asking you to share anything important, just tell me if they have kids.” Eventually a fragment of truth could get out and everyone will then want to give the committee some advice.

Four reasons why confidentiality is necessary:

- It creates trust within the committee
- It keeps controversy out of the church
- It protects the candidate
- It keeps committee members from hurting their own reputation

Think about the search committee as a choir. There is one leader. Everyone who sings must come to practice, and good choirs always do everything together. Likewise, all activity must go through the chairperson. To function well, the committee members have to be at the meetings. In addition, the committee will always speak in public with a unified voice.

This is not to imply that there will be no disagreement. In fact you should expect it. The committee, if it is a real representation of the church, will have a variety of people represented.

Such diversity can help the Search Committee ask better questions if they are committed to the task and not a personal agenda.

### **It Can Be a Unifying Process**

If the Search Committee maintains a positive attitude, committee members should grow closer as a result. It is like being on a long trip with someone. You may know them a little, but hours down the road, you will know them a lot. If Christ is the center of the committee, then the committee will grow closer. As a result, the church as a whole can become closer and that is wonderful thing.

So why is there so much tension around the process? The answer is simple: People have a desire to have their own wants and needs met. Since not all have the same needs, there will be a struggle over who gets the most.

It is like sibling rivalry among brothers and sisters in Christ. It may be beneficial to continue to ask, "Who does God want here?" As long as we ask, "Who do I want here," believers run the risk of creating an unhealthy agenda.

If church members are happy with one another before the pastor left, the search will be easier. However, many pastors or staff persons leave under duress and battle lines are already drawn. With the help of other leaders, the committee may get the church to move toward revival. Some churches have delayed appointing a Search Committee because they knew they were not healthy enough to begin making difficult decisions.

Unity provides clarity. Clarity enhances decision-making. For the committee, the bigger question is not "Do we agree?" but rather it is, "Can we reach an agreement?" The committee needs unity in purpose in order to reach an agreement.

## **III. Establishing the Search Committee**

### **Look for Guiding Documents**

Before the church selects the committee, look at your Constitution and By-laws. Look to see if there is any guidance. Also, look at the minutes of business meetings that demonstrate how a former committee was established. Often, people who see this committee as a powerful committee may want to get on the committee. Predetermined guidelines can help avoid trouble and hurt feelings. Remember: If it begins well, it ends well.

### **The Committee is Elected**

The church will need to know in advance how many will be serving on the committee. Many churches will choose a committee of five (5) or more, but always an odd number. Keep in mind

larger committees will need more organization and it will be more difficult for all the committee members to be present at every meeting.

One common form of committee election is taking nominations from the floor of a business meeting. If the number to be elected is five, then the church should be prepared with ballots numbered 1 -5. When the church is finished nominating possible candidates, the moderator will hand out the ballots and ask the church members to select their top five choices. The moderator will appoint a tellers or counting committee of three people and report to the church the top five people. The moderator should keep all ballots in case someone should question the validity of the count.

Electing a Search Committee by taking nominations from the floor can be a difficult task. Another form of selecting the Search Committee is to have a board or council to nominate the Search Committee. The Nominating Committee is not the committee needed for a pastor or staff search. They were elected or appointed without the anticipation of a ministerial search process. In addition, they still have the duties and responsibilities of finding others willing to serve in other capacities. The Search Committee needs to focus on one thing.

Yet a third style is to create a blend so that some members are selected for nomination while others are nominated from the floor. In one church, the deacon body would nominate four of the five nominees. The remaining member is from the church at large.

Remember, whatever decision the church makes, it sets precedence for the next Search Committee. The church can minimize political struggle when they do not make rash decisions. This is a good reason to have good bylaws. Following the Bylaws depoliticizes the process.

### **Meet with the Church Finance Committee**

To operate, the Search Committee will need to secure some operating funds for travel or correspondence expenses. Typically, it would be easier for the Search Committee to access an existing line item. The best example I have found is to use the budgeted item for the minister's salary.

### **Set Regular Meeting Times**

It is very important that the committee set for itself a regular time to meet. This will enable people to have a clear calendar for a number of months. If a member of the committee missed a meeting in which the top candidate was selected, or worse, if they missed meeting with a candidate in person, the process of selection could break down. Another problem could mean having to answer the same question more than once. Then there are those moments that that just happen. They are God moments. For instance, let us say that the committee has a new

sense of direction. However, a key member was away and what was once clear will become unclear at the next meeting. Regular meetings with all in attendance are very important.

### **Consider Using a Survey**

One easy way to begin your search is to survey the congregation. This will give your committee some guidelines. Do not publish the complete survey, as this will make someone unhappy that the committee disregarded an individual response. If anything, report a verbal synopsis of your findings. Pay close attention to the characteristics in which the church agrees. These characteristics will define what a good candidate for the church will look like.

### **Produce an Information Packet About Your Church With a Job Description.**

Candidates will want to know some basic facts about your church and community. They will also want to know the church's expectations. One pastor was expected to be a key holder of the volunteer fire department. The parsonage was next door and the community expected him to unlock the building and open the large bay doors and crank the truck. The church also needed someone to play catch for the church softball team. Once a call is extended, it is unfair to say, "Oh, yeah. Did we tell you that you would be expected to . . ."

### **Report to the Church What Was Accomplished**

The church will be very curious about what the Search Committee is doing. Report what work the committee has completed. If information is given about what is being considered, the committee could face a roomful of differing opinions. The congregation will have a tendency to gather with others who think like their group. The worst-case scenario would be the formation of factions with which the next pastor or staff member may have to contend for years. At the very least, it would increase the pressure on the Search Committee. This would easily politicize the process.

A good example of reporting is to say one month that the Search Committee meeting time is thus and such. The next report the committee could say that they will be receiving resumes for the next six weeks; the third report may include the number of applicants. (Never mention a name or a town associated with the search process until the committee has a name for the congregation to consider).

## **Contact the State Convention, Association, and Sister Churches.**

“Leave no stone unturned” when you are looking for a possible candidate.

“I was called to a church when my mother’s friend’s next-door neighbor knew an influential person who knew a deacon that served at a church without a pastor. That deacon was a mentor to the chair of the Search Committee.”

One just never knows how God is sending a pastor or staff person to their church.

Wait on resumes before taking a candidate seriously. It is often the only legal proof that the church screened its leadership. The resume is that candidate’s best foot forward. If it is shoddy or full of incomplete information, you may want to look elsewhere. Even a poor speller can ask for a proofreader.

## **IV. Substitutes and Interims**

### **Avoid Power struggles**

At the onset of the absence of a pastor, a power vacuum is created. Deciding who speaks may cause a power struggle. Hopefully your constitution and bylaws will guide you here. If you must question someone’s leadership, avoid being critical. This is especially true for children. It is hard enough on adults to hear negative talk. Children may learn to distrust the leadership of the church. For many the church is a safe zone. If an open disagreement is unavoidable, underscore the difference in one another’s positions while affirming each other in love. Angry outbursts have a detrimental effect on the Great Commission.

### **Use a Supply Speaker**

The first Sunday that the pastor or minister is gone, have someone appointed to fill the pulpit. If possible, do not use a potential candidate. Your Association or sister churches may help you with supply speakers. This would be a good opportunity to invite a guest speaker from the Georgia Baptist Convention or a related institution to speak to a special mission endeavor. Often a church discovers leaders within its own ranks. A retired pastor or your Director of Missions would often be happy for the opportunity.

### **Select an Interim For a Long-term Substitute.**

Often churches need time to heal in between pastors. If not, the church will go into a reactionary mode and hire the opposite of whom they had. If the previous pastor was a good administrator but weak in pastoral care, the church will normally call the next person who is better in pastoral care. If the previous pastor was traditional, the next might be very contemporary.

Think about driving a car when a wheel gets off the road. A person does not snatch the wheel in the opposite direction. Rather, the driver must slow down and ease the vehicle back into the correct lane. The move in the church should be to slow down and move in a new direction but in smaller increments.

Some interims handle significant administrative issues. They are called “Intentional Interims.” These interims will come and help the church resolve issues before calling the next pastor. Because of the level of intensity, these interims will need the full salary of a pastor. They will usually come on a contractual basis and will engage the congregation at every level.

### **Avoid Calling the Interim to be the Pastor except in Rare Circumstances.**

Why avoid calling an interim as pastor?

- It politicizes the interim position. Often the church needs a period of rest from the struggles of the past administration. There is a peace in knowing that the interim has no agenda. The interim period gives the people time to anticipate the next minister without fighting over the interim or against the interim.
- Candidates can use it as a manipulation tool to circumvent the Search Committee. It is not uncommon to have a candidate ask if someone could get them an opportunity to be the interim pastor. With a little help, they would be able to by-pass the Search Committee.
- Normally the resume of the Interim is examined less carefully than that of a candidate. Congregations assume that the real minister will be someone different, so they do not ask hard questions. In their mind, those questions are for the *real* candidate.
- The search process is reduced to a few weeks. Within a few weeks, the church has already decided on an interim. The new minister begins doing everything that the former minister has left undone. Members begin asking the interim, “Why don’t you be our pastor/music director/youth director?” The interim minister smiles and by next conference his or her name is brought to the floor by a well-intentioned individual. The Search Committee feels pressure to go along with the wishes of the Church.
- If there is no clear distinction between a candidate and an interim, members will assume anyone who preaches or leads worship is a ministerial candidate. The appropriate church committee hired an interim and left the terms of service open-ended. With that in mind, many will become confused as to which speaker is a supply and which is a candidate.

- There are some things that only an interim can say or do. An interim period is a unique time that an outside leader can be very frank with church leadership. Using wisdom of their years, they offer guidance and a smooth transition. They are in a position to encourage committees without the fear of losing their job.
- Most any interim would have an advantage over all other candidates. The pastoral candidate, for example, has limited contact with the church before coming in view of a call. Once the interim has been at the bedside of church members, funerals, etc., people feel like they owe them the opportunity. “The interim is my friend,” they may say. “And I don’t think we need to look any further.”

The Apostle Paul said, “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” (1st Corinthians 14:40) To promote order, the church should proceed to call an interim and elect a Search Committee as soon as possible.

The only time a Search Committee should make an exception on the calling of an interim is when the Search Committee has exhausted its efforts. They will initiate a meeting with the interim. Should the interim agree to serve, the committee would share with the church that this was done at the committee’s initiative. Moreover, it was without any encouragement from any person or group, formal or informal, to examine the interim as a possible candidate. Then, if there were no objection, the committee would ask the church if they would like to extend the call to the interim.

That exception may seem a bit narrow. However, if the interim is as good as some imagine, it will be unusual to think that the committee has not entertained the thought.

Remember, there will be two search committees operating at the same time. One elected by the church (formal) and the other will be the congregation itself (informal). One will do homework while the other will likely act on its feelings. One will answer to the church while the other has no accountability structure. One has the ability to negotiate with the candidate while the other does not. Therefore, pray for the Search Committee often.

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## V. Stretching Exercises

The following is an exercise to stretch the minds of committee members and help them understand why it is important to follow a proven plan of action. Some of these examples are personal experiences that I witnessed during my 25 plus years of ministry. All names are changed.

### **Trouble at Riverdale Church**

**The pastor leaves and the church called Rev. Goodbody as the interim. Goodbody was not the one the church wanted to be their pastor. That was something nearly everyone agreed to. The Search committee worked hard to find the new pastor. Six months later, certain members of the congregation approached the Search Committee and said that people have changed their mind. Now they are saying to the committee that Rev. Goodbody ought to be the next pastor. The committee was currently negotiating with a candidate that met all the church's qualifications and was hoping to present him the next Sunday.**

**However, certain members said that if the committee presented anyone that was not Rev. Goodbody, they would vote against the Search Committee's candidate. The Committee believed that all their work was in vain. The committee resigned and some left the church. What could the committee do to avoid this problem?**

Answer 1: The position of pastor should not be offered to interims.

### **Trouble at Old Brick Church**

**After the pastor left, the church elected a committee to begin the search. Before the committee met, one man, whose nephew had just finished a Bible course, called a member of the committee. This member held a private interview with the young man and promised that she would try to convince the other committee members to present him to the church. At the initial Search Committee meeting, she mentioned that she already had the perfect candidate for the church. Other committee members questioned her motives as well as her judgment. She explained that she had prayed about it and believed him to be "God's man." Church By-laws indicated that the committee**

**needed to be unanimous before issuing an invitation to give a trial sermon. Neither side would budge. What could the committee do to avoid this problem?**

Answer 2: The Search Committee acts together and does nothing without the knowledge of one another. There should be no private interviews or private conversations outside of the committee meeting.

Answer 3: Do not require every decision to be unanimous. Requiring the committee to be unanimous gives absolute power to any one dissenter.

### **Trouble at Tall Steeple Church**

**The Smith and Jones families have always taken opposite opinions on just about everything. Therefore, when the church elected Smith to serve on the search committee, it was a guarantee that the outcome would be unacceptable to many. When it came time to vote on the pastor, the results were unpleasant. Smith exclaimed, "So what do you want?" For almost a half an hour, the Smith and Jones family debated. Eventually, the meeting ended when no one was present to argue. A number of neutral parties left the church resolved and vowing never to return. What could the committee do to avoid this problem?**

Answer: 4. The Search Committee should seek a candidate that the church would receive well. If not, you will insure either the new pastor's ministry will be very short or the committee will be embarrassed. In addition, the church is not the property of the Smith's or Jones'. She is the bride of Christ. It is improper to embarrass a "lady."

### **Stonewall Baptist**

**The newly elected committee at Stonewall issued a survey to the church before they began their search. They promised to get the person that reflected the wishes of the congregation. The only problem was that He would have to be a young man with gray hair, fresh out of seminary with 15 years experience. His wife would need to be beautiful and talented, but must be willing to stay in the background and dress homely. The church expects his children to be normal and above average. The committee published the results. It**

**took the church over 2 years to find a pastor. What could the committee do to avoid this problem?**

Answer: 5. Do not publish complete survey results. Rather, publish things as generally as possible. Focus on how the church agrees.

### **The Parade of Pastors**

**The church, not wanting to waste time locating a pastor, put the deacon body in charge of finding pulpit supply for each Sunday. The church began sizing up the supply speakers as potential pastors. Soon it became clear that finding consensus on an interim would be difficult and finding a pastor would be almost impossible without disappointing the people. Then some of the supply speakers sent résumés and told regular church members that they wanted to be the pastor. Eventually, everyone was trying to tell the Search Committee what to do. Good candidates began to withdraw their names while desperate-to-be-employed candidates began showing up on Sundays unannounced. How could the committee avoid this?**

Answer 6: Tell the church that the committee will only consider one candidate at a time.

Answer 7: Every candidate must have a resume. A *walk-on* is risky.

Answer 8: Every candidate must pass a criminal background check. A walk-on cannot be accepted.

Answer 9: Call all references and ask the references for references. The Search Committee must have time to investigate.

### **Pay according to what you expect them to do.**

If the church expects their interim to do virtually everything the minister did, they deserve his salary. On the other hand, if the deacon/leadership team shares the work, pay less. Ask your association or convention about what other churches your size pay for the same job.

## **VI. Solicit Resumes**

The search committee will publicize with the Association and Convention about its search. State the position for which the church is searching and the “ball park figure” you are able to pay. It would be helpful if there were a brief job description attached. If the Search Committee describes who they are looking for, it will keep the committee from being overwhelmed with resumes that are poor matches for the church. Indicate that the committee will solicit resumes for a given number of weeks before narrowing the list. This will help both the committee and the candidates.

## **Reading Resumes**

1. Always have a resume in-hand. Do not hire a best friend without a resume. Employee screening is proven by the resume.
2. Check for spelling and grammatical errors. This tells what kind of a worker he/she would be. Even poor spellers can get a proofreader.
3. Examine the quality of paper and print. A candidate should always put his/her best foot forward. Make sure that the copy in hand is an original copy before you draw any conclusions. E-mail versions are only as good as the recipient’s printer.
4. If the resume is too long (more than three pages beyond a cover letter) the candidate “might” enjoy talking about him/her self more than usual.
5. Study his/her work history. Past action is a good predictor of future behavior.
6. Look for what the candidate does not say. Notice timeline gaps. It is typical for a pastor to have shorter pastorates early in his career. It is good to see a minister stay four or more years, especially after his third pastorate. There are some exceptions, so get more information from the candidate’s references.
7. Recognize the difference between “attending” a school and receiving a degree from a school. Look for the degree earned. A Doctor of Theology is for teaching theology while a Doctor of Ministry is earned while working in a particular church field. A Doctor of Divinity is a conferred degree and may not represent any particular level of education. The Master of Divinity represents three years beyond college. Some degrees are purchased without any significant work. You may want to look up the schools on the internet.
8. Study doctrinal statements and make notes on what the candidate did not include. Be sure to ask questions.
9. Call references and ask them for references. Printed phone numbers and addresses should be correct. Be sure to ask if they have any knowledge of accused criminal behavior. Be prepared to do a background check for criminal records. This is now standard operating procedure.
10. The best resumes have cover letters. The candidate or someone else may write it.
11. Everything needs to be typed. Handwriting on a resume does not look professional.
12. Does the person state his/her objectives? If not, the Search Committee should ask.
13. Remember, no candidate is perfect. If the committee waits for the perfect person, it may never find him/her. If the search Committee finds a perfect candidate, remove the blinders

and look again. Aim for excellence; perfection is out of reach. Look for the best person, not the perfect person.

## **Deciding Whom to Contact**

The Search Committee will reach a point when the resumes need ranking in order of preference. Some committees will make copies and send them home with committee members. (Be careful to keep these confidential.) The individual committee member will pray over the stack and return them in order of preference. The advantage here is to encourage committee members to think for themselves and draw their own conclusions. The committee members will then compare personal observations and seek consensus within the Search Committee.

## **Making First Contact**

When the committee has selected a candidate of interest, the chair should initiate a telephone contact telling the candidate of your interest. The committee should have the chair ask some simple questions. For example:

1. Are you seeking to leave your previous position? **If so, why?**
2. Would you be open to consider a church like ours?
3. What is your current pay?
4. Ask if the committee could send some more information and ask what address would be best to receive any correspondence.
5. Ask if they are speaking with any other church Search Committee.

Share this conversation with the committee and begin to check references. Use the following as a guide. In order to examine candidates in a consistent way, use a guide to assist the interview. The committee can then better compare “apples to apples,” not “apple to oranges.” (Feel free to create a list to fit your church’s need).

## Checking References

### Sample Telephone Reference Interview Guide

Create a common sheet so that the committee asks each reference very similar questions. This is only a sample. The committee may choose to write its own.

Candidate's name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reference \_\_\_\_\_ Ph # \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to the Candidate \_\_\_\_\_ How long? \_\_\_\_\_

The candidate's greatest strengths

A word or statement that describes his/her ministry skills

A word or statement that describes his/her character

A word or statement that describes his/her attitude

A word or statement that describes his/her leadership

On a scale from 1 –5 (5 being the highest), rate the following in light of the candidate.

Integrity \_\_\_\_\_

Honesty \_\_\_\_\_

Work attitude \_\_\_\_\_

Emotional Maturity \_\_\_\_\_

Cooperation \_\_\_\_\_

Personal Habits \_\_\_\_\_

Dependability \_\_\_\_\_

Compatibility with others \_\_\_\_\_

Could you provide two other references for the candidate?

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ph# \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Ph# \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If all goes well, follow this process contact. Tell them if you wish to pursue their candidacy. ( If not, send a letter to inform the candidate, thanking him/her for his/her time). Ask what he/she thinks about the information that your committee sent. Arrange for the candidate and the committee to meet. If the candidate is required to travel to meet the committee, be willing to reimburse the gas.

Be sure to discuss some of the following with your candidates:

- Dreams they have for their ministry
- How they believe they are gifted
- Their salvation experience
- Their preaching style
- How their family fits in
- Vacations and sick leave
- Salary
- Health insurance and retirement
- Discuss a basic job description
- How they relate to other ministers in their association/convention.

- If they are currently leading a congregation, ask how they spend a typical day.
- How they handle conflict.
- If there are other staff, how they relate to them.
- Encourage the candidate to ask questions

**Sample Post Interview Guide for the Committee to follow when looking at a given resume.**

After the committee has interviewed the candidate, the search committee will answer a few questions to rate their overall reaction. It is best to resist discussion until the form is complete. This gives every committee member equal voice and encourages greater input.

1. The resume was reflective of the candidate. 1 2 3 4 5
2. The candidate seemed like a warm individual. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Appearance was acceptable 1 2 3 4 5
4. Enthusiastic 1 2 3 4 5
5. Seemed Confident 1 2 3 4 5
6. Seemed like a spiritual person 1 2 3 4 5
7. Seemed like he/she would get along well with others 1 2 3 4 5
8. Seemed intelligent 1 2 3 4 5
9. Seemed emotionally mature 1 2 3 4 5
10. Fun to be with 1 2 3 4 5

11. Could fit in with the existing leadership 1 2 3 4 5

12. Easy to talk to 1 2 3 4 5

13. Holds beliefs in keeping with traditional Baptists 1 2 3 4 5

14. Poses no risk to children or youth 1 2 3 4 5

15. My overall impression of the candidate 1 2 3 4 5

If the meeting with the committee and candidate went well, the committee should arrange to visit the current church to examine his/her work. Do not sit as a group as this only attracts others to your presence. If the church is small, it may be unavoidable. Other options may include watching video or hearing audio. Sometimes ministers are away leading certain events. These too are excellent ways to visit the minister.

If the relationship between the candidate and the committee is still going well, invite the candidate to bring his/her family to join you on a weeknight to meet your church leadership. The church should have a dinner and have time allotted for members to ask questions. If the candidate's role is to lead a choir, encourage the choir to be present, if the candidate is to lead youth, encourage the youth to be there. If the candidate is a pastoral candidate, encourage everyone to be present.

At the end of the evening, the search committee should get together and ask themselves, "Does the candidate seem to be connecting well with the people?" If all is still going well, then invite the prospective minister to come on a Sunday in view of a call.

## **VII. The Call**

After the morning worship, the committee addresses the church during a special conference. The question is a simple yes or no vote. It is highly recommended that the vote be by ballot. Some may want to make the final vote unanimous. Although that might look good in the minutes, it is not the truth. The prospective minister needs to know the actual percentages before agreeing to come. In addition, if the votes are in favor, but key leaders oppose the new minister being there, the minister may have difficulty establishing leadership even though they have the required votes. The committee should be open with the candidate on these matters.

## **If the Candidate is Rejected**

In the event that the candidate is rejected, try in the days ahead to ascertain why. The current business meeting will not be the appropriate time to discuss this matter. The committee will need to spend more time listening to individual church members. Go back to the stack of resumes, look at other candidates, and continue interviewing. If the committee finds all other candidates unacceptable, the committee must start with a second round of collecting resumes.

Do not take a “no” vote personally. Rejection of a candidate may happen for a variety of reasons. Some people just want someone else. Others did not like the way his wife laughed. Perhaps, it was his haircut or his name may be too long for the marquee.

## **If the Candidate is Accepted**

The chair of the Search Committee should contact the candidate. He/she should share with the candidate the total number of voting members present and how many votes cast in the affirmative. With that information, the candidate is able to make a good response. If the candidate agrees, rejoice and plan for a church wide fellowship or some kind of an installation service.

## **VIII. Plan the Move**

The Search Committee should make arrangements to move the minister’s family. If they already live nearby, it will not be an issue. Some churches provide an allowance for the new minister to arrange for a moving company to handle their belongings. Others churches that have younger members may want to come help the pastor move. If you choose to help the new minister move, be aware that you will see the minister and family under great stress. Depending on what gets broken, the honeymoon may end before the first Sunday. Unless you enjoy moving people, it is worth the money to hire a professional.

I hope this guide will be of great help to your church as you seek to find the minister that the Lord wants for your church.

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