

Introduction

Thank you for accepting the challenging and sacred word of serving on your congregation's Search Committee. Perhaps this is the first time you are on this team, or perhaps you have done this before. Perhaps your congregation has experienced the Search Process in recent years, or perhaps this is a once in a generation experience for you. In any case, serving on the Search Committee in a congregation can be one of the most important and rewarding experiences for many people. It can also, at times, be challenging, sometimes frustrating, and even discouraging as many search processes can take many months and contain some twists, turns, and even detours along the way. It is our hope that this series of guides may provide guidance and suggestions for navigating through this holy and sacred work.

Grounded in Prayer

These best practices and hints are gathered from the experiences of pastors, congregations and regional leadership, all of whom share the same goal: to help congregations and pastors find each other so that God's ministry through the church of Jesus Christ may be healthy, creative, faith-full and hope-filled. Through the process you are encouraged to surround this work in prayer. Trust that God is at work in the process, in your ministry and in the ministries of the pastors you will consider. Seek God's guidance, rely on Christ's strength, and trust the Spirit's leading. God has a mission in need of a church and has called and equipped pastors to offer leadership and gifts to our congregations. Know also that others will be praying with you as even these

words are bathed in prayer. May they be helpful to God's chosen servants and communities.

Getting Started

Begin with prayer. Even before the Search Committee is formed, begin praying for the season of transition you are entering and for God's wisdom to prevail. *Consider appointing a Chaplain or Spiritual Guide* who will lay the foundation for discernment and continue to lead that practice throughout the process.

Consult your Bylaws for requirements about the make-up and size of the Search Committee and follow the process outlined. If the Bylaws do not designate specific people who will serve (such as Chair of the Elders, Moderator/Board chairperson, etc.), ensure that the Search Committee is representative of the make-up of the congregation in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, tenure in the congregation, and relation to specific groups within the congregation (both formal and informal), etc.

Your Search Process Partners

You have two partners in the Search and Call process. Your Regional Minister (or his or her designee) are trained to facilitate congregational search committees in the search process.¹ Contact your Regional Office as soon as possible for assistance and schedule a meeting with the Regional Consultant assigned to work with congregations in the Search Process. Your Regional Consultant will outline the process for gathering information and completing the discernment work. The process works best when you involve your Regional Consultant throughout

the process, copying them on meeting minutes and including them in search committee emails.

A second partner is the Office of Christian Vocations. On their website you will find valuable resources to assist you in calling your next pastor. The Office of Christian Vocations will work with your Regional Consultant to provide ministerial profiles at the appropriate time in the search process.

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/clergy/search-call/downloadable-and-online-ministry-resources/>.

Interim/Transitional Ministry

During the transition time, the best practice is to work with the Regional Consultant in securing pastoral leadership. The general recommendation is that an Interim minister will not be a candidate for the settled position. There may be some instances in which different forms of transitional leadership may be appropriate. Again, your Regional Consultant will be helpful in making this determination. In any case, be clear in the call agreement what the expectations of your pastoral leadership during this time of transition and communicate them to the pastor and congregation.

A best practice is to use this transition time to take a serious look at the congregation as a whole. Are there conflict issues to be resolved? Does the congregation need time to grieve the loss of the previous pastor or engage in visioning for future ministry? Are there questions around finances, staffing, building, governance, or other issues that need to be resolved before the

¹ Hereafter referred to as Regional Consultant

congregation will be at its healthiest place to embrace a new pastor?

This honest evaluation is preparation for completing the congregational profile

Congregational Profile

The Congregational Profile is a snapshot of the current realities of the congregation. In addition, it provides the congregation an opportunity to seriously reflect on a comprehensive understanding of important aspects of the congregation which include financial, property, human/volunteer, emotional/spiritual energy and the ways in which the congregants engage each other and the community.

Section XI of the Congregational Profile provides a series of questions that may prove to be a helpful resource in doing these vital assessments. It will also assist in identifying those qualities, gifts and characteristics you should seek in your next pastor. The interim minister and your Regional Consultant can be helpful in designing avenues for this evaluation.

Complete the congregational profile and gather other materials as requested by your Regional Consultant. Your congregational profile should be both honest AND present your congregation in the best possible light. The congregational profile and directions for completing the profile is found on the disciples.org website: <http://disciples.org/gcom/resources/>.

Breathe

Take your time in completing this part of the search process. Approximately 80% of your interim time will be spent in this discernment phase. While it is tempting to rush ahead and begin interviewing candidates, the groundwork you lay during this initial phase will serve you well in recognizing the gifts and skills needed in your next pastor.

Candidates are wonderfully diverse. Stay open to possibilities in seeking the next pastor. Describe the needs of the next pastor in terms of skills, gifts and graces best suited to the present and future needs of your congregation.

Use this time to also work with the governing board, the personnel committee, and/or the finance committee to develop a framework for the compensation and benefits that you will offer the candidate. The specifics will be decided later in the process, but it is helpful for the committee to understand what the compensation and benefits package can include.

Website/Social Media

Update your website, Facebook and other online presence. In most cases, the candidates you will be most interested in will first meet you online. Be sure that their first impression of you is a positive one.

The website may also serve as the place where all the information for candidates related to your congregation and community may be located. It is recommended that this webpage be password protected and given only to those candidates you are working with through the search and call process.

Search and Call Guidelines for Search Committees Preparing for the Task

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