

## **Pulpit Search Committee Guidelines**

### **Stage One: TRANSITION**

\*This is the time period between the private announcement to leadership that the pastor is going to leave and the pastor's actual departure.

- I. Keep things stable** - prevent a major blow-up
- II. Keep things positive** – be gracious toward departing staff (e.g. Farewell Reception, love offering, etc.)
- III. Keep things focused** – cultivate a forward thinking, visionary outlook; but avoid making major changes that may cause more complications in the early days of a new pastor's ministry (e.g. hiring strategic staff members; building programs; major revision of church constitution; etc.).
- IV. Keep things honest** – help encourage genuine humility and love; hold people accountable for their statements and actions

### **Stage Two: ORGANIZATION**

\*There may be some overlap with the Transition Stage since this must begin before the departing pastor actually leaves.

- I. Among the members of the Pulpit Search Committee**
  - A. Establish leadership roles for the proper functioning of the Pulpit Search Committee
  - B. Establish clear goals for the direction of the Pulpit Search Committee
    1. Pulpit supply for services of the church
    2. Prospective candidates for office of pastor
  - C. Establish consistent procedures for the operation of the Pulpit Search Committee
- II. Among the members of the Congregation**
  - A. Inform them of the basic framework that has been established for the PSC (see above)
  - B. Keep them informed of basic progress by the PSC without divulging sensitive or confidential matters

### **Stage Three: INTERACTION**

- I. Receiving resumes**
  - A. Contact like-minded ecclesiastical groups (e.g. IFBA of Michigan)
  - B. Contact like-minded local churches/pastors
  - C. Contact like-minded Christian colleges and seminaries (e.g. DBTS, BJU, NBBC, etc.)

## **II. Screening potential candidates**

- A. Establish a screening grid – meet most or all of basic criteria for further consideration
  - 1. Doctrinal position (request statement)
  - 2. Philosophy of ministry (request statement)
  - 3. Position on key issues (e.g. separation, music, translation issue, marriage-divorce, etc)
  - 4. Personal qualifications (inc. spouse and children)
  - 5. Educational preparation (e.g. seminary training)
  - 6. Ministry experience (e.g. total years of service; length of stay in individual ministries; diversity of leadership experience; etc.)
- B. Use and misuse of questionnaires
  - 1. Avoid the overwhelming and unreasonable (way too long) – “It’s not thorough if it doesn’t get completed and returned. It’s just plain useless!”
  - 2. Avoid the deceptive and unethical (ambush questions)
- C. Conduct brief phone interviews
- D. Review of beliefs and practices
  - 1. Church - doctrinal statement, church constitution, church’s history
  - 2. Candidate – doctrinal statement, philosophy of ministry, ministry experience

## **III. Pursuing primary candidates**

- A. Conduct follow-up phone interviews
- B. Contact references, and ask around for other potential references not listed on resume
- C. If serious prospect, conduct personal meeting, as proximity allows

## **IV. Settling on list of Serious Candidates**

- A. Establishing a short list
- B. Prioritizing that short list for action

## **Stage Four: RECOMMENDATION / PRESENTATION**

\*Procedure: pursue one man at a time publicly (i.e. candidate presented to congregation for consideration) through this stage. This will help avoid a popularity contest, which would invariably end up being conducted on far too superficial a basis. It will also help maintain the highest in ethical standards, and minimize the potential for division among the ranks of the Pulpit Search Committee.

### **I. 1<sup>st</sup> visit – pulpit supply (prospective candidate)**

- A. Not announced as candidate, just pulpit supply (part of the rotation)
- B. Possibly teach adult SS
- C. Preach in AM
- D. Dinner with deacon chmn. or small group of church leaders (keep it inconspicuous)
- E. Preach in PM

### **II. Possible Business Meeting prior to official candidate visit**

- A. Clarify budget issues re: financial support for any future pastor
- B. Resolve any procedural issues re: call of a pastor

**III. 2<sup>nd</sup> visit – candidating (official candidate)**

\*Needs to be announced clearly and well in advance to all members of the congregation in writing and by frequent public announcements (per requirements of the church constitution).

Deacons should make personal contacts with key families who have special needs.

- A. Sunday School
  - 1. formal introductions of candidate and his family
  - 2. teach lesson
- B. Morning Worship
  - 1. Brief testimony
  - 2. Preach in service
- C. Afternoon
  - 1. Dinner with deacons and their families
  - 2. Informal interaction with deacons (inc. review of proposed financial package)
  - 3. Time to rest, some privacy
- D. Pre-Evening Service -- Q&A time with candidate
- E. Evening Service
  - 1. Preach
  - 2. Special music from family member(s) if so inclined
- F. After PM Service -- Casual time of fellowship and mingling with congregation
- G. Pulpit Committee Meeting –
  - 1. Usually sometime after Sunday night but prior to Wednesday evening service
  - 2. Prepare recommendation to congregation (at business meeting)
- H. Business Meeting – vote by the congregation
  - 1. Usually no earlier than Wednesday following candidate’s visit; no later than Sunday following candidate’s visit
  - 2. Extend formal call to the candidate
  - 3. Confirm financial package (especially if must revise the budget)
- I. Evaluation & Acceptance by the Candidate
  - 1. Usually allow up to three or four days to provide formal reply.
  - 2. Many candidates will already be sufficiently convinced so as to provide a reply over the phone immediately or within 24 hours.

**Stage Five: CONFIRMATION**

**I. Announcement to the Congregation**

- A. Candidates decision to accept or decline
- B. Candidates transition plans
- C. Churches obligation for effective transition

**II. Work out plans for new pastor’s arrival**

- A. Housing
- B. Office
- C. Programs
- D. Current staff members

**III. First Sunday at church**

- A. Special greetings from the church's leaders (deacons, PSC)
- B. Welcome Reception, following AM or PM

**IV. Installation Service**

- A. 4-8 weeks after arrival, allows time to organize
- B. A time to celebrate with gratitude and commitment for future
- C. Afternoon Program
  - 1. Invite special guests to attend (friends of the new pastor, friends of the church, local supporting pastors, etc.). Include display of letters sent by those unable to attend.
  - 2. Dinner at church for congregation and guests
  - 3. Special service
    - a. Schedule a special speaker (or two) --significant role for church or the new pastor
    - b. Scripture reading & prayer
    - c. Special music
  - 4. No PM service that day