

# The Pastor SEARCH Handbook



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*The Pastor Search Handbook*

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# Preface

**T**he Southern Baptists of Texas Convention is committed to equipping our churches in every area of their ministry. This *Pastor Search Handbook* is offered as a tool to assist churches in this critical time in their history.

The period without a pastor or staff member can be one of the most critical times in the life of any church. Thus, it is essential that the search committee be as prepared as possible, both spiritually and practically, to facilitate the most efficient search process and smoothest possible transition for the church's new pastor.

The SBTC stands ready to assist the committee in any way possible through training, resources, and prayer support. Upon request, the Minister/Church Relations Department of the SBTC will be happy to provide resumes for a committee's consideration through our Next Step Resume Service. Any resumes sent from our office are intended as a service to our churches and not as recommendations from the SBTC.

It is our prayer that God would bless the use of this manual to assist churches in finding the individual God desires for effective ministry in His church.



# Electing a Pastor Search Committee

**A** Search Committee for a pastor may be elected one of several ways. The Church needs to decide the best method for its needs and proceed from that point. The procedure that most comfortably fits a church will often be determined by the size of the Church.

## Considerations

1. If your Church has a constitution and by-laws, consult and follow it.
2. A “Standing Committee” or “Committee on Committees” may be responsible for nominating all church committees, including a “Search Committee” for a pastor or staff member.
3. The church “Nominating Committee” may have this responsibility.
4. The church may have a committee within the deacon body to nominate the “Search Committee.”
5. The Church may nominate and elect the committee from the floor.
6. Ballots may be prepared with the names of all church members age eighteen and above. In a business meeting, the church members circle the names of five or seven persons to serve on the committee, with the one receiving the most votes serving as the chairperson.

## Suggested Procedure for Electing a Pastor Search Committee

**N**otify the church at least two weeks in advance that there will be a special called business meeting to adopt the procedure for electing a Pastor Search Committee. Explain that the purpose of the meeting is to adopt the procedure to be used in electing a Pastor Search Committee.

The Church Council (or Deacons) recommends the following procedure for electing a committee to search for a pastor (staff member).

1. That \_\_\_\_\_ (a church member or staff member) be elected to serve as moderator of church business meetings until a pastor is called.
2. That the following procedure be adopted:
  - a. The name of the Committee be: “Pastor Search Committee”  
(Or Minister of Education Search Committee, etc.)

- b. No existing committee be used (this committee should give its undivided attention and prayer to the process of searching for a pastor)
  - c. A business meeting be called two weeks from today (give date) for the purpose of electing a Pastor Search Committee. (This time should be used by every member to prayerfully seek God's will regarding persons to serve.)
  - d. The Pastor Search Committee will consist of five members and two alternates, all members of our church (This number may vary depending upon church size.)
    - 1) The individual receiving the most votes will be the chairperson.
    - 2) The individual receiving the second most votes will be the vice-chairperson.
    - 3) A record will be kept of the ten persons receiving the most votes.
  - e. A secretary will be elected by the committee.
  - f. If any of the top seven cannot serve, the individuals receiving the next highest votes will be asked to serve.
  - g. The Nominating Committee (or other appropriate committee) will be responsible for counting the votes.
  - h. Those elected be contacted by appropriate persons. (Chairman of deacons, Associate Pastor or other staff members.)
  - i. The results of the election be published in the next mail-out. (Or by special letter mailing, bulletin, or posted in church foyer.)
3. The members of the Pastor Search Committee should represent all the church; a healthy cross-section of the membership. Additionally ladies (and possibly one mature youth) should be considered for membership on the committee.
  4. The expenses of the Pastor Search Committee be paid by the Church.
  5. The Church should pledge to support the search committee in prayer until a pastor (or staff member) is called.



# Preliminary Considerations

1. **Pray!**
2. **Scriptural Basis for a Pastor.** (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9)
3. **Specific Concerns during the Interim**
  - a. Composition of the search committee is vital.
  - b. Avoid allowing a vacuum to be filled by an incorrect leadership.
  - c. Rule #1 - Do not allow an interim pastor to be considered for the position of pastor.
  - d. Consistency of ministry is important.
  - e. The interim pastor can provide leadership for Sunday school, outreach and other ministries.
  - f. Usually, the interim will only fill the pulpit on Sundays. However, a more extensive interim may preach on Wednesday nights, visit the hospital and meet with the staff. This is negotiable.
4. **SBTC Assistance**
  - a. Supply preachers - Staff of the Convention. Other non-pastoral candidates - retired ministers, college and seminary professors may also be considered.
  - b. The Ministering Interim program of the SBTC represents our commitment to assist the church in ministry during the interim.
  - c. Interim should last no less than three months and no more than twelve months, unless circumstances dictate a longer term stay.
  - d. Training for the Pastor Search Committee is available during this time upon request.
  - e. The Minister/Church Relations Department of the SBTC is available to assist churches requesting ministry resumes.
  - f. Transitional Pastor Program.
5. **Cost**
  - a. The Cooperative Program provides for the Pastor Search Committee training and other ministry aspects during the interim.
  - b. Supply preachers should be given an honorarium (This amount may vary).
  - c. An Interim Pastor should be paid commensurate with his experience and responsibilities. This amount should be agreed upon up front.

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*Remember, pray, pray and pray.*

*This will bring revival and help the church prepare for the new pastor.*

# Pastor Search Committee

## I. Getting Started

1. Training is Important
  - a. Be informed. Even if you served on a search team before, things change.
  - b. The Holy Spirit moves in an orderly fashion, 1 Corinthians 14:33, 40.
  - c. Observe ministerial ethics and etiquette in dealing with the candidates.
  
2. Essentials for Success
  - a. Move on God's timetable and not what others are urging you to do.
  - b. Get the conviction that there is only one man God has for you.
  - c. Confidentiality is necessary for the committee.
  - d. Twice a month the chairman should share with the congregation in general terms where the committee is in the process.
  
3. First Meetings
  - a. Pray together until you come to a place of spiritual unity. You have an awesome responsibility. The congregation has given you its trust.
  - b. Discussion in the committee should include:  
Priorities, needs, and future challenges before the church.
  - c. Discuss the profile of the man to meet the needs of the church
  - d. Elect a chairman and a secretary to handle the minutes.

## II. Step One - In House Business

1. Receiving Resumes
  - a. Announce to the congregation you are receiving resumes and give a cut-off date. Resumes will be the only means by which a person will be considered. Resumes should be in the sole possession of the chairman. Resumes may be obtained through the State Convention office, associational offices, seminaries, colleges, church members, or other pastors.
  - b. The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention is available to assist Churches with resumes through our Next Step Resume Service.



- c. After the cut-off date, copies of all resumes should be made for each committee member.
  - d. Other Considerations:
    - 1) The committee can contact a man for a resume.
    - 2) Late arriving resumes may be considered.
2. Church Survey
- a. Announce to the congregation that a survey will be taken. This should be done during the first month, while resumes are being gathered. Give one week advance notice for the survey.
  - b. Distribute during the early part of a morning worship service.
  - c. The Chairman of the Search Committee should explain the purpose of the survey. [The purpose of the survey is to let the congregation know that they are being taken into consideration in the process as well as to get a profile of the prospective pastor.]
  - d. The secretary of the committee should compile the findings.
3. Church Evaluation
- a. The committee does a ten year evaluation of the church's history. Check areas such as S. S. attendance, baptisms, finances, etc.
  - b. Reviewing this material helps in evaluating the type of pastor the church needs. The results should be made available to the new pastor.
  - c. Use the profile in the discussion of the resumes.

### **III. Step Two - Resumes and Data Assessment**

- 1. The committee should have the survey results, the pastoral profile, and copies of the resumes. This is the first discussion of the resumes.
- 2. After the first meeting, the committee members should take the resumes home and pray over them for a week.
- 3. Privately, each member selects a predetermined number (as many as 15 and as few as 7) as their top choices.
- 4. The candidates are discussed openly with each member giving their choices. A secret ballot is taken at the end of the discussion with top number (15\7) being selected for further consideration. (This does not mean that others may not be considered. Names may come in late. However, this usually excludes the non-selected candidates from further consideration.)
- 5. Send a letter to those who are no longer being considered at this time.

#### **IV. Step Three - First Contact**

1. Mail the candidates a questionnaire. A cover letter by the Chairman asks for mutual confidentiality and explains that the person is under consideration. Give them a cut-off date to return the questionnaire. Ask permission to contact references. For return mail, use a home address of the chairman or secretary to insure confidentiality.
2. Drop the names of those that do not return the questionnaire or do not give satisfactory answers.
3. Ask for tapes of two types of messages: evangelistic and pastoral (Duplicate the tapes. Give each member a copy.) Two weeks is a sufficient amount of time.
4. After listening to the tapes, the committee will review the candidates and narrow the number of candidates under consideration for a second time.
5. Send a letter to those who are no longer being considered at this time.

#### **V. Step Four - Getting Serious**

1. Check references
  - a. Mail a questionnaire to references on the candidates resume. Ask each reference to give a reference that is not listed. Be sure to ask for phone number and address.
  - b. Contact secondary references.
  - c. Use a knowledgeable advisor outside the church to assist in referencing.
2. Conduct Background Checks.
3. Select the final group (This may be as many as five or as few as two).
4. Send a letter to those who are no longer being considered at this time.

#### **VI. Step Five – Making the Final Selection**

*A specific prayer emphasis should be set at this point.*

*When you finish this step*

*you will be down to one pastoral choice.*

1. The Church should only deal seriously with one candidate at a time. This reinforces to the Church the need to be dependent on the leadership of the Holy Spirit.
2. Send the church's information to the pastoral candidates.
3. Select the order in which the committee feels led to pursue potential candidates.

4. Personal visit with the candidate on the field
  - a. Contact them and be sure they will be in the pulpit. Set a time when the committee can meet privately with them, preferably some other time than Sunday.
  - b. Pay for meals and/or any other expenses of the pastoral candidates.
  - c. Option - Secure a neutral site for a preacher who is not a pastor or has to travel a considerable distance and pay any of his related expenses.
  - d. After meeting with the candidate and his family on the field, a decision should be reached as to whether the committee unanimously believes this is the ONE MAN God has for the church.
  - e. Send a letter to those who are no longer being considered at this time.

## VII. Step Six - Confirming God's Leading

1. The committee should be enthusiastically unanimous about the one candidate they wish to consider. There should be no reservations!
2. The candidate should be contacted about a convenient time for him to come visit the church field.
  - a. This is a time for him and his family to see the church's facilities, visit with the committee, and evaluate the community.
  - b. Any details or questions relating to his coming as pastor should be finalized in this meeting. A full discussion of salary, benefits, moving expenses, vacations, Sundays away for revivals, etc., should be completed. **Everything should be put in writing.**
3. Set a time for the candidate to come in view of a call.

## VIII. Step Seven - Bringing a Candidate In View of a Call

1. Invite the prospective pastor and his family to come and spend the weekend.
  - a. Designate someone on the committee to be responsible for hospitality (meals, housing, childcare, etc.). The Church should pay all related expenses for meal, travel, and accommodations.
  - b. Mail the following material to the congregation one week prior to his coming in view of a call: biographical information of the prospective pastor, recommended salary and benefits (unless confidential), any agreements between the search committee and

the prospective pastor, and a statement from each committee member expressing their support for the new pastor.

2. Sample schedule for the weekend
  - a. Friday evening - Pastor & wife have dinner with committee.
  - b. Saturday morning - Pastor & wife meets with church leaders for late breakfast. (Afternoon off)
  - c. Saturday night - Church-wide fellowship meal with an informal time of visiting.
  - d. Sunday - The prospective pastor & wife visit as many Sunday School classes as possible. Promotion for high attendance should have been made through the Sunday School. The candidate preaches in all Sunday worship services.

### **IX. Presentation of a Candidate before the Church**

1. Following the evening worship the candidate and his family should be excused.
2. The committee presents their recommendation (allow each member to speak to the congregation) and answer questions. Take a secret ballot.
3. The committee counts the votes immediately and announces the result before the congregation is dismissed.
4. The chairman should call the pastor and give the count of the vote. If the pastor is ready to accept, the announcement should be given following the report of the count.

### **X. The Final Responsibility of the Search Committee**

1. Upon acceptance
  - a. Notify the church when the new pastor will be moving to the field.
  - b. Send a letter to the church from the new pastor.
2. Relocation and welcome
  - a. Assist in the moving process.
  - b. Assist in any questions or problems during the transition.
  - c. Arrange salary and benefits to be started and the payment of moving expenses.
  - d. Be at the pastor's residence when he arrives as a welcoming party.
  - e. Make sure his new office is ready for his arrival.
  - f. Make sure the church fulfills the agreements made by the committee and the recommendations voted on by the church.

- g. The committee shall act as a liaison between the pastor and church for one year.
- 1) Help your new pastor get settled in and become acquainted with your community.
  - 2) Help your new pastor get to know associational and denominational leaders, as well as other local pastors.

### ***IT IS TIME TO REJOICE!!***

#### **XI. Addendum**

All of the Search Committee's correspondence, phone calls, travel and other related expenses are to be covered by the church.

#### **XII. Alternatives**

1. An announcement to the church ought to be made as soon as possible, should the pastor decline.
2. The committee may return to any point in the process.
3. One possibility is to go back to the second candidate and consider him.
4. You may want to start the process over at some other point.
5. Should the committee's recommendation be overwhelmingly rejected, the committee may need to allow the church to elect another search committee.



# Pastor Search Committee Process

1. **Step One – Receiving Resumes**
  - a. Church survey
  - b. Church evaluation
  
2. **Step Two - Resume and Data Assessment**
  - a. Make a first selection
  - b. Send letters to those no longer being considered
  
3. **Step Three - First Contact**
  - a. Mail candidates a questionnaire
  - b. Ask for permission to check references
  - c. Drop names that no send back questionnaire
  - d. Ask for tapes of sermons (2 types)
  - e. Make a second selection
  - f. Send letters to those no longer being considered
  
4. **Step Four - Check References**
  - a. Primary and secondary
  - b. Background checks
  - c. Make a third selection
  - d. Send letters to those no longer being considered
  
5. **Step Five – The Final Selection**
  - a. Personal visit
  - b. Send letters to those no longer being considered
  
6. **Step Six – Confirming God’s Leading**
  
7. **Step Seven – Bringing a Candidate in View of a Call**

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***Celebrate the new pastor’s arrival!***



## Search Committees Review of Resumes

1. **Look** at the candidate's record of ministry, length of time at each place, type of location, accomplishments.
2. **Determine**, if possible, his reason for departure from previous places of ministry.
3. **Check** references two and three deep. Ask each reference to give you another reference not listed on the resume.
4. **Find out** who recommended the candidate, if no letter is attached. The one who recommends is very important.
5. **Verify** the degrees and educational background.
6. **Investigate** ministry experience by calling former churches at least back ten years (if possible).
7. **Check** on his denominational involvement in the state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.
8. **Investigate** worship and leadership styles, as well as philosophy of ministry.

## Sample Letters

### LETTER ONE

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Your name has been sent to us as a prospective pastor. We appreciate your willingness to be involved in the Lord's work at \_\_\_\_\_. We ask for your prayers during our time of searching for a pastor. God has been good to us and we praise Him.

Your resume will be placed with all the others we have received. After a period of prayer, a selection of about ten to twelve men will be made. Should we be led to consider you, you will be contacted at that time for further information. We are committed to an orderly process and will seriously consider only one man at a time.

Thank you again for your submission to the Lord's will. We pray that God will continue to use you in your current place of service to the fullest.

In Christ,

Chairman

### LETTER TWO

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

The Pulpit Search Committee of the \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church has completed the first stage of the process toward the selection of a pastor. We have prayed over and reviewed all the resumes. Although you possess a number of positive qualities, we feel led in a different direction at this time.

Thank you for your willingness to allow your name to be considered. Should we feel led to come back to you at a future time, we hope you would be open to talk with us.

May God's will be done in your life and ministry. Please pray for us as we continue our search.

In Christ,

Chairman

## LETTER THREE

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

The Pulpit Search Committee of the \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church has completed the second stage of the process toward the selection of a pastor. We have prayed over and reviewed all the resumes. Although you possess a number of positive qualities, we feel led in a different direction at this time.

Thank you for your willingness to allow your name to be considered. Should we feel led to come back to you at a future time, we hope you would be open to talk with us.

May God's will be done in your life and ministry. Please pray for us as we continue our search.

In Christ,

Chairman

## LETTER FOUR

The Pulpit Search Committee of the \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church has completed the final stage of the process toward the selection of a pastor. You have been gracious to help us gather information and respond to every request.

After much prayer and deliberation, we have been led to pursue another man. You have many positive qualities. We simply believe that God would have us consider someone else. Should we feel directed to contact you again, it is our hope you would still be open to us.

May God continue to use you in His service. We covet your prayers for our Church as we hope to have completed our Pastor Search process. We will continue to be in prayer for you as you continue to seek the Lord's will for your life.

In Christ,

Chairman



## Questions for a Search Committee to Ask Prospective Candidates

### Doctrinal Questions:

1. Describe in-depth your definition of inerrancy.
2. What is your position on predestination, foreknowledge, election, the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation and the universal, general call of the gospel?
3. Explain your interpretation of I Corinthians 12-14. Do you consider tongues to be an operative gift today? If yes, are there any restrictions upon the use of tongues?
4. In your view, to what degree does the Scripture restrict the Lord's Supper? What do you consider alien immersion?
5. From the Scriptures, what is your understanding of the role of women in the church? In light of the fact that the Bible does not give a description of the pastor's wife, what role will your wife have in your ministry?
6. Do you believe in the exclusivity of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and do you believe that those who die without being born again will go to an eternal hell?
7. Do you believe in direct creation? Do you accept Genesis 1-11 as historical and literal?
8. Do you believe in, practice, and teach Biblical tithing?
9. Do you affirm the Baptist Faith and Message 2000?

### Practical Ministry Questions:

1. What is your attitude concerning the Cooperative Program?
2. Tell about your involvement in the Convention and your attitude toward the Cooperative Program. What has been your involvement in missions and New Church starts?

3. What is your approach to ministry, traditional, contemporary, or blended?
4. What is your opinion about “marketing the church” and “seeker” ministries?
5. Are you familiar with the work and direction of the SBTC?

## **Personal Ministry Questions:**

1. Share with us your personal salvation experience (if spouse is present ask same question).
2. Share with us your call to ministry.
3. Share about your former places of service (length of service, accomplishments, reason for resignation, etc.).
4. Describe for us your leadership style (how you [intend to] relate to staff, deacons and committees in the Church.



## Checklist of things to share with serious candidates

- Church Constitution and Bylaws
- Current Church Budget
- Church Mission Statement and Vision Statement
- The Church's long and short range goals (if available)
- Pastor's Job Description
- Demographics profile of your community (if available)
- Information on Church Sunday School, ministries, and programs
- Current Nominating Committee Report
- Church History (if available)
- Evaluation of Church's History (produced by this committee)
- Current Pictorial Directory
- Profile compiled by Church and Committee
- Recent Newsletters, Bulletins
- Other material about the Church or community you deem valuable



# Annual Financial Arrangements

A. Vocational Compensation	
Base Salary	\$ _____
Housing Allowance	\$ _____
Utilities Allowance	\$ _____
<b>Total Compensation</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
B. Other Benefits	
Retirement ____% of vocational compensation	\$ _____
Family Health Insurance	\$ _____
Life Insurance	\$ _____
Disability Insurance	\$ _____
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
C. Professional Expenses	
Automobile Expenses/Mileage Reimbursement	\$ _____
*Convention and Meetings	\$ _____
Book Allowance	\$ _____
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
D. Other Considerations	
Social Security Tax Allowance	\$ _____
Worker's Compensation Ins.	\$ _____
Christmas Bonus or Gift	\$ _____
Home Owner's Insurance	\$ _____
Insurance on Pastor's Library, books, etc.	\$ _____
<b>Total Package:</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>
Moving, relocating expenses	\$ _____

\*Professional Expenses, conventions and meetings - will be reimbursed for these if you do not go over budget limit for these expenses

- \_\_\_\_ Expenses for Conventions and conferences attended as our Pastor
- \_\_\_\_ Pastor's wife when she attends with the Pastor
- \_\_\_\_ Study leave and continuing education
- \_\_\_\_ Civic club membership expenses
- \_\_\_\_ To be used at Pastor's discretion

\*\* Churches may wish to consult the Compensation Study of the Annuity Board for assistance in putting together a salary package.

# Annual Time Arrangements



The Church acknowledges that due to the nature of the Pastor’s job, crises situations and emergencies that may arise, and heavy schedules there will be times when the Pastor will need to arrange his work and time arrangements to accommodate ample time for family and personal needs.

Following is the Annual Time Arrangements:

- Days off per week \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of weeks of paid vacation \_\_\_\_\_
- Holidays off \_\_\_\_\_
- Study leave allowed \_\_\_\_\_
- Revivals or Sundays away from the pulpit \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of weeks of paid vacation \_\_\_\_\_
- Holidays off \_\_\_\_\_



# Sample Church Survey

To be given to every member of the Church and returned to the Pastor Search Committee

Your Pastor Search Committee would like for you to give this matter your prayerful and thoughtful attention. You are the Church. We want your suggestions and recommendations in regards to the selection of a pastor. This will help in the work you have asked us to do.

1. How much pastoral experience should our new pastor have?

- Under 5 years                       10-20 years                       Does not matter  
 5-10 years                               Over 20 years

2. While age should not be the primary factor, approximately what age pastor do you feel our church should have at this time?

- 20-30                                       40-50                                       55-60  
 30-40                                       50-55                                       Does not matter

3. What educational qualifications should our new pastor have?

- High School     Some seminary training     Post-graduate work  
 College degree     Seminary degree                       Other

4. A pastor has many important responsibilities. While he ought to be interested in each of the following, which do you feel should receive most of his time? (check five)

- Sermon preparation                       Attending Committee meetings  
 Visiting prospective members                       Counseling and advising  
 Administration and office work                       Personal soul winning  
 Personal Bible study and prayer                       Attending Denominational meetings  
 Civic affairs                                       Visiting Church Members  
 Promoting church programs                       Caring for the needs of his own family

5. On which of these should he spend the least amount of time?

6. What do you feel is the most important quality our pastor should possess? Feel free to express your feelings about other characteristics you would like to have in a pastor. Use back of page if necessary.

7. OTHER CHARACTERISTICS \_\_\_\_\_

8. I would like to present the following names for the committee's prayerful consideration. (Please provide a resume.)

