

Middle Florida Baptist Association



PASTOR SEARCH: Overview

INTRODUCTION

Great Commission Baptist Churches like yours are autonomous and independent and should only be influenced by the Holy Spirit of God at work among their members both corporately and individually. This is never any truer than during the season of a church's life when they are searching for a new lead pastor or other minister.

Through the years, church leaders have observed some truths and practices that serve churches well as they navigate this process. There is no single, absolute approach that meets the needs of all churches in every situation. But here are some suggestions that every church and church leader would be wise to seriously consider.

There are several sources of help available to churches on this journey. They begin on the local level with our own Middle Florida Baptist Association and expand from there. The Florida Baptist Convention has several staff members available to guide and assist churches through this effort as does the Florida Baptist College. The Southern Baptist Convention also has help for churches seeking a new lead pastor as do their six seminaries. There are other schools, organizations and services also available to help churches as well. If not exclusively dedicated to Great Commission Baptist Churches, several of them are certainly friendly toward churches like yours.

This is a simple overview to guide churches in a general way as they prepare for and enter into a time of being without a lead pastor and then beginning the search for their next one. Please do not hesitate to turn to others who are called to serve and support churches and are available to assist you through this process.

1. PREPARING

1A Pray

- Calling a new pastor is not a business task, it is a spiritual event
- Pray without ceasing for your church and for your next pastor

1B Slow Down

- This is an extremely significant decision for any church to make – do not rush the process
You and your church members will be eager to enlist a new pastor – that's fine
- Do not rush the process or skip over important steps
- You are not simply filling a job opening
You are seeking the man God has chosen as your next pastor
You need to be sure you hear from God very clearly
- It may seem hard to believe, but time is on your side – do not rush – wait on God

1C Agree

- Have conversations about what it is the church is looking for in their next pastor
- Build consensus within your church family throughout the process

1D Update

- Candidates may view your website or Facebook page to learn about your church
- Use this time to update the information there – both should be contemporary and relevant

2. ORGANIZING

2A Search Committee

- Do your organizational documents speak to how to form a search committee?
If they do, follow that process to formulate your search committee
If they do not, first spell out the process the church will follow – then form the committee
- There are several approaches:
Representative of various demographic groups within the church
Call on those already in key leadership positions
Call on the most Godly people you can enlist to serve
- Search Committee members MUST commit to being private, circumspect and trustworthy
They should not discuss the work of the search committee outside of their meetings
They should never identify by name any candidates or resumes they have received

2B Affirm

- The search committee should be approved by a vote of the church
- Have a dedication service one Sunday morning after they have been selected
Pray for them and their work often and regularly – every day

2C Communicate

- The search committee should make regular reports to the church as a whole
Sunday morning worship service – Wednesday evening prayer meeting
Notes in the bulletin or newsletter – letters posted on a bulletin board
- The committee should agree at each meeting what their report will be
The chairman may make all the reports
Or various members of the committee can take turns making these reports
- You can never provide too much appropriate information to your church about your work

3. SUSTAINING

3A Interim Preaching

- Who will address filling the pulpit during the time you are without a pastor?
 - Is this a task of the search committee – not really ideal for them to do so
 - Is this a task for a separate committee – they can be better focused
 - Is this a task for the deacons (and perhaps another staff member)
- There is no rule for all churches – your documents may address this idea
 - You should not consider an interim or supply preacher as a candidate for the position

3B Supply Preachers or Interim Pastor/Preacher

- Supply preachers give other men opportunity to preach – but no consistency for the church
- Supply preachers require more work to enlist someone for week after week
- Interim pastor/preacher gives consistency and eliminates the weekly search for someone

4. SEARCHING

4A Process

- Before looking for candidates, the committee should agree on their process and practices
 - Keep candidates informed – acknowledge receipt of resumes – inform of decisions
- Once you develop or agree on your process, stick to it – you may be tempted to deviate
 - You should seek unity on who you choose to pursue
- When you are ready to select a preferred candidate, deal only with that one candidate to the end
 - Either he will withdraw, you will change your mind or you will extend a call to him
 - But only deal with one preferred candidate at a time
 - The church should never hear of any candidate until you recommend one to them

4B Develop

- Spend time discussing what it is the church is looking for in their next pastor
 - Involve the church members directly in this process
 - Do not assume you know what others want or are thinking – ask them to tell you
 - Formulate a consensus of what is important or not important
- Write and publish a complete job description for the position of pastor

4C Advertise

- However you choose to do so, let others know you are looking for a pastor
 - Contact your Association, State Convention and National Convention
 - Contact appropriate schools and seminaries
 - If you choose to, there are on-line minister employment services you can use
- Be simple, brief and clear in your advertisement
 - You can direct candidates to your website or Facebook page for more information
 - Share only those things that you decided are important – everything else is optional
 - Clearly identify how candidates may share their resume with you
 - State a deadline for responses – do not review any resume until after the deadline

5. SELECTING

5A Evaluate

- After the deadline, begin reviewing resumes for the first time
- If practical, let all committee members review all resumes
 - If that is not practical, evenly divide the resumes among the committee members
 - Let them pick a number of best choices (determine the number in advance)
 - Share all the best choices with all the committee members
- Eventually, you must begin to prioritize the candidates you are considering

5B Identify

- In advance, you should have determined how many top candidates you will consider
 - Three is a good number – more than five becomes unwieldy and difficult to process
- Spend more time evaluating and prioritizing you top candidates
- Speak with your top candidates (use the same medium for all)
- You may even want to have two conversations with each candidate a week or so apart
- Give them the opportunity to ask you questions as well
- This may be the time you notify those other candidates that you are not going to be considering them any further – it is better for them to know than to wonder
- Be kind and gracious in your communication with them

5C Choose

- Once you settle on a preferred candidate – suspend contact with your other candidates
 - Deal with only one candidate at a time at this point
 - If your preferred candidate does not end up accepting a call, move to your second one
- Check references, education and other claims as part of your process
- Ask references to give you other references to contact not listed on the resume
 - Contact those secondary references as well
- Viewing recorded or on-line sermons by the candidate is fine
 - Before recommending a candidate, go somewhere to hear him preach in person
 - Make great effort to NOT go to his church or his community to hear him preach
 - You will have to work out with him how, when and where you will hear him in person
 - Be prepared to compensate him for any related expenses (travel, lodging, meals, etc.)
 - Compensate him as you would a supply preacher speaking at your church
 - Do NOT bring him to your church as just another supply preacher
 - The first time your church hears him should be when you recommend him
- Before bringing the candidate to your church in view of a call, finalize your compensation
 - Spell out what will be provided and what will not be provided
 - You may offer a total sum package to the candidate to divide or allocate as he chooses
 - Clarify what the church will do to help with his move to your community

5D Present

- Bring the whole committee to agreement regarding who you should recommend
- Invite the candidate to visit your church one weekend in view of being called as pastor
 - During that weekend, you might consider doing some of these events:
 - Meeting with the committee again in person
 - Meeting with the deacons and other church leaders
 - Driving through the community
 - Seeing the parsonage (if your church has one)

A fellowship meal with the church family

A question and answer time for the candidate to speak to the church

At least one worship service where the candidate preaches (if you regularly have a Sunday evening worship service it might be too much for the candidate and the church family to do on such a busy weekend – plus the candidate may need travel time to get back home, especially if he has school-age children)

- Be sure to appropriately compensate the candidate for preaching as well as any related expenses he may have to provide for himself – if you provide his lodging and meals you should still reimburse his travel expenses

5E Vote

- Some churches vote while the candidate is present
- Some churches wait until Wednesday night or the following Sunday to vote
 - Follow your church's documents
 - If your documents do not address this, you should decide very early when you will vote
- Your documents may specify how much favorable support is needed to extend a call
 - If they do not, decide as a church in advance of a candidate being presented
- Follow your process for voting and conduct the vote to extend a call to the candidate
 - Realize that even with a very favorable vote, a candidate can still decline your call

5F Announce

- If you have an acceptable favorable vote, extend a call to the candidate to be your new pastor
- Share his response with the church family as quickly as you can
 - If he declines your call, repeat this process with your second preferred candidate
 - If he accepts, continue to protect his identity until he can notify his current church
 - Let him tell you when you can begin to publicly announce him as your new pastor
- Notify any candidates you had spoken with that you have called a new pastor

6. WELCOMING

6A Housing

- If you do not have a parsonage, assist the new pastor in identifying possible homes
- Assist your new pastor as much as you can with packing and unpacking as he moves
- Consider a 'house-warming shower' or 'pantry pounding' to his family with the move
- Consider a moving bonus to help with additional expenses and new utility deposits
- Consider a 'Welcome' sign or banner to greet the new pastor at his new home

6B First Sunday

- Announce to your church family the first Sunday your new pastor will be with you
- Consider sharing this information with the local newspaper as well
- Share this information on your website and your Facebook page
- If you have a marquee sign, post a welcome message the week before his first Sunday
 - If you do not have a marquee sign, consider ordering a 'Welcome' banner for your building
- Notify your local association and state convention offices
- Invite special guests to be present for your new pastor's first Sunday
 - Former members, former pastors, association leaders and state convention workers
 - Depending on your circumstances, invite local community, school and business leaders
- In your worship service, have a special time of dedication for the new pastor and his family
 - The church should commit themselves to his support and encouragement
 - A deacon, retired pastor, association leader or state convention worker may lead this

6C Reflect

- Formally disband the search committee
- Do so as a part of your worship service
 - Let the chairman or another search committee member review their history
- Recognize the arrival of the new pastor as an answer to prayer and as a demonstration of God's provision
- REMEMBER! Calling a new pastor is a spiritual event
 - Recognize and celebrate what God has done
- If possible, conclude the pastor's first Sunday with a fellowship meal after the service or later that evening
- Considering all that has happened in the preceding week as the new pastor arrived to begin his work, you may choose to forego your evening service if you usually have one

CONCLUSION

The process of calling a new pastor is a demanding task that calls for a good bit of work and effort by the church in general and the search committee in particular. If not properly handled, it can give the enemy an opportunity to create division in the church and deflate enthusiasm. But if handled properly, it can be a process in which God is honored and glorified and the church is encouraged and strengthened. There are those available to help you as you may need. Together, you can fulfill God's will for your church as you seek and call the new pastor he has for you.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you."

Jesus of Nazareth
John 15: 16