

About Pastor Search Committees

By: Ed Hart

- Step #1 & #11 should be done by the church body
- Steps #2 - #10 (and Miscellaneous) should be done by the Pastor Search Committee

Step #1: Form a Pastor Search Committee

➤ As a church, decide how to select this committee

- Use one of the following methods
 - Whatever you Constitution & By-laws call for
 - Nominated from the floor in a business meeting
 - The Leadership Team, Church Council, or whatever group of church leaders that already exists
- Select only people who are actively involved in the church
- Select people who have the time and willingness to accept the added responsibility

➤ Choose a Chairman of the Pastor Search Committee

- Use one of the following methods
 - Whatever you Constitution & By-laws call for
 - Someone elected from the floor in Business meeting
 - Chairman of Deacons
 - Chairman of whatever group of church leaders that already exists

Step #2: Gather information about what the church is looking for in a pastor

➤ This can be accomplished in several ways

- Survey filled out in the worship service a couple of weeks in a row
- Survey mailed (or emailed) to every active family with a due date to return
- A Phone survey with the Search Committee each taking a fairly equal number of active church families to call

➡ This survey should include (but not necessarily be limited to) the following:

- Education
- General Age
- Marital Status
- Preaching Style
- Minimum Experience

Step #3: Set some ground rules for Pastor Search Committee

➡ Review what your Constitution & By-Laws say related to the Pastor Search Committee.

➡ If the Constitution & By-laws do not address it, decide as a committee the percentage of agreement of the committee that is necessary to present a candidate to the church for possible call as pastor.

- This percentage should not be 100%
 - 100% gives one person too much power
 - 100% puts too much pressure on members to go along just to make it unanimous –
 - ✓ People usually don't want to be the only hold-out.
 - ✓ After being the lone hold-out once or twice, most people will usually just vote with the majority, even though they may have some legitimate concerns about a candidate

➡ Review with the church what you will do about moving expenses

➡ Decide what to do if you disagree on a candidate

- If anyone disagrees about a candidate being included in the final group, agree to stop and hear why before voting again.

Step #4: Gather Information to Give Potential Pastors

➡ Gather information about the community – from Chamber of Commerce, City or County Economic Development Office

- Demographic
- Economic
- Climatic
- Size
- History
- Cost of Living
 - ✓ Average cost of home rental
 - ✓ Average cost of home purchase
 - ✓ Average cost of utilities
 - ✓ Taxes – property, school, car license, etc

➡ Gather information about the church

- History
- Membership – active & inactive
- Average Sunday morning worship
- Total budget
- Year-end Treasurer's reports for last couple of years
- Total compensation package
 - Salary
 - Housing allowance
 - Insurance
 - Retirement Annuity
- Any Employee Business Expense Reimbursement included in the budget
 - This should not be considered a part of the compensation package
- Moving Expense reimbursement (save up for this between pastors)

Step #5: Recommend an Interim Pastor to the Church

➡ Where to find possible candidates for Interim Pastor

- Your Director of Mission
- Your state convention office
- Congregation may know someone
- Sister churches may have someone who could serve in this capacity

➡ Have clear terms for Interim Pastor

- Approximate length of service
- What will we pay?
- What will we expect from an Interim Pastor?
 - Preach
 - Teach?
 - Meet with committees?
 - Mid-week service responsibilities?
 - Lead in a review and possibly revision of Constitution & By-laws?
 - ✓ Between pastors is a good time to do this
 - ?????
- What length of notice will we give when we call a permanent pastor?
- Can they be considered as the permanent pastor?
 - My strong suggestion is NO

Step #6: Gather Resumes

Step #7: Handling the Resumes

➡ Give a copy of all resumes to every member of the Pastor Search Committee

➡ Reduce the number of resumes to five (5).

- When there are more than 10 resumes, ask each Pastor Search Committee member to pray over the resumes for one week and pick their top 10 choices
 - List on a board (or sheet of paper) the resumes that are everybody's top 10
 - If there are not 5 resumes on the board, take the resumes that are not on the board and ask each Pastor Search Committee member to pray over them for one more week and pick their top (whatever number needed to make 5) choices from the resumes.
 - Continue this process until you have 5 candidates.
- If there are less than 10 resumes, ask each Pastor Search Committee member to pray over the resumes for one week and pick their top 5 choices.
 - Use the procedure above to get to 5 resumes

➡ (Optional) Reduce the number of resumes to three (3)

- Use the same procedure as above until you get the number of resumes down to three.

Step #7: Interviewing Candidates

- ➡ Develop a set of questions that you will ask each candidate.
 - There is a suggested list at the end of this document – Appendix A
 - You may choose to come up with your own list
 - In any case, be sure to include questions related to major concerns within the church

- ➡ Interview the top 5 or the top 3 three candidates via phone
 - Call (or ask the Director of Missions to call) and set up a time when the interview can take place without interruption.
 - Using a speaker phone, conduct the interview at the appointed time.
 - Each member of the Search Committee should have a copy of the questions, with space after each question so notes can be taken.
 - After the interview, have a debriefing session amongst the members of the Search Committee to learn what each member heard on each question.
 - If there are any discrepancies, make a note. You may want to re-interview the candidate on that question at a later time.

 - You may want to ask for an audio or video recording of a sermon.
 - Listen to all three sermons before moving to the next step

Step #8: Ranking the Candidates

- ➡ After debriefing on all three candidates as soon after the interview as possible (immediately after is best), and hearing all three recorded sermons, pray over the results for a week.
 - Ask the Lord to help you answer two questions
 - Is there anybody on this list that should be dropped from consideration? And why?
 - How should the names on this list be ranked?

- ➡ When you come back together ask the same two questions of the group
 - Is there anybody on this list that you now think should be removed from consideration? And why?
 - After discussion, use the same degree of agreement that you will use when making a final decision about who to present to the church to determine whether those mentioned in the previous question is dropped from consideration.
 - How should the remaining names be ranked?
- ➡ If on the first ballot you have the degree of agreement that you will use to decide whether to present a candidate to the church, you have your candidate.
 - If you do not have the requisite % of agreement on one candidate on the first ballot, have a long and full discussion about why and how each member ranked the candidates
 - Then pray for a week before coming back to finish this step.

Step #9: Check References

OPTION: You can do this step on all three top candidates rather than just the top ranked candidate

- ➡ The resume should have contained references.
 - If not secure references from the candidate
- ➡ Call all the references
 - Divide the references up among the Search Committee members
 - Ask each reference the following questions and write down the answers
 - What would you say is this person's greatest strength?
 - What would you say is this person's greatest weakness?
 - If you were hiring a person for ministry, would you consider hiring this person?
 - Could you give us the name and phone number of another person who would know this candidate well enough to answer these questions?

- Call these secondary references ASAP
- Each Search Committee Member can call the secondary references her/she got or
- You can swap references so you get a different perspective

➡ Come back together and discuss what you found.

- If there are any red flags, use the same degree of agreement you will use when deciding whether to present a candidate to the church to decide whether to proceed further with this candidate OR
- Go back and do Step #9 with the 2nd ranked candidate from step #8

➡ Keep going through this process until you have the requisite % of agreement among the Search Committee as to the #1 choice of candidates.

Step #10: Presenting the Candidate of Choice to the Church

➡ Once you have arrived at the #1 choice of the Search Committee, contact the candidate to inform him of your choice and to find an available date when he can come to the church in view of a call.

➡ Here is a suggested agenda for the prospective Pastoral candidate's visit

- Put the pastor & family in a nice comfortable motel for the week-end
- Saturday lunch with the Pastor Search Committee and other church leaders
 - At a local restaurant OR
 - If the season is right, a cook-out at someone's home or a local park
- Sunday morning – have the candidate preach in the worship service
- Sunday lunch – fellowship meal at the church
- After Sunday lunch – question and answer session for the congregation and candidate
- If the candidate can stay over Sunday night and you have an evening service, you can ask him to preach a second time
 - Some candidates will need to get back to work on Monday morning
 - Some candidates may have a wife who needs to get back to work on Monday morning
 - Some candidates may have children who need to get back to school on Monday morning

Step #11: Church Votes

- ➡ There are pros and cons on whether to vote the same day the candidate comes
- ➡ My suggestion is to ask the church to pray and vote the following Sunday morning.
- ➡ When you have voted, let the candidate know the result
- ➡ If the vote was a positive vote, ask the candidate to give the church an answer ASAP
- ➡ If the vote was a negative vote OR if the candidate declines the call, go back to Step #9 and proceed with the candidate that was second on the list.

Miscellaneous

- Keep the church informed – report weekly in general terms
- Treat all candidates as you would want to be treated
 - Any candidate you contact should be kept informed about his status in the process. Don't leave people hanging.
 - When you get to 1 candidate, send those who are no longer being considered an email letting them know when you are no longer looking at them
 - “Thank you for your interest in our church. As we have prayed and asked the Lord for direction during each step of narrowing the list of candidates, we feel that we have been led to the person God has for this position, whom we have notified. Should anything change as we finish this process and we find that we have not found God's choice for this position, we may be in contact with you again.”
 - If you interviewed 5 candidates, you will want to notify the two who were not included in the top 3 ASAP after the decision.

Appendix A

Questions for the Pastoral Candidate

1. Tell us about your salvation experience.
2. Tell us about your call to ministry.
3. Do you have a problem with any part of the latest Baptist Faith & Message statement?
4. How long have you been associated with Southern Baptists?
5. Has there been a time in your ministry life when you were not associated with Southern Baptists? If yes, why?
6. What are your thoughts and feelings about the local church?
7. Are you actively involved in a local church now? If not, why not?
8. What administrative experience have you had?
9. How long did you stay in your last assignment?

10. What has been your average length of service in previous assignments?

11. Why did you leave your last assignment?

12. What did you do in your last assignment to improve the situation?

13. How will your family be involved in this ministry?

14. Describe your philosophy of ministry? What is the role of a pastor?

15. What are some of your expectations of the church?

16. Do you have any hobbies or personal interests that might conflict with the time demands of this position?

17. What do you feel are your strengths?

18. What do you feel are your weaknesses?

19. How would you expect to relate to the members of the congregation?

20. What are your thoughts regarding involving yourself and the church in the community?

21. How much emphasis would you put on outreach efforts?

22. Do you or your family have any musical gifts?

(Questions related to specific concerns of your church folks)

example:

23. How do you feel about casual dress at church?

24.

25.