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## **PASTORAL PLACEMENT**

**Ed Nichols**



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## THE PASTORAL PLACEMENT PROCESS

Research into the practical aspects pertaining to the pastoral placement process has yielded a wealth of information on the subject. With the termination of preachers occurring about every eighteen months in the life of churches today the publications abound which are designed to help the church find someone they can call as pastor. It would be good if the process could return to God calling them as it has been reportedly accomplished in the past.

The practical aspects as reported in the following information are not necessarily in any particular order. An attempt has been made to list aspects from the leaving of the old pastor to the beginning of the new pastor.

Most congregations have a history of needing a pastor and for that reason they should develop early on in the life of their church guidelines which will be followed in the event of the pastor's departure. Fortunately for some denominations these procedures are already available.

Often forgotten in the search for a new pastor, or so it seems, is God's part in his calling. It may be necessary for a church or committee to decide first the issue of "Who is calling the new pastor?" the church or God.

A self-study is a worthy aspect of any pastoral placement process. The church body should determine what they see as the mission of the church. This mission can later be matched with the appropriate candidate with skills to meet the mission statement of the church and congregation.

A truly insightful group of people will recommend that the body reflect upon the past. They need to answer the question "What were the previous problems with the pastors?" which served their congregation. Is the problem the pastor or power brokers within the church?

Prospective pastors for the pastoral placement process need to be identified. This can be done by soliciting resumes or through an application process and recommendations from interested parties. A full pool of prospects will make for better comparison of applicants and their qualifications.

The practical aspect is of course to decide which candidate best meets all expectations (within reason) and call him to serve as pastor. While this lengthy process takes place it might be appropriate to consider using a consultant and/or an interim pastor. These individuals can help a congregation focus on such things as their mission, past, and the needs of the church. This can also be a time for grieving for the loss of the previous pastor and a time to face the problems of the past, as well as those about to occur. Psychological issues must be dealt with, as well as internal

differences between members. A poorly handled selection process can result in a church split. Members who are dissatisfied will vote with their feet by joining another church which is not at that time in conflict in their opinion.

Much can be said for the calling of a pastor with the distinct purpose of keeping him for a long time. It is commonly believed that longevity in the pastorate is beneficial to both the pastor and congregation. This should also be the case with any associate staff members. These people have a real stake in the total outcome of the selection and should be given all due consideration.

A serious look at the biblical basis for pastoral qualifications can be obtained by the reading of 1 Timothy and Titus. No search committee should overlook this practical aspect of what a pastor is according to God's Word. Some problems can be eliminated if these guidelines are the basis for selection.

There is a cost for any endeavor, and the calling of a pastor is expensive and must be considered. Depending on the location of the called pastor and his living arrangements, the relocation and moving expenses could be more than the church can afford. Cost of the total pastoral placement process needs to be taken into account.

Learning from the past, and not making other pastoral committee mistakes, may make the process easier. Committees should consider discuss the process with members of previous committees with in their church or with other church of their denomination which have recently made changes in pastoral staff. Time is money. A practical aspect of the pastoral placement process must take into account that more time will be spent on the selection of pastor than any other position of service in the whole church. The loss of time is an inconvenience which is a by-product of serving on the selection committee.

It is extremely important that representation by all members of the congregation be a major concern. Too often the elderly and women are being ignored in the pastoral placement process. Deacon boards are not representative of the church body.

A procedure is needed to ensure that the congregation is not influenced by multitudes of preachers parading through the worship services. The best preacher may not necessarily be the best pastor for the job.

The pastoral placement process should be made in as short a period of time as possible. An established procedure, whether from a book, or self-designed, should be used and followed to bring the end results as rapidly as is humanly possible. Time, money, and patience are at stake and the longer the process the more that is lost.

The congregation should use a process which fits their needs. Part of this should be their development of a preacher profile. This profile should be a composite of what each member thinks the prospective candidate should be.

Some type of assessment methods should be developed in order assist with the selection of a pastor. The committee should consider using a form for collecting pastor information. They should look at

references supplied by the candidate. For legal reasons credit checks and police records may be appropriate assessment tools. Certainly, the analysis of the recordings provided by the prospect is important. The committee should have a means of evaluating the answers to the prepared list of questions used in the personal interview. This list can be developed from 1 Timothy.

Several other practical aspects to be considered are the salary and benefits, congregational expectations, history and church policy, and the care and feeding of the new pastor and his family to name a few. Now consider an aspect which may help one understand the total aspects of the pastoral placement process. This aspect is that, most everyone on the selection committee, if not all of them, have never been in an interviewing or hiring capacity before. Many will learn "on the job" what it takes to call a pastor. Each individual committee member should put himself in the position of the prospective candidate to see how the procedure is measuring up to God's standards.

Most importantly in the process of finding a pastor is the absolute necessity for prayer. One cannot have too much prayer in finding the right pastor for God's people.

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Number of years completed

Degree and year received

List other experience which may be relevant to position.

Family Information

Wife's name

Children's names

Please use a separate sheet of paper for the following.

Describe your conversion experience.

Describe your call to the ministry.

What is your pastoral or Christian service experience?

What do you believe concerning the inerrancy of God's word?

What does the Bible say concerning abortion? What is your position on this issue?

What does the Bible say concerning homosexuality?

Do you condone abortion, homosexuality, ordination of women or homosexuals, homosexual marriages? Please explain where necessary.

Please discuss briefly your strengths and weaknesses in the following areas.

Pastoral

Preaching

Training

Finance

Building

Visitation

Interpersonal skills

Leadership

Association

State Convention

National Convention

Missions

Discipleship

(Others, your choice)

List at least three references who can attest to your pastoral ability and moral character.

Give name, address, city, state, zip, phone.

Do not list references that you do not wish to be contacted at this time.

Permission is granted to contact references which have been provided.  
(Sign here) \_\_\_\_\_.

#### CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE CHURCH

Please provide the following information which may assist in a better understanding of your church.

If members of the congregation were asked "What is the mission of your church?" what would be the reply?

What long range planning is presently in place?

When was the last self-study conducted by the body? Is that study available?

What statistics are available concerning the condition of the church? i.e. attendance records or reports.

What is the communities perspective of the church? Respected? Lack of influence? Describe community.

What are the strengths of the church?

What are the weaknesses of the church? What is being done to correct this?

What is the vision or priority of this body for the next five years?

Is there a current constitution and by laws available to the candidate?

Is a church budget available and what is the process used for accountability?

What are considered to be the leadership positions within the church and how are these leaders selected?

Briefly describe the church history.

What was the length of tenure of the last five pastors and the reasons for their departure?

What facet of the church body do each member of the committee represent?

What are the expectations of this church for the pastor's wife?

## OUTLINE OF PASTOR SEARCH PROCESS

CANDIDATE - Resume with cover letter expressing interest in vacant position sent to pastor search committee.

CHURCH - Acknowledges receipt of resume and provides a tentative time schedule for completion and call of pastor.

Development of salary and benefits package should already be completed. It can be adjusted upward if appropriate.

CHURCH - Committee reviews information received by candidates and sends one of two documents.

1. Pastoral information form with deadline for returning.
2. Letter stating church does feel led to continue considering them for the position.

CANDIDATE - Promptly completes information form and returns to committee.

CHURCH - Committee assumes non-respondents to information form no longer interested and sends them letter thanking them for their interest, but stating they are no longer being considered for position.

CHURCH - Completed forms should be reviewed by committee. Those meeting the established criteria for continued consideration are asked to provide any additional information or clarification along with two audio or video tapes of recent messages delivered. Notify candidates at this time that references may be checked.

Those not meeting the established criteria are sent a letter that they are no longer under consideration because they do not meet the needs of the church at this time.

CHURCH - Committee members after hearing tapes should record their response on the form for evaluating the messages. This preaching form along with the information form should be prayerfully considered in light of needs of the people at this time in the life of their church. After prayerful consideration all members should rank order all remaining candidates. The ranking should be the order which they wish to continue to consider the candidates. i.e. first, second.

These ranks are tallied and a committee consensus ranking is obtained.

CHURCH - Committee contacts the number one choice and sets up an appointment for a personal interview. Questions should be developed

by committee members to be asked of all interviewees prior to first interview.

CHURCH - After interview individual should be notified whether committee wishes to continue the process with this candidate. If not the candidate is so notified and committee request interview with second ranked candidate.

CHURCH - After the interview should the committee desire to take a candidate to the next step arrangements should be made to the individual preach somewhere other than at the calling church.

CHURCH - After hearing candidate preach should committee not wish to continue his consideration he should be so notified. The committee should then invite the next ranked applicant to interview.

CHURCH - Committee desiring to continue after hearing preacher can now recommend to the total church body that the candidate be invited to preach for them in view of a call. Salary and benefits should be finalized as part of call. Member interaction time with candidate may be arranged. i.e. a reception. Motel and restaurant accommodations should be provided by church. Traveling expenses as well.

CHURCH - The body now votes to call. If call is not extended or candidate declines call committee invites next ranked candidate for interview.

CHURCH - If candidate is called and accepts notify candidate in writing of terms of salary and benefits, and any other requirements, and request a written response. The candidate should be given sufficient time for prayer.

CHURCH - After acceptance of call committee should send sincere thank you letters to the remaining non-interviewed candidates.

CANDIDATE - Give reasonable notice to present church and prepare to move.

CHURCH - Committee should arrange for payment of any required preliminary moving expenses. i.e. deposits.

CHURCH - Selection committee should disband and be recognized by the church for their service.

CHURCH - A new committee should be formed for the purpose of moving and hospitality for new pastor.

CANDIDATE - Leave the church you had been serving graciously, this

is not a time for negative comments or conduct.

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**Other writings;**

**Discipleship: An Evangelistic Approach.**

**The Decree of God.**

**The Deity of Christ.**

**Personality of the Holy Spirit.**

**The Ministry of Angels.**

**The Creation and Fall of Man.**

**The Dilemma of Sin.**

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