

RISE UP

BY GENE RONCONE

THE MOST
COMPREHENSIVE AND
PRACTICAL REFERENCE
FOR PASTORAL TRANSITIONS
AND SUCCESSIONS
AVAILABLE TODAY

"May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

Numbers 27:16-17, NIV

Endorsements



Peer over the shoulder of Gene Roncone in “Rise Up” from his wealth of experience as district leader, lead pastor, and district superintendent to access a wealth of biblical knowledge and practical help in passing the baton of transition. Whether read from cover to cover or consulted as a resource, you’ll find this book answering questions you didn’t even think to ask. Donna L. Barrett, General Secretary, The General Council of the Assemblies of God



After being informed of our pastor’s call to another ministry assignment, it was comforting and encouraging to see the breadth and depth of knowledge and practical assistance contained in this resource Superintendent Gene Roncone had prepared. Having to start from scratch to develop a search plan would have been daunting at the least. The plan gave us a great starting point and cut months off our transition process. Philip B. Nielsen, Pastoral Search Committee Member



Wow! This resource is very insightful and comprehensive! My small church went through the process of replacing our lead pastor. It was so painful and exhausting! If our board had been plugged in to this resource, we could have been so much better equipped to handle one of the hardest times in our lives! Rhonda Housden, Pastoral Search Committee Member



“Rise Up” by Gene Roncone is an excellent resource for boards and search committees and for pastors designing succession plans for the church they lead. Gene identifies common problems that arise when a church is in pastoral transition and provides wise remedies. He also lays out an effective process to be implemented to help ensure a successful transition and search process. I highly recommend “Rise Up.” Don Steiger, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, Previous Superintendent



Practicing the baton pass in relay teams is vital for a team to win. Churches, however, don’t have the luxury of “practicing” pastoral transitions. This all-inclusive, extensive guide takes the guesswork out of the vetting process, budgetary concerns, and communication barriers. This is a must-read for teams leading during times of transition. Rev. Charla Blair, Director of Church Ministries, Northern California/Nevada



Approaching pastoral transition is such a daunting task one hardly knows how or where to start. Gene Roncone’s extensive research and understanding of this process would have taken those of us approaching it for the first time many months of exhausting work and effort. I am confident you will find it a true blessing. Vern Lentz, Chair of Pastoral Search Committee



Driven by the practical insight and the experience of a successful pastor and district superintendent, “Rise Up” is full of valuable lists and resources that equip everyone involved in this process for success. Janet Faggart, Executive Presbyter, North Texas District Council



The information in this resource has allowed me to go into this process more prepared. It clearly outlines a 13-step process and provides a tremendous number of resources, all of which allowed our search committee to be much more effective from beginning to end. I highly recommend this manual to any church embarking on a lead pastor transition. Stephanie Farmer, Pastoral Search Committee Member



Having been through a pastoral transition as cochair of a search committee, I can very much appreciate this resource. If something like this had been available to our team during our experience, we would have been much more effective, made fewer mistakes, and had less misunderstandings—not to mention avoiding emotional stress. Gary Larson, former Cochair of the Pastoral Search Committee for New Life Church, Colorado Springs, Colorado



Wow, I could not be more impressed with “Rise Up,” and I would definitely recommend it. It was biblically based, thoughtfully developed, and strategically outlined. The careful insight it gives to pastoral transition and succession is refreshing. I felt Pastor Gene’s shepherd’s heart clearly came through. Christa Lund, Presbyterian, Ohio Ministry Network



“Rise Up” is an incredibly well-researched resource that is a necessary tool for any leadership team to navigate the difficult waters of pastoral transition. I would highly recommend that this resource be a part of every organization’s ongoing training and resource library. Chris Peterson, West Slope Executive Presbyter, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network



This is a comprehensive resource and a valuable tool for the pastoral transition process. I wish it would have been available years ago! Gene Roncone offers spiritual insight and a wealth of practical wisdom and leadership guidance. “Rise Up” will prepare and equip not only pastoral search committees but also pastors and church boards to courageously anticipate the eventual time when transition will come to every church. Rev. Michelle Sudfeld, District Presbyter, Northern California/Nevada



Even very healthy churches can be sabotaged by poorly managed pastoral transitions. That’s why “Rise Up” by Gene Roncone is an essential resource for every church board leading through a time of pastoral transition or succession. “Rise Up” provides sage guidance gleaned from hundreds of sources to assist leadership teams as they navigate the complex waters of discovering their next leader. I highly recommend this outstanding leadership tool. Steve Pike, East Slope Executive Presbyter, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network



I believe pastoral leadership transitions can be faith building or faith crushing. However, instead of these times being exhausting and bewildering, this resource can help leadership transitions become an Ebenezer moment in the history of your church. Noreen Lemon, Utah Presbyter, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network

Rise Up

A Practical and Comprehensive Reference for Pastoral Transitions and Successions

4/23/2021 Edition

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Dedicated to my mentors, Wally and Jan Weber
They taught me to “pray as if everything depended upon God and plan like everything
depends upon me.”

May the LORD, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd (Numbers 27:16-17 NIV).

All the people assembled with a unified purpose (Nehemiah 8:1 NLT).

HYPERLINK NAVIGATION TOOL: If you are using the PDF version of this resource, you can use the hyperlinks to easily navigate through the document. Click on the chapter and appendix titles listed in the Table of Contents to go immediately to their place in the document. To return to the Table of Contents from anywhere in the document, click the “(back to table)” hyperlink at the top of the page and after each chapter heading.

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1. FROM DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT GENE RONCONE ([back to table](#))



If you are reading this, you are probably either a board member or a member of a pastoral search committee. Your church is now looking to you for leadership, and it is time to begin the task of ensuring a successful transition. The unfortunate fact is not that churches experience pastoral transitions but that they get little to no training on how to do it well. By the time a board learns the pastor is leaving, there is little time to educate oneself, develop systems, and learn from experts. That is why I spent years writing this pastoral transition resource. **I would love to meet your leadership team to encourage them and make the following five commitments face-to-face.**

- A. I commit to resourcing your leadership community.** I will place the most comprehensive and practical reference resources available on the subject of pastoral transitions at your disposal. The first section contains short chapters on important steps you must take. The second section is full of helpful resources, advice, form letters, and examples. We recently added a third section that gives you access to our audio channel with short coaching podcasts on challenging issues. The fourth section is a detailed index to help you quickly find information and the page number it can be found on in the resource. The fifth section lists the hundreds of books, articles, and interviews used to produce this valuable reference work. Take what is helpful, customize it, or even ignore what is not relevant. If you are an RMMN minister or church, you may also request a PDF version from my office.
- B. I commit to being available when you need me.** Having served in two different district offices, I have helped many churches successfully navigate pastoral transitions. I stand ready to offer coaching, problem solving, perspective, encouragement, representation, and insight at your request. You will be working directly with me and will be given access to my personal email, cell phone, and calendar.
- C. I commit to respecting your uniqueness.** No two churches are alike, and every transition demands some level of customization. I want to help you build upon your strengths and honor your unique identity as a community of faith.
- D. I commit to your church's successful transition.** Coach Nigel Hetherman once said, "The race is about the baton, not the runners. The baton must always remain the fastest member of the squad."¹ That is what I want for your church—to win and be launched into a new and exciting future.
- E. I commit to pray for you.** Most importantly, I will mobilize our network staff and leadership community to pray WITH and FOR you and your church on a daily basis during this transition.

In addition to this resource, you can also listen to our coaching podcast entitled, "My Pastor Is Leaving! Now What?" at this link: <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>. **The most important thing I want you to remember is I am only one phone call or email away.**

Committed to your success,

Gene Roncone, District Superintendent/Network Pastor
Rocky Mountain Ministry Network
Email: gene@rmdc.org — Cell: 303-921-4758

2. ADVANTAGES OF THIS RESOURCE ([back to table](#))

Barna Research Group recently predicted that the North American Church is rapidly approaching a massive wave of pastoral successions. A “graying” or aging of US clergy is increasing, and the average age of lead pastors is growing one year every three years.² But are we ready?

Aristotle once said, “For the things we have to learn, we learn by doing them.”³ Unfortunately, that statement describes the challenge that every church will face. The truly unfortunate fact is not that churches must experience the uncertainty of pastoral transitions but that they get little to no training on how to do it. Pastoral departures are usually unpredictable. By the time a board learns the pastor is leaving, there is little time to educate oneself, develop systems, and learn from experts. That is why I have spent years writing and updating this resource.

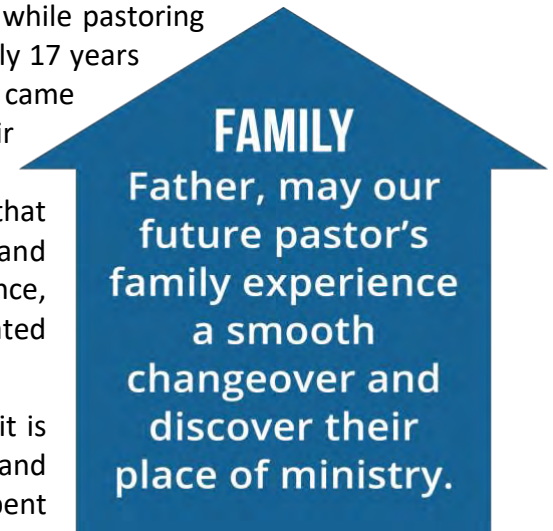
Before my fiftieth birthday, I began thinking about this plan while pastoring Highpoint Church in Aurora, Colorado. I had been there nearly 17 years and had no intention of leaving or retiring. My motivation came from an awareness that every pastor, no matter how long their tenure, is an interim pastor. Planning for that succession may be the most significant task a leader will face. It has been said that it is better to look ahead and prepare than to look back and regret.⁴ That is why I chose to embrace it with faith and diligence, and you are reading an updated version of the manual I created for my own board while pastoring Highpoint.

Succession planning is not choosing a successor as much as it is creating an intentional process for the transfer of leadership and authority from one leader to another.⁵ That is why I have spent several years reading, researching, and writing a succession plan that gives churches options and practical direction. I have offered my best efforts by:

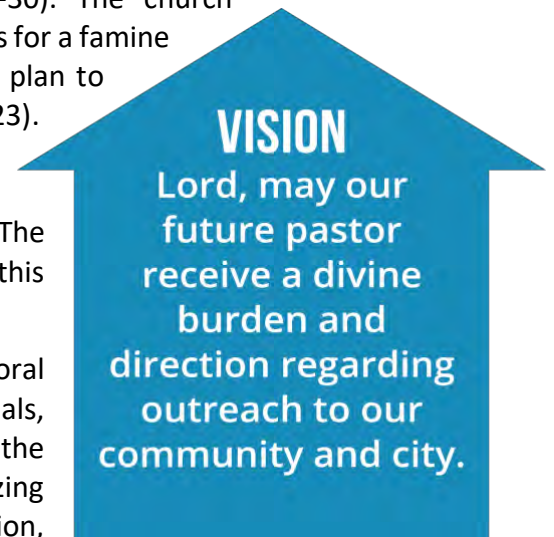
- Educating myself on the greatest obstacles and best practices of pastoral transitions.
- Interviewing wise leaders, district officials, and peers regarding board-led succession plans.
- Writing a thirteen-stage plan that can be used as a guide but not necessarily as a rule.
- Encouraging you to anticipate expenses and create a transition fund long before it will be needed to finance a successful pastoral transition.

This resource will help you leverage eight powerful advantages:

A. Scriptural intentionality. It has been said that when you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Some believers mistakenly think that strategic planning is a lack of faith and smothers the Spirit’s spontaneity. However, Scripture reveals that God has often used intentional planning to accomplish His will. Some of these examples were ordered by God and others were initiated by spiritual leaders and then blessed by God’s favor and effectiveness. For example, Joseph executed a strategic plan that saved Egypt from famine and economic collapse (Genesis 41). The Lord gave Moses a detailed plan about how the twelve tribes of Israel were to set up camp, organize their society, and march into battle (Numbers 2). Moses sustained his effectiveness as a leader by creating an organizational plan to delegate authority and appoint leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (Exodus 18:13-26). God instructed Moses to select seventy leaders to help him govern (Numbers 11:16-17). We are told that the people of God found these structures to be good and effective (Deuteronomy 1:14). Before rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah surveyed the damage and then developed a plan for separating tasks, mobilizing a work force, and reconstructing Jerusalem’s wall (2:11-16).



The New Testament also provides examples of intentional planning being employed for successful ministry. Before feeding the 5,000, Jesus gave instructions on how the crowds should be divided into groups of hundreds and fifties (Mark 6:39). A prophet warned the early church about a future famine that would devastate the Roman Empire (Acts 11:27-30). The church appointed Paul and Barnabas to begin planning relief efforts for a famine that had not yet transpired. Paul and Barnabas utilized a plan to appoint pastors and deacons in local churches (Acts 14:23). Paul also gave detailed instructions to Titus and Timothy concerning his plan to appoint leaders in every town and city where a church was planted (Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3). The same kind of Spirit-driven intentionality is embraced in this resource.



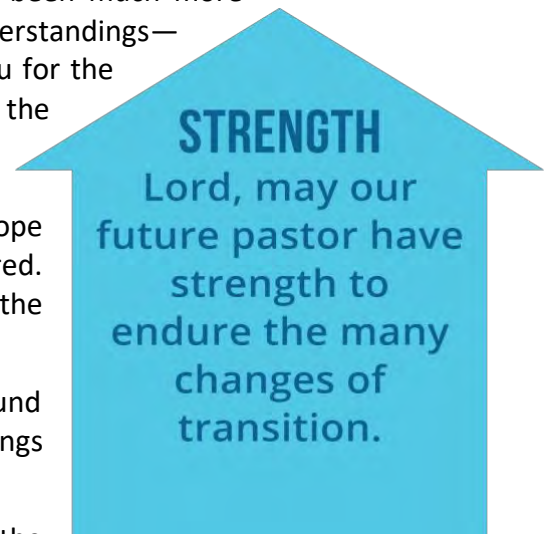
- B. Shortened learning curve.** Most churches facing pastoral transition spend the first 30-60 days gathering materials, reading books, and participating in training to acquire the needed knowledge. They then have to invest time synthesizing this information and applying it to their unique situation, bylaws, and culture. However, this learning process and best practices have already been assembled and made available to you in the form of this resource.
- C. Exposure to best practices.** This resource is the compilation of the best books, manuals, thinking, and practices of board-led succession plans. It is also updated every other year to incorporate any new thinking or best practices contained in newly released books or publications.
- D. Practical resources.** This resource contains examples of a church profile, history, statistics, demographics, facility descriptions, congregational and community leader surveys, agendas, committee job descriptions, churchwide prayer focus, confidentiality agreements, mutual commitments, budgets, letters, announcements, planning meeting schedule, interview questions, hypothetical situations, task lists, and much more. We have also added a companion podcast channel that offers specialized coaching on some of the more complex, difficult, or controversial topics associated with pastoral transitions. You can access them on the Rise Up Sound Cloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
- E. Existing search committee.** While most churches in pastoral transition must spend 30-60 days vetting, selecting, and educating a pastoral search committee, most church bylaws wisely charge the existing board with that responsibility. If that is the case for your church, you will save time because the most knowledgeable group of volunteers already has chemistry and experience in making decisions together. You also have access to inside information and limited authority to make decisions on behalf of the church. If your bylaws require the search committee to include others outside the board, this resource will help you educate them and bring them up to speed.
- F. Uniquely valuable.** Not only does this resource reflect the most recent and best practices of others, but it also has several unique and helpful qualities.
 1. It contains a thirteen-stage plan to guide your leadership community through the process.
 2. It provides access to short audio files (podcast) where Superintendent Roncone and knowledgeable guests coach your team on how to navigate critical challenges.
 3. It outlines a churchwide forty-day prayer focus with a daily prayer emphasis.

4. It outlines a three-week sustainability initiative to be executed in the weeks immediately following your lead pastor's departure. Small group discussion questions that correspond with Sunday morning messages have also been provided. The initiative's purpose is to minimize declines in involvement, giving, attendance, and morale.
5. It outlines the structure and schedule for a board planning retreat to establish a unified strategy for the search process.
6. It contains drafts of letters, forms, meeting agendas, a congregational survey, and interview questions the board may ask as well as those that candidates might be expected to ask the board.
7. It includes a template for a transition budget that can be amended as needed.
8. It provides a board and member covenant to sustain commitments during the transition.
9. It has one of the most detailed ministry descriptions available for an interim pastor.
10. It has one of the most practical checklists to help prepare for the new pastor's arrival.
11. It has a master checklist for those who enjoy working from sequential lists.
12. It has a new small group bible study for small group intersection. The three-part study has scriptural lessons and discussion questions to educate your people on the biblical purpose of pastoral transitions and why it is important to stay committed to the church during them. The curriculum can be accessed at www.agspe.org/rusmallgroup.pdf.
13. It has a companion coaching podcast that can be accessed at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

G. Successfully vetted. This resource has been reviewed by experienced interim pastors, district superintendents/network pastors, authors, and deacons who have experienced a pastoral transition.⁶ Their feedback and suggestions have been incorporated into this plan. Gary Larson served as cochair of the Pastoral Search Committee for New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and is now a current elder/trustee for Church of the Highlands in Birmingham, Alabama. After reviewing this document, he echoed the sentiments of other reviewers:

Having been through a pastoral transition as cochair of the Search Committee, I can very much appreciate the way you have compiled this document. If something like this had been available to our team during this experience, we would have been much more effective, made fewer mistakes, and had less misunderstandings—not to mention avoiding emotional stress. I salute you for the passion and commitment you have invested to set the tone, provide the tools, share the research, and be transparent in your reflections for your board. This will enable them to perform their task with integrity. My hope is that they will accept and follow your guidance offered. The incoming pastor, the congregation, and the community will all be forever thankful.⁷

The fact that this resource has been reviewed and found helpful by deacons in small, medium, and large church settings is a tribute to its practicality and value.



H. Leadership preparation. This resource also gives you the opportunity to prepare your church long before a pastoral transition occurs. While pastoring Highpoint, I decided to select a small team of board officers (three individuals) and a board alternate (distinguished deacon) to sign a strict confidentiality agreement and serve as an advance team to coach the board through the process in the event anything ever happened to me. We met several

times in my home to work our way through the manual, pray, and discuss applications. I discussed its contents with them and received their commitment to the strictest confidentiality until a time when the manual was needed. When God called me to serve as district superintendent, Highpoint already had a team of valuable coaches to get the process started and keep things on track. There are many models of succession, and this resource touches upon all of them. That is why it may be more valuable to churches who have yet to experience transition than those that currently are. Should you choose to lead with this kind of intentionality, the chapter entitled “Courageous Intentionality” explains how I made myself vulnerable and led this process in my own church before becoming district superintendent.

Bestselling author and business consultant, Peter Drucker said, “The ingredient most missing in churches today is a plan of succession.”⁸ However, having a plan is only half the battle. It is important to note that, despite the many hours it took to create this resource, it does not in and of itself guarantee success. Pastoral transition specialists William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird confess that the existence of a transition plan is not a guarantee that it will be successful. Their experience brought them to conclude that, “In the end, most of the success of a pastoral transition rises and falls on the shoulders of the outgoing pastor.”⁹ Author Warren Bullock also suggests that search committees revisit the history of pastoral transition and learn from past mistakes.¹⁰ That is why I have included a few honest footnotes entitled “In Reflection” where share some of my own lessons learned.

It is for these reasons that this resource gives you several strategic advantages and a greater likelihood for success in this journey. **The best place to start is reading the first set of short chapters 1 to 21 and then check out the helpful resources in the appendix from A-Z. You may not need them all, but it is your one-stop resource for this journey.**



DIVINE CALL
Lord, may our
future pastor feel
an irresistible call
and mandate from
God to lead this
church.

3. RISING TO THE TASK ([back to table](#))

At this point, you may be feeling an extra need for God’s help, wisdom, and direction. Securing a new pastor is a lot like a heart transplant. The body must be given time to accept the heart, and the heart must be given time to learn and adjust to the body. The most important thing to remember is you are going to make it! Thousands of churches experience a pastoral transition each and every year. As a matter of fact, it is estimated that 480,000 churches will experience a pastoral leadership change in the next ten years as the baby boomer generation moves into retirement.¹¹

Allow me to share a few things that will help your search committee become equal to this task.

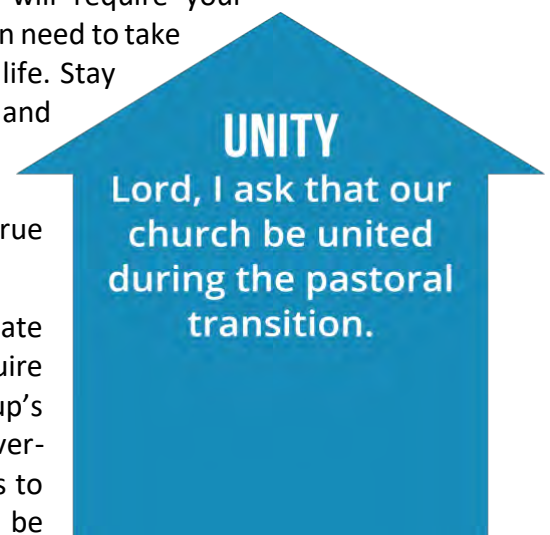
A. Humility. If you are reading this, you have been selected because of your proven service as a volunteer. However, be careful not to let your occupational or spiritual history deceive you. Chances are you have never been in the ministry, served as, or hired a lead pastor before. I like to compare a church board to first class passengers on an airplane. The frequency of their travel and proximity to the cockpit make them familiar with planes, airports, and even flight crews. They may even have a general knowledge of standard flight procedures, equipment, and terminology; however, that does not mean they know how to fly the plane, run an airline, or hire a pilot. Your familiarity with church life cannot be mistaken for expertise in pastoral ministry or even the search process. Stay humble and allow God, district leaders, and others on the committee to help you learn and discover God’s will. To help you avoid a few of the common pitfalls, we have created a short podcast entitled “Common Mistakes Pastoral Search Committees Make.” The link can be found on the Rise Up audio resource site at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

B. Spirit-Driven. Stay prayed up, in your Bible, and open to the Holy Spirit’s leading. There will be times you will feel unqualified or unprepared for this assignment. There may be times the Holy Spirit closes doors you want open and opens doors you would prefer to be closed. However, it is important to remember that God’s Spirit can compensate for any limitations you or the search committee may have. Follow the Spirit’s lead and keep in step with His pace.

C. Sacrifice. Although these seasons are temporary, they will require your undivided attention and diligent commitment. You may even need to take a few things off your plate to create more margin in your life. Stay engaged in the process, keep up with your reading and research, and be flexible in accommodating the need for extra meetings and assignments. Remember, everything great thing in your life required sacrifice. The same is true about God’s church.

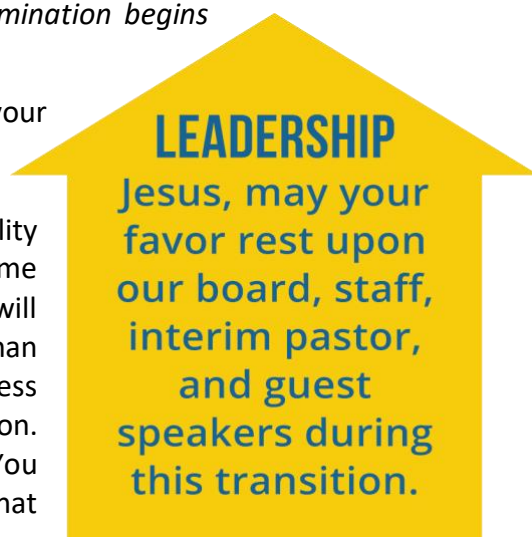
D. Availability. It is paramount that the entire board participate with an “all-hands-on-deck” attitude. The process will require the commitment and availability of all members. The group’s efforts will become compromised by impatience, over-delegation, or the board’s leaning on a few of its members to do all the work. The best result will require everyone to be equally committed to the task and attend regularly scheduled meetings.

E. Thoroughness. Authors Jim Ozier and Jim Griffith compare the importance of this process to the “changeover zone” in a relay race. The changeover zone is the place where the baton is passed from one runner to the next. Ozier and Griffith stress the importance of the entire team’s working hard to



master passing skills.¹² I wish I could tell you that this process is easy and has shortcuts, but it does not. Take the time to study, confirm facts, ask questions, and do things right. Many people will claim to know what you need and whom you should select. Remember the advice of Solomon: *The first to speak in court always sounds right—until the cross-examination begins* (Proverbs 18:17 NLT).

F. Integrity. This process will challenge the depth of your integrity. From curious friends who want the “inside scoop” to minister acquaintances asking you to put in a “good word” for them, your commitment to confidentiality and collaboration will be tested and revealed. Some candidates may ask very penetrating questions that will tempt you to answer in vague, exaggerated, or even less than honest ways. Always be honest. God cannot and will not bless dishonesty, exaggeration, or intentional deception. Remember, you were elected because people trust you. You will have no greater opportunity than now to show them that you are worthy of their confidence.



G. Patience. According to succession expert William Vanderbloemen, most pastoral searches take 12-24 months from start to finish.¹³ Although this resource will place you months ahead of schedule, do not be in a rush. It never pays off. In his book, *A Change of Pastors*, Loren Mead warns boards not to allow strong and impatient personalities to rush the process. “Those people are not necessarily your friends. The pressure for quick action needs to be heard but not heeded. Marry in haste; repent at leisure,” says Mead.¹⁴ Don’t let the timetables of others dictate your agenda. Patience is faith in its working gloves.

H. Confidentiality. Warren D. Bullock in his book, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God’s Person for Your Church*, says nothing can destroy a pastoral search process more than a person with “loose lips.” A breach of confidentiality will jeopardize a candidate’s present ministry, spread distrust, politicize the process, and unleash “confusion, animosity, and contention.”¹⁵ If you or your board lacks confidence in one of its members in this this area, it would be wise to address it now for the sake of the church, the candidates, and the kingdom. That is why it is important for each member to sign a confidentiality agreement and for those agreements then to be scanned, provided to the entire board, and a sample made available to the church and its members. This helps to prevent church people from asking inappropriate questions and keeps the board accountable to standards that have been made public.

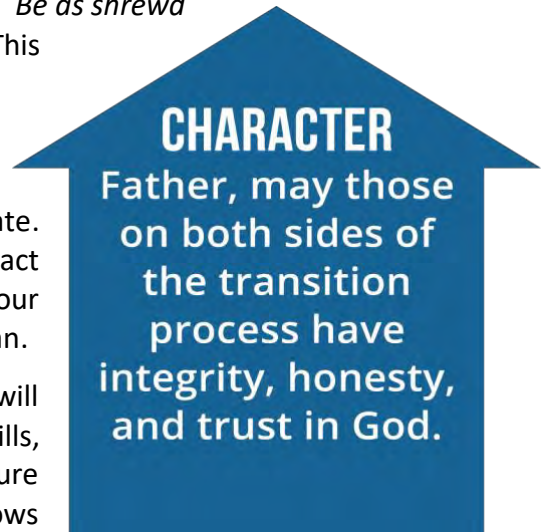
It may also help to prepare yourself for this challenge by understanding how the enemy will present opportunities for you to compromise confidentiality. Most breaches of confidentiality are the result of one or more of the following tactics of the enemy:

- 1. Social engineering.** This breach of confidentiality is the result of busybodies shopping for information like honeybees pollinating flowers. They may pretend to know a smaller piece of information and reveal it hoping to bait you into going deeper, or they may try to get twenty pieces of information from twenty different people in hopes of having enough to assemble the entire puzzle.
- 2. Relational leveraging.** This breach of confidence comes from people you love, trust, and admire. They may try to leverage your relationship by asking you to tell them more than they should know.

3. **Prying eyes.** This violation of confidence occurs when people who have access to your office, computer, email, or home cross the line by helping themselves to your pastoral search notebook, mail, or copies of your board minutes.
4. **Hacking.** This breach of confidentiality is the result of someone's hacking into your computer, smart phone, text messages, or email because they illegally or dishonestly gained access.
5. **User error.** This most common breach in confidentiality occurs for no other reason than a person has loose lips and lacks self-control. Personal insecurities, fear of rejection, the need for recognition, or the inability to deny inquisitive friends can cause you to cross the line and compromise the entire process.

Jesus warned His disciples to be preemptive and prepared: *Be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves* (Matthew 10:16 NIV). This warning is good advice regarding this issue as well.

- I. **Self-control.** Word will travel fast, and the board will be tempted many times to act before they are ready, prepared, or have had time to pray and deliberate. Desperation is your enemy. You must resist the impulse to act before you have compiled a church profile, done your research, established group chemistry, and agreed on a plan.
- J. **Faith.** This process is impossible without faith. People will make mistakes, and nothing is certain. Your best talents, skills, and screening processes are fallible. There are future challenges you cannot see or understand, but God knows whom you need and why you need each other. You simply must be convinced that God is in this and trust Him to guide the process. He can compensate for any weaknesses, mistakes, and obstacles. It was Paul who confidently said, *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness* (Romans 8:26 NIV).



It is imperative that the board understands this to be a spiritual process by which God uses imperfect instruments to achieve His perfect will. You can set up the best screening systems, check references, listen to sermons, and ask perfectly phrased questions; but at the end of the day, the board must make a call. Nowhere do we see the partnership of the human and divine played out more in the decision-making process than in Acts 15. The leaders of the early church assembled to address a challenge, review facts, and pray for God's will. In the end, they issued a statement which said, *It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us* (Acts 15:28 NIV). As they waited on God, He guided them to the appropriate consensus. This is the same type of process in which you find yourselves. As you present yourselves to God, submit to Him, and seek the direction of the Holy Spirit, He will bring His will to culmination in your hearts.

4. STAGES OF THE PROCESS—BIRD’S EYE VIEW [\(back to table\)](#)

Although the committee’s process will not always be linear and will require flexibility, it may help to identify the basic steps involved in the course of determining a candidate. Because the committee will be meeting regularly to process information, make decisions, and strategize, it is possible for several stages to be happening at the same time. It should also be noted that General Council churches are sovereign and have the freedom to determine their own process. However, district affiliated churches are under the supervision of the District and must conform to established policies and procedures of the District Council Presbytery. Allow me to summarize both.

A. General Council churches and a suggested pastoral selection process. Following is a brief description of each stage and where to find additional resources concerning their execution in the appendix section.



Stage 1: Pre-search preparation. The best and most important way to begin this process is for the board to have two half-day planning meetings or a two-day retreat. Boards that avoid this in the interest of “being too busy” will find themselves as victims to chronic stalls in the process. No meeting will be more important than this one for it is in this meeting that the board will go over this resource; determine roles; strategize; write up a church bio, job description, and profile of the “ideal candidate”; determine a search budget; and sign confidentiality/member agreements. The board officers should determine a structured meeting schedule and collaborate with the board to select a date that works best for everyone. Although it is preferred that all members be present, not everyone may be able to attend. To keep the process moving forward, the board will need to accept the fact that not all members will be able to participate in each segment of the process. However, the planning meeting/retreat is the most important meeting, and a venue that is close but feels far would serve

best. See the appendixes entitled “Board/Search Committee Planning Retreat,” “Desirable Qualities,” and “Search Budget” for a practical example of a planning meeting schedule.

In the meantime, it may help to alleviate any anxiety the staff or volunteers may have if the board were to send a letter expressing appreciation for their faithfulness and ask for their patience during this process. It is important, however, that this letter not commit to securing employment or large initiatives requested by your team of staff or volunteers. Your new pastor must have the freedom to build their own team and finance new vision. See the appendix entitled “Sample Letters” for an example.

Stage 2: Advertising the opening. After the board has compiled the church profile and candidate profile, the most important thing is to get the word out. This will help to maximize networking potential and get others working for you. This can be done by creating a shared internet folder, central website or blog informing influential people about the opening, and posting the opening on several ministry job sites. See the appendix entitled “Advertising Ministry Opening” for a list of options to accomplish this task.

Stage 3: Seek counsel. At this stage, the board will need to seek advice from the district superintendent/network pastor, community leaders, and the congregation. Scripture repeatedly teaches us that the best wisdom comes when people are humble enough to seek advice from knowledgeable advisors.

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, But a wise man is he who listens to counsel (Proverbs 12:15 NASB 1995).

Through insolence comes nothing but strife, But wisdom is with those who receive counsel (Proverbs 13:10 NASB 1995).

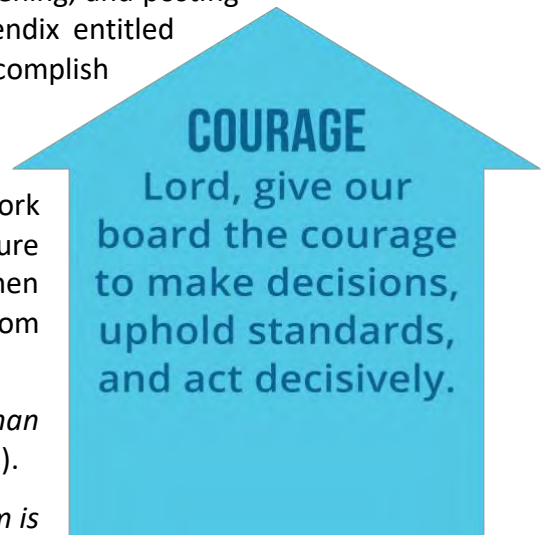
Where there is no guidance the people fall, But in abundance of counselors there is victory (Proverbs 11:14 NASB 1995).

There are three important sources of advice and critical feedback that are needed early on in the process.

- a. **District Superintendent/Network Pastor.** District superintendents/network pastors spend much of their time coaching churches and candidates through the pastoral selection process. Their wisdom and advice can spare the board and the church much heartache, regret, and wasted time. Be sure to notify them about the opening and invite the district superintendent/network pastor to a board meeting to give the board advice, offer resources, and answer questions. At some point, you will need technical advice about your church bylaws so emailing your district superintendent/network pastor a copy now will save time later.
- b. **Community leaders.** Important and actively engaged leaders in your community may also be able to help you determine what kind of church your community needs. While pastoring Highpoint, I used the following list of questions to interview city leaders every 2-3 years. This can be accomplished by sending an email similar to the following:

Dear Community Leader:

Our church is presently in a leadership transition and searching for a new lead pastor. We believe in community engagement, and you were among a short list of community leaders we



wanted to reach out to for input. We feel confident we have a handle on the spiritual qualities we are looking for but would value your input concerning the city's current and future needs. Would you mind replying to this email with brief answers to the following questions:

- *What are the most pressing spiritual, personal, and social needs people have in our neighborhood?*
- *What gaps need to be filled in our city that only a faith-based work can do?*
- *How would you describe the city as a culture?*
- *What are our city's greatest needs?*
- *What are the greatest dangers or threats our city is facing?*
- *What are our greatest strengths as a city?*
- *What are ways you have seen our city change over the past five years?*
- *What significant needs do you think our city will have five years from now?*
- *What are the different subcultures that exist in our city?*
- *What needs do most organizations in our part of town feel unqualified for or unable to meet?*
- *From your perspective, how can a community-minded church best help our city?*

Thank you for helping us better serve our community.

*John Deacon, Chair of the Pastoral Search Committee
First Assembly of God*

Emailing this list of questions to your mayor, city council members, police and fire chiefs, school superintendent, principals of nearby schools, and your city's neighborhood services departments will reveal needs most church people do not think about. I always looked forward to these responses and, even at times, felt convicted that they were unknown to us as a church. They will help you know the kind of spiritual leader you will need to make a true impact upon the community.

- c. **Congregational survey.** The board should also give the congregation the opportunity to submit input concerning the state of the church and pastoral selection. There are many advantages to this including:
- **Peace.** People tend to be less anxious about change if they are part of the process.
 - **Equitability.** People will want a fair and equitable opportunity to express what is important to them.
 - **Ownership.** People will be more likely to support the board's final candidate if they have been given a voice in the process.
 - **Cooperation.** The survey may reduce the amount of campaigning or lobbying within the church if people have been given the opportunity to voice their opinion.
 - **Confirmation.** The results will be helpful in confirming, expanding, or challenging the board's existing assumptions about what kind of pastor needed or wanted.

Taking a congregational survey or "self-study" is one of the best ways this can be done and is easily accomplished by creating an online survey in www.surveymonkey.com or by passing out a paper survey that can be filled out and returned in a sealed box. The network office has hired a statistician to create a customized survey for your church. It can be launched for free from our account or transferred to your own paid account with surveymonkey.com. It can be customized with your own logo, color scheme, and name. Results can be accessed anytime

you desire. Please see the section entitled “Congregational Survey” for an example that has been used in many other network churches.¹⁶

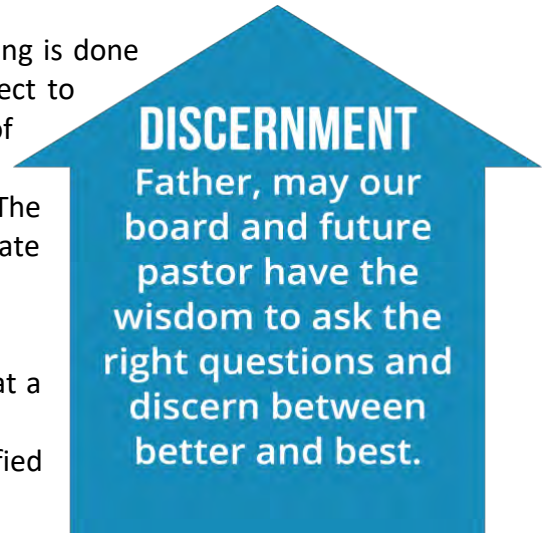
Stage 4: Targeting potential candidates. Soon after the resignation announcement, the board will begin to receive recommendations of possible candidates and inquiries of interest. However, the board will also need to recruit possible candidates as well. This will require the board to initiate contact with potential candidates that were referred or recommended by others. It is important that every contact with a potential candidate be professional, organized, and show respect for their privacy. See the appendix entitled “Recruiting Candidates” for suggestions on how to navigate this process.

Stage 5: Receiving résumés. If networking and advertising is done properly, the board of a church of over 300 should expect to receive anywhere from 40 to 70 résumés with 10-15 of them being promising candidates. Smaller or rural churches will receive proportionally fewer résumés. The board will then sort through the list, organizing candidate résumés in categories of A, B, and C.

A = Strong candidate to contact and explore.

B = Possible candidate to be revisited or considered at a later time.

C = Unqualified or undesirable candidate to be notified immediately.



It is important that the board do this as a whole and have consensus on each and every name. This task should NOT be delegated to a smaller group. See the appendix labeled “Categorizing and Evaluating Résumés” for additional information and form letters.

Stage 6: Ministry exposure and references. In this stage, members of the committee review résumés and audio and video sermons or internet links as well as any other helpful information about “A-List Candidates.” Because the lead pastor is the primary communicator in the church, it is important that the board be exposed to their preaching and teaching ministry. See the appendix labeled “Exposure to Speaking Ministry” for advice on what to look for as well as the one labeled “Checking References” for additional information and form letters.

Stage 7: Preliminary phone/Zoom interview. In this phase, members of the committee or a sub-committee interview potential candidates on the phone to assess qualifications and competency. See the two appendixes entitled “Interview Questions” for suggested questions that candidates may ask boards and boards can ask candidates at this stage and others.

Stage 8: Video interview with the entire committee. In this stage, the board interviews potential candidates and their spouse using online meeting applications to gain additional personal, family, and ministry information. Gotomeeting.com (www.gotomeeting.com), Apple Facetime (iPhone or iMac applications), Zoom (www.zoom.com), or Google Hangout (<https://hangouts.google.com>) all have free or affordable entry level options. See the two appendixes entitled “Interview Questions” for suggested questions that candidates may ask boards and boards can ask candidates.

Stage 9: Contextual visit. In this phase, a member or small team visits the church where the candidate ministers to personally see, hear, and feel the candidate in real-time ministry. No contact should be made with the candidate nor should they receive prior notice. It will be necessary for the committee

to call the church and find out if the candidate will be preaching that Sunday and is not out of town or out of the pulpit. The team will also want to drive by the facility after hours to see how well things are kept up and get a feel for the life of the church.

Stage 10: Personal interviews. The board should narrow down their list of potential candidates to two (2) or preferably three (3) who will be invited to visit with their spouse and family (at the church's expense) to interview in person. This gives the board and their spouses and the candidate and spouse the opportunity to meet as a group and interact together. There may be a temptation to minimize costs by using video conferencing instead of face-to-face interviews; however, experienced search firms have learned the hard way the price of cutting out face-to-face interviews. You cannot read body language, hesitation, or a person's spirit over a phone or video interview.¹⁷ It is also important that a candidate's spouse be part of this interview process. See the appendixes entitled "Three Personal Interviews" and "Interview Questions" for more information on this step.

Stage 11: Return trip. After interviewing two or three potential candidates, the board should narrow the options down to one primary candidate. The primary candidate will be invited to return with their family to meet the board and staff. During this time, they can ask any questions they would like as well as have free time to explore the city, tour ministry sites, spend time with staff, and get a "boots-on-the-ground" feel for the ministry and community. See the appendix entitled "Interview Questions" for suggested questions at this stage and others.

Stage 12: Official candidacy. At this stage, the board invites their best candidate to return as the board's nominee to meet key leaders, interact with the people, and be voted upon. See the appendixes entitled "Presenting an Offer" and "Hosting the Candidate" for more information on logistical matters concerning this important step.

Stage 13: Preparation. In the last phase, the board prepares for the arrival of the newly elected pastor and helps provide a smooth transition by planning for logistics. The board should also be prepared to provide an official letter confirming their election and the remuneration package. This will assist their new first family with finding temporary housing. In addition, the board will also need to mobilize teams to help them move in, provide meals, prepare for a welcome day, and explain office logistics. It is critical that your new pastor not have to set up his office. All the office preparations including computers with all needed programs, applications, and access; cell phone; keys; email; office orientation; and the unique needs for new pastor should already be in place. There is no better way to show your new pastor that you are committed to their success than to enable them to hit the ground running. See the appendix entitled "Preparing for Pastor's Arrival" for ideas on this step.



B. District affiliated churches and the required pastoral selection process. Following is a list of stages and steps for district affiliated churches. Most of the resources and appendixes found in this resource can be applied to district affiliated churches as well.

Stage 1: Notification of intent to resign. The departing pastor notify their district superintendent/network pastor of their intent to resign at least 30 days in advance in written email form.

Stage 2: Notify Church 30 days in advance of departure. After notifying the district superintendent/network pastor and getting their input, the departing pastor notifies the church’s local advisory committee and the church at least 30 days before their last Sunday.

Stage 3: Opening declared. The district superintendent/network pastor will declare the church as officially “open” and advertise the opening through existing promotional methods.

Stage 4: Coaching and resourcing. In consultation with the executive and sectional presbyters, the district superintendent/network pastor will assist the church by providing résumés for potential candidates.

Stage 5: Review of candidates. The presbyter and local advisory committee will review résumés and interview potential candidates.

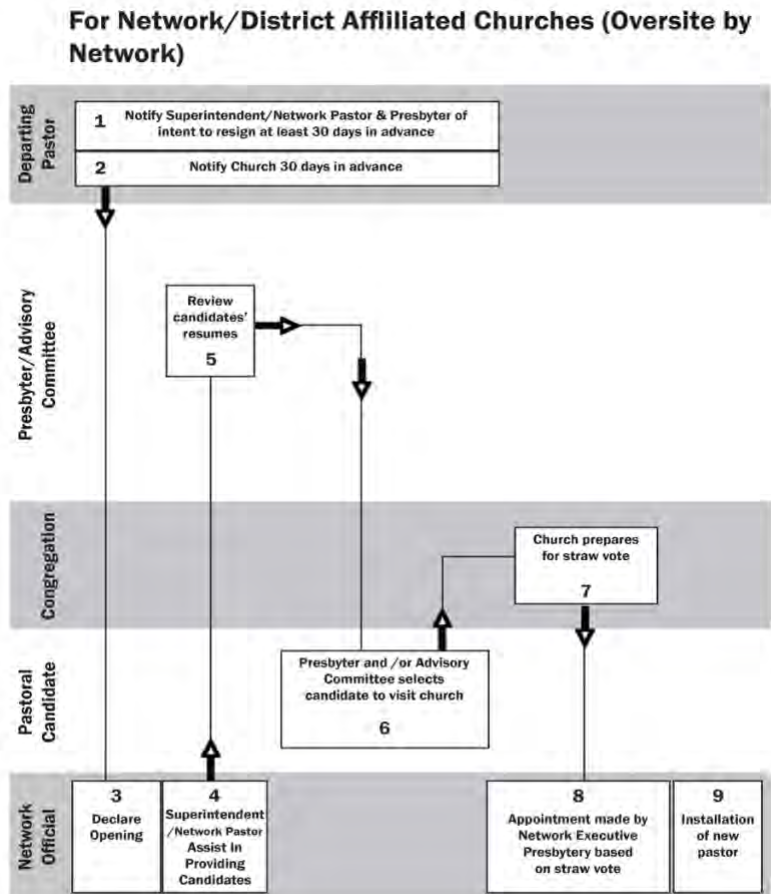
Stage 6: Candidate selection. The presbyter and/or local advisory committee will select a candidate to visit the church to be interviewed and meet the local advisory committee.

Stage 7: Church expression through a “straw vote” nomination. After the candidate has met the local advisory committee and presented their ministry, the church will give their formal recommendation to the presbytery in the form of a “straw vote.” The “straw vote” is not an official election but a nomination to the presbytery revealing the church’s opinion regarding the possibility of that candidate’s serving as their new pastor.

Stage 8: Official appointment or denial. After evaluating the local church’s “straw vote” nomination, the district Executive Presbytery will either approve or deny the appointment of the candidate. If approved, the candidate is appointed as the new pastor. If denied, the process will start over.

Stage 9: Installation of new pastor. The new pastor, local advisory committee, and district superintendent/network pastor will collaborate to select a day and time when a network official can officiate the installation ceremony of the new pastor.

A visual illustration of each stage overlapping others and those responsible for initiation is above.

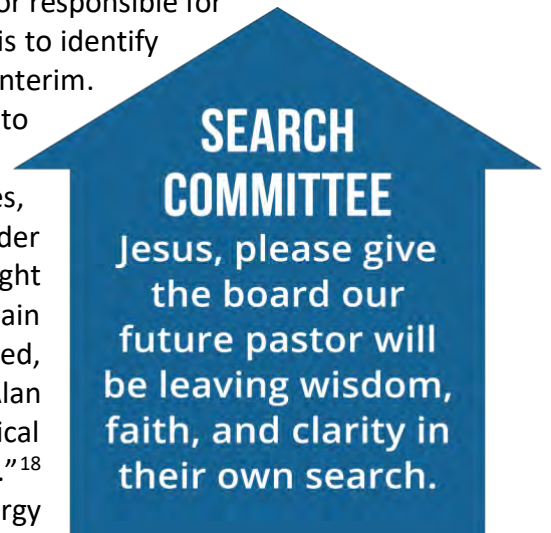


5. MANAGERS OR VISIONARIES? ([back to table](#))

Some boards make the mistake of using pastoral transitions as an opportunity to set new vision, determine long-term goals, and make significant financial decisions (building expansion, staff enlargement, salary adjustments, and the increase of debt and financial commitments). These decisions will only prolong the process, distract the church, and cripple the new pastor. Instead of helping, they only make another pastoral transition more likely.

Since most churches and even their bylaws hold the lead pastor responsible for setting vision, the board's primary role during this transition is to identify a qualified pastoral candidate and manage the church in the interim.

Setting vision and then trying to find a pastor who will buy into and execute that vision is not only unbiblical but also unwise and unlikely. A couple of years after the new pastor arrives, there will be time for the board to collaborate with God's leader to reestablish vision, goals, and financial commitments. Right now, the important thing is to avoid distractions and remain focused on the board's prime directive. In their book entitled, *Between Pastors: Seizing the Opportunity*, Cam Taylor and Alan Simpson say, "Goals during a pastoral transition are critical because they give focus to the work needing to be done."¹⁸ During the transition, it is important that all of the board's energy and resources be focused on the following five priorities:



- A. Identifying a candidate.** The first priority should be to fulfill their duty to the people, Scripture, and the bylaws by identifying the most capable candidate.
- B. Managing ministries.** The second priority is to empower the staff and existing ministries to keep systems running, momentum moving, and morale high.
- C. Removing obstacles.** The third priority should be to resolve any and all conflicts that may threaten the health of the church, the selection process, or the smooth acclimation of the new pastor. Instead of allowing problems to grow or accumulate during the interim period, deal with them now. It is better to step on crocodiles when they are small rather than to expect the new pastor to jump into the swamp and wrestle a twenty-foot man-eater! Dealing with debilitating or divisive conflict before the arrival of the new pastor gives a honeymoon period for the new pastor to build credibility and learn the church, its people, and the community. Postponing tough decisions only removes options that may be needed later.¹⁹ Tom Mullins led one of the most successful pastoral transitions in mega-church history. One of the eleven tips he gives for successful transitions is to make tough calls before the leadership exchange—not after it. "No one wants to inherit a mess! Do whatever is in your power to position them (new pastor) to walk on the smoothest possible path," says Mullins.²⁰

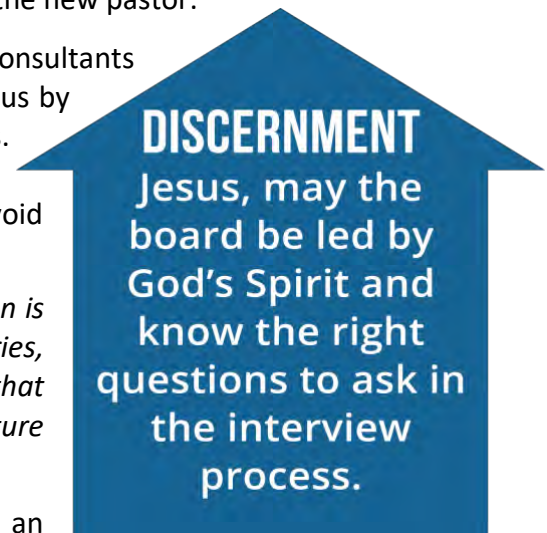
Another way to remove obstacles is to be preventative. One of the most common mistakes made during a pastoral transition is to invite discontented, critical, fringe, and unsupportive people to be part of the search team's efforts. This is often done hoping they will be more likely to accept the result or become more committed if they have a voice in the decision. While this seems logical at first, nearly all the experts agree that it never works out that way. My research found repeated warnings regarding this mistake. The Apostle Paul would seem to agree as he told the Corinthians that one of the reasons God allows conflict is to reveal who is mature and qualified for increased responsibility in the community of faith: *There must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among*

you may be recognized (1 Corinthians 11:19 ESV). Paul is teaching us that God has permitted conflict so we may see who is qualified to serve during critical times. The Apostle Paul and the experts in pastoral transition are not implying that these people are not valuable or important nor are they implying that they should be excluded from the community of faith. What they are saying is that their propensity towards immaturity, conflict, or criticism has already revealed what can be expected of them in the future. There will be a time for them to earn the trust of the new pastor; but for now, the search team, prayer coordinators, Q&A moderators, hosts for home meetings, and those involved in other important roles should be reserved for individuals without a prior history of conflict. References are provided in the footnotes to show the frequency with which this warning was repeated among literature on best practices.²¹

D. Postponing expansion. The fourth responsibility is to postpone expansion. Pastoral transitions are vulnerable times for a church. Activists and strong personalities can see this as an opportunity to advance their own agendas, ministries, or passions. There will be a temptation for everyone to add their own “wish list” to the board agenda. However, this is not the time for the board to start new ministries, introduce personal preferences, or initiate sweeping change. Instead, they should ensure that the day-to-day operations and management of the church is done in a way that sustains momentum and creates opportunity, not obligations, for the new pastor.

E. Creating a purpose statement. Many pastoral transition consultants recommend that a board/search committee maintain focus by creating a short purpose statement to guide their efforts. Establishing a purpose statement for the board/search committee is a good way to keep everyone focused and avoid distractions. Following is an example of such a statement:

The purpose of the board during this pastoral transition is to identify the best candidate, manage existing ministries, remove obstacles, and postpone expansion in a way that creates margin, options, and opportunity for our future leader.



If a board uses this microscopic window of transition as an opportunity to modify vision, make organizational changes, and take on additional expenses, they are writing a check that will be unable to clear. Their prime directive needs to be identifying a candidate, removing obstacles, managing existing ministries, and creating opportunity for someone to lead. One possible way to place these four goals front and center is through an interim pastor who fulfills one of several possible roles. The pros and cons of an interim pastor is addressed in a separate chapter. The important thing to remember is that interim pastors can help prepare the church for a new season of leadership.²²

6. THE IMPORTANCE OF AG CREDENTIALS ([back to table](#))

Why is it important for a pastoral candidate to hold a General Council issued credential with the Assemblies of God? That is an honest question that deserves a thoughtful answer. The current leadership of the Assemblies of God in our network and on the national level values flexibility and freedom to lead the local church in the power of the Spirit.²³ To accomplish this, we lean toward a pastor-led model while affirming the autonomy of the local church to select a credentialed leader and a system of governance that works best for them. One of the agreements that occurred when your church was granted the privilege of self-governance as a General Council church was the selection of a credentialed AG minister to serve as lead pastor. With these principles in mind, our Movement has chosen to embrace minimal requirements for a General Council affiliated church as it applies to their selection of a credentialed minister. One of those requirements is that General Council churches be pastored by ministers who hold an AG credential.

As the church is beginning the search process, allow me to share some combined wisdom from other district leaders in addressing this subject.²⁴ I would like to answer three practical questions:

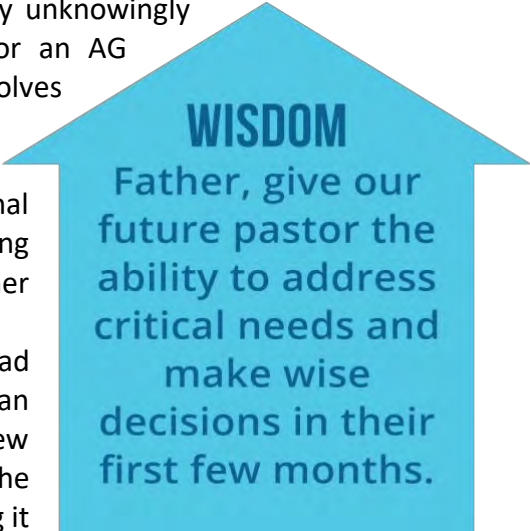
- **Contributing factors.** What factors most often contribute to a church's being out of compliance regarding this issue?
- **Potential risks.** What are the risks a church exposes themselves to when considering a lead pastor who does not have credentials with the Assemblies of God?
- **Possible solutions.** What are some practical ways to resolve this tension should a church's search committee feel drawn to a minister who is not credentialed with the Assemblies of God?

A. Contributing factors. There are several reasons why an AG church may seek to elect a non-AG minister to serve as their lead pastor. It is usually the result of one or more of the following factors:

1. **Neglect.** A church may either fail to consult or overlook the legal requirements and/or qualifications prescribed in their bylaws or that of the General Council.
2. **Endearment.** A church may have a current associate pastor, a minister who has a past history with the church, or a respected lay leader who does not currently have an AG credential who has endeared themselves to the church. Those endeared to these individuals may want them considered as an exception and a favored candidate when filling a pastoral vacancy.
3. **Convenience.** A church may have a respected minister within the church or community who does not have an AG credential but has offered their services and/or expressed interest in pastoring the church. The offer may seem like a quick and convenient way to fill a vacancy.
4. **Disappointing experiences.** A church, pastor, network, or denominational official may have allowed a disappointing or painful experience to create a culture of mistrust. Fault in these cases may have been shared on both sides of the equation, or one side might have allowed the relationship to deteriorate.
5. **Poisoned well.** A church may have been influenced by a disgruntled pastor or potential candidate who has had a strained relationship with their credentialing body and chosen to speak critically of the Assemblies of God.
6. **Overconfidence.** A church board may feel their intimate knowledge of their church or corporate hiring procedures automatically qualifies them in the area of pastoral selections. They may mistakenly think that hiring people in one specific field of business qualifies them to hire a spiritual leader in an entirely different "industry." As a result, they may fail to seek professional advice or take time to educate themselves.
7. **Good intentions.** A church may make an unwise exception, believing the candidate will pursue a credential once elected. In some cases, the candidate may have even committed to pursuing an

AG credential if elected; however, the busyness of ministry or lack of personal initiative often prevents progress toward a credential after the election.

8. **Geographic or financial challenges.** A church may be small and/or located in a remote area that requires a bivocational pastor, and there are no credentialed ministers available to serve as the pastor.
9. **Inability to qualify.** A church's search committee may unknowingly decide on a candidate who is unable to qualify for an AG credential due to the candidate's past. This usually involves something that would disqualify them from receiving an AG credential such as a previous divorce that cannot be recognized, documented abuse, lack of personal experience regarding Spirit baptism, dismissal, being under discipline by a credentialing organization, or other disqualifications.
10. **Refusal of candidate or board.** A church may elect a lead pastor who, for personal reasons, refuses to seek an Assemblies of God credential. On the other hand, a few boards have favored noncredentialed AG pastors so the church can retain the minister's tithe instead of sending it to the district/network and General Council.



WISDOM
Father, give our
future pastor the
ability to address
critical needs and
make wise
decisions in their
first few months.

B. Potential risks. There are considerable risks a church exposes themselves to when electing a minister that does not have credentials with the Assemblies of God. Although unknown to most pulpit committees, district officials have witnessed the realities of unpleasant consequences resulting from an Assemblies of God church electing a non-AG minister to serve as their lead pastor. Please understand that non-AG ministers are not bad, substandard, or even dangerous in and of themselves. However, in many cases, there are undeniable and unintentional consequences with electing a non-AG pastor to lead an AG church. These would include the following possibilities:

1. **Decreasing exposure.** As the new pastor introduces the church to their own preferred associations and culture, the church will gradually experience less and less AG associations through theology, governance, guest speakers, missionaries, ministry programs, regional events, and interchurch activities.
2. **Organizational drift.** When it comes to pastoral transitions, churches are a lot like wood chips in a river. They tend to go with the flow, force, and direction of the current. In the same way, churches led by non-AG pastors will slowly start to be carried downstream by the new leader's past associations, preferences, governance, relational circles, and doctrine. As an extreme application of decreasing exposure mentioned above, the worst-case scenario of this consequence can result in disaffiliation. Investing time and prayer is important for the church to make sure they want and need to go where the current will carry them.
3. **Irreconcilable incompatibility.** Every church culture involves a triad of doctrine, governance, and vision. A few Spirit-filled denominations have similar doctrine, governance, and visionary structures that can make interdenominational ministry possible. However, disparity in any of these three components can create polarizing incompatibility. The likelihood of incompatibility increases exponentially when interdenominational and independent crossbreeding occurs. A minister may share similar doctrinal beliefs with an Assemblies of God church but embrace a very different leadership style and governance structure. It is also possible that a noncredentialed candidate may share the church's preferred governance but have very dissimilar doctrinal beliefs. For example, the Assemblies of God and Foursquare have nearly identical doctrinal

statements but very different governance structures and convictions about the sovereignty of the local church. On the other hand, the Seventh Day Adventist and the Assemblies of God share a common governance structure and respect for the sovereignty of the local church but have diametrically different doctrinal beliefs. Spirit-filled ministers from independent/nondenominational churches may share similar Pentecostal doctrines but prefer systems offering less accountability when it comes to finance, membership, and decision making. That is why the likelihood of doctrinal, structural, and cultural compatibility is greatest when a candidate holds an Assemblies of God credential.

- 4. Negligent governance.** If a church's bylaws require the lead pastor to have an AG credential, the church must comply. Most church bylaws prescribe *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* as their parliamentary authority. That means the bylaws must be followed implicitly regarding procedures for pastoral elections.



*When a society or an assembly has adopted a particular parliamentary manual—such as this book—as its authority, the rules contained in that manual are binding upon it in all cases where they are not inconsistent with the bylaws (or constitution) of the body, any of its special rules of order, or any provisions of local, state, or national law applying to the particular type of organization.*²⁵

According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, the bylaws cannot be suspended without that option being prescribed in the church's bylaws:

*The Bylaws "cannot be suspended (with the exception of clauses that provide for their own suspension under specified conditions)".*²⁶

*Rules contained in the bylaws (or constitution) cannot be suspended—no matter how large the vote in favor of doing so or how inconvenient the rule in question may be—unless the particular rule specifically provides for its own suspension.*²⁷

If the search committee ignores the bylaws, what kind of example is being set for the members when they want to do the same thing in other areas? A lack of organizational integrity will only create a culture of negligent governance.

- 5. Inadequate accountability.** Accountability is greater and most effective on all fronts when a church and its lead pastor share the same credentialing authority, ecclesiastical governance, and doctrinal statements. When the lead pastor is not under the same ecclesiastical authority as the church they pastor, there is a greater propensity for a lack of accountability, doctrinal deviation, abuses in authority, and financial indiscretion. In addition, should there be any impropriety on the part of the church's future leadership, the district/network or General Council will have no way of addressing the church's concerns, disciplining, or restoring the pastor to ministry.
- 6. Legal exposure.** If the church's Articles of Incorporation, constitution, or bylaws require that the lead pastor be credentialed with the AG, those in authority cannot ignore them without being complicit in an illegitimate election. No vote, no matter how large, can suspend, ignore, or conflict with the bylaws regarding the election of the lead pastor, chair of the board, or president of the corporation. Again, *Robert's Rules of Order* says:

Rules contained in the bylaws (or constitution) cannot be suspended—no matter how large the vote in favor of doing so or how inconvenient the rule in question may be—unless the particular rule specifically provides for its own suspension.²⁸

Should any member of the church at any time feel disillusioned, misled, or concerned enough to challenge the validity of the election, the decision may cause a lack of trust in the leadership community, unnecessary conflict within the church, and potential litigation regarding the legitimacy of the election. Should the election be contested legally, the courts will most certainly examine compliance with the church’s bylaws as well as the previous consent to be governed by the Assemblies of God’s criteria for all General Council affiliated churches. Furthermore, if the insurance company’s investigation reveals that the church ignored or violated their own bylaws or those outlining criteria for the church’s affiliation (General Council bylaws), they will most likely decline to cover expenses related to the church’s claim.

- 7. General Council status.** The only body authorized to grant a church a Certificate of Affiliation with the Assemblies of God is The General Council of the Assemblies of God. The General Council has outlined a short list of minimal governance requirements for all churches affiliated with the Assemblies of God. This document has only seven minimal governance requirements of which the second reads:

A General Council affiliated church must accept the Assemblies of God tenets of faith and be amenable to applicable General Council and district council constitutions and bylaws to include the provision for a lead pastor who is credentialed with the Assemblies of God.²⁹

In addition, the General Council constitution requires all affiliated churches to be led by lead pastors who are credentialed when it requires each church to:

Make provision for a pastor who is a credentialed minister in good standing with the General Council and a district council.³⁰

In the event the “minimal requirements” have not been attained, the General Council Constitution requires the church to:

Revert to district affiliated status until the minimal requirements for General Council affiliation have been attained, unless an exception has been granted by the district in accordance with the provisions of General Council Constitution.³¹

In addition, should the pastor, a majority of the official board of the church, or a petition signed by 30 percent of the voting members challenge the validity of the election based upon the qualifications of the pastor, the district and/or General Council:

May act to bring the church under district supervision and, when necessary, revert it from General Council status to district affiliated status until the governing entity considers the problem resolved.³²

- 8. Loss of assets.** As a district superintendent/network pastor, my service enables me to view the network from the “top of the mast,” so to speak. I see a trend growing larger on the horizon, and



I am deeply concerned. We are losing sacred space, hard-won property, and critical beachheads in strategic communities for the following three reasons:

- Patterns of declining attendance may result in a church's inability to maintain staff and remain current on mortgage payments and maintenance, causing the property to be sold in the name of downsizing.
- The assimilation of smaller churches that merge with larger works has also resulted in the liquidation of the smaller church's property only to have the proceeds absorbed into the bank account of the larger work. In these cases, we lose property and presence that took decades to acquire.
- A district and General Council may also lose property purchased by those associated with the organization should it disaffiliate with the Assemblies of God and take the assets with them. In many cases, this drift and departure was driven by a lead pastor who was either disgruntled or lacked an Assemblies of God credential.

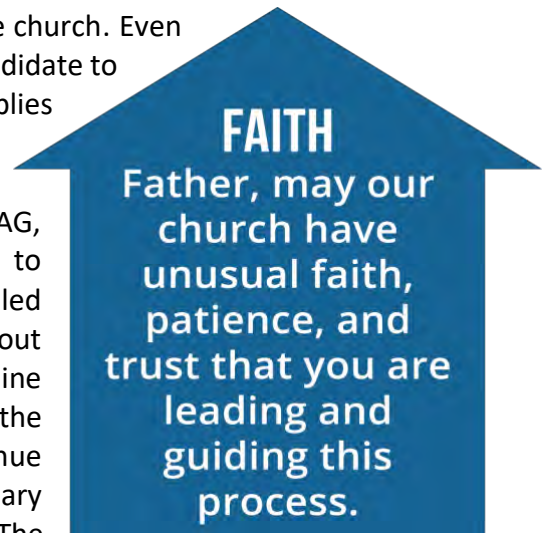
In nearly every case, a mournful and regretful deacon board wished they had not ignored the early warning signs. The unintended cost was the loss of property won by a generation who generously gave of their time, talents, and treasures, believing those who followed them would honor their sacrifice.

C. Possible solutions. Following are some ways (listed in prioritized order) to collaborate with the district and work towards a possible solution should the board or search committee find themselves wanting to consider a non-AG lead pastor:

- 1. Seek seasoned advice.** Any small, medium, or large church considering a non-AG pastor should seek the advice of the district superintendent/network pastor. For example, small, remote, and rural churches can find it difficult to identify healthy, available, and qualified ministers. The superintendent/network pastor can help explore creative solutions such as a provisional credential, PAC (Parent Affiliated Church) cohort under the pastoral supervision of a presbyter, or even a collaborative partnership with other churches and leaders in the network. They have navigated these waters before, can give practical advice, help with an interview of a non-AG candidate, and assist in finding a win/win solution for the situation.
- 2. Check the bylaws.** Most church bylaws prescribe *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* as their parliamentary authority. That means that the bylaws must be followed implicitly regarding procedures for pastoral elections. Any procedure not outlined in the bylaws must not conflict with the rules contained in the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, so be sure to check the bylaws concerning issues related to the lead pastor's election. This would include but not be limited to the specific level of credential required (certified, licensed, or ordained), how they are nominated, term of office, form of voting, type of vote, scope of meeting notice, requirements of prior notice, agenda prescriptions, minutes, and notification to the district/network office.
- 3. Explore compatibility.** When considering the question of non-AG leadership, take the time to collaborate with others to create a list of subjects that must be vetted. This may include things like the non-AG candidate's:
 - Previous experiences with AG doctrine, position on spiritual gifts, and other topics of relevance to the church's history as an AG work.
 - Personal preferences regarding governance; accountability; and the role of pastors, boards, and staff.
 - Compatibility with the church's existing bylaws, doctrinal statements, and culture.

- Current mentors, preferred conferences, favored resources, and past denominational associations.
- References, history, denominational affiliations, collaborative skills, ministry track record, and background check.
- Other items that are important to the board and official members of the church.

4. **Create time to qualify.** The average pastoral search process in the Assemblies of God is between three and eight months, depending on the size of the church. Even the shortest side of that timeline is sufficient for a candidate to acquire the lowest level of credential with the Assemblies of God through Berean School of the Bible's correspondence course.³³ If the minister the board is seriously contemplating is not credentialed with the AG, inform the candidate that they have three months to acquire the lowest level of credential. This level is called "Certificate of Ministry" and can be completed in about three months if assertively pursued through online correspondence courses with Berean School of the Bible.³⁴ In the meantime, the board can continue exploring other candidates in the event the primary candidate is unable to acquire the needed credential. The district/network may be able to assist in fulfilling the requirements in an accelerated timeframe. Whatever the candidate's response may be to this option, the board will have an opportunity to see what they can expect in the future.

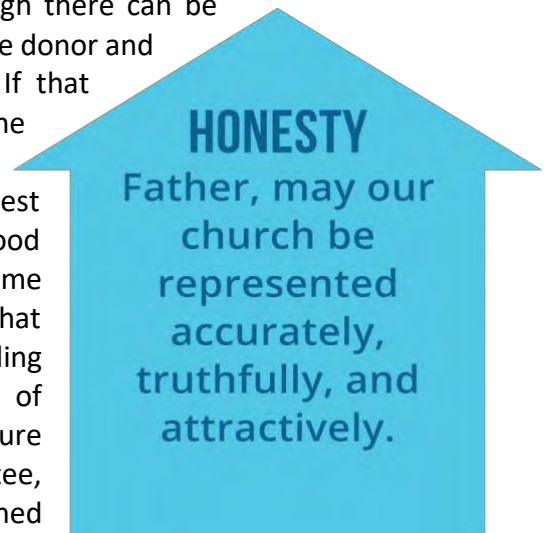


Don Popineau is an example of this kind of collaborative approach. After retiring from a career as a residential painter, Don was asked by his pastor to join his church's pastoral staff. Believing every minister should hold a credential, his pastor's only requirement was that Don acquire a credential. Despite only having an eleventh-grade formal education, this dedicated 55-year-old man enrolled in Berean School of the Bible correspondence courses and studied every night. In only three months, Don completed the minimal requirements and was granted the Assemblies of God's lowest level of credential (certified minister). Three months later, he finished the second level of credential (licensed minister) and went on to successfully serve his pastor and church for many years as an associate pastor.³⁵

5. **Seek a provisional credential.** If the church is small, in a rural area, or has already elected a noncredentialed lead pastor, they may request the district/network to grant a provisional credential that will allow the candidate to serve while pursuing a conventional credential. A Certificate of Ministry may be issued on a provisional basis to a person who has not met all the credentialing requirements but who is deemed by the district Credentials Committee to be essential to the continuity of a church or a ministry. The provisional certificate has less requirements than the certified level for the person working on educational requirements and is an option for getting a minister into the credentialing pipeline. Life experience and exception requests are looked at favorably when the minister is being sought after or already in place as a lead pastor yet needs credentials. However, the reason for such a provisional issuance must be ministry driven; and the justification for its use is terminated when the minister ceases to be involved in the ministry for which it was initially granted unless the minister accepts another qualifying assignment.³⁶ It should be noted that this option is not a permanent substitute for a credential but only creates the potential for a three-year window by which a candidate must acquire a Certificate of Ministry.

6. **Seek district affiliated status.** Because the church does not have an AG credentialed lead pastor and thus is unable to meet the minimal requirements of a General Council affiliated church, a majority of the board can vote to request the district/network to revert the church to district affiliated status until they are able to qualify as a General Council affiliated church.³⁷ While under district affiliated status, the existing board becomes an advisory committee under the supervision of the district council until the church is able to qualify again for General Council affiliation.
7. **Become a PAC church.** A PAC (Parent Affiliated Church) is an assembly that is under the supervision of a parent church in accordance with the parent church's constitution and bylaws.³⁸ Although PAC churches do not require General Council credentialed ministers, they do require an Assemblies of God local church-based credential for all parent affiliated church pastors, including background checks. PAC churches are not autonomous and submit themselves to the leadership, governance structure, and vision of the parent church. Should the church later qualify for General Council status, they can apply for sovereignty after securing the approval of the parent church.
8. **Rectify quickly.** If the church elected a non-AG minister and is not compliant with the General Council's affiliated church standard that lead pastors be credentialed, notify the district superintendent/network pastor immediately.³⁹ They can help identify and explore solutions to this unique situation.

Pastoral transitions are a lot like heart transplants. Although there can be some variance in blood type, group compatibility between the donor and the recipient is required to reduce the risk of rejection. If that minimal compatibility is not there, the recipient's immune system will recognize the donor organ as foreign and reject it. This results in trauma to the entire body in the form of chest pains, chronic fatigue, fever, shortness of breath, drops in blood pressure, aches, pains, fainting, and even death. The same principle holds true with churches. It is important to note that there are success stories of non-AG pastors effectively leading AG churches. In nearly every case, however, some level of minimal compatibility existed beforehand and full disclosure occurred between the candidate, search committee, district/network, and church members. If a board feels pushed by a non-AG candidate's deadline or pressured by church members to rush the process or ignore the bylaws, chances are they are moving too fast. Slow down, consult the General Council bylaws, seek district/network advice, and wait for God's will to be revealed and confirmed.



7. HISTORY OF YOUR CHURCH ([back to table](#))

Pastoral candidates will want to be exposed to a brief, one-page summary of your church's history that covers the significant milestones of your church from its inception to the present. Most churches find it easier to use previous pastoral tenures as a way to organize this historical summary. Following is an example of the page I wrote for Highpoint's manual. It may help you get started.

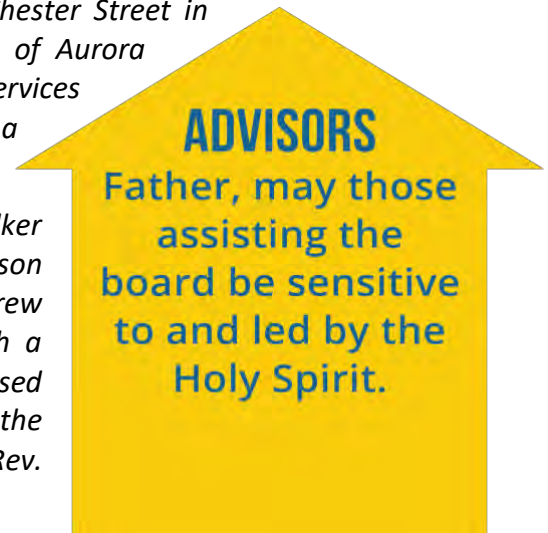
Highpoint has not always been called Highpoint. It was first organized under the name Aurora First Assembly of God in 1933 under the leadership of Rev. and Mrs. C. N. Bishop who served from 1933-1941. The church's early meetings were held at 1645 Chester Street in Aurora and at other temporary locations until the city of Aurora donated two lots at the corner of 17th and Alton in 1937. Services were held in a temporary structure on the property until a permanent building was erected in 1941.

Under the pastoral leadership of Rev. and Mrs. C. L. Walker who served from 1941-1946 and Rev. and Mrs. T. P. Johnson who served from 1946 -1951, the congregation grew consistently. C. L. Walker returned to pastor the church a second time from 1951-1955, and the church purchased property at 1523 Boston Street. By New Year's Day 1953, the church was completed and dedicated—debt free. Then Rev. and Mrs. R. C. Clark led the church from 1955-1958.

Under the leadership of Rev. James and Virginia Boulware, the church continued to grow and thrive from 1958-1975. During that time, the church experienced several expansion programs including a new sanctuary in 1960, educational space in 1963, and a youth center in 1965. With the facilities crowded by 1970, the congregation took a major step in their development and purchased 12 acres of land at 11001 E. Alameda Avenue in Aurora. Construction was soon started on a colonial-style sanctuary which served as the main building and worship facility.

In 1975, Rev. Howard and Margie Cummings were elected and served the church until 2002. In 1980, the Family Activities building was added to the complex to facilitate the growing Christian Education department and a school called Aurora Christian Academy. In 1990, a Children's Ministries Center was constructed to house a preschool called Aurora Christian Learning Center. In 1999, fifty-six acres of land near E470 and Smoky Hill Road were purchased for future expansion. The site presently consists of 30 acres and is strategically located adjacent to a new mall in the center of the city's Southlands growth plan. After nearly 27 years of service, Pastor Cummings announced his retirement in June of 2002 and completed his service that October.

In October 2002, Rev. Gene and Rhonda Roncone were elected as the new lead pastors of Aurora First Assembly by a nearly unanimous vote of the membership. Under their leadership, the church's foreign missions emphasis became strategically focused on unreached people, the name of the church was changed to Highpoint Church, and the new Southlands campus was constructed in 2012. The educational wing was completed in 2013 to facilitate additional classrooms and office space. In addition, over a quarter of a million dollars of interest-earning capital was mobilized into two scholarship funds whose principal grows and is never touched (Fuller Memorial Fund and GenoStrong Fund). The church also reached unprecedented levels of community outreach and involvement including the planting of Highpoint@Colfax, a church for homeless and at-risk kids in urban Aurora. Highpoint also received recognition and commendations for community problem solving by the



Colorado State Legislature, Aurora City Council, Chamber of Commerce, the Aurora Police Department, and Aurora Public Schools. It was during this time that a daily Bible reading plan and small group ministry called "The Power of 3" became the cornerstone of the church's discipleship ministry. A video and audio studio were also established to facilitate the church's discipleship and communication ministries. In addition, the church's core values, organizational structure, and governance documents were significantly updated. Pastor Roncone resigned the pastorate of Highpoint in May 2019 after being elected district superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network.

As you work through the historical seasons of your church, you will want to note important things like locations of meetings, construction of facilities, significant ministry focus or refocus, name changes, relocations, and high-water marks in the church's past.

Reading the church files and talking to a few long-timers in the church or district may help; and believe it or not, funerals are a rich opportunity to connect with people who have shaped your church. I always enjoy mixing with these senior citizens and asking lots of questions. They also seemed more than willing to reminisce and share amazing stories from the past. When I wrote our historical summary, there was one previous pastor I knew nothing about. I called our then-superintendent, Don Steiger; and he was kind enough to read the church's file at the district and fill in some of the blanks. Don even had recollections of this man's ministry that helped me tell his story.

8. SO LONG, FAREWELL ([back to table](#))

The song, “So Long, Farewell,” is one of the most memorable scores of the 1965 film, *The Sound of Music*. Performed by the Von Trapp children, it has only one main chorus that is repeated several times. The song is a lot like pastoral departures. They are filled with both excitement and sadness and involve many repeated “goodbyes.” There are a few necessary things the board must do after the resignation and before the departure of the lead pastor. They are important because well-planned endings are necessary for successful beginnings.

- A. Clarify important dates and times of departures.** Pastoral departures involve lots of “last things.” This includes things like last sermon, day in the office, day on signature cards, possession of keys and equipment, final paycheck, and much more. A checklist for these types of items is in the appendix entitled “Parting Well.”
- B. Send an initial letter of affirmation, encouragement, and update to the congregation.** Within a week of the pastor’s resignation, the board should send a letter to the church. This letter should affirm the prior leadership (if possible) and outline the general steps the board will be taking. An example of such a letter can be found in the appendix entitled “Parting Well.”
- C. Organize farewell event(s) before the official last day.** Although there are several unknowns that may affect the pastor’s departure date, it is important to determine what audiences require a special farewell date and time. These items are often the most overlooked because no one has been charged with their execution.⁴⁰ It is best to appoint groups or people close to the outgoing pastor to plan these events. Following are a few questions that may help the board determine appropriate farewell events:
1. What groups (board, small group, church as a whole, staff, etc.) warrant a special farewell event and when will those take place?
 2. What types of gifts or expenses need to be approved, planned, and executed for each occasion?
 3. What guidelines or agreements will need to be negotiated to ensure the events are uplifting and beneficial?
 4. Who will be responsible for each occasion and its execution?
- D. Plan a “Sustainability Initiative.”** Statistics show that most churches in transition experience a substantial decline in morale, attendance, and giving.⁴¹ Instead of just accepting that, the board should consider launching a sustainability initiative. The purpose of this kind of initiative is to encourage adherents to recognize that change is part of God’s growth process and that to benefit from it, they should stick around and sustain current levels of giving and participation. The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network has designed a three-week sustainability initiative called “Rise Up” that has been extremely effective for churches that have chosen to use it. A description of what that may look like can be found in the appendix entitled “Sustainability Initiative.”
- E. Set boundaries for ministerial etiquette concerning the transition.** It is basic ministerial etiquette that the outgoing pastor should exit with dignity, grace, and integrity. The General Council of the Assemblies of God states the following guidelines concerning ministerial ethics:

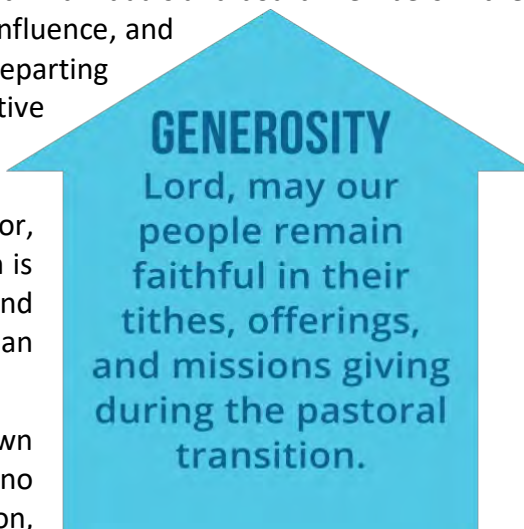
All discourteous conduct is disapproved, and all ministers are advised against interfering with pastors in charge of assemblies, whether it be by going in upon their work without consent or



JUDGMENT
Lord, give the board clarity as they interview, eliminate, and move forward with candidates in the interview process.

*by such correspondence with members of the assembly as will hurt the influence of the leader. All correspondence which concerns the whole assembly shall be addressed to the one in charge and not to individual members. Where there is no pastor, letters concerning the work shall be addressed to the officers of the assembly. Any minister who so offends shall be subject to discipline.*⁴²

Despite the ministerial ethics required by the General Council bylaws, I have found there to be conflicting expectations concerning things like interaction with individuals and board members in the church, fundraising, correspondence, titles, roles, levels of influence, and participation in church events. It is preferable that all departing ministers (lead pastors and staff) embrace a conservative interpretation of generally accepted standards of ministerial ethics. Unless specifically asked by the acting chair of the board (in the interim) or the newly elected pastor, it should be assumed that their help, input, or participation is not needed. However, it would be wise for the entire board and the departing pastor to discuss this topic and come to an agreement before a pastor's departure.



GENEROSITY
Lord, may our
people remain
faithful in their
tithes, offerings,
and missions giving
during the pastoral
transition.

Two years before I left Highpoint, I decided to write my own personal commitment and pledge to the church while I had no immediate plan to leave and would not be swayed by emotion, nostalgia, and the insecurities so common in life transitions. I tried to write that pledge based on the needs of the church and new pastor rather than my own. I included it in our succession plan and shared it with the advance team. After my resignation, I read it publicly to the church, posted it on Facebook, and asked the board to make it available to potential candidates. I wanted to do everything in my power to let others know they could count on me to firmly embrace the highest standards of ministerial ethics. You can read that commitment in the chapter entitled "A Pastor's Outgoing Pledge." Should the board desire any additional clarification regarding this matter, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss it as a group with the entire board present.

- F. Exit interview.** An exit interview is an informal dialogue between the church board and the departing pastor. The purpose of an exit interview is to glean spiritual feedback in order to improve aspects of the church, better retain staff, and reduce future turnover. These interviews are generally conducted in a neutral setting for the purpose of gathering vital information about the former leader's experience and to get honest feedback about the vision, mission, and current health of the church. A sample list of questions for this interview can be found in the appendix entitled "Parting Well."
- G. Blessing service.** Scripture gives us several examples of believers blessing each other when the circumstances of life caused them to part ways. Before his death, the last thing **Moses** did was to pronounce a blessing on each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 33:1-29). While concluding his farewell speech to the children of Israel, the prophet **Samuel** encouraged them in the Lord and said, *As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you* (1 Samuel 12:23 NIV). Before ascending to heaven, **Jesus** blessed His disciples: *When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven* (Luke 24:50-51 NIV). After recognizing a new assignment for Barnabas and Paul, the **church at Antioch** laid hands upon them and sent them off with prayer (Acts 13:1-3). While saying goodbye to the Ephesian elders, **Paul** spoke blessings upon them, and they knelt down

to pray and cry together (Acts 20:32-36). Many of Paul's epistles conclude with a prayer or blessing for the recipients.

The departure of a pastor is a wonderful opportunity to honor this scriptural tradition and model scriptural partings for our people. A prayer meeting with the lead pastor, their family, and the board to pray and bless one another as they part ways would not only be productive but would also honor God and His church. If a successor has been identified by then, including them in this service would echo this biblical tradition. An informal guide for a blessing service can be found in the appendix entitled "Parting Well."

H. Severance. The departure of a pastor raises the matter of severance. If you decide to consider severance pay, the following factors should be contemplated:

1. **Tenure.** The number of years the pastor has served your church.
2. **Subsequent employment.** Whether the pastor will be going directly into a new position.
3. **Special circumstances.** If there are any special circumstances regarding the pastor's resignation which may include but not be limited to illness, death, termination, moral or ethical issues, marital difficulties, mental health issues, or other considerations.
4. **Available resources.** The current financial position of the church.

The Oregon Ministry Network suggests the following as best practices for severance:⁴³

5. **Generous.** One month pay for each year of service to the church—up to six months.
6. **Normal.** Three months' salary if tenure was for more than five years.

The recommended bylaws from The General Council of the Assemblies of God specifically mention severance in the context of termination:

In the event a pastor is removed from office by a vote of the active voting membership of the church or shall fail to be sustained by a vote of the active voting membership at the end of a term, he shall be given a minimum of 2 months regular or average remuneration as severance pay, except in the case of moral turpitude.⁴⁴

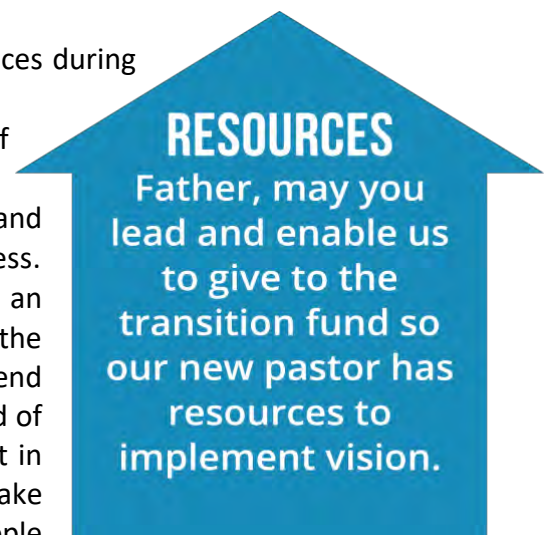
It should also be noted that severance is not the same thing as receiving a "love offering" or compensating your pastor for unused vacation/sick time.

9. MOBILIZING PRAYER ([back to table](#))

Next to the Spirit's divine leading, prayer is the most important resource for a successful pastoral transition. The prophet Samuel not only understood the importance of prayer during leadership transitions but also perceived a lack of prayer as sin. That is why in his farewell speech to the nation he said, *As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you* (1 Samuel 12:23 NIV). Prayer is the one thing God expects you as a board to bring to the table. But not just you, the entire church as well!

During my extensive research on pastoral transitions, nearly every resource I read mentioned the need for prayer. However, I do not recall one that provided practical examples and resources on how to apply prayer to the pastoral selection process. Intentional prayer will require a specific strategy. That is why I invested a considerable amount of time thinking through this topic. As a board, try to implement the following elements of prayer into your process:

- Always start your meetings with prayer for wisdom, discernment, unity, and divine direction for you, the staff, the interim pastor, and your people.
- Incorporate prayer for God's direction in Sunday services during the interim period.
- Call all-church prayer meetings to build a sense of community and faith.
- Mobilize any existing prayer groups to give exclusive and confidential prayer support to the board's search process.
- More importantly, call the entire church to prayer on an individual basis. Before leaving Highpoint, I used the prayer list below and the church's texting network to send one prayer focus each day. If you do not have that kind of technology, you can use the list below or customize it in the form of an electronic or paper version. You can make it available at your Information Center and tell people where it is each Sunday during announcements.



This list incorporates all the needs and challenges involved in a pastoral transition and can be rotated every forty days. I would recommend using it to give the entire church one practical thing to pray about each day during the pastoral transition.⁴⁵ Feel free to copy and paste the following list:

RISE UP — 40 DAYS OF PRAYER **Pastoral Search Prayer Initiative**

Knowing that the most underutilized source of spiritual power in ministry is the intercession for Christian leaders, the Board would like to call the church to pray for one of the following focuses each day of the month during this transition. (Continue rotating through the list until your new pastor is identified.)

- 1. FAMILY DURING TRANSITION:** Pray for our future pastor's family during the transition that they would experience a smooth changeover and discover their place of ministry.
- 2. STRENGTH FOR TRANSITION:** Pray for our future pastor to have strength to endure the changes of transition (relocation, selling/buying a home, moving, packing/unpacking).
- 3. UNITY:** Pray for our church to be united during the pastoral transition.

4. **TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP:** Pray for our board, staff, interim pastor, and guest speakers during this transition.
5. **CHARACTER:** Pray for all those involved on both sides of the transition process to have integrity, honesty, and trust in God.
6. **COURAGE:** Pray for our Board to have the courage to make decisions; take unfavorable positions, if necessary; uphold standards; and act decisively without fear.
7. **DISCERNMENT:** Pray for our Board and future pastor to have wisdom to ask the right questions and discern between better and best.
8. **AFFECTED MINISTERS:** Pray for the staff ministers and their families on both sides of this transition. Pray that God would give them faith, trust, and the ability to bless their respective churches in this transition.
9. **AGREEMENT:** Pray for the Board to be in agreement regarding the background and experience needed by the next pastor.
10. **SENSITIVITY TO NEEDS:** Pray for the Board to place the church's needs before their own as they read applications, listen to sermons, and talk with candidates.
11. **SITUATIONAL WISDOM:** Pray for our future pastor to have the ability to address critical needs and make wise decisions in a short period of time.
12. **DISCERNMENT:** Pray for Board to be led by God's Spirit and know the right questions to ask as they represent the church in the interview process.
13. **FAITH AND OPTIMISM:** Pray for our church to have unusual faith, patience, and trust that God is leading and guiding this process.
14. **JUDGMENT:** Pray for Board to have clarity as they interview, eliminate, and move forward with candidates in the interview process.
15. **HONESTY:** Pray for the Board to represent the church accurately, truthfully, and attractively.
16. **TEAM CHEMISTRY:** Pray for our future pastor to have the ability to quickly find, appoint, and delegate tasks to the right people.
17. **WISDOM TO NETWORK:** Pray for those outside the church who will be assisting the Board to be sensitive to and led by the Holy Spirit.
18. **RESOURCES:** Pray for our people to remain faithful in their tithes, offerings, and missions giving during the pastoral transition. Also pray that God will lead and enable others to give to the transition fund so our new pastor has resources in order to implement vision.
19. **SURRENDER:** Pray for those with influence in the search process to subordinate their personal agendas to what is best for the church.
20. **PHYSICAL STAMINA:** Pray for our Board to have physical endurance to handle all the necessary demands of this process.
21. **DISCERNMENT:** Pray for our Board to have discernment in sorting through all the various styles, philosophies, and ministry models represented by pastoral candidates.
22. **AFFECTED MINISTRY:** Pray for the church or ministry that our future pastor will be leaving. Pray for them to have faith, wisdom, and divine leading in their own transition.

23. **PATIENCE:** Pray for our church to have the ability to trust God and others while investing the necessary time and resources in the pastoral search.
24. **REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS:** Pray for the Board not to settle for too little or aim too high thereby setting unreasonable or unattainable expectations.
25. **SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE:** Pray for our Board and future pastor to be led by and walk in the Spirit.
26. **DEPARTING MINISTRY:** Pray for the ministry our future pastor will be transitioning out of to assume new leadership. Pray for their previous church's search committee to have a healthy transition and for their denominational executives to be led by the Lord to assist them.
27. **TEAM CHEMISTRY:** Pray for our future pastor to have deacons, staff, and employees who genuinely support their ministry values, philosophy, and initiatives.
28. **PEACE:** Pray for the candidate and the candidate's family to have clarity during their visits with the church and know whether or not this is the next step of ministry to which God is calling them.
29. **WISDOM IN EVALUATING NEEDS:** Pray for our Board and interim pastor to have discernment in evaluating the needs and opportunities in this transition.
30. **AFFECTED FAMILIES:** Pray for the ministry staff and family members on both sides of this transition who will need to adjust, support, and serve with a new leader.
31. **FORWARD VISION:** Pray for our future pastor to receive a divine burden and direction as well as outreach to our community and city.
32. **DIVINE CALL:** Pray for our future pastor to sense an irresistible call and mandate from God to lead this church.
33. **SEARCH COMMITTEE:** Pray for the future search committee in the ministry our future pastor will leave. Pray for them to have wisdom, faith, and clarity in their own search.
34. **ROLE CLARIFICATION:** Pray for the Board to have clarity as to the characteristics, goals, and responsibilities that should be included in the position description for the next pastor.
35. **MULTIGENERATIONAL:** Pray for our future pastor to be able to relate to the various generations and cultures represented in our church.
36. **SUSTAINABILITY:** Pray for our church not to experience declines in attendance, giving, volunteerism, and morale during this pastoral transition.
37. **PROTECTION:** Pray for no individuals to choose to use this leadership vacuum as a time to promote their own agenda and preferences. Pray for the church to be protected from selfish ambition and that those attempting to do so will be lovingly corrected by the Holy Spirit.
38. **SENSITIVITY:** Pray for the Board to hear God's voice with clarity and have peace concerning who should be interviewed.
39. **OPTIMISTIC ANTICIPATION:** Pray for the future pastor, spouse, and family to feel the same peace and excitement that the Board feels about them.
40. **MUTUAL CONFIRMATION:** Pray for the entire congregation to feel a sense of peace and confirmation as the new pastor is confirmed through the vote of the official membership.

In addition to other prayer opportunities provided, this list has the potential not only to mobilize many in prayer but also to give them specific things to pray for each day. I have also uploaded a graphic of each

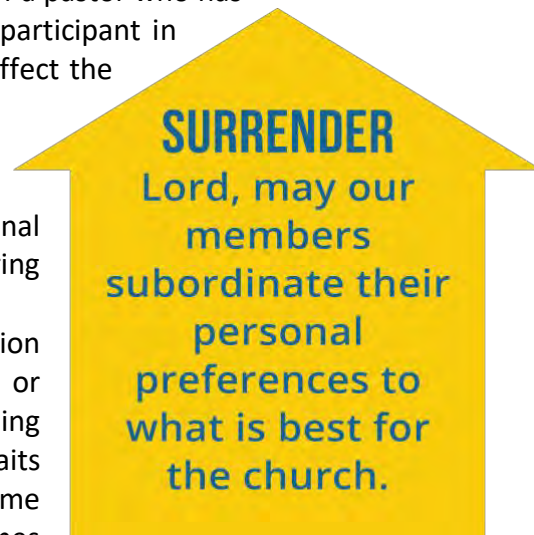
day's prayer focus to a shared internet folder.⁴⁶ They can be downloaded and posted to your church's social media outlets as a daily prayer reminder.

10. CHARACTERISTICS OF CONGREGATIONS IN TRANSITION ([back to table](#))

Literature and testimonies from those who have served as interim pastors have given rise to a list of general characteristics and emotional reactions churches tend to have during pastoral transition. Although they are not all-inclusive and will vary from church to church, it will help the board to be aware of their propensity.

A. Organizational tendencies. Following is a list of general characteristics many churches experience during pastoral transitions:⁴⁷

- 1. Receptivity to change.** Congregations in transition experience brief windows of greater openness than other seasons of organizational life. They tend to be more open to trying new things, receiving outside advice, and accepting change. Concerning his experiences in serving as an interim pastor, Justin Tull said, “I was astonished that in the midst of chaos and high anxiety, so many positive changes could take place—changes in many cases unrelated to the major sources of the crisis situation. In the midst of transition and even chaos, the church is often more open to change than in times of the status quo.”⁴⁸
- 2. Openness to outside assistance.** Congregations in transition are more open to outside help, assistance, and advice. They are more open to seek the assistance of denominational leaders, interim pastors, consultants, and helpful resources.
- 3. Increased levels of commitment.** Congregations in transition tend to “circle the wagons” and experience increased levels of commitment, sacrifice, and involvement. The organizational “survival instinct” kicks in, and some churches actually experience an increase in volunteerism.
- 4. Dealing with grief.** Congregations in transition experience some degree of grief over the loss of a pastor who has served more than ten years. The loss of a pastor who has become a friend, confidant, community leader, and participant in some of the happiest and saddest times of life can affect the morale of a church.
- 5. Potential for conflict.** Congregations in transition have an increased potential for conflict. The leadership vacuum often results in minor interpersonal problems, angry factions, the emergence of domineering personalities with competing interests.⁴⁹
- 6. Magnification of weaknesses.** Congregations in transition find their weaknesses become magnified. Weak or ineffective staff members, neglected policies, declining income, neglected facilities, and other mediocre traits become magnified. It is not that these things become worse as much as the attention given to them becomes subordinated in the absence of a leader.
- 7. Decrease in attendance, morale, and giving.** Churches in transition usually experience lower levels of morale, enthusiasm, and a 15-20 percent decrease in attendance and income. First-, second-, and third-time visitors tend to decline by at least 50 percent due to their reluctance to commit to a church without knowing who the next pastor will be. Others who came to the church because of the unique style, vision, and personality of the previous pastor may fade away. The lack of promising candidates, length of the search process, and decreased momentum can also become discouraging.
- 8. Staff turnover.** Pastoral staff members need a connection with their lead pastor in order to facilitate long-term commitment. Without a leader or knowing what direction the church may be



headed, many staff members will put their feelers out, update their résumés, and explore options. It is not uncommon for a church to continue experiencing staff turnover a year after the transition is completed.

9. **Loss of momentum or vision.** In nearly every unplanned transition, church vision and momentum come to a screeching halt. Without a lead pastor at the helm, there is a very high likelihood that the overall voice of vision will be absent during the transition period. Pastorless churches will begin to see a loss of momentum in the church body and paid staff. As the interim period lengthens, many of the church's ministries can experience decline due to a lack of clear vision and energetic leadership from the top.
10. **Change brings growth.** Scripture teaches us that God uses change to bring new life: *See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?* (Isaiah 43:19 NIV). When change is embraced with faith, trust, and optimism, God begins to write new chapters in the life cycle of the church.

B. Individual tendencies. Pastoral transitions can result in an array of different emotions, especially when the departing pastor has been there longer than ten years. Long-term pastors will have led many to Christ, counseled people in difficult times, married them, dedicated their children, buried their loved ones, and spiritually sustained them through the teaching and preaching of God's Word. Grief, therefore, is seen to be a natural and normal part of the process for both the pastor and people. It may be even more difficult for the minister's spouse and children. Other personal reactions to the pastor's resignation may be:

1. **Anxiety, fear, and/or panic.** These come from the thought that the church will face a difficult time without an experienced pastor giving direction.
2. **Guilt and self-doubt.** Some in the congregation may feel guilty for criticizing the pastor, causing conflict, or failing to help create a more fulfilling work environment for the pastor while they were there.
3. **Anger.** This may occur especially if the pastor leaves under negative circumstances. Anger often is directed toward persons who are perceived as "the ones who made the pastor leave" and, therefore, can create deep scars and group departures.
4. **Understanding and self-confidence.** Others, though sorry to lose a minister, may see it as the pastor's "graduation" to a new and perhaps greater opportunity.
5. **Feelings of relief.** In some cases, no strong reaction at all will seem quite natural. This could be true in the case of a pastoral resignation due to illness, overdue retirement, or prolonged ineffectiveness.

All of these are normal reactions. What is important is for the congregation to be aware of, express, and deal with their own grief before they are ready to embrace new pastoral leadership.⁵⁰ Right now, this task may seem intimidating. However, it should encourage you that over sixty thousand churches survive a leadership change each year.⁵¹ You are experiencing something uncomfortable and challenging but also very normal. You've got this!

11. GOVERNANCE AND CORE VALUES ([back to table](#))

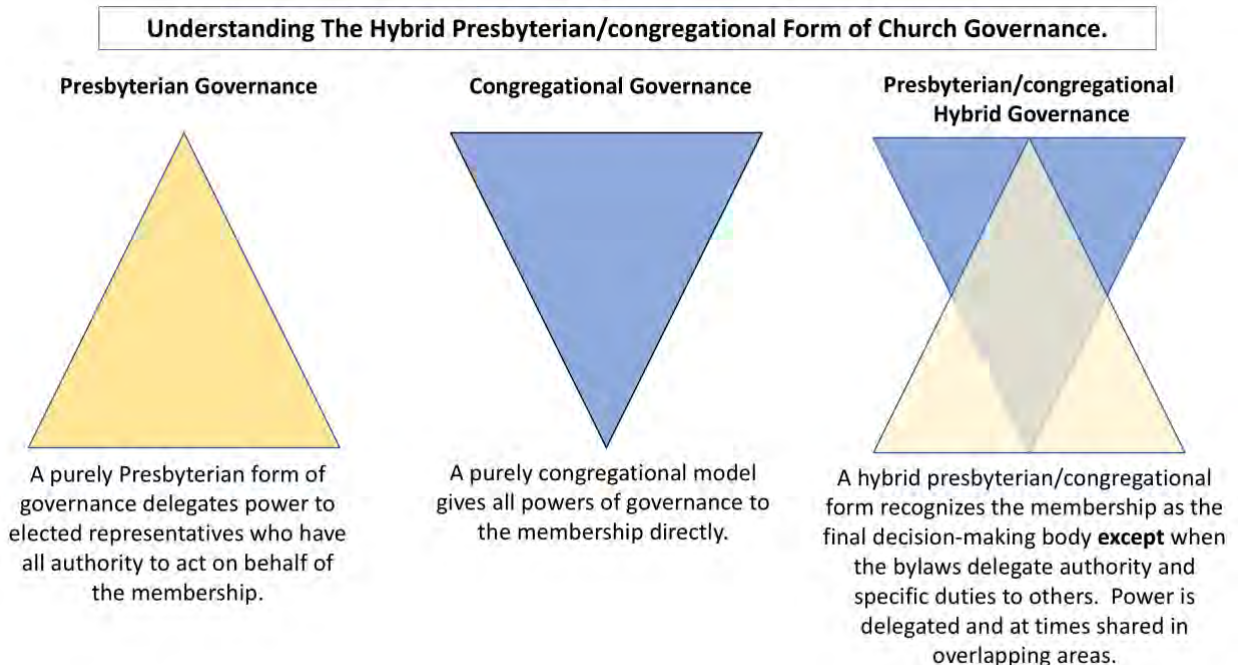
Although every church affiliated with the Assemblies of God shares similar doctrine, they are given the freedom to choose their own governance, values, and vision. Candidates will want to know what your bylaws say about these things, so you will need to take the time to briefly describe them on paper. Doing this now will enable you to cut and paste to various communication applications later. To give you an example of how this may look, I have provided a summary of Highpoint's established governance, core values, qualifications, and duties of the pastor as mentioned in the bylaws at the time of my departure.

A. Governance. The vision and doctrine of a church are important; but how a church makes decisions, who makes them, and the parameters of accountability are called governance. It sounds like a boring word, but governance is important if a person wants to be part of a church that can be trusted.

There are three basic types of church governance:

1. **Episcopal governance** is an elaborate hierarchical structure with one priest or bishop who answers to another who answers to another until there is one potentate at the top who has final authority. They have clear lines of authority, but the lack of accountability can be problematic.
2. **Congregational governance** is the opposite. Church members meet to make all the decisions about budgets, ministries, policy, and even personnel. While everyone has a voice, these churches can be plagued with division, are often slow to change, and are usually small.
3. **Presbyterian governance** delegates authority and responsibility to elected representatives who have all authority to act on behalf of the congregation. They representatives can be effective but can also become disconnected and create an "us versus them" environment.

Most Assemblies of God churches embrace a hybrid presbyterian/congregational form of church government. See the following illustration:



This hybrid model recognizes the membership as the final decision-making body of the church but delegates authority and duties to others to act on their behalf. Power is delegated and, at times, even shared in overlapping areas. This enables most Assemblies of God churches to have sufficient

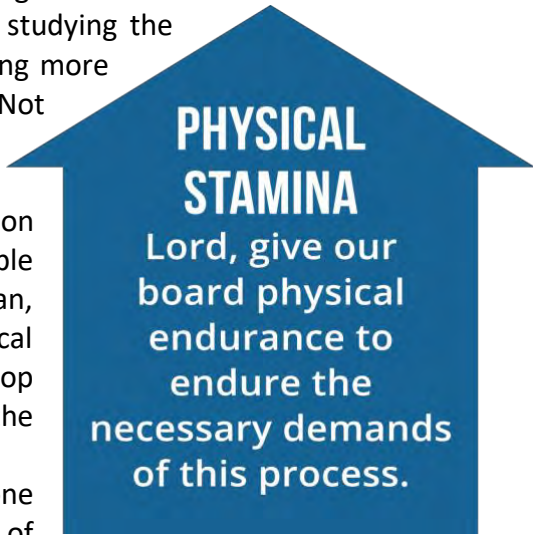
accountability structures while, at the same time, benefitting from a board of directors and being led by visionary leadership. It helps with being accountable, decisive, and responsive all at the same time.

While at Highpoint, we created a special page on our website to educate others about our governance, bylaws, and fund policy. It can be viewed at www.highpointchurch.us/transparency.

- B. Purpose and mission or core value statements.** If your church has identified core values or a mission statement, you will want to know what that is and make it available to candidates. It is important to tell them you recognize that God may lead the church in a different direction under new leadership, but knowing what the focus has been will help candidates understand your church.

Seeing an example of how this will need to be laid out may help. At Highpoint, the entire pastoral staff and board spent many months seeking God’s direction regarding how the church could fulfill its biblical responsibility to make disciples. Highpoint’s four core values at the time of my departure were:

- 1. Experiencing God through worship.** Soon after a person becomes a follower of Christ, the Bible encourages them to start identifying with the community of faith in public worship. Public worship is the combined expression of our love to God—for who He is, for what He has said, and for what He is doing in our lives. Each worship service generally consists of music, prayer, media or drama, and teaching. Worshipping God in community is the starting point for growing as a believer in Jesus Christ. The worship service will also help keep our people informed of what is going on at Highpoint.
- 2. Learning and living God’s Word.** Learning and living God’s Word is what the Bible calls “discipleship.” Discipleship is the personal activity of studying the teachings of Jesus, applying them to life, and becoming more like Christ through a growing relationship with God. Not only is discipleship necessary for spiritual growth, but Highpoint also provides discipleship opportunities called “The Power of 3”—small groups to help a person grow spiritually. These groups are places where people read the Scriptures by using a churchwide reading plan, ask questions, grow in understanding, and apply biblical truth to their lives. They also provide a place to develop meaningful relationships and support when facing the challenges of everyday life.
- 3. Serving God and each other.** God has designed everyone for service and created each person with a unique mix of spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, temperaments, and experiences that complements where God wants them to serve. Therefore, everyone needs to identify and develop their God-given gifts and use them in service to God and others. That is why Highpoint provides opportunities for our people to identify and use their spiritual gifts and talents.
- 4. Loving the community and the world.** Loving the community and the world is about meeting the needs of those around us. It is about expressing God’s love in ways that build relationship and provide opportunities to share God’s plan of salvation. It requires each to set aside individual preferences and combine time, talents, and treasures to ensure that others know God’s love.



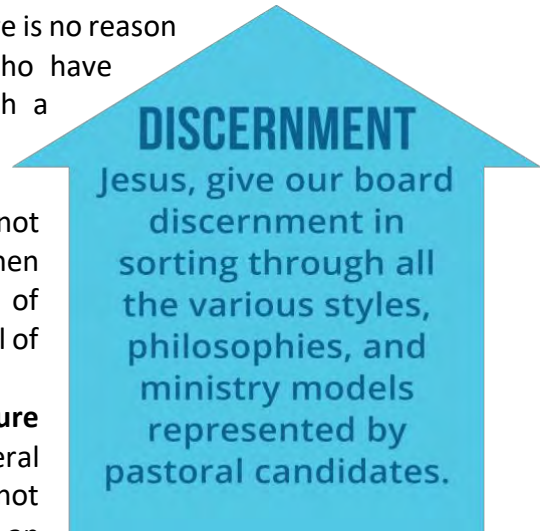
- C. Bylaw requirements.** You will also want to provide a copy of your church bylaws and include the references that state the qualifications and responsibilities of the lead pastor. In addition, be sure to check your bylaws concerning issues related to the lead pastor’s election. This would include but not

be limited to the specific level of credential required (certified, licensed, or ordained), how they are nominated, term of office, form of voting, type of vote, scope of meeting notice, requirements of prior notice, agenda prescriptions, minutes, and notification to the district/network office.

These are important things for the board to remember because they **MUST** be followed; and you are bound by the law, your bylaws, and the vote of the membership to serve the people in these ways.

D. Updating and freezing the membership roster. One of the most important governance tasks the board must do before your pastor leaves is to update and freeze the membership roster. Failing to do this is one of the most common mistakes search committees make. Updating your roster is extremely important for the following reasons:

- 1. You only want active members voting on your new pastor.** The membership roster will determine who is eligible to vote for your new pastor. You want that voting constituency to include those who are presently in the church, active as members, and supportive of its finances and ministries as well as those who are familiar with the church's needs. The names of people who are deceased, have left the church, or have moved should be purged from the list to ensure it accurately reflects current membership. Previous District Superintendent Bob Cook said it best: "There will always be those who say, 'I really didn't think about membership seriously, but NOW I really want a voice. Pretty please, pastor, deacon, oh please let us vote!!' I really believe it is important not to cater to those who were flippant about membership in the past but now are eager to vote."⁵²
- 2. You want the new pastor to receive an accurate reflection of the sentiment of the church's members.** Chances are your new pastor will have a predetermined percentage of votes they feel are needed to lead successfully. If the names of deceased, departed, or relocated members are still on your roster, it will cause the final vote to be a lower percentage of the total membership. You will want to do your best to ensure your primary candidate receives the highest percentage vote possible.
- 3. You want to protect the unity of the church.** Unfortunately, business meetings can be a breeding ground for division and church politics. If any of your members have left the church for several months and ceased to participate in its ministries, there is no reason they should be given the same rights as those who have remained to support and carry the church through a transition. Removing the names of those who have left the church does three things: helps protect the unity of the church, ensures disgruntled members cannot return with the same level of influence they had when they left, and gives existing members a high level of confidence that the election accurately reflects the will of participating members.
- 4. You want to safeguard the legitimacy of a future election.** Over the years, I have seen and heard of several examples where a small group of members who did not like the candidate would challenge the legitimacy of an election by claiming new members were either added or removed after a candidate was introduced and before the scheduled election.



Passing an official board motion to update your membership roster now and freezing it until after the election will help achieve the objectives mentioned above. Remember, your church bylaws will

prescribe specific guidelines concerning how the membership roster should be updated and who is eligible to vote on a new pastor. You will want to take great care to ensure they are followed.

This issue is so important we have produced an audio resource on the topic entitled “Why and How to Update the Membership Roster.” It can be found on the Rise Up audio resource site at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

12. THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE [\(back to table\)](#)

Each church is different, and their bylaws usually prescribe the details concerning the composition and duties of the pastoral search committee. The structure of most pastoral search committees is made up of one of the following four arrangements:

- **Existing board.** About 60 percent of pastoral search committees are made up of the existing board. In other words, the existing board automatically becomes the official search committee when a vacancy in the office of lead pastor occurs.
- **Majority board.** About 20 percent of pastoral search committees are made up of a majority of existing board members and a minority of nonboard members.
- **Equal split.** About 10 percent of pastoral search committees are made up of an equal representation of existing board members and nonboard members.
- **Majority nonboard.** About 10 percent of pastoral search committees are made up of a majority of nonboard members and a small representation of existing board members.

Given the diversity of composition, I will address the two general categories of “existing board” and “mixed committee” compositions with some advice for both.

- A. Existing board as search committee.** While some churches can waste months vetting, appointing, and training a pastoral search committee, most wisely delegate this function to the existing board. That means members who are already elected by your membership and entrusted with the governance of the church act as the search committee when a vacancy occurs in the office of pastor. This leverages an existing leadership community that already has group chemistry and is most familiar with the doctrine, governance, staff, finances, and policies of the church to screen and recommend the most qualified candidate available.
- B. Mixed search committee (board and nonboard involvement).** Although much of this resource assumes your church’s pastoral search committee consists of existing board members, following are a few helpful tips on selecting nonboard participants in the event your bylaws require them.
- 1. Appoint people who meet the specific qualifications prescribed in your church’s bylaws.** The constitution and bylaws of the church usually give direction as to who will serve on the pastoral search committee. Transitions can be a time when churches are tempted to ignore their bylaws in the name of progress. Some mistakenly think they can even override their bylaws with a vote of the membership in a business meeting; however, *Roberts Rules of Order* clearly states that the bylaws cannot be suspended without the instance being prescribed in the bylaws.

The Bylaws “cannot be suspended (with the exception of clauses that provide for their own suspension under specified conditions.”⁵³

Rules contained in the bylaws (or constitution) cannot be suspended—no matter how large the vote in favor of doing so or how inconvenient the rule in question may be—unless the particular rule specifically provides for its own suspension.⁵⁴

That is why it is imperative to start the process right and meet any and all requirements your church bylaws may prescribe concerning the selection and size of your search committee as well as how it selects a chair. Where the bylaws may be silent or may not be prescriptive, the official board or church members then have the opportunity to determine the makeup of the search committee. Attention should be given to the inclusion of women, diverse age groups, and members of both short and long tenures in the church.⁵⁵ As a general rule, the pastoral search

committee should have no less than five people but no more than ten. All members of the search committee should be respected, mature, and spiritually discerning.

2. Appoint people who do not have a propensity for conflict. One of the most common mistakes made during a pastoral transition is to invite discontented, critical, fringe, and unsupportive people to be part of the pastoral search committee. This is often done in hopes that these individuals will be more likely to accept the result if they have a voice in the decision. While this appears reasonable at first, my research found repeated warnings regarding this mistake.⁵⁶ The Apostle Paul would seem to agree as he told the Corinthians that one of the reasons God allows conflict is to reveal who is mature and qualified for increased responsibility in the community of faith: *There must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized* (1 Corinthians 11:19 ESV). Paul is teaching us that God has permitted conflict so we may identify who is qualified to serve during critical times. The Apostle Paul and the experts in pastoral transition are saying that a person's propensity towards conflict and criticism has already revealed what can be expected of them in the future. There will come a time for them to earn the trust of the new pastor; but for now, the search team should be confined to those without a prior history of conflict. The following questions may help you gain clarity regarding such individuals:

- Do they talk more than they listen?
- Do they oppose more than they support?
- Do they seem to be more articulate about what they are against than what they are for?
- Do they divide more than they unify?
- Do their expectations seem higher than their commitment level?
- Do they criticize more than they encourage?
- Do they tend to find problems instead of solutions?
- Is their history more associated with organizational wins or conflict?
- Have they had conflict with more than one pastor?
- Are they quick to take offense or get their feelings easily hurt?



3. Appoint people who have proven themselves to be spiritually mature. Many churches make the mistake of assembling a pastoral search committee that is full of successful, strong-willed personalities. However, pastoral search expert William Vanderbloemen suggests we remember a different set of spiritual criteria: "Who will serve on your committee is quite possibly the most important aspect of forming a pastoral search committee as whomever you put on the committee will shape the direction of the church."⁵⁷ That is why it is important to select people who are mature in their Christian walk. Having a successful career is not a good enough qualification. They should have undeniable evidence of spiritual disciplines in their lives like faithful church attendance, prayer, Bible reading, and outreach. Spiritually mature people create spiritually mature results.

4. Appoint people who have skills that are strategically aligned with the task. William Vanderbloemen's book recommends you appoint people who have the following qualities:⁵⁸

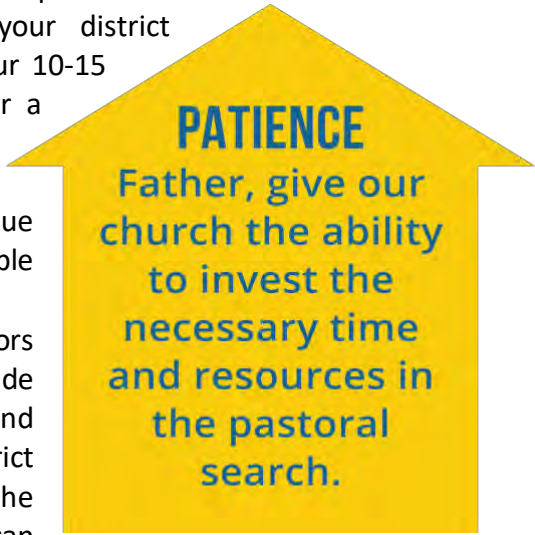
- They have no personal or hidden agenda.
- They have spiritual depth.
- They have the best interests of the church at heart and a broad view of its mission.
- They are available for meetings and committed to the process.
- They live out the church's mission and vision.

- They reflect the culture of the church and staff.
 - They are aware of the unique needs of the church.
 - They exude calm, peacefulness, and patience.
 - They are supportive but can think independently.
 - They show no propensity to micromanage the church.
 - They have leadership experience.
 - They get along with others and can collaborate as a team.
5. **Appoint a person to lead the pastoral search committee who also serves on the board.** Unless directed otherwise by your bylaws, the church board will be wise to select a person to lead the pastoral search committee who is also a board member.⁵⁹ This will ensure the committee has access to information, budgets, and decisions of the board that may affect their deliberations. The church should also provide the office of the district superintendent/network pastor with the name, address, and phone number of the chair of the pastoral search committee so proper communication may be maintained.

Once the pastoral search committee is appointed, the congregation should be informed of who they are and how they can be contacted. Each member of the search committee should be given a copy of this resource to help them be successful in fulfilling their role.

C. **Responsibilities of the search committee.** The duties of the pastoral search committee will be outlined in your bylaws. In most cases, these responsibilities will include:

1. **Seek the advice of the district superintendent/network pastor.** After a vacancy has occurred in the office of the pastor, the board and pastoral search committee should seek the advice of the district superintendent/network pastor. There are several reasons why this is beneficial:
 - **Experience.** District superintendents/network pastors are much more experienced in the process of finding a pastor. Most churches assemble a pastoral search committee once every 5-7 years. However, your district superintendent/network pastor may see this occur 10-15 times in any given year. It is not uncommon for a district to see 27 percent of its churches experience a pastoral transition in a three-year period.⁶⁰ Repeated exposure has given them a unique perspective on everything from the most regrettable mistakes to the most effective practices.
 - **Resources.** District superintendents/network pastors have access to resources, networks, and inside knowledge. Books, manuals, succession models, and relationships with other district superintendents/network pastors are just a few of the things a district superintendent/network pastor can bring to the table.
 - **Information.** District superintendents/network pastors often know ministers who feel released from their current ministry but are still waiting for God's direction. In some cases, they may already have résumés in their files. They also know who has a track record of success and who does not.
 - **Recommendations.** District superintendents/network pastors can provide a list of ministers who may be available to serve as an interim pastor or provide insight into the kind of person your church's situation may require.



Some boards may fear a superintendent's/network pastor's lack of recent pastoral experience or service in a large church setting, inability to sustain confidentiality, or potential bias might disqualify them from being a valuable resource. However, the only way to test those fears is to request a preliminary meeting. The results of that meeting can then help set expectations for future involvement.⁶¹

- 2. Consider securing the services of an interim pastor for the duration of the search.** While most churches can experience several pastoral turnovers in a decade, some churches enjoy a string of long pastorates.⁶² If your church has enjoyed a long pastorate, it also means you have lacked the opportunity to develop transitional skills. An interim pastor could play to your strengths and give the board time to focus on the process and create space for reflection.⁶³ However, that individual's unbiased service will require them to remove themselves from consideration as a pastoral candidate.

Wally Weber has gained extensive experience by serving as an interim pastor during most of his retirement. After I spent several hours interviewing him concerning the topic, he gave me a list of deacons he had worked with while serving as an interim pastor. I called each one and asked for their opinion regarding the pros and cons of having an interim pastor. The overwhelming response was positive. Several stated they could not have overcome the many challenges presented during the interim without the interim pastor's help. The most reoccurring obstacles mentioned were decreased giving, declining attendance, consistency in the pulpit, inexperience of sectional presbyters concerning the pastoral search process, and attempted interference from strong personalities, retired ministers, missionaries, and local pastors who desired influence during the leadership vacuum. The reasons, responsibilities, and benefits of an interim pastor are covered in a separate chapter entitled "Interim Pastor."

- 3. Call the church to pray for a pastor.** See the chapter entitled "Mobilizing Prayer" for examples of effective ways this can be accomplished.
- 4. Make a prayerful determination of the goals and needs of the church.** There are several chapters in the appendix with resources and helpful ways to accomplish this.
- 5. Seek out, screen, interview, and evaluate potential candidates.** The board or pastoral search committee is to screen pastoral candidates as to their compatibility with the unique culture, goals, and needs of the church in mind. Again, the appendix offers many helpful resources.
- 6. Recommend one candidate to be voted on by the membership.** Candidates should only be presented one at a time and not in competition with each other with multiple names on the same ballot. The appendix entitled "Electing a Pastor" has many proven suggestions concerning this subject.

It is important for the committee to remember that they are not given the authority or expectation to select the next pastor. They are only charged with serving as a nominating/selection committee to present the most available and qualified candidate. In most cases, the church members are the only ones empowered to vote on, elect, and invite an individual to be the lead pastor.

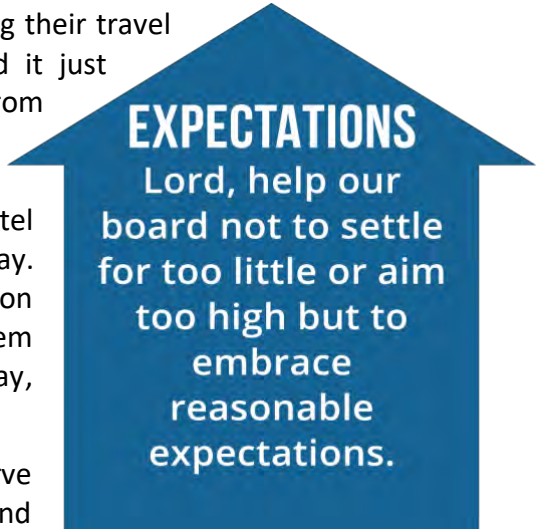
- D. Potential roles of the search committee.** Delegating roles and tasks on the search committee is an opportunity for your board to share the burden and split the load. A few suggested roles that may help the board fulfill their duty as a search committee are as follows:

- 1. Team Lead (Chair).** This person must have the time, availability, and talent to lead. They should be respected among the board, have strong collaborative skills, and be a decisive leader. This person should also be very comfortable with technology, saving and sending electronic documents, email attachments, shared files on the cloud (Dropbox, Google docs, or others), and

video conference calls on the internet. Confidentiality will require them to communicate with others without needing an administrative assistant. They should be the only person interacting with applicants prior to selecting a candidate. The church should provide the office of the district superintendent/network pastor with the name, address, and phone number of the chair of the pastoral search committee so proper communication may be maintained.

2. **Secretary.** This person must have strong organizational skills, be available, and feel comfortable with email and technology. They should coordinate meetings, email the chair's agendas, take minutes, organize candidate files, distribute all the notes following a meeting, coordinate with an approved person at the church office, and set up confidential folders the committee can access on Dropbox.
3. **Communications Lead.** This person is responsible to lead the board's communications efforts in keeping the congregation informed. They should make sure that any and all communication accurately reflects the decisions of the entire board and not their personal opinions, preferences, or private interpretation of the board's decisions. They should work under the direction of the Team Lead and the liaison with the church office or whoever prints the weekly bulletin.
4. **Prayer Lead.** This person should lead the prayer efforts of the church and take responsibility for collaborating with the board, interim pastor, and staff to help the church remain focused on prayer.
5. **Networking Lead.** This person will carry out assignments given by the Team Lead. These may include posting job openings on the appropriate websites and seeking out recommendations from key pastors and ministry leaders. They should also do research over the internet to identify associations, involvements, articles, or books written by "A-list candidates" to share with other board members.⁶⁴
6. **Hospitality Lead.** As a district superintendent/network pastor, I hear lots of stories about pastoral transitions. Some are inspirational and others are disappointing. One ministry couple told me about the day they arrived in town to candidate, and—like Jesus—there was no room at the inn. Apparently, the person making their travel plans booked the wrong dates for their arrival, and it just happened to be the same week that all the students from the local college arrived to start a new semester. Every hotel in town was booked. They had to split their time between staying with a family from the church and a hotel farther away that could accommodate part of their stay. The night before their candidacy, they had no other option but to stay with a family in the church which deprived them of the privacy they needed to process the weekend, pray, and discuss God's will together.

That is why your team will need a detailed person to serve as the hospitality lead. This person's job is to plan for and entertain candidates who come in for interviews. This would include everything from airline reservations, car rentals, hotel reservations, dinner plans, itineraries, and all the logistics of the visit. They should be the only liaison between the interviewee and the accounting department to get receipts for reimbursement. They should also guarantee that those who are being interviewed will have a reimbursement check for any approved expenses BEFORE they leave the interview.⁶⁵ Although the hospitality lead may want to take them to meetings, a car should be rented for or loaned to the candidates. They will need to have the freedom to explore, check out housing, and get a feeling for the geography of the city.



Because the hospitality lead will spend a lot of time with candidates, it would be wise for them to be fully versed on the demographics of the areas near your church address and zip code.

E. Decision making. The board will need to decide how they want to make decisions regarding the pastoral search process. There are two facets the board will need to discuss and come to agreement on:

1. The minimum vote needed for routine decisions.

- A unanimous vote: Every member present votes the same way (yes or no).
- A consensus vote: All members consent to the decision even if some may not prefer the decision.
- A majority or two-thirds vote: A number greater than half of those present with 51 percent is known as a simple majority while 66 percent is known as a two-thirds majority.

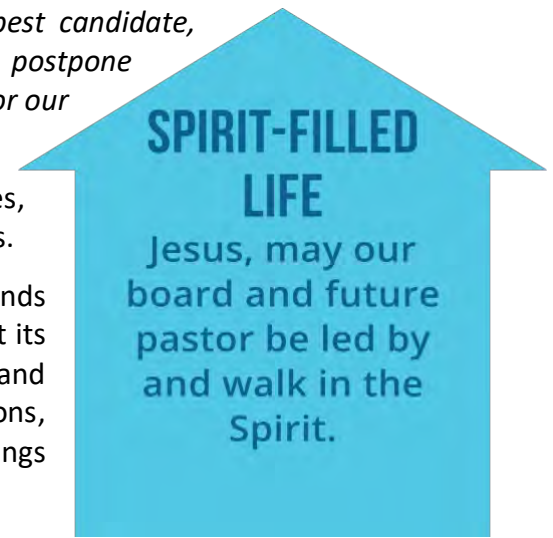
2. The minimum vote needed for various decisions.

- What vote will be required for normal administrative decisions?
- What vote will be required to invite a candidate for a phone or live interview?
- What vote will be required to select a candidate to be voted upon by the membership for the office of lead pastor?
- Other _____.

13. BOARD AND PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE COVENANT ([back to table](#))

The new pastor and board will shape the future of the church and its contribution to the kingdom. It is imperative that all members of the board be completely dedicated to their role in the search process. In order to fulfill the duty as members of the search committee, it will be necessary to honor each other with the highest levels of integrity. To help ensure the success of the pastoral search process, each member must agree and commit to God and the other members to hold one another accountable to the following agreements:

- A. Prayer.** To pray earnestly on a daily basis for God’s direction, the church, the board, and its work.
- B. Focus.** To assist the group by staying focused on the primary purpose: *The purpose of the board during this season without a pastor is to identify the best candidate, manage existing ministries, remove obstacles, and postpone expansion in a way that creates margin and opportunity for our future leader.*
- C. Availability.** To make this process a priority, fulfill my duties, and be an equal contributor to the pastoral search process.
- D. Confidentiality.** To keep confidential from family and friends any and all information disclosed, discussed, or learned at its meetings. This includes but is not limited to the identity and current ministry of potential candidates, comments, opinions, or votes of other committee members as well as the leanings or intentions of the committee.
- E. Honesty.** To be entirely honest and forthright in representing the church, its current financial situation, attendance, challenges, history, culture, and previous commitments.
- F. Sensitivity.** To protect all prospective candidates by not jeopardizing their privacy, job security, current position, or other opportunities being presented at the same time. I also agree to seek the candidates’ written permission before contacting references.
- G. Clarity.** To provide clarity to the process by creating a clear and reasonable job description, church bio, and pastor profile before interviewing any candidates.
- H. Surrender.** To subordinate my own personal preferences, agenda, or priorities to the will of the committee as a whole and to support the committee’s final decision and candidate.
- I. Thoroughness.** To vet the final candidate to the best of our reasonable abilities through interviews, references, and background checks.
- J. Transparency.** To not deprive the committee of context by trying to represent any “anonymous” opinions of people or groups in our deliberations.



I understand that a breach of these agreements, unintentional or otherwise, will be brought to the full board who will determine whether the violation disqualifies me from continued service.

Name

Date

It is also important that each member of the board and/or search committee sign a confidentiality agreement similar to the one above. Those agreements should then be scanned and provided to the entire board. A sample of this agreement should also be made available to the church and its members. This helps to prevent people from asking inappropriate questions and to keep the board accountable to standards that have been made public.

14. CHURCH MEMBER COVENANT ([back to table](#))

In addition to calling the church to prayer, it would be wise to request your church members and attendees to make a formal commitment to help sustain the church through the transition. Following is an example of what that commitment might look like:

I agree and commit to God and the other members of our church community to the following:

- 1. Prayer.** I will pray daily for our board, staff, volunteers, church, and future pastoral family.
- 2. Trust.** I will trust God to use the search process to identify our future pastor.
- 3. Faith.** I will have faith and stay optimistic and spiritually expectant.
- 4. Commitment.** I will sustain my commitment, faithfulness, attendance, giving, and service during the transition.
- 5. Patience.** I will have fair expectations, be patient, and give our future pastor and family the time needed to adjust to a new community, church, and work environment.
- 6. United.** I will seek to build unity and resist selfishness, division, and the desire to force my preferences on others.
- 7. Sensitivity.** I will be sensitive to our staff, volunteers, and workers by supporting and encouraging them during this interim time.
- 8. Hope.** I will trust our deacons to be led by the Holy Spirit, sensitive to the needs of our church and community, and be unified as they seek God's will.
- 9. Cooperative.** I will take responsibility for the final decision that the members make in selecting our new pastor.
- 10. Support.** I will support our new pastor and seek to understand the vision and burdens the Lord will place upon their heart.

Name

Date

15. COMMITTEE MEETINGS ([back to table](#))

While acting as a search committee, the board will need to be prepared to meet at least weekly for two hours to stay on top of pastoral search issues. If there is one thing that drags out and stalls a pastoral selection process, it is the committee's failure to set a regularly scheduled weekly meeting. I have even seen churches lose great candidates for no other reason than the committee did not meet regularly enough to process résumés and communicate with applicants. The best strategy is to have a regularly scheduled meeting that is easy to remember such as every Monday at 7 p.m. or every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. That keeps the committee focused on moving things forward without having to constantly try and coordinate schedules. To ensure confidentiality, it may be preferable—when the church is populated with other functions—to meet outside the church in someone's home or in a rented meeting room to interview candidates.

If your official board also serves as the pastoral search committee, it would be wise to avoid distractions by separating the board's two functions into separate meetings. As a general rule, regularly scheduled board meetings should be confined to the normal management and governance issues. Pastoral search committee meetings should be separate and deal with matters relevant to the board's responsibility to identify a candidate. Following is an example of a standard search committee meeting agenda that can be modified and used as a template:

January 1, 2021 Pastoral Search Committee Meeting

- A. Prayer** (5-10 minutes)
- B. Meeting Objectives** (5 minutes)
 - Specific tasks or objectives that must be accomplished in this meeting
- C. Process Update** (5-10 minutes)
 - A big picture update on what has transpired since the committee's last meeting
 - Where the church is in the pastoral search process
 - Any additional updates
 - Report of past actions (previous motions) or assignments to different individuals
- D. Specific Updates** (20-35 minutes)
 - Prayer focus
 - Churchwide updates
 - Candidate-specific updates
 - Résumé updates
 - Reference check updates
 - Recruitment updates
 - Candidate assignments to categories A, B, or C
- E. Post-Meeting Objectives** (10-15 minutes)
 - Tasks to be assigned
 - Brainstorming
- F. Closing Prayer** (5 minutes)

16. DO WE NEED AN INTERIM PASTOR? ([back to table](#))

An interim pastor is someone who helps fill the leadership gap during a pastoral transition. They can be one of the most valuable resources but are often overlooked. The Presbyterian Church of America has conducted thorough research on the subject of transitional pastors. It gives the following five scenarios that justify considering an interim pastor:⁶⁶

- When a pastor leaves due to duress, termination, or moral failure.
- When a congregation is experiencing significant conflict.
- When a pastor who served the church for many years retires.
- When a pastor dies unexpectedly or must resign unexpectedly due to medical issues.
- When a pastor who served the church for many years accepts another call.

Interim pastors allow the board to focus on identifying qualified candidates and the staff to continue focusing on their ministry portfolios. It is a temporary position that reports directly to the board in carrying out a written job description. For the first 4-8 weeks, scheduling local guest speakers who have a positive rapport with your church will give your team time and margin to consider and select an interim pastor. However, those speakers will need guidelines if they are to be productive. For an example of a confirmation letter with guidelines, see the appendix entitled "Sample Letters."

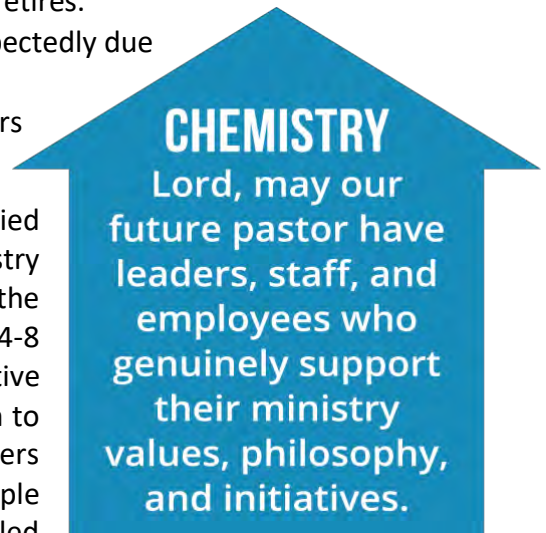
Following are some points and a draft job description to consider:⁶⁷

A. Biblical precedent for an interim pastor. Scripture gives us many examples of spiritual leaders God used to provide interim ministry during times of transition, crisis, or emergency.

In the Old Testament, Moses served as an interim leader transitioning the people of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. His leadership helped the Israelites make the transition from a nomadic people to a structured society. Jehoiada the priest thwarted an attempt to assassinate every member of the royal family by hiding Joash, the last remaining heir, in the temple for seven years (2 Kings 11). God used Jehoiada during this temporary period to secretly mentor Joash in the things of God until he was old enough to become king. Nehemiah was called by God to bring focus, leadership, and scriptural teaching to the people returning from Babylon as they transitioned into their new lives in Jerusalem.

In the New Testament, John the Baptist is an excellent example of an interim leader. His ministry had the specific purpose of preparing people's hearts and minds to accept the Messiah. He was called upon to "prepare the way" of the one who would follow (Matthew 11:10). Jesus appointed 72 people to go ahead of him and establish temporary ministry points in towns he intended to visit at a future time (Luke 10:1). Titus was appointed by the Apostle Paul to serve in a temporary role at Crete to bring order to the church and raise up leaders (Titus 1:5). Paul sent Timothy to Thessalonica for a temporary time to provide sound teaching and protect new converts from false doctrine (1 Thessalonians 3:2). The church was encouraged to recognize the unique value and contribution of transitional leaders like Paul, Apollos, and Peter (1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-9).

David Bittinger makes a powerful case that the forty days following Christ's resurrection and before His ascension served a critical interim purpose. This interim time of ministry allowed the disciples to



process their grief and confusion while transitioning into a new understanding of the resurrected Christ.⁶⁸

B. Benefits of an interim pastor.

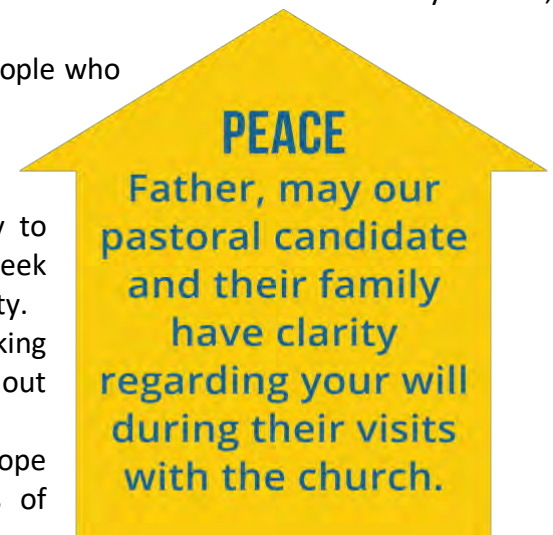
- 1. Preaching consistency.** Gives consistency in the preaching and teaching ministry as well as the economy of resources in not having to search, secure, and host a different person each week.
- 2. Board focus.** Gives the board the freedom to focus on the pastoral search instead of providing for weekly ministry.
- 3. Guest consistency.** Offers weekly consistency, leadership, and exposure to regular attendees and visitors.
- 4. Seasoned leadership.** Gives the board, staff, and members the assurance of seasoned leadership.
- 5. Board monitoring.** Gives the board hands-on representation in the office and day-to-day operations of the church.
- 6. Minimizes loss.** Minimizes the loss of momentum, decrease in attendance, and the stagnation of giving commonly experienced in pastoral transitions.
- 7. Provides stability.** Gives the members a sense of confidence that wisdom and restraint will be applied to the managing of the church during the interim time because interim pastors are usually semiretired ministers with a lot of lead pastoral experience.
- 8. Neutrality.** Gives an interim pastor the ability to interact with the outgoing pastor concerning needed information without seeming insensitive. Post-departure interactions regarding things like file locations, keys, historical documents, and other items can be overlooked by even the best planners.
- 9. Staff focus.** Allows the staff to focus on keeping existing ministries running and effective instead of being distracted by additional duties that were once carried out by the lead pastor.
- 10. Change preparation.** Gives the people, staff, and board a chance to increase their capacity for change. Instead of the church's being pushed into the cold water of change all at once, they are exposed to new interim leadership that helps them wade into the pool slowly. Because interim pastors have minimal concern about being fired or voted on, they are in an ideal position to confront systemic problems or decline in the church.⁶⁹

Justin Tull is a respected and experienced interim pastor who chronicled his observations in his book, *Interim Ministry: Positive Change in Times of Transition*. In concluding his observations, Tull said, "An interim pastor has, I believe, a greater ability to affect real change in the life of the church than a new minister whose every move will be evaluated at the onset."⁷⁰

C. Qualifications of an interim pastor. Wally Weber is a retired minister who has spent much of his retirement serving as an interim pastor. He has developed many helpful resources for churches and recommends the interim pastor have the following qualifications:⁷¹

- 1. Recommended.** One who has served as a lead pastor and interim pastor and is recommended by the district superintendent/network pastor or other denominational leaders.
- 2. Unbiased.** One who can be unbiased in all matters pertaining to the selection of a lead pastor, the management of the church, or personal preferences. They should also be willing to voluntarily waive the right to submit a résumé or be considered as a candidate.⁷² Because many interim pastors can be retired ministers who miss the opportunity to lead, they should be individuals who are secure in themselves at their particular stage of life. They should not view their role as an opportunity to introduce sweeping change, start ministries, implement new operational procedures, or seek the loyalties and affections of the congregants.
- 3. Communicator.** One who can preach on a weekly basis if need be.

4. **Experienced.** One who has prior management skills and staff leadership abilities adequate for a larger congregation.
5. **Pastoral.** One who is spiritually gifted in practical pastoral ministry and exudes a pastoral heart. It is preferred that they have decades of pastoral experience in the local church—not as an associate, home or foreign missionary, or parachurch leader.
6. **Diplomatic.** One who is able to facilitate dialogue, resolve conflict, and address sensitive matters with grace, diplomacy, and clarity. Pastoral transitions can be inviting to strong personalities who seek to take advantage of the leadership vacuum. The most common instances are:
 - Church leaders and members who seek to advance their personal agenda or ministry preferences.
 - Ministers within the congregation who want to be considered for the position, influence the search committee, recommend friends, submit résumés, or fill the pulpit.
 - Individuals who privately lobby search committee members on behalf of ministry friends, relatives, or associates.
 - Missionaries, parachurch leaders, and business people who desire to raise funds during the interim.
7. **Flexible.** One who is capable of being flexible and understands that each church has different needs and history. They must not lead from nostalgia and try to recreate structures used in past situations but should seek to understand the culture of the church and community.
8. **Cooperative.** One who can have a good working relationship with the board and be willing to carry out their desires.
9. **Motivated.** One who has sufficient energy levels to cope with the mental, physical, and emotional stresses of interim ministry.
10. **Optimistic.** One who has a positive attitude and can create organizational trust and anticipation for the next pastor.

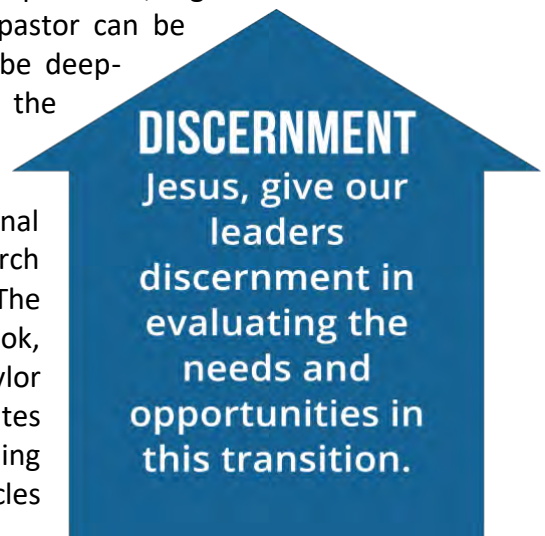


D. Responsibilities of an interim pastor.

1. **Teach/preach.** Be part of the Sunday morning teaching team with others. The frequency will be determined by the board.
2. **Respond.** Attend to correspondence, phone calls, emails, and emergencies that would normally be addressed by the lead pastor.
3. **Pastoral care.** Manage the “on call” schedule and provide pastoral care to members of the church (counseling, hospital calls, prayer for the sick, communion, funerals, weddings).
4. **Resolve conflict.** Resolve conflict to ensure the new pastor’s early days are not consumed with unresolved problems and neglected priorities.
5. **Recuse.** Remove themselves from consideration for the lead pastor position.
6. **Worship services.** Give leadership to coordinating the weekly services with the staff.
7. **Collaborate.** Attend finance meetings and a portion of the monthly board meetings.
8. **Empower.** Free the existing staff to remain focused and productive in their appropriate portfolios.
9. **Assist.** Assist the board when directed by the acting chair or board motion.
10. **Cooperate.** Work within the framework of the job description approved by the board.

E. **Various capacities of an interim pastor.** The role of an interim pastor is determined either by the bylaws, the board, or the unique needs and culture of the church. Following is a list of the most common models in ascending order of the time, skill, and involvement necessary:

1. **Preaching only.** The interim pastor's sole responsibility is to give the church a consistent preaching ministry during the duration of the search. Their role is preaching and building morale to sustain the search process. In this case, the interim pastor arrives each week and preaches according to the order of service.
2. **Pastoral care only.** The interim pastor's sole responsibility is to provide pastoral care in the form of hospital calls, counseling, weddings, baby dedications, funerals, and care for the elderly. Preaching and teaching is provided by others.
3. **Preaching and pastoral care.** The interim pastor's role consists of preaching each week and giving attention to pastoral care (counseling, hospital calls, weddings, baby dedications, funerals, care for the elderly).
4. **Preaching, pastoring, and coaching.** The interim pastor's role consists of giving the church a consistent preaching ministry, pastoral care (see above), and being a resource to the board in their role as the search committee.
5. **Interim executive leadership.** The interim pastor maintains office hours, leads the paid staff, does the majority of preaching (teamed with guests and staff), provides pastoral care, and serves as a staff liaison with the board. In reality, they serve as the "acting lead pastor." This ensures that the ministries of the church function but in a way that keeps the board informed and ensures the staff is not launching new ministries, changing direction, or neglecting normal functions. It also helps provide continuity with the search process.
6. **Specialized interim ministry.** It should be mentioned that the situation in some churches may warrant a prolonged interim period to resolve systemic problems, organizational dysfunction, or debilitating obstacles before a new pastor can be secured. Examples of these kinds of obstacles may be deep-seated division, moral failure, unexpected death of the pastor, church split, unforeseen tragedy, or recurring turnover in short periods of time. There is even a specialized group of interim pastors called "intentional interim pastors" who are highly trained in helping a church address and move beyond those types of problems. The scope of their unique ministry is outlined in the book, *Between Pastors: Seizing the Opportunity*, by Cam Taylor and Alan Simpson.⁷³ It should also be noted that advocates of the intentional interim model recommend postponing the pastoral search until other dysfunctions and obstacles are successfully addressed and overcome.



F. **Selecting an interim pastor.** It is important to select an interim pastor who has both training and experience in their field. The fact that a person may be a retired minister/missionary does not mean they are qualified to be a good interim pastor. As a matter of fact, an inexperienced or untrained interim pastor can do more harm than good. The following considerations should be made when selecting an interim pastor. There are several sources to acquire leads for a potential interim pastor.

1. **District Superintendent/Network Pastor.** District superintendents/network pastors are very experienced in the art of pastoral transitions. While most churches only experience transition once or twice a decade, a district superintendent/network pastor may see this occur 15-20 times in any given year. It is not uncommon for a district to see 27 percent of its churches experience

a pastoral transition in a three-year period.⁷⁴ Repeated exposure has given district/network leaders a unique perspective on everything from the most regrettable mistakes to the most effective practices. The district superintendent/network pastor knows who has both the experience and track record to serve as an interim pastor.

- 2. Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM).** IPM is an organization dedicated to formal training and certification in interim pastoral ministries. Membership with IPM requires a thorough vetting process, considerable experience, advanced education, and a high view of Scripture. Only those who have successfully completed the membership process are eligible to serve with IPM, and churches are required to pay them and they then pay the interim (almost like a temp agency does). Rhonda and I completed their two-day training, and it was outstanding. However, as a general rule they do not deploy to Spirit-filled churches due to doctrinal and governance differences. If by chance you know of an Assemblies of God minister who has been through their training, they would be a blessing to your church. Their website is:

<http://www.interimpastors.com>

and their YouTube channel is:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqJDFBbX-gKh2txEWt-meHg>.

- 3. Professional search organizations.** Many professional search organizations can be subcontracted to provide these services. However, it is my opinion that the liabilities outweigh the benefits. They are expensive and can charge between 30-50 percent of the previous pastor's salary. Because they do all the work for you, your church is robbed of the opportunity to develop transitional skills and increase its organizational learning. They also have a conflict of interest in many cases. Not only do they charge the church for search services, but they also require a fee from the ministers with whom they contract who are also looking for employment. As a result, they are being paid on both sides of the deal. It is not by coincidence that their candidate lists are usually the same people they are under contract with to secure a job. Others believe their success rate is actually less than that of a well-planned, board-led succession plan.

G. Needed qualities of an interim pastor.⁷⁵

- 1. Spiritually mature.** The person should be seasoned and have a deep love for God, people, and local church ministry.
- 2. Interim experience.** The person should have both served and been trained in interim ministry.
- 3. Local pastoral experience.** The person should be capable of performing the general duties of a pastor.
- 4. Preaching/teaching.** The person should be a competent communicator and feel comfortable teaching and preaching.
- 5. Administrative ability.** The person should assist the church by setting up structures and policy when needed.
- 6. Management skills.** The person should have prior experience in overseeing and managing paid staff and volunteers.
- 7. Collaborative.** The person should be able to recognize the board's authority and be willing to work with and through existing leaders.
- 8. Wisdom.** The person will need to ask probing questions, listen well, be objective, understand issues, discern the source of problems, and recommend solutions.
- 9. Motivated.** The person should have initiative, energy, and the physical ability to be engaged in the process.
- 10. Humility.** The person should subordinate their own preferences and seek to serve the interests of the church.

H. Interview questions of an interim pastor. A board should not assume an interim pastor has the unique qualities, temperament, and experience for their needs. They should interview potential candidates for this role. When interviewing potential interim pastors, it is important to listen with three ears: to what candidates are saying, for what candidates are not saying, and for what candidates would like to say but cannot put into words. Following are a few suggested questions that can help determine situational fit:

1. Tell us about your conversion and call to ministry and give a summary of your ministry experience and the reason you enjoy interim ministry.
2. Briefly summarize all your past experiences as an interim pastor—what size churches they were and the result of the ministry there.
3. Explain the type of training you have had for interim ministry (formal, experiential, reading).
4. Elaborate on your past involvement in any of the following capacities of interim ministry:
 - **Preaching only.** The interim pastor's sole responsibility is to give the church a consistent preaching ministry during the duration of the search.
 - **Pastoring only.** The interim pastor's sole responsibility is to provide pastoral care in the form of counseling, hospital calls, weddings, baby dedications, funerals, and care for the elderly.
 - **Preaching and pastoral care.** The interim pastor's role consists of preaching each week and giving attention to pastoral care (counseling, hospital calls, weddings, baby dedications, funerals, care for the elderly).
 - **Preaching, pastoral care, and coaching.** The interim pastor's role consists of giving the church a consistent preaching ministry, pastoral care (see above), and being a resource to the board in their role as the search committee.
 - **Interim executive leadership.** The interim pastor maintains office hours, leads the paid staff, does the majority of preaching (teamed with guests and staff), provides pastoral care, and serves as a staff liaison with the board.
5. Are you more of an introvert or an extrovert?
6. What topics do you usually address from the pulpit (teaching and preaching) during a pastoral interim?
7. How do you handle situations when the board does not take your advice?
8. Are you willing to remove yourself from consideration as the lead pastor?
9. How do you manage people who try to insert their influence in the selection process, lobby for churchwide change, or actualize their personal preferences?
10. How do you respond when you become aware of divisive behavior among church members?
11. Have you ever left an interim assignment before the new pastor was elected or appointed? If so, what was the reason?
12. Are you able to make a commitment as an interim pastor for approximately 3-8 months?
13. What kind of remuneration or unique accommodations would you require?
14. What are three of the most important principles you have learned concerning interim ministry?
15. Could you give us a list of references from churches where you have served as an interim pastor?
16. What questions do you have for us?

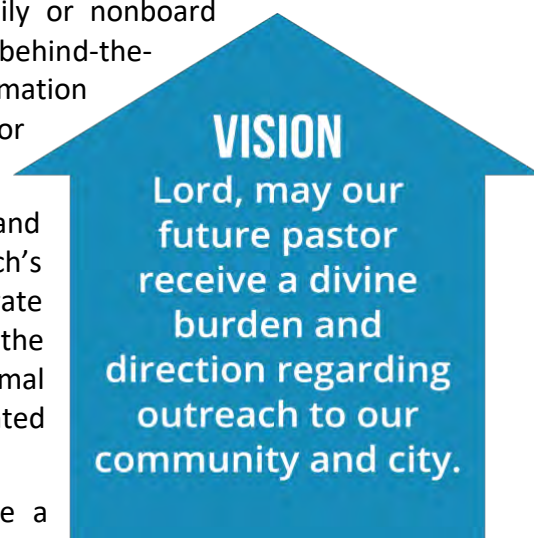


It would be reasonable for the board to request résumés, interviews, recommendations, and preaching tapes/links of those considered to serve as interim pastor.⁷⁶ The interim pastor should be given a short job description and offered a generous salary in proportion to their responsibilities. When a church is large enough to have a full-time pastor, then a reasonable “rule of thumb” is to pay a full-time interim pastor 75 percent of the permanent pastor’s full-time salary and use the remaining 25 percent to cover commuting and local housing expenses. When the church is smaller and normally led by a bi-vocational pastor, then an interim pastor can be paid according to the capability of the church and the agreed-upon role and responsibilities.

17. COMMUNICATION ([back to table](#))

It is important for the board to have a predetermined communication strategy as it pertains to the pastoral search process. The communication vehicles should be something fast and easy to sustain over a long period of time, if needed. That strategy should accommodate the following components:

- A. Search committee lead (aka the voice of the church).** One and only one person should be responsible to speak on behalf of the church and board/search committee. This should be the acting chair of the board. In his book, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Warren D. Bullock states that under no circumstances should anyone other than the chair contact those interested in the position. If a candidate bypasses the chair and attempts to communicate with a committee member, they should be referred to the chair.⁷⁷
- B. Communication lead.** This person reports to the acting chair of the board/search committee and should be very tech savvy without depending on family or nonboard members to communicate. They are responsible to do the behind-the-scenes work of writing status updates, updating information platforms, and communicating with the staff responsible for the church bulletins and website.
- C. Communication platforms.** What will be the primary and secondary communication platforms? A page on the church's website that is linked from the home page or a separate google blog maintained and updated by a member of the search committee? An electronic newsletter? The normal church bulletin? A biweekly video or podcast? Printed material? An announcement or interview in the service?
- D. Frequency of updates.** How often will the board give a pastoral search update and on what regular day of the week? Will it be every third Sunday? Once a month? Every week? Among the nonconfidential things the board can report on include:
- 1. Committee composition.** The names and bios of those on the board or pastoral search committee.
 - 2. Process updates.** A general summary of the different stages of the process and then identifying in what stage they are currently engaged.
 - 3. Progress updates.** A summary of developments over the past few weeks such as:
 - "We met with the superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network."
 - "The board has met four times this past month."
 - "We have visited three different churches to listen to prospective candidates."
 - "We have narrowed our list down to three persons."
 - "We interviewed five candidates this month."
 - 4. Prayer updates.** Request prayer for the specific stage the committee is in or may be moving into over the next few weeks.



Current information updates keep anxiety at bay and breeds confidence, patience, and trust among the membership. It is recommended that the board release a weekly update on Tuesday mornings via a website or email and regularly in Sunday services.

- E. Interactive communication.** How will potential candidates send résumés and correspondence to the search committee? Who will receive that communication and be responsible to respond? It is recommended that one email address be set up that is forwarded to each committee member with the understanding that only one person is authorized to respond. This will ensure accountability, clear communication, and that nothing falls between the cracks. The email should be placed on all updates and advertised as the preferred method of official communication.
- F. Interested parties' page.** A web page, splash page, or google blog should be created for those interested in applying for the position. Posting all the church's information that candidates would want to know in one place will save many hours of fielding phone calls, texts, and emails from interested candidates. It also helps get the word out by only having to share one link. Many churches call this a "candidate's page." You can see an example of one at <http://www.agspe.org/rutour.mp4>.

Google Blogger might be a better place because it can offer a site independent of the church's official website and allow the board to manage the content personally as it is rather simple to use. At any rate, the location should contain a link to each of the following:

1. A welcome from the pastoral search committee.
2. The pastoral search plan (a brief outline of the stages of the process). If you are using this research, then it would be the 13 stages mentioned earlier.
3. Commitments made to participants (confidentiality agreement by committee members, member commitment, and commitment of privacy to potential candidates).
4. A summary of your church, its previous pastors, governance, number of members, number of board members, the name of the board chair, and the name of the president of the nonprofit corporation. It should also give service times and statistical averages for total constituents and attendance as well as the annual income, missions giving, debt, and mortgage payment.
5. A neighborhood, community, and city profile. This kind of information can usually be found at the reference desk of your city hall or online presence and includes population, demographics, and things that make your city a unique place to live.
6. A brief history of your church.
7. A brief bio of your previous pastor so candidates may know what type of education, experiences, passions, and hobbies they had that would likely have influenced the church.
8. The church's current mission or purpose statement.
9. A link to the church's bylaws and other important policies.
10. A short bio on any staff members and the area of the church to which they give leadership.
11. A profile paragraph outlining the desired skills, qualifications, and experience the church desires potential candidates to have.
12. Photos and a floor plan of your facility.
13. An email address for applicants to send résumés to or for others to recommend or refer potential candidates to the committee.
14. A list of any awards or community commendations your church has received.
15. A place for current status updates by the pastoral search committee.



You are basically using a blog format to create an online résumé for the church. At first it may seem like too much information; however, creating a separate online page with this information helps you in two important ways. It saves time in communicating with potential candidates. Instead of sending each applicant individual email attachments, you can simply copy and paste the URL for the page. Also, all this information is bound to be requested by several candidates. Gathering it early and making it readily available allows you to focus on more important issues than customized information requests.

18. INTERNAL CANDIDATES ([back to table](#))

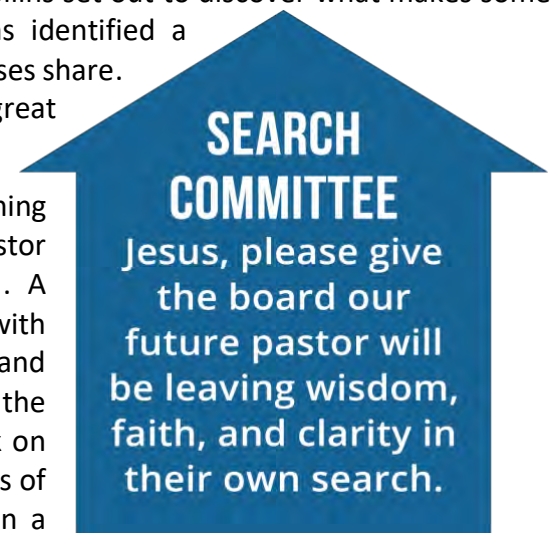
When doing an organ transplant, doctors look first at family members who share the same genes. Why? Because they already possess the same DNA—a molecule in the body that carries all the genetic information about a person. Proven internal candidates can be organizational DNA carriers who are easily able to translate and transfer the vision, values, and culture of your church. That is why more and more churches of over 500 are embracing succession plans that either pre-appoint, groom, or elect internal candidates already serving on staff. They have the church’s culture in their blood and already know what it takes outsiders two to three years to learn.

However, dealing with internal candidates can be a high-stakes game. Once an internal candidate throws their hat in the ring, things can get very complicated. They may be respected but not qualified or qualified but not respected. They may even lack both respect and qualifications. Once rejected, they can become hurt, difficult, and divisive. Some may even stick around to make things difficult for the new pastor who they perceived robbed them of a perfect opportunity.

In this chapter, we will talk about all things related to internal candidates and tackle some of the toughest questions.

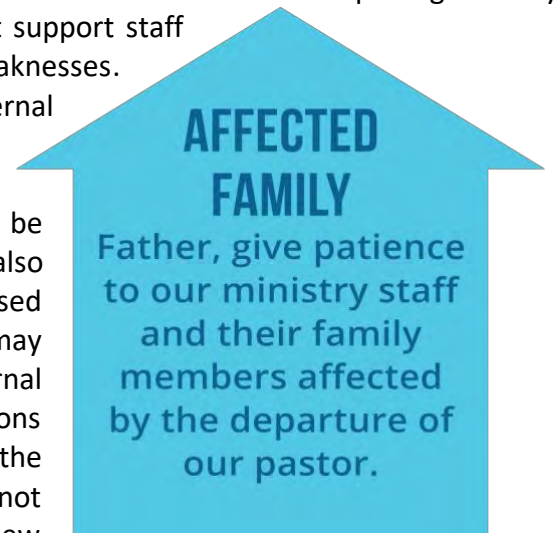
A. Why is this model gaining popularity? There are good reasons why this type of succession plan is gaining momentum. Even if they are extremely talented, it takes most outside candidates three to five years of spinning their wheels to learn the city and the unique culture of the church and build enough credibility with the people to lead them into bold new adventures. The success rate of outside candidates who follow long-term predecessors is disappointingly low and the turnover rate high. If outside candidates are not careful, they can introduce change that feels so “imported” that people no longer feel comfortable in the church and end up leaving. A second level of staff and board changes in the months following can magnify the degree of “change trauma” to the church. Corporate America seems to have figured this out long before the church. In his bestselling book, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don’t*, Jim Collins set out to discover what makes some businesses great while others flounder and fail. Collins identified a number of common denominators that successful businesses share. Ten out of eleven businesses that went from good to great found CEOs from within the company.⁷⁸

B. What are the advantages of internal candidates? Assuming the church has a qualified staff member with lead pastor experience, there are many advantages to this model. A qualified and respected internal candidate can lead with instant familiarity of existing leadership, people, culture, and community. Like veteran missionaries, they understand the culture, structures, and values of the church. In his book on pastoral transitions, Warren Bird warns search committees of what he calls the “rebounding effect.” This occurs when a church hires someone so opposite and unlike the previous pastor that it puts the church in culture shock.⁷⁹ Internal candidates, especially ones at least 20 years younger than the previous pastor, know the past but are also in touch with future trends and generations. They also understand the church’s history, policies, and existing staff. The church does not experience the normal declines in attendance, giving, and momentum that an interim period can bring. Internal staff members have the advantage of understanding the strengths and weaknesses of



the church, its prior pastor, and existing workers. The transition can feel more like getting a new doctor than a heart transplant. Unlike outsiders who may need two to three years to transition, qualified internal candidates are able to maximize the months and years immediately after their election.⁸⁰

- C. What are the disadvantages of this model?** Even though this model is becoming the norm in larger churches, there are some disadvantages that need to be addressed. Some succession plans get messy and political. The internal candidate may need different support staff than their predecessor to adequately shore up their weaknesses. The church can also run the risk of losing the internal candidate or staging a potential rivalry with an outside candidate if the internal candidate is not selected. The internal candidate already has a following that can be disappointed and hurt should they not be selected. It is also possible the internal candidate may lack an unbiased perspective of the sweeping changes a church may desperately need in order to stay relevant. When an internal candidate takes the initiative to apply for the job, options seem fewer should they not be selected. However, if the board approaches an internal candidate and then does not select them, it presents a very difficult challenge for the new pastor. The situation requires sensitivity and wisdom.



- D. In what order should an internal candidate be considered?** Consultants have differing opinions about when a qualified internal candidate should be considered. Some say considering qualified candidates in the beginning honors the commitment of the internal candidate and deals with the most difficult decisions first. Others say considering outside candidates first and the internal candidate last gives everyone the peace of knowing they made the right choice. There are two possible approaches concerning how internal candidates who either apply or are formally approached by the search committee can be considered.
- 1. Considered first.** The internal candidate should be considered before external candidates with the understanding that should they not be selected, they will agree to resign and depart with a generous severance package BEFORE the new pastor arrives.
 - 2. Considered last.** The internal candidate is considered last after all qualified external candidates have been considered. Should they not be selected, they agree to resign and depart immediately with an agreed-upon severance package.

The purpose of securing their agreement to depart if not selected is not intended to be mean-spirited or insensitive. It is founded upon the wisdom of knowing that requiring a newly elected pastor to work with a person who believed they were called to lead the church would be unreasonable and unwise and divide the loyalties and emotions of the people at a time when they need to be unified behind one leader.⁸¹

- E. How should the board respond when a staff member applies for the opening?** It is important to make sure that an internal candidate understands the risks and need for equality should they choose to proceed. This is even more important if the search committee or board has not invited a staff member to apply, is not united about the prospects of an internal candidate, or later becomes interested in an external candidate. Because these kinds of meetings can be awkward, many churches avoid them and end up regretting it dearly later on. These issues can be compared to the difference

between stepping on a baby alligator or waiting to wrestle it later on when it is a twenty-foot man eater! This issue is too important to neglect.

Phil Schneider has been the district superintendent of the Illinois District Council for almost a decade and has seen churches crippled by conflict due to the toxic disappointment of an internal candidate whom the board did not select. He recommends the church board do the following two things when an internal candidate applies:

- 1. Briefing meeting.** The board should immediately call a meeting between the official board and the internal candidate to ensure everyone understands the risks and ramifications associated with their application. In this meeting, the board informs the potential internal candidate that their love and appreciation for them must be set aside so that they can treat each applicant fairly and equally. Questions that should be asked in this interview are:
 - In order to treat all potential candidates fairly, it will not be possible for you to preach, teach, or be involved in platform duties during the search. Are you able to support this?
 - If you are not chosen, will your next ministry assignment be in the same role you presently occupy or will you be looking for a lead pastor position?
 - How will your spouse and family react to the possibility of moving if you are not chosen?
 - The constitution and bylaws of The General Council of the Assemblies of God address what is called “Doctrines and Practices Disapproved” in which they outline a standard of ministerial courtesy for credential holders:

All discourteous conduct is disapproved, and all ministers are advised against interfering with pastors in charge of assemblies, whether it be by going in upon their work without consent or by such correspondence with members of the assembly as will hurt the influence of the leader. All correspondence which concerns the whole assembly shall be addressed to the one in charge and not to individual members. Where there is no pastor, letters concerning the work shall be addressed to the officers of the assembly. Any minister who so offends shall be subject to discipline.⁸²

Are you willing to promise that you will live by that standard whatever the outcome?

- Are you willing to sign a binding memo of understanding outlining commitments in the event you are not selected as the primary candidate or are not able to secure the required vote?
 - To be sure you have weighed all the ramifications of not being selected, would you consider praying about this for another week before officially submitting your application? This will also provide margin for the board to do the same.
- 2. Memo of understanding.** A signed memo of understanding should be executed any time an internal candidate applies. The memo should outline any unique concerns your own situation warrants as well as the following items:
 - If the internal candidate is not selected by the search committee as the primary candidate or is unable to secure the needed vote by the membership, they will resign and be gone between two to three months before the arrival of the newly elected pastor.

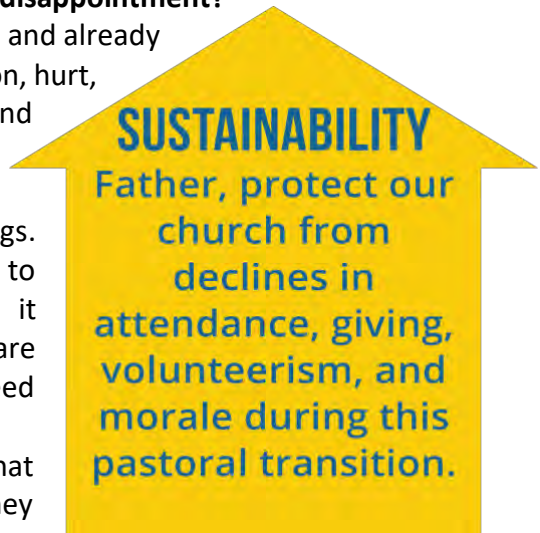


- The internal candidate will not plant a new church or join the staff of an existing church of any affiliation or nonaffiliation within 30 miles of the church’s current location.

The memo should be signed by the candidate and the acting board chair.

F. How might a rejected staff member manifest their disappointment?

Because internal candidates are part of your church family and already have a loyal following, there is a higher potential for division, hurt, and staff turnover. How they respond will largely depend upon their character and the clarity of the predetermined agreements after their application. How you manage their perception of rejection will help you stay out in front of things. Some will rise to the occasion and give you more reasons to respect and trust them. Others will choose to take it personally and further complicate the situation. There are four general categories of disappointment that you may need to be prepared to face:

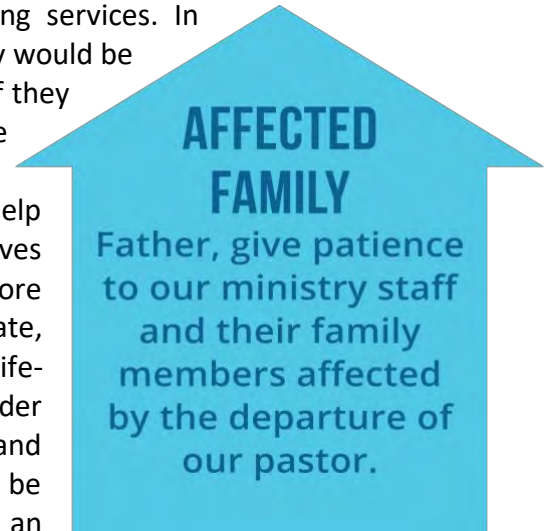


- 1. Trusting disappointment.** Although disappointed that they were not selected as the pastoral candidate, they trust the leadership of the church, accept your decision, and move on. They may even be relieved because they were pressured by others to apply but knew it was not the right season or place to step into a lead pastorate.
- 2. Confined disappointment.** The news that they will not be considered is deeply discouraging and affects their motivation and confidence that either you or they are not in the will of God. They are visibly disappointed and need to work through issues surrounding God’s will and their development as a minister. They may start withdrawing emotionally and resent having to leave friends and possibly family. They will update their résumé and explore opportunities to serve elsewhere—but with resentment. At the end of the day, however, their character will prevail; and they will not cause significant problems.
- 3. Open disappointment.** The news that they will not be considered is too disturbing for the staff member to keep to themselves. They feel disappointed, shamed, unappreciated, and betrayed. Being incapable of processing these feelings alone, they share their disappointment with their own support system and leadership community and those who are sympathetic and loyal to them as leaders. They may encourage others to lobby the board or even capitalize on opportunities to answer naïve questions members may have about the transition. They may lack discretion in how, when, and with whom they share their disappointment; but the damage is usually confined to their own support base.
- 4. Toxic disappointment.** Because these staff members see themselves as entitled to candidacy, they feel rejected, wronged, and deprived of what they believe they deserve. As a result, they are incapable of self-control, self-awareness, and the use of verbal filters. They become toxic, disloyal, and divisive and even seek to discredit the search process and those stewarding it. They may try to divide the board, encourage activism, splinter the staff, and deprive the official candidate of enough votes to secure an election. Unfortunately, these are the staff members that split churches, plant nearby works, and encourage those who support them to create an uprising or dramatic exit from the church. You will need your network’s assistance in navigating these waters.

G. How should a board inform an internal candidate that they will not be considered? It is never an easy task to tell a respected but unqualified associate that another candidate has been chosen. The

suggestions listed below are in order of their ascending intensity of conflict to help your board navigate these uncertain waters and limit the impact of destructive disappointment.

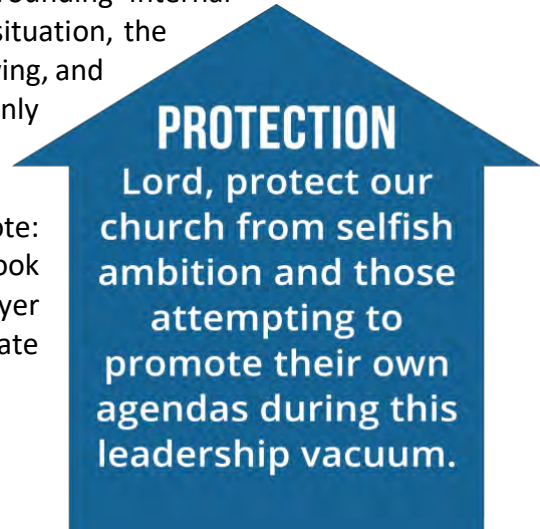
- 1. Take preemptive actions at the time an internal candidate applies.** As soon as a staff member communicates a desire to apply for the lead pastorate, be sure to schedule a private meeting with the board to consider the possible outcomes. Inform them that as a candidate, it would be unfair and unethical for them to preach in Sunday morning services. In addition, if they are not selected as the candidate, they would be expected to leave before the new pastor arrives; and if they are selected as the candidate but do not receive the required vote, they must do the same. This will help them prepare for disappointing news later on and help them understand that if they are not selected, their lives will change dramatically as they will need to leave before the new pastor arrives. Applying for any lead pastorate, whether it is with your church or elsewhere, is life-changing for all concerned, particularly if there are older children involved. A move away from a great church and godly friends (particularly for teenagers) can be devastating. That is why the board must make sure an internal candidate has weighed all the ramifications of not being selected and should ask any interested candidates to consider these matters in prayer for another week before officially submitting their application. This will also give the board an opportunity to draft the necessary agreements mentioned above should they decide to submit their résumé.
- 2. Leverage the deterrent of your denominational authority.** If an associate pastor who is applying is credentialed with the Assemblies of God, they are accountable to ministerial ethics and etiquette which means that their ministerial credential makes them accountable to an authority structure outside the local church. If that is the case, it is a good idea to keep your district superintendent/network pastor informed. If a disgruntled staff member does not share your credentialing agency, the options are limited. If they do, you can ask the district superintendent/network pastor to speak with them privately and encourage them to take the high road no matter what the outcome may be. Your denominational executives can coach them on ministerial ethics and what their ecclesiastical authority expects of them should they not be selected. They can also relate to them as colleagues and inform them of other ministerial openings in the Fellowship. This may seem premature or overkill so early in the process, but it is not. It is wise to leverage this resource while positive options are still available.
- 3. Give the news quickly and in person.** It is tempting to avoid an uncomfortable meeting with a staff member you have grown to love and appreciate; but failing to communicate, sending an email, or forcing them to learn who the candidate is through official church communications is insensitive. If a staff member who has applied for the lead pastorate is not going to be considered or was considered and passed over, let them know as soon as possible and do so face-to-face. This allows the board to deal with any potential problems long before the new pastor arrives and gives the rejected staff member time to process and figure things out. Show empathy without miscommunicating. Let them know that the search committee understands how much they wanted the lead pastor position and how excited they were about the opportunity. By letting them know you understand their feelings, you lessen the chance of their becoming bitter over your decision. It is also important to explain why they were not considered. Few things are more frustrating for an applicant than not understanding why they were not selected. Take the time to



review the selection process and explain the reasons why the search committee looked to another candidate. Affirm their strengths but also kindly inform them what would make them a stronger candidate in the future. Encourage and remind them that there are other opportunities in the kingdom of God and that although it is not God's will for them to lead this congregation, God has a church that is perfect for them. Above all, let the disappointed staff member know that you want them to succeed in the future.

4. **Do not try to negotiate their happiness.** When delivering bad news, there is a temptation to soften the disappointment by making promises that cannot be kept. The biggest mistake boards make in this area is that they do not get out in front of these issues early. The second is that they try to limit the fallout by negotiating with a disappointed staff member by making concessions, giving raises or promotions, or promising to require the newly elected pastor to keep them on board. At other times, they are allowed to serve as an interim pastor in the hope that giving them temporary authority and access to the pulpit will pacify them. In the end, these methods never work and even further compound the problem. The fact of the matter is that all of us, including ambitious staff members, must accept that disappointments are part of life on this side of heaven.
5. **Determine a grace-filled and honorable departure plan.** Check back with them a week later to determine a map to the future. It would be unfair to ask a newly elected pastor to work with and be dependent upon someone who desired their job. Set dates for their last office day, last check, and last Sunday and plan an appreciation event. Be sure to ask them if they can be counted upon to embrace the highest standards of ministerial ethics and conduct. These should be placed in writing and **MUST** be accomplished **BEFORE** the new pastor arrives. It would also be wise to pay out any severance pay biweekly with the last payment being a month after their departure and contingent upon their fulfilling their commitments to ministerial ethics.
6. **Seek denominational assistance.** If at any time the disappointment level of a rejected staff member transitions into open or toxic levels (see above), be sure to seek the advice of your district superintendent/network pastor immediately. The earlier they know about one of their ministers creating controversy or discord, the more they will be able to help. Keeping your district superintendent/network pastor informed by weekly emails or phone updates reduces the risk of permanent harm, difficult transitions, or loss of momentum.

There are no easy answers to the difficult questions surrounding internal candidates. The best solution will depend upon the unique situation, the character of the internal candidate, the strength of their following, and how quickly the board deals with potential problems. The only thing consultants seem to agree upon is that a qualified internal candidate should be considered. William Vanderbloemen, CEO of the leading pastoral search firm, wrote: "This is a valuable lesson for search committees. Do not overlook internal candidates."⁸³ The board will need to give serious prayer and deliberation to this matter in the event a qualified candidate is already on your staff.



19. SUCCESSION MODELS ([back to table](#))

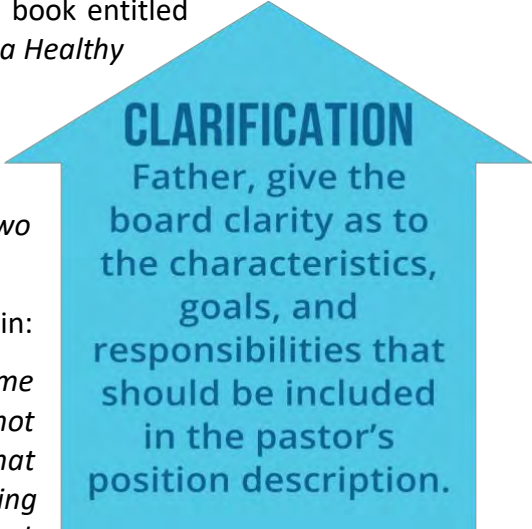
Many transition specialists, denominational leaders, and local churches are starting to question whether the traditional method of pastoral searches is really effective. The model of bringing in outsiders with no understanding of the church culture, community, and congregation seems to be creating a continuing cycle of short-term transitions. Andrew Flowers' research and book entitled *Leading Through Succession: Why Pastoral Leadership Is Key to a Healthy Transition on Pastoral Transition* sounds the alarm:

*Something seems to be horribly wrong with the process of appointing pastors. It's the epidemic no one wants to talk about and it's not uncommon for churches to go through two or three sacrificial lambs before someone is able to stick.*⁸⁴

Transition experts Carolyn Weese and Russell Crabtree complain:

The current model of pastoral transition, left over from a time when organizational learning was not as important, does not help congregations protect what is healthy and retain what they have learned. It is the organizational equivalent of burning down the community library every time a new mayor is elected.

⁸⁵



CLARIFICATION
Father, give the board clarity as to the characteristics, goals, and responsibilities that should be included in the pastor's position description.

Mark Moore of Christ's Church of the Valley in Peoria, Arizona, cries out:

*There is a black hole in church leadership transition strategy. What we don't know how to do is transition from first generational leaders to second generational successors. It's not that we have no theory; it's that we have few models to follow in churches where the stakes are the highest because of the church's influence and visibility.*⁸⁶

This frustration has resulted in a growing popularity of other succession models. Author Terry Roberts says:

*There is no one-size-fits-all model. Plans differ just as the churches they serve differ. However, the best plans have one thing in common: They combine the wisdom and stability of a seasoned leader and the vision and energy of a young leader. As such, they help the church not only go through the challenge of change but also grow through it.*⁸⁷

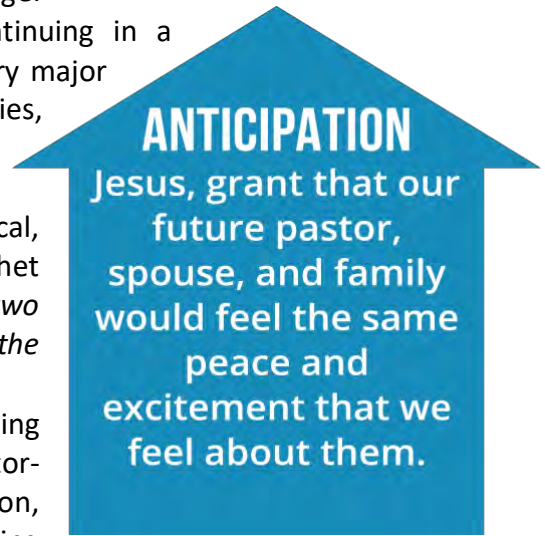
The results of a 2019 Barna research project found that "while the majority of church transitions occur because a pastor initiates their departure, planning ahead for an inevitable transition makes a big difference in congregants' experiences."⁸⁸

With that said, let me comment on the four most common succession models and why some are gaining in popularity.

A. Four common succession models. Because the bylaws of most Assemblies of God churches embrace a traditional board-driven succession plan, that is what this resource has focused on. However, there are several other models of strategic mentored succession that are gaining popularity and proving effective. They are listed briefly for the sake of information.

1. Traditional succession plan. The board or search committee interviews prospective candidates and recommends one of them to the congregation for a vote. This resource goes into great detail and presents 13 stages of how this can be accomplished.

2. **Relayed succession plan.** When the pastor resigns, the board selects an interim pastor to serve for one to two years while an extended search process is undertaken. The interim pastor is not considered as a candidate but tasked with preparing the church for the future pastor. In this model, the interim pastor could best be described as a relay runner in a short leg of a long race. This model tends to be more popular in liturgical churches.
 3. **Mentored succession plan.** The lead pastor and the board collaborate together and select a person (current staff or future staff member) to be mentored and trained with the intention of one day leading the church. There is a focus to identify a divinely called “DNA carrier” who understands the church, has proven themselves effective, is mentored by the pastor, and loved and trusted by the people. This model is becoming increasingly popular in churches with over 500 attendees.
 4. **Scheduled succession plan.** The lead pastor informs the board one to two years before they intend to step down or retire. The first year is spent selecting a successor and the second year mentoring that person to lead. These plans work best when the lead pastor is very near retirement age and has a specific start and end date that is agreed to by all (pastor, successor, and board).
- B. The gaining popularity of mentored succession.** This model has proven successful and is gaining popularity in churches over 500 and where the outgoing pastor has had an effective, long-term ministry of over ten years. Author Terry Roberts also documented the fact that the model has been the cultural norm in many large churches in Asian cultures.⁸⁹ The lead pastor and the board collaborate together and select a person (current staff or future staff member) to be mentored and trained with the intention of one day leading the church.
1. **Stages of mentored succession.** There are several books authored by pastors who have successfully navigated the uncertain waters of mentored succession. Although each story is different, I did notice common denominators and intentional processes that were employed in the handoff. They can be summarized in the following five stages of varying length:
 - **Stage 1** involves a testing time where the potential successor is given a portfolio, placed on the teaching team, and then works on staff to determine if they are compatible with the pastor, board, staff, and church. At the end of this time, the lead pastor and board decide if the potential successor can advance to the next stage.
 - **Stage 2** involves the potential candidate’s continuing in a determined portfolio while being exposed to every major facet of the church’s administration, ministries, neighborhood, and community to develop cultural and organizational mastery. The goal of this important step is to determine cultural, philosophical, theological, and stylistic compatibility. The prophet Amos warns about ignoring this season: *Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?* (Amos 3:3 NLT).
 - **Stage 3** involves the potential candidate’s being interviewed and considered by the board as “pastor-elect.” In an effort to gain organizational confirmation, some may even present this plan to the voting members and ask them to endorse the board’s sentiment through a vote. If selected, the pastor-elect continues to serve as the second in command and right arm to the lead pastor until the lead pastor resigns or retires at will.



- **Stage 4** is a scheduled season where the lead pastor employs their authority, credibility, and trust to implement changes the successor will need to be successful. This may include alterations in staff, structure, and finances that play to the successor’s strengths and backfill their weaknesses. This allows the board and pastor to help the pastor-elect by giving them the highest likelihood of future success.
- **Stage 5** is the formal succession that occurs when the lead pastor resigns, retires, or dies. At that time, the pastor-elect is immediately presented to the church as a candidate.

We recorded a two-part companion podcast with mentored succession specialist, Terry Roberts, entitled “The Why and How of Mentored Succession.” It can be accessed on our Rise Up Sound Cloud Account at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

2. Mentored succession and church governance. At first glance, it may seem that mentored succession favors independent churches and poses problems for churches with congregational forms of governance where members elect the lead pastor. However, contemporary examples can be found where each model of church governance is able to embrace the increasingly popular mentored succession plan through increased collaboration.

- Presbyterian forms of governance require the least amount of organizational-wide collaboration since the governing body is empowered to act on behalf of the members.
- Episcopal forms of governance can embrace mentored succession by planning ahead and seeking the blessing and cooperation of the appointing bishop or organizational overseer.
- Congregational forms of governance require the most methodical amount of collaboration because the voting members must be persuaded that it is in the best interests of the church and they are the only ones empowered by the bylaws to elect the pastor.

Most Assemblies of God churches embrace a hybrid presbyterian/congregational form of church government. While this form requires more collaboration, it allows the membership to approve the process and provide additional confirmation.

Pastor Dick Iverson of City Bible Church in Portland, Oregon, chose to use this method in what he called “a three-fold witness.”⁹⁰ After much prayer and deliberation, Iverson believed Frank Damazio was to be his successor. City Bible Church is an independent Charismatic church with a pastor-led governance, thus not requiring the vote of the church. However, Iverson saw wisdom in taking the matter to the congregation for their approval or affirmation. The three-fold witness ended up being experienced in the heart of the outgoing pastor (first confirmation) and the conviction of the official board (second confirmation) but was also confirmed a third time through a vote of the church members.



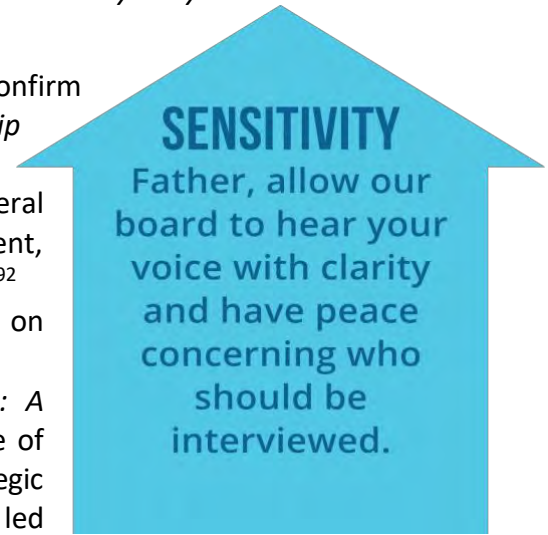
Jeff Harlow pastored Crossroads Community Church in Kokomo, Indiana, for 35 years before investing three years mentoring outsider Chris Duncan into a strategic succession. Harlow embraced their congregational form of government as a way to provide a “safety net” and designed three congregational votes at different stages of the succession process. Harlow gave the rationale for this procedure in his book about the process:

*At some point in my leadership career, I decided to make voting my friend. I used votes to gain ownership and measure buy-in, not just to grab permission. If you don't have the people's approval of the new leader, you're fighting a battle you will not win. A power play at this point will put the very team and stakeholders you love and appreciate at risk as well as jeopardizing the very mission you're working to extend beyond your tenure.*⁹¹

Harlow already knew what the Barna Group would confirm in their 2019 research project entitled, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, where they reported, "As a general rule, the higher the degree of congregants involvement, the more positive they feel about the final outcome."⁹²

3. Best practices. Of all the material I have read on mentored succession, the following are standouts:

- Tom Mullins' book, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, is one of the finest books I have read concerning strategic succession.⁹³ Mullins is the founding pastor who led Christ Fellowship Church, a nondenominational, multisite church with more than 20,000 members. He and his board collaborated together in one of the most successful planned successions in megachurch history. Although his book focuses on the mentored succession model, it is filled with wise, seasoned, and practical advice for pastors, boards, and successors.
- Jeff Harlow's book, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading a Healthy Church Transition*, outlines one of the most successful and wise integrations of the mentored succession plans while being true to the congregational/presbyterian model of church governance.⁹⁴ His book is a practical and transparent example of how a strong leader can transition a church without being autocratic.
- Terry Roberts' book, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, gives an excellent perspective of the mentored success model from an Assemblies of God perspective. Roberts gives practical advice and examples of AG churches that have used this model with success.⁹⁵
- Gary L. Johnson's book, *Leader Shift: One Becomes Less While Another Becomes More*, offers several convincing arguments for this model.⁹⁶ Johnson gives some of the best scriptural applications as well as good and bad examples of mentored succession in leading corporations. He also recognizes that each plan must be tailor-made for the church while also outlining important pieces that must be present in all applications.
- Bob Russell's 2010 groundbreaking book, *Transition Plan: 7 Secrets Every Leader Needs to Know*, was among the first to highlight the success of the mentored succession plan.⁹⁷ Russell served as the lead minister of Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, for 40 years until he retired in 2006. It is the sixth largest church in America with more than 26,000 members. Amazingly, four years after leaving, his transition plan has resulted in continued growth. The outline of Russell's plan has become a template for organizations of all kinds.
- Barna Group's 2019 study entitled, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, offered the following five goals for outgoing leaders:⁹⁸
 - a. Communicate clearly, honestly, and often.
 - b. Target unity. Remember, it's about the kingdom.
 - c. If you can, plan! Don't coast out but leave with intentionality.



- d. Aim for a graceful exit. Make a hard thing easy for others.
 - e. Keep asking why. Be aware of your emotions, motives, and insecurities.
 - Dr. Jerry David's book, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, is unique in addressing the need for a culture of honor and how the outgoing pastor must take the lead in creating this needed culture.⁹⁹
- 4. Minimal requirements of mentored succession.** Although this model is new and proving to have great success, it does require ingredients that not all situations can provide.
- The full commitment, willing involvement, and enthusiastic leadership of the outgoing pastor.
 - The collaboration and participation of the governing board.
 - Patience and respect for the outgoing pastor and the teachability of the successor.
 - The successor's proven track record in the church, the affection of the people, and the ability to be a "DNA" carrier of the church's culture and vision.
 - A written plan that clearly outlines a process, roles, dates, and "triggers" that start the gradual transfer of authority in several different areas.
 - Fiscal health of the church to finance the transition.
- C. Application to your church.** The literature confirms that planned succession is the best way to sustain health in churches over 500 that have had a long-tenured lead pastor with community-wide influence. Every church needs two plans. The first is an "if our leader dies tomorrow" plan. The second is an intentional transfer of leadership to a qualified and divinely called successor. Although recognizing that Highpoint's bylaws did not give me the authority to determine either, I tried to hope for the best while planning and mentoring for the worst. That is why I would recommend the following plan options:
- 1. Plan A—Mentored Succession:** If possible, the lead pastor and board seek to mentor a successor using the five stages mentioned above under the section entitled "Stages of Mentored Succession." Provided the lead pastor continues to be effective, the successor would serve until the lead pastor's resignation, retirement, removal, or death. At that time, the successor would immediately become the board's candidate for the office of lead pastor.
 - 2. Plan B—Traditional Transition Plan:** Should your church ever experience a sudden and unexpected vacancy in the office of lead pastor and not have identified a qualified successor, the board would appoint an interim pastor and implement the traditional succession plan outlined in this resource. This gives them the flexibility and time to identify a possible leader.

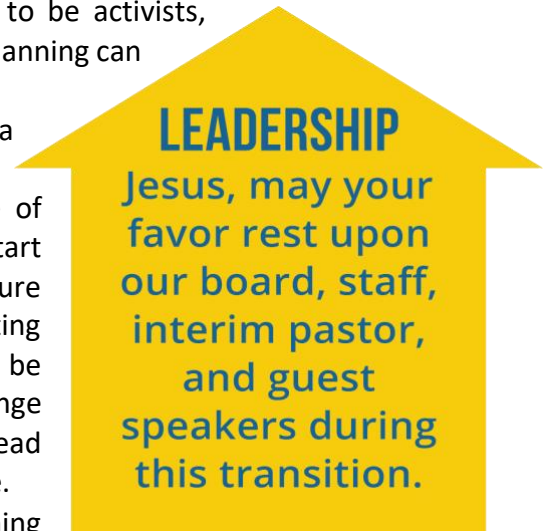
Should the lead pastor and board desire to create a mentored succession plan, they should work together to formulate a written plan. I am willing and able to offer any advice or coaching along the way.

20. COURAGEOUS INTENTIONALITY (back to table)

I believe fear and insecurity are the primary reasons pastors fail to involve their boards in transition and succession planning. In their book, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, authors Weese and Crabtree seem to spread blame a bit farther saying, “Leaders on both sides of the board table must face the unhealthy part of themselves that threatens a successful pastoral transition . . . Although we would like to assume that a strong commitment obviates a shadow side to the Christian leader, all the evidence shows it does not.”¹⁰⁰ However, there are often justifiable reasons for these unsettling emotions. Every situation is different and will require a leader to courageously strike a balance between Spirit and flesh. I will share how I navigated my way through this minefield in a larger church setting in hopes that it may help you find God’s will in your own context.

A. Why risk is justified. These kinds of discussions have legitimate risks, and not all board members are spiritually or emotionally mature enough to handle them. These risks include:

- **Impatience.** Instead of a succession plan being considered a contingency, its existence has the potential of being considered an “outstanding task” in need of execution dates, progress, and constant attention.
- **Disunity.** Those who have a different agenda than their pastor can use the plan as a way to expedite their pastor’s departure. In this case, the plan becomes a “coup” in disguise. Every church has a few spiritually immature leaders who choose to be activists, critics, and pursuers of greater influence. Succession planning can become a playground for the immature and divisive.
- **Instability.** Rumors of attention being given to a succession plan can create a culture of apprehension and uncertainty in the church. The perceived sense of insecurity can cause staff members to secretly start looking for employment elsewhere. Givers can feel unsure and start restraining their generosity or insulating themselves from appeals for help. Volunteers can be cautious about making commitments, and fringe attenders and members who feel connected to the lead pastor can even start shopping for a new church home.
- **Fear and insecurity.** Statistics show that nothing influences the success of a pastoral transition or succession plan more than the support and enthusiasm of the outgoing pastor. Succession expert Jerry David claims many transitions are unintentionally sabotaged by insecure leaders who undermine their successors in a way that guarantees their failure.¹⁰¹ If a transition is dependent upon the outgoing pastor’s support, the pastor must be ready emotionally, financially, intellectually, and spiritually.



B. Why courageous intentionality is needed. It sits on my desk and reminds me that I am part of something bigger than myself. It is a trunk slice from a tree that gave my family shelter in the national forest. After 109 years, the mighty tree finally fell. A friend of mine was kind enough to make the journey, cut this slice, and use a high-powered magnifying glass to count its rings. Knowing it was my son Geno’s favorite camping spot, he and his wife gave it to me as a gift. It appears this pillar of the forest lived from 1909 until 2018. Much like my son’s premature death, it reminds me that everything in this world is temporary.

However, outside of its sentimental value, the tree slice speaks to me about my role and contribution as a pastor. The tree is like a church and its rings are like seasons of a lifespan. Seasons of growth produced rings with large spaces between them. This was a result of the tree's being blessed with favorable temperatures and rain. Seasons of dormancy created rings that are tight and close together. These were years the tree suffered through drought, harsh weather, long winters, or limited sunlight. Rings scarred by burn marks reflect fires the mighty tree endured, and dark discoloring reveals a temporary infestation of insects or fungus. Some rings reflect unbalanced growth on the side of the tree that faced harsh winds as opposed to the sides that did not. The older the tree, the slower it grows because its roots have grown deep enough to have to compete with other trees for nutrients, resources, and water. Though older, the tree is more stable and may, like this one, provide shelter for over a hundred years.



However, the most profound story the rings tell is one of perseverance. The rings remind us that our role in the tree's life cycle is temporary. Some pastors ignore preceding rings and mistakenly think the history of the tree began the day they arrived. Others think the tree's sole purpose is to build their personal legacy or feed their voracious egos. Unfortunately, some leave the tree in distress while others leave rings that are wide, healthy, and distinct. Most leave rings of modest but consistent growth. In the end, the fires, floods, or growing seasons are not as important as the question: "Will our contribution cause the tree to outlive us?"

I pastored Highpoint for nearly 17 years. At the time of my departure, the church was 86 years old and had only had seven pastors. The last three pastors alone made up 62 years of the church's history. That is why I framed the tree slice and hung it on the wall. The tree reminded me that it is not about me. It reminded me that although we will face storms, droughts, and fires, the tree must survive! It reminds me that there were rings before me and rings that will follow me; but it is our stewardship of the tree, not our rings, that tell the truest story. This is why I came to the conclusion that for Highpoint, need outweighed the risks when it came to succession planning.

- C. How I found balance between justified fear and courageous intentionality.** Even though I was only 50 years of age with no intention of leaving or retiring in the near future, I decided to start leading differently. The thought occurred to me that every pastor, no matter how long their tenure, is an interim pastor. I started leading as if I were a long-term interim pastor. Our governance did not give me the right to select my successor. However, I could certainly lead in such a way that an eventual transition would be staged for success. I could prepare and resource those who would be charged with finding a successor. I could even mentor in a way that presented the possibility of both internal and external candidates.

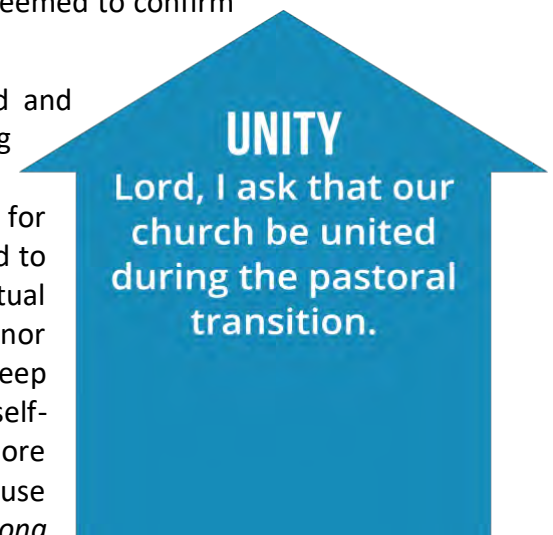
Churches can be like garages in that over time they can accumulate outdated, unwanted, or unfinished "stuff." Mine was the same. Without others knowing it, I decided to make a list of problems I knew a future successor would have to tackle. Then I took each and every one of them on in a patient and methodical way. After being at Highpoint for nearly 17 years, I felt I had earned enough trust and

credibility to absorb any fallout that fighting these battles might bring. The list consisted of things such as:

1. **Governance.** Addressing governance issues and totally rewriting the church bylaws. This took me two years.
2. **Policy.** Updating financial policies, board etiquette, and operating procedures.
3. **Neutralization.** Diplomatically neutralizing the influence of problem, divisive, or high maintenance leaders.
4. **Accountability.** Confronting and realigning committees or ministries that had drifted from their mission and/or accountability structure.
5. **Board.** Training my board about how difficult modern pastoral ministry really is and helping them become more supportive and helpful to spiritual leadership in the future.
6. **Planned abandonment.** Giving a few ministries I started a decent burial. God had given me the vision for them, but I felt sustaining them would become a burden to leaders who did not share my passion or mandate.
7. **Exit strategies.** Formulating exit strategies for large missions pledges and stale partnerships that no longer brought life and energy to our missions and outreach ministries.
8. **Empowerment.** Expressing financial faith to engage highly gifted and diverse staff pastors and then ushering them into the “inner circle” of Highpoint’s leadership structure.
9. **Tribal storytelling.** Mentoring promising staff and volunteers to become organizational DNA carriers for Highpoint’s future.
10. **Strategic planning.** Writing a 140-page manual on how the church would find a new pastor in the event something ever happened to me.

All of these things created new margin and opportunity for whoever would one day follow me. However, the most surprising result from this process was that Highpoint started experiencing another wave of numerical and financial growth. Please do not misunderstand; there is never one reason a church may be growing. If a church is growing, it is always the result of several factors. However, the checking account and attendance records seemed to confirm that God was honoring this courageous mindset.

However, there still was one mountain to climb. I had and enjoyed working with a large board of 12 people (including myself) at Highpoint. Although I desperately wanted to work arm in arm with my board to develop and train them for pastoral transition, I could not get a release from the Lord to do so. I felt some of our leaders may lack the spiritual sensitivity to deal with this issue in a way that would honor the Lord. One had already exhibited an inability to keep confidence regarding smaller decisions. I felt the lack of self-control was a predictor of what I could expect in more significant issues. Paul seems to confirm my sense of pause when he told the Corinthians, *There must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized* (1 Corinthians 11:19 ESV).



I asked the Lord in prayer for two years to either grow them or remove them so I could have a peace about revealing the 140-page manual to the entire board. The Lord chose to take a couple years to grant my request. Until He did, I decided to engage a small team of board officers and one alternate who already had my unequivocal trust. I asked them to pray about signing a strict confidentiality agreement and serve as an advance team that would train and coach the board in the event anything

ever happened to me. We met several times in my home to work our way through the manual, pray, and discuss applications. I will forever cherish the memories, tears, prayers, laughter, and wisdom that converged in those meetings! When God called me to serve as district superintendent, Highpoint already had a team of valuable coaches to get the process started and keep things on track. Following are a few talking points from the memo I gave to the advance team after opening our first meeting in prayer:

SIGNIFICANT CONCERNS. *Allow me to begin our meeting by bringing to you a few concerns I have regarding this risky process of introducing you to a succession plan in the event anything ever happens to me.*


1. **Confidentiality.** *Having a good succession plan is no guarantee it will work. I have not shared this with the full board because of my concern about a few who may lack self-control and the ability to keep confidences. Our church is growing, and I do not want to risk losing momentum because a few people have loose lips.*

2. **Respect.** *I do not want to be penalized for being proactive and putting these things in writing. Some consultants advise against sharing a succession plan with the board before it is needed. Even churches that have plans only have a 50 percent success rate for the following reasons:*

- **Impatience.** *Instead of the plan's being considered as a contingency, it is considered an outstanding task in need of execution dates, progress, and constant attention.*
- **Disunity.** *Those who oppose the pastor or have a different agenda can use the plan as a way to expedite his departure. In this case, the plan is seen as a coup in disguise.*
- **Instability.** *Rumors of attention being given to a succession plan can create a culture of apprehension, fear, and uncertainty in the church. The perceived sense of insecurity can cause staff members to secretly start updating their résumés and shopping for employment elsewhere. Givers can feel unsure and start withholding offerings, restraining their generosity, or insulating themselves from visionary appeals. Volunteers can be cautious about making commitments, and people who feel connected to the lead pastor can start looking for a new home church.*
- **Fear.** *Statistics show that nothing influences the success of a succession plan more than the support and enthusiasm of the outgoing pastor. If a transition is dependent upon the outgoing pastor's support, the pastor must be ready emotionally, financially, intellectually, and spiritually.*

I feel like I can trust our officers. They love me and I love them. Unless I disqualify myself or am ineffective, I want to decide when I leave and not be pressured to establish a timeline or schedule steps in the process. I am confident we can overcome all four of these potential threats.

3. **Transition fund.** *The fact of the matter is that EVERY pastor, whether they realize it or not, is an interim pastor. Because transition is inevitable, expenses related to it are also unavoidable. Any transition is going to involve a "best case," "likely case," and "worst case" scenario. For various reasons we will discuss later, I believe Highpoint will need to plan for a healthy transition fund. Over a year ago, I used an existing but empty bank account to*



STRENGTH
Lord, may our
future pastor have
strength to
endure the many
changes of
transition.

start a pastoral transition fund. I envision this fund being used to help underwrite expenses related to the transition and to finance a new pastor's early initiatives. Rhonda and I have already made the first significant donation to this fund, and we are asking you to consider taking eight weeks to match ours and do the same. In the Old Testament, the waters of the Jordan did not part until the leaders walked in first (Joshua 3:13). Would you talk with your spouse about matching our gift in the next eight weeks?

- 4. Inexperience.** Pastoral departures are usually unpredictable. By the time a board learns the pastor is leaving, there is little time to educate oneself, develop systems, and learn from experts. In over 86 years, Highpoint has been pastored by only seven men. The last two of Highpoint's pastors have led since 1975 which means that in the last 43 years, the church has only assembled a pastoral search committee once! **Highpoint may be good at a lot of things, but we just do not have enough experience to be skilled at pastoral transitions.** That is why I have spent many months reading, researching, and writing a board-led succession plan that gives the church options and direction. I have educated myself on the greatest obstacles and best practices of pastoral transitions. I have interviewed wise leaders, district officials, and peers regarding board-led succession plans. I have also considered how Highpoint's unique needs, culture, and history will shape our needs in a successful transition. That is why I wrote a 13-stage plan to serve the board as a guide but not necessarily as a rule. I want to coach our board officers and one alternate on the contents of this manual so they can serve as guides to the board if it should ever be needed.

COACHING PLAN. I would like to take this group on the following journey to provide an advance team that can usher the board and church through pastoral transition if and when it occurs. This would involve the following:

- 1. A Covenant of Confidentiality.** Have all four of us sign a mutual nondisclosure agreement.
- 2. Meeting #1: Clarification.** Discuss these concerns, come to agreement about how to proceed, and introduce six chapters in what I will call a "partial reveal." I know this will be a lot for you to take in all at once, so I want to unveil it in small amounts starting with six critical chapters.
- 3. Partial reveal.** Introduce the critical six select chapters of the manual and allow you to read it independently before our next meeting.
- 4. Meeting #2.** Discussion of the first six chapters of the partial reveal.
- 5. Full reveal.** Introduce the entire 140-page manual and allow you to read it independently.
- 6. Meeting #3.** Discuss the first half of the manual consisting of Chapters 1-19.
- 7. Meeting #4.** Discuss Appendixes A-Z.
- 8. Full release.** Distribute the full electronic version to the officers and alternate with the understanding that we are all under the obligation of the nondisclosure agreement until I decide to give the full board access, die, leave, or become unable to pastor.

Each meeting ended up being about three hours in length. I have never regretted doing this and, in fact, found each member of the advance team to have elevated their level and distinction of service. They became more sensitive, wise, supportive, and willing to lead their peers in discerning between better and best. Ecclesiastes 3 teaches us that all things have a time and season. Looking back, I do not see that the officer team serving at that time would have been ready for this a year earlier. It was the Spirit's timing. You will need to discern your own time for courageous intentionality. When you do, you will want to be sure to discuss the two chapters entitled "Internal Candidates" and "Succession Models."

21. A PASTOR'S DEPARTING PLEDGE ([back to table](#))

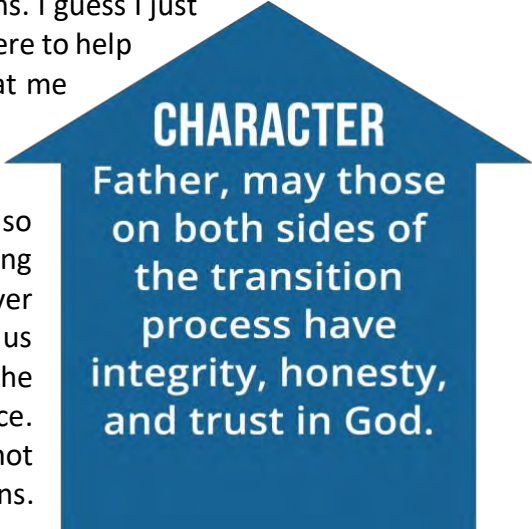
I never worried about Highpoint's future that much until Geno, my 23-year-old son and Highpoint's youth pastor, died from cancer in July 2016. Please do not misunderstand. Neither I nor the board ever anointed Geno as heir apparent or spoke formally about him as my successor. Yes, there were hypothetical compliments made on the wings of appreciation but nothing formal. However, Geno grew up in the church and was respected, trusted, and loved by all generations. I guess I just figured that if something ever happened to me, he would be there to help the church through the storm. I never imagined he would beat me to heaven.

Geno's early death made me more aware of my own mortality and the enlightenment that I had failed the church I worked so hard to build. How? I never prepared Highpoint for something they did not have a lot of experience in—finding a pastor. In over 86 years, Highpoint had only had seven pastors. The last two of us have led since 1975 which means that in the last 43 years, the church had only assembled a pastoral search committee once. Highpoint might be good at a lot of things, but we just did not have enough experience to become skilled at pastoral transitions.

I found myself praying the same prayer Moses whispered in the mid seasons of his own life:

May the LORD, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd (Numbers 27:16-17).

That is why I decided to begin preparing the church in the event something ever happened to me. I decided to write a transition manual and my own personal pledge to the church letting them and future candidates know they can count on my support, integrity, and good intentions. I wanted to write this important document at a time when I could think clearly and would not be swayed by emotion, nostalgia, and the insecurities so common in life transitions. I knew that after nearly 17 years, the success of the transition would largely be dependent upon my sincere support. One day I sat down at my computer and started the draft by asking, "What would Highpoint need from me to be successful?" Below is the pledge that I wrote for Highpoint's succession manual, communicated to the church, and asked the board to make known to all potential candidates. If you are reading this as a lead pastor, I would encourage you to write one as well.



CHARACTER
Father, may those
on both sides of
the transition
process have
integrity, honesty,
and trust in God.

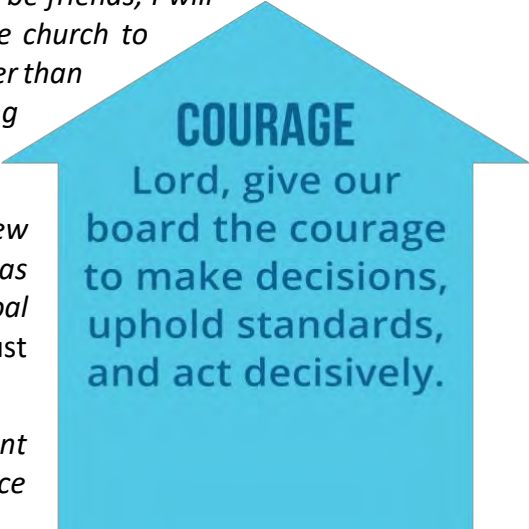
Pastor Gene's Pledge

I want to close this succession plan by pledging my love, support, and good intentions to Highpoint. As I transition from being Highpoint's lead pastor to Highpoint's biggest fan, I pledge:

- A. Not to interfere.** *I pledge to use my influence positively, not to speak critically or to act inappropriately during this or any other transition the church may experience.*
- B. To facilitate success.** *I pledge to make the transition as smooth as possible by preparing the people, resourcing the board, and doing everything in my power to give my successor opportunity and not obligation. I will also deliver to the board a 140-page step-by-step succession plan that is*

customized for Highpoint's structure and the result of years of private research on best practices, books, and manuals concerning pastoral transition.

- C. To help when asked.** *I pledge to make myself available and ready to assist in any way the board or my successor may need. My only desire is that such a request during the interim come from the acting chair of the board or the new pastor after his arrival.*
- D. To be grateful.** *I pledge to be grateful to God, the church and its board and staff, and the people of Highpoint for this wonderful journey we have taken together. I was fairly paid for my labor; and the church, the board, and the people owe me nothing for my service that was given unto the Lord.*
- E. To be positive.** *I pledge to cast a vision of hope for the church under its new leadership and to meet any criticisms with optimism and in a way that honors God, the existing leaders, and my successor.*
- F. To lead my family responsibly.** *I pledge to instruct (and correct if need be) any of my family members involved in the church to be helpful, secure, and positive while they serve at Highpoint.*
- G. To embrace change.** *Scripture teaches us that God uses change to bring new life: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19 NIV). I pledge to find my security in God and embrace this new chapter of my life with faith, trust, and optimism. I also pledge to be enthusiastic about the new chapters that God is writing in the life of Highpoint.*
- H. To create margin for bonding.** *Although we will always be friends, I will not always be your pastor. Now it is important for the church to bond with the new pastor. Nowhere does that occur faster than landmark moments of life. That is why I will be deferring to the new pastor and unavailable to officiate at events like weddings, baby dedications, hospital calls, funerals, counseling, and other pastoral duties. Your new pastor will be more than capable of helping in these areas and will let me know should assistance be needed. My goal is similar to that of John the Baptist who said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30 ESV).*
- I. To contribute.** *I pledge to make the first significant donation to the transition fund I established to finance expenses related to this and future pastoral transitions.*
- J. To pray.** *Like Samuel who said, "Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you" (1 Samuel 12:23 NIV), I pledge to pray for the church, its leaders, its finances, and its growth.*



COURAGE
Lord, give our
board the courage
to make decisions,
uphold standards,
and act decisively.

Sincerely,

Pastor Gene and Rhonda Roncone

A. SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE ([back to table](#))

Statistics repeatedly reveal that churches in pastoral transition experience a substantial decline in morale, attendance, and giving.¹⁰² However, instead of just accepting the gravitational pull of transition, why not believe God to sustain or even increase resources and engagement during this time. Why not step out like Joshua and believe God to defy gravity and enable an anomaly of faith.

On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to Israel, Joshua said to the LORD in the presence of Israel: "Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and you, moon, over the Valley of Aijalon." So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the nation avenged itself on its enemies, as it is written in the Book of Jashar. The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a human being. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel! (Joshua 10:12-14 NIV).



DISCERNMENT
Father, may our board and future pastor have the wisdom to ask the right questions and discern between better and best.

That is why I believe you should consider launching a sustainability initiative that encourages your people to recognize that change is part of God's growth process, and to benefit from this time, they should stick around and sustain current levels of giving and participation. It is a wonderful opportunity to be intentional about making your church stronger rather than weaker. It can also leverage the trust, loyalty, and respect of the outgoing pastor to create sustainability through the transition. This would include some or all of the following six components:

- A 40-day churchwide prayer focus
- Modeling a positive and biblical transition
- Preaching series by Superintendent Roncone
- Small group interaction and involvement
- Pastor-to-person meetings with the congregation
- Commitment Sunday

Following are some suggestions on how that might look:

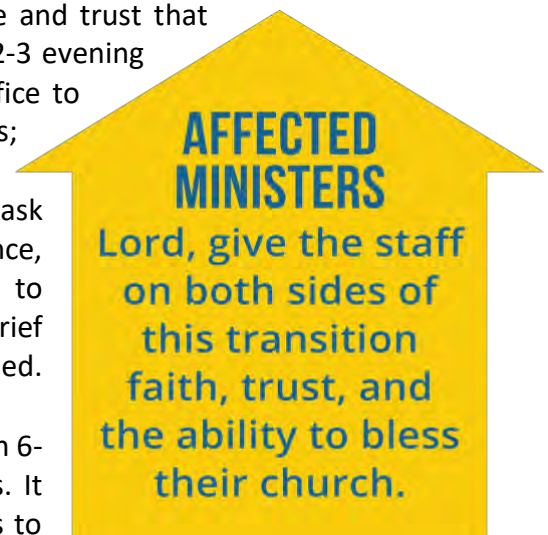
A. Initiative Description.

1. **Purpose.** To be proactive in overcoming the common obstacles of pastoral transitions.
2. **Title.** Rise Up. Surviving, striving, and thriving in pastoral transitions.
3. **Scriptural reference.**
All the people came together as one (Nehemiah 8:1 NIV).
All the people assembled with a unified purpose (Nehemiah 8:1 NLT).
All the people gathered as one man (Nehemiah 8:1 ESV).
4. **Length.** Three-week preaching series, companion small group bible study, and 40 days of prayer.
5. **Involvement levels.** Sunday morning services, small group meetings, one-on-one interactions, and individual prayer focus.

B. Initiative Strategy.

1. **A 40-day churchwide prayer focus.** The entire church is called to prayer on an individual basis. This is accomplished by using the prayer guide explained in the chapter entitled "Mobilizing Prayer." This guide gives the entire church one practical thing to pray about each day. It can also be repeated as many times as needed throughout the duration of the transition.

2. **Healthy modeling.** A healthy transition will require your leaders to model the traits of a biblical changeover with faith, optimism, and mutual respect. This would include having the board, staff, and outgoing pastor meet together and be the first ones to sign the “member covenant” and implement the concepts outlined in the appendix entitled “Parting Well.”
3. **Teaching series.** Superintendent Roncone has written a motivational three-week sermon series designed to be used as soon after the departing pastor’s last Sunday as possible. It serves as the centerpiece of the church’s three-week sustainability initiative and combines humor, common sense, and teaching about what the Bible has to say about pastoral transitions.
 - **Part 1: How to Grow in Pastoral Transitions.** Practical teaching from biblical examples of leadership transitions explaining why God transitions leaders as well as giving your people practical ways they can grow and thrive in a pastoral transition.
 - **Part 2: What Your New Pastor Needs.** A positive message giving 4-5 things every new pastor needs and wants from the people to be successful in the long run.
 - **Part 3: Embracing God’s New Thing.** The conclusion of the series as a motivational call to commitment. Superintendent Roncone focuses on the good things that come from God’s “new thing” and the commitment required to experience them. A member commitment form is made available in people’s seats, and the service climaxes with everyone’s signing them and bringing them to the altar as an offering to the Lord followed by a corporate time of prayer and consecration.
4. **Small group bible studies.** For three weeks, every small group in your church will go through the same Rise Up curriculum. The Rise Up small group resource contains three bible study lessons (with discussions questions) on why God brings spiritual leaders in and out of our lives. The group interaction questions focus on how to apply the concepts from the Sunday morning preaching series and the bible study. They can also be used as a stand-alone resource. The weekly small group discussion questions can be found in the appendix entitled “Churchwide Small Group Study.”
5. **Pastor-to-person meetings.** To leverage the influence and trust that people have in the outgoing pastor, they could host 2-3 evening meetings a week with 6-8 people at a time in his office to briefly explain God’s purpose for pastoral transitions; identify common challenges; explain the plan to overcome them; outline their personal pledge; and ask people to sustain and increase their existing attendance, service, and giving. Participants could also be asked to make a donation to the church’s transition fund. A brief time of questions and answers could also be provided. These meetings could occur in two ways:
 - **Top 50 financial leaders.** Small group meetings with 6-8 individuals who are among your top fifty givers. It may also be wise to consider asking these leaders to make a designated offering to the “transition fund.” A suggested goal could be to secure one-twelfth (1/12) of the church’s annual income within sixty (60) days. This can be achieved by asking each family to give an offering of what would be equal to one month’s tithe to the transition account. Those who are not tithing can be scheduled separately and asked to begin tithing (instead of giving to the transition fund) during and through the transition.



- **Members and adherents.** Small group meetings with 6-8 individuals who have been called and scheduled in one of the 2-3 slots in the evenings.

This format will give anyone who desires one-on-one access to the lead pastor before their departure. It is a powerful way to harness their influence to increase people's commitment and ensure sustainability. If the lead pastor is unavailable due to death, a move, illness, or unwillingness, these meetings can be done with board members or key staff.

6. **Commitment Sunday.** The third week of the series will consist of a shorter sermon with the board, staff, and outgoing pastor standing together on the platform and explaining the member covenant. The service will end by asking each member to personally sign the member covenant and conclude with prayer asking for God's blessing and favor (perhaps a replay of the blessing service described in another appendix).

B. PARTING WELL ([back to table](#))

This section gives greater detail about how to write the first letter to the congregation, conduct an exit interview, use an employee checkout form, access issues, and plan a blessing service.

A. Lead Pastor's farewell letter to the church. Immediately after the pastoral transition has been announced, the lead pastor should write a letter. Following is an example of my own letter and what your letter may look like:

Greetings Highpoint Family,

On Sunday, (month) (date), I announced in both worship services that I will be leaving Highpoint to take on a new assignment the Lord has called us to. (Briefly describe the new assignment.)

I write with a deep sense of sadness that our time together as a pastor and congregation is ending after (insert number) years. However, I know that the same God who is calling me forward has new and exciting plans for Highpoint. Scripture teaches us that God uses change to bring new life: *See I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?* (Isaiah 43:19 NIV). When change is embraced with faith, trust, and optimism, God begins to write new chapters in our lives and church.

I want to assure you that Highpoint's Board of Deacons is fully capable and resourced to lead the church through this transition. They have already begun executing the directives outlined in our bylaws concerning pastoral transitions and have a plan to call the church to prayer, appoint an interim pastor, assess the unique needs of our church, and begin a national search to identify God's person to lead Highpoint into the future. Before I even knew about this transition, the Lord led me to invest several months collaborating with other leaders around the nation to prepare a customized manual in the event anything ever happened to me. The manual contains thirteen steps to help identify God's will for a new pastor. I wanted Highpoint to be ready for such a time as this and shared the manual with the board officers and an alternate before we even knew of this development. The board is capable, resourced, and ready to lead.

My last Sunday will be (month and day). Until that time, Rhonda and I pledge our deepest commitment to prepare the church for your new pastor. The board and I have collaborated together to launch a 40-day emphasis called, *"Rise Up. Surviving, Striving and Thriving in Pastoral Transitions."* We are excited about what God can and will do when *all the people came together as one* (Nehemiah 8:1 NIV). The series will involve:

- A 40-day churchwide prayer focus.
- A Sunday morning series gleaning truth from leadership transitions recorded in the Bible.
- Power of 3 small group interaction and involvement focused on the transition.
- "Pastor-to-person" meetings with Rhonda and me in the evenings to say goodbye and thank you and ask for your prayers regarding specific items concerning the transition. These appointments are open to anyone who desires to schedule them.
- Commitment Sunday on (insert date) will be our last day as your pastor.



DISCERNMENT
Jesus, may the board be led by God's Spirit and know the right questions to ask in the interview process.

Serving the people of Highpoint for the past (insert # of) years and loving this great city of Aurora has been a privilege Rhonda and I will cherish throughout eternity. You have allowed us to share in your lives, feed your souls, dedicate your children, marry your young, and grieve together when losing loved ones. We have reached out to our community and city with the love of God and accomplished so much together. It has been a joy. However, now it is time to embrace the commitment needed to ensure a successful transition of leadership. Like always, Highpoint will rise to the occasion and be amazed by what God does!

More in the coming weeks,

Pastor Gene and Rhonda Roncone

B. Send a letter of affirmation and encouragement to the congregation. Within a week of the pastor's resignation, the board should send, post, or email a letter to the church. This letter should affirm the prior leadership (if possible) and outline the general steps the board will be taking. The Alaska Ministry Network provided a wonderful example of such a letter.¹⁰³ Following is a customized version of that letter which you can amend as needed.

Greetings,

As you know, Pastor (insert pastor's first name) resigned as lead pastor due to (insert specific scenario) effective (insert date). We appreciate Pastor (insert first name) and (insert spouse's first name) and their contribution to the church over the past (insert number) years, and we will be announcing ways we hope to express our appreciation to them before they depart.

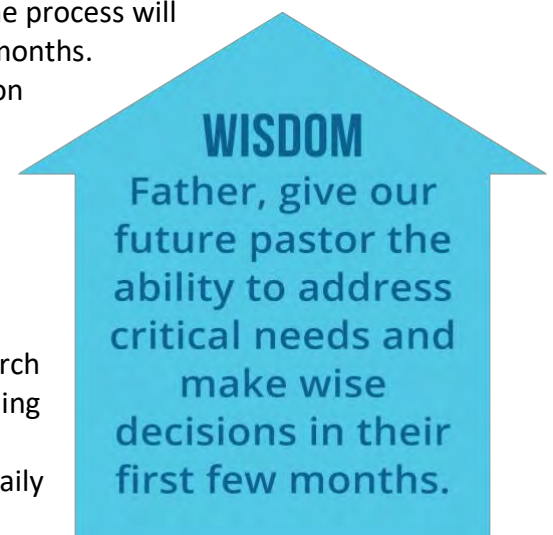
In the meantime, we wanted to let you know of our immediate plans to secure a new lead pastor. We have chosen to use an excellent resource to guide us in this process. The resource contains thirteen steps to help identify God's will for a new pastor and identifies the best practices in pastoral transitions. Our bylaws also provide specific instructions concerning the process of selecting a new lead pastor. Article (insert reference) says:

(insert text from bylaws prescribing the process your church has for a pastoral search and election).

Although it is not possible to know exactly how long the process will take, the average pastoral search takes about twelve months.

However, we believe our prior planning and preparation through the resource may enable us to identify a candidate in approximately (insert your projection) months. As a board, we will be:

1. Seeking the counsel of the district superintendent/network pastor.
2. Appointing an interim pastor to allow us to put our full attention and focus on the pastoral search process and permit the staff to continue providing effective leadership to our ministries.
3. Calling the church to 40 days of prayer with a daily focus.
4. Making a prayerful determination of the goals and needs of the church.



5. Screening, interviewing, and vetting potential candidates concerning their compatibility to serve.
6. Selecting the best qualified candidate to be presented to the membership for election.
7. Presenting the candidate to the congregation over a weekend which will include a social event on a Saturday, preaching on Sunday morning, and a business meeting in the evening.
8. Throughout the entire process, we will keep the church informed of our progress and prayer needs.

Please pray for the board and search committee and allow this process to come to a satisfactory conclusion without lobbying or division (Ephesians 4:3-4). This process has proven to work effectively and is the normal method for Assemblies of God churches across the United States. We will be sure to keep you updated as to our progress.

Sincerely,

The Board of Deacons
(list each deacon's name)



- C. Exit interview.** An exit interview is an informal dialogue between the church board and the departing pastor. These interviews are generally conducted for the purpose of gathering vital information about the former leader's experience and to obtain honest feedback about the vision, mission, and current health of the church. Following are a few suggested ground rules to keep these meetings productive:
1. The meeting should be attended by the full board, not a subcommittee. This ensures everyone hears the same information firsthand without the need for summaries by others.
 2. The discussion should be positive and productive. It should not be used as a platform to take parting shots or release frustration. The goal is to get information that will help the church transition well and avoid obstacles.

Most of the questions below are from two outstanding resources produced by the British Columbia and Yukon Districts of The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and Robert Kaylor's book on pastoral transitions entitled *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*.¹⁰⁴ I have also added a few that I used during my own season of district service. They can be given out ahead of time and serve as an agenda for the face-to-face meeting.

Your Church Lead Pastor Exit Interview

Some of the questions in this survey will deal with the personal observations of your tenure in ministry with this congregation. Other questions will ask you to reflect on the character and culture of this congregation and its strengths and weaknesses in order to prepare their next pastor for future ministry and leadership.

1. What do you feel were the greatest accomplishments in your goals and objectives for this congregation during your tenure?

2. What will you miss about your ministry here? What will you not miss?
3. What was the best thing about serving here? What was the most difficult thing about serving here?
4. How effective has this congregation been with accomplishing their mission over the past two or three years?
5. What two or three congregational needs required a major portion of your time and energy during this tenure in ministry?
6. To what degree do you believe the leadership supported your passion for the vision, values, and mission of this church? Congregational support?
7. What important aspects of the work do you believe are “in progress” or unfinished and need continued guidance for long-range success?
8. What future challenges do you consider “must-win battles” for the church to be effective in the future?
9. Were there any critical issues that sidetracked your ministry or leadership?
10. How adequate was the salary and benefits of this pastoral appointment during your tenure?
11. What are our church’s three greatest needs?
12. What are the three greatest dangers or threats our church is facing?
13. What are our church’s greatest strengths?
14. What changes are taking place in our church that have the potential to impact our future needs?
15. From your perspective, how can our church better reach its immediate community?
16. What financial or organizational commitments (missionary pledges, love offerings, facility commitments, or staff and volunteer obligations) have you made as a leader that remain outstanding?
17. What missionaries, guest speakers, or guests have been scheduled that we need to know about?
18. What wounds have you received here that still require healing? How can we heal together?
19. How can we best support your successor?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell us in confidence about this congregation?



AGREEMENT
 Jesus, may the board be in agreement regarding the background and experience needed by the next pastor.

D. Employee checklist. I used the following departure checklist at Highpoint which can be amended to accommodate your needs:

Church Employee Departure Checkout

1. **Day of Checkout:** Employee checkout will be conducted on a day determined by the board. This will require you to come prepared to return all church property and equipment. All departing employees should have removed all personal belongings from their work space prior to their last day in the office.
2. **Checkout Procedures:** Before a final paycheck can be authorized, the employee should come to the scheduled meeting prepared to return the following items and information:
 - Keys and entry access codes:** All keys (including those you may have loaned or given to others) have been labeled and returned to the board. Do not give others (staff or volunteers) your keys. They will be reissued as needed and approved by the business office.

- Cell phone(s):** If the employee (or employee’s spouse) has been issued a company cell phone, the phone(s) will be returned as well as the code to change and access voicemail. Employees are not permitted to keep company phones or dedicated numbers unless authorized by the board.
 - Electronic logins:** All computer and electronic logins will be turned over to the board.
 - Medical and dental:** Medical, dental, and COBRA responsibilities will be communicated.
 - Outstanding educational balances:** Check for any balances due for reimbursements or the purchase of prearranged and authorized educational equipment.
 - Outstanding postage and phone balances:** Check for any balances due for postage or long distance.
 - Electronic equipment returned:** All electronic equipment and church property will be returned to the board during this meeting unless other arrangements have been authorized by the board.
 - Remote access:** Remote access (if applicable) disconnected.
 - Passwords and vender information:** List of current passwords for work-related/ministry websites and other vender related items.
 - Key ministry leaders:** List of names/contact info for key ministry/department leaders.
 - Forwarding address:** Forwarding address/information for mail and last check.
 - Paid time off status:** Review of used paid time off and vacation schedule. Upon termination, employees receive pay for earned unused vacation.
 - Last check:** Review arrangements for the date and location the last check(s) will be sent via mail.
 - Signature of recognition:** Sign document outlining things that were covered in the checkout meeting.
- 3. Insurance Coverage at the End of Employment:** Regardless of the reason, when employment ends, church group health coverage terminates on the last day of the month in which your employment ceased. For example, if your last day of work will be June 13, your health coverage will terminate June 30. Dental insurance terminates on your last day of employment.
- 4. Reference Requests:** The church does not furnish open letters of recommendation addressed “To Whom It May Concern.” If you receive a call inquiring about a former employee, please refer it to the Executive Administrator. Only the lead pastor or executive administrator has the authority to respond to such inquiries.

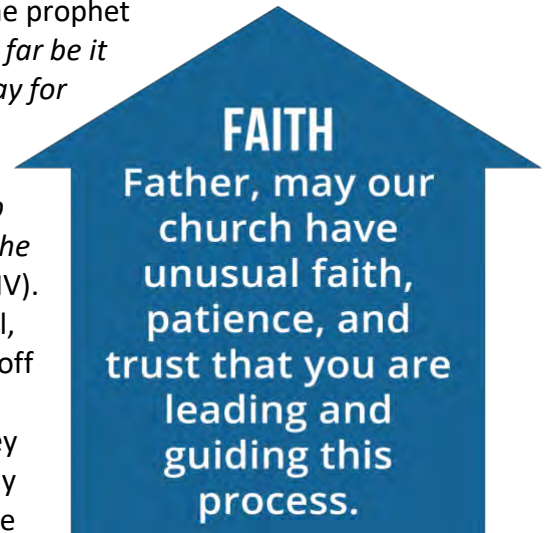
Employee Signature _____ Date _____

Secretary of the Deacon Board _____ Date _____

- E. Outstanding access issues.** The board will want to ensure that the following access issues are addressed before the pastor’s last day:
1. Final payment of salary, bonus, love offering, or unused vacation days.
 2. Termination of any existing benefits (health, dental, retirement, or transportation).
 3. Location of important records, legal documents, corporate seal, passwords, or files that were managed by the lead pastor. See the checkout form for more details.
 4. Change of signature cards on all bank accounts (checking, savings, credit cards, legal documents, and others).
- F. Blessing service.** The following can be used as a guide for an informal blessing service. The service can take place informally in a room of the church or publicly as part of a church service.

Your Church
Deacon and Pastor's Blessing Service

READING BY BOARD MEMBER: Scripture gives us several examples of believers blessing each other when the circumstances of life caused them to part ways. Before his death, the last thing **Moses** did was to pronounce a blessing on each of the tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 33:1-29). While concluding his farewell speech to the children of Israel, the prophet **Samuel** encouraged them in the Lord and said, *As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by failing to pray for you* (1 Samuel 12:23 NIV). The Bible tells us that before ascending to heaven, **Jesus** blessed the disciples: *When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven* (Luke 24:50-51 NIV). After recognizing a new assignment for Barnabas and Paul, the **church at Antioch** laid hands on them and sent them off with prayer (Acts 13:1-3). While saying goodbye to the Ephesian elders, **Paul** spoke blessings upon them, and they knelt down to pray and cry together (Acts 20:32-36). Many of Paul's epistles conclude with a prayer or blessing for the recipients.



READING BY OUTGOING PASTOR: A blessing is the act of declaring favor and goodness upon others. A blessing was one way of asking for God's divine favor to rest upon others. Probably the most famous blessing in the Bible is found in Numbers 6:22-27.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron and his sons to bless the people of Israel with this special blessing: 'May the LORD bless you and protect you. May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you. May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.' Whenever Aaron and his sons bless the people of Israel in my name, I myself will bless them" (NLT).

God told Moses to teach Aaron's sons to bless others and, in return, God would bless them. There are five things this blessing asks God to do in the life of another:

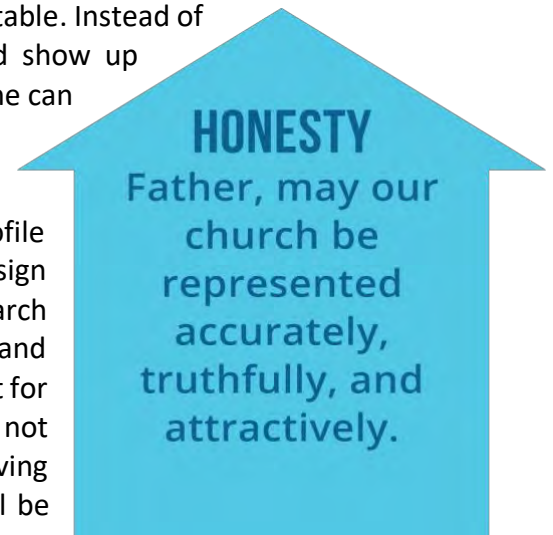
- God to give His favor and protection – *"May the LORD bless and protect you"* (v.24)
- God to be pleased – *"May the LORD smile on you"* (v.25)
- God to be merciful and compassionate – *"May the LORD be gracious to you"* (v.25)
- God to give His approval – *"May the LORD show you his favor"* (v.26)
- God to give peace – *"May the LORD give you his peace"* (v.26)

LAYING ON OF HANDS: The board lays hands on the pastor and family and prays for them. Then the outgoing pastor leads the church in prayer for the board.

C. BOARD/SEARCH COMMITTEE PLANNING RETREAT ([back to table](#))

The best way to start the process well is for the search committee to have a two-day retreat at a nearby hotel or bed and breakfast. The purpose of this time is for the search committee to get away to be able to hear from God and give concentrated focus on determining a plan of action. This can also be accomplished through two separate half-day Saturday meetings as well. Requiring members to read this resource before the retreat will help make the time more profitable. Instead of having to use time to explain the process, members should show up already having a general understanding of the process. The time can then be better used for strategy and collaboration.

During the retreat, you will go over this resource; determine roles; strategize, write up a church bio, job description, and profile of the “ideal candidate”; determine a search budget; and sign confidentiality agreements. Your board officers or search committee chair should determine a retreat schedule and collaborate with the committee to select a date that works best for everyone. Although it is preferred that all members be present, not everyone may be able to attend. To keep the process moving forward, the fact must be accepted that not all members will be able to participate in each meeting. The board officers should have a pre-meeting huddle the day before to come up with an agenda and game plan, provide hard-copy manuals for everyone, and access the needed resources. Following is a proposed schedule you can amend:



Search Committee Retreat

Friday Evening

5–6:30 pm	Dinner together.
6:30–7 pm	Prayer (see prayer focus).
7–10 pm	Manual orientation. The group goes over the retreat agenda and each part of the succession resource and determines a committee purpose statement (see example in the chapter entitled “Managers or Visionaries?”).

Saturday

8–9:45 am	Assign committee roles and responsibilities and determine what kind of vote is desired for different decisions (see the chapter entitled “The Pastoral Search Committee” to see additional information on this topic).
9:45–10 am	Break.
10–11:45 am	Write church summary/bio. See the appendix entitled “Church, Neighborhood, and Community Profile.”
11:45 am–1 pm	Lunch together.
1–1:30 pm	Review of biblical qualifications and characteristics form. See the appendix entitled “Desirable Qualities.”
1:30–2:30 pm	Group discussion regarding biblical qualifications and desired qualities to isolate common denominators.
2:30–3:30 pm	Group writes pastoral job description. See the appendix entitled “Job Description.”
3:30–3:45 pm	Break.

3:45–4:15 pm	Group writes profile of ideal pastor. See the appendix entitled “Pastor Profile.”
4:15–4:30 pm	Group reviews, explains, and signs the “Member Covenant” and confidentiality agreement if they have not already done so and discusses consequences of a breach.
4:30–5 pm	Group determines meeting frequency, location, and time. They also begin discussions that will be revisited later concerning the search budget. See chapter entitled “Committee Meetings” and the appendix entitled “Search Budget” for more information.
5–6 pm	Prayer together.
6–7:15 pm	Dinner together.
Dismissal	

D. SEARCH BUDGET ([back to table](#))

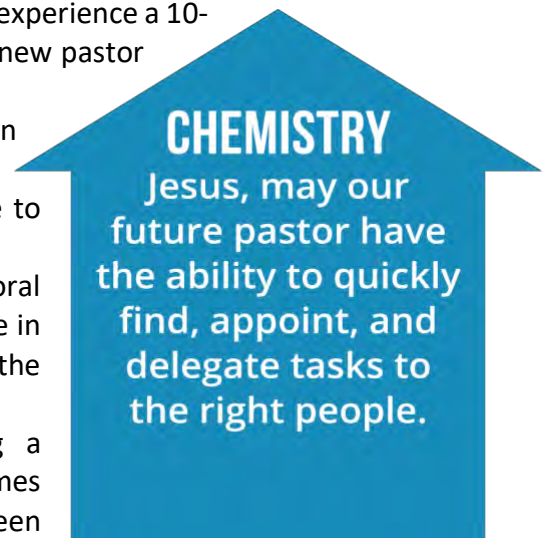
Searching for a pastor is a significant expense worthy of the benefits it brings. Cutting corners only results in depriving your committee of the experiences and resources needed to make wise decisions and identify God's will. The Bible encourages us to be as strategic with our budgeting as we are with our process:

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish" (Luke 14:28-30 ESV).

When anticipating expenses, it is important to distinguish between hard and hidden costs. Hard costs include expenses directly related to the search process while hidden costs include expenses indirectly related to the transition as a whole.

A. Hidden costs. Many churches fail to consider the indirect costs of a pastoral transition. Authors Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree dedicated an entire chapter of their book to warning church boards of the staggering financial impact of a pastoral search. As consultants specializing in pastoral transition, they listed some of the following considerations among their list of hidden costs:¹⁰⁵

- 1. Attendance.** Nearly all churches in pastoral transition experience a 10-15 percent decrease in attendance that will take the new pastor one to two years to regain.
- 2. Income.** Nearly all churches in pastoral transition experience a 10-15 percent decrease in tithes and offerings that will take the new pastor between one to two years to regain.
- 3. New members.** Within the first six months of a pastoral transition, churches experience a 50 percent decrease in new members and families deciding to associate with the church.
- 4. Transition expenses.** Most churches experiencing a pastoral transition will end up spending at least two times the amount of the lead pastor's salary between decreased giving and expenses related to the entire transition process. The expenses include things like farewell expenses related to the exiting pastor, interim pastor or guest speaker costs, searching for candidates, interviewing candidates, relocating a new pastor, assimilating the new pastor into the work environment, and the possible loss of revenue related to decreased attendance.
- 5. Salaries.** Most churches experiencing a pastoral transition (especially those losing long-term pastors) find their current salary is around ten percent lower than the industry norm and needs to be increased to appeal to competent candidates.
- 6. Staff adjustments.** Most churches experiencing a pastoral transition will also experience expenses related to additional staff turnover both before and after the placement of a new pastor.
- 7. Morale.** Most churches experiencing a pastoral transition will experience a drop in morale during the search process. This momentum usually takes one year to totally recover.



Weese and Crabtree warn that unreasonable expectations of the new pastor during the vulnerable three years that follow a transition can create a recurring cycle of transition and financial limitations. These unrealistic expectations commonly include things like launching new ministries, exceeding past

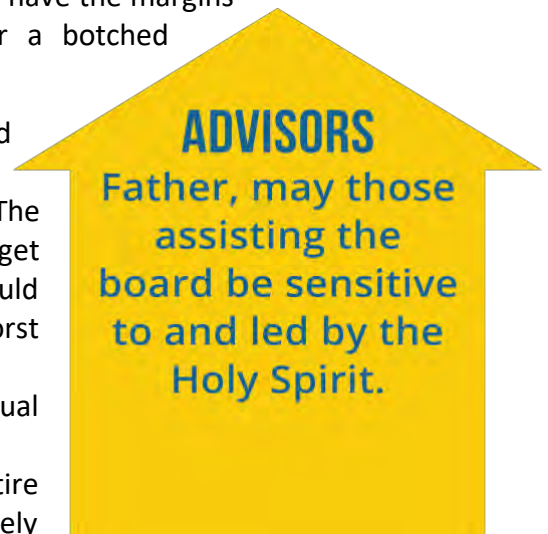
attendance, income and ministry involvement levels, and capital campaigns before the church has recuperated from the three-year transition cycle. They estimate that the total financial cost between expenses and loss of income will exceed twice the annual compensation package of the lead pastor—10-15 percent of a church’s total operating budget.¹⁰⁶ Another study reported that the hidden costs, unrealistic expectations, and transitional challenges alone result in 40 percent of new leaders failing within the first eighteen months of entering a new leadership role.¹⁰⁷ The takeaway seems to be three things:

1. **Commitment.** The committee must be willing to invest the time to do a pastoral transition right.
2. **Initiative.** The church board and search committee must be willing to take the initiative in removing apparent obstacles before the new pastor arrives.
3. **Patience.** The church must give the new pastor two to three years to help the church recover and navigate the learning curve of a new culture, city, and community.

Pastor Jeff Harlow said it best: “Our churches simply do not have the margins in missional momentum, money, and people to suffer a botched handoff.”¹⁰⁸

B. Hard costs. Because transition is inevitable, expenses related to it are also unavoidable. Any transition is going to involve “best case,” “likely case,” and “worst case” scenarios. The following budget template is to help you estimate and budget transition expenses for your church. When doing so, I would suggest basing it off of the following assumptions and a “worst case” scenario.

1. **Feasibility study.** Research and bidding based on actual expenses at the time of your estimation.
2. **Eight-month process.** This budget should assume the entire search process from start to finish will be approximately eight months. Although research reveals the national average for a pastoral transition is 12-24 months, I feel you can do a very thorough job in or around eight months. The rationale for this projection is based on several factors. First, if you are like most churches, your bylaws have already charged the board to act as a pastoral search committee. That means you are months ahead of churches that require a separate pastoral search committee which needs to be nominated, vetted, selected, and educated concerning their role. Second, the compilation of best practices in this resource has the potential to shave 3-4 months off the learning curve. Third, your board already has experience and chemistry working with each other and deliberating as a group.
3. **One-time expenses.** One-time expenses that occur all at one time are not listed in the monthly column but carried over to the column labeled “8-month total.”
4. **Economic variables.** Your budget should assume individual expenses will be on the higher end of available options at the time of your estimation. However, several factors may actually result in lower estimates. For example, the process may be shorter and actual expenses may be less due to less travel, shorter distances, smaller family size, economic realities, cost savings, or the possibility of a strong internal candidate. There is also the possibility that the data used to determine this budget will become obsolete or that an unforeseen event may lengthen the process. Consequently, the budget would need to be increased. Use the template below to estimate your search budget.



Projected Pastoral Search Budget

Stage	Description	Detail	Month	8-Month Total	Total Stage Cost
0	INTERIM PASTOR COSTS				
	Monthly honorarium. This figure assumes the fifth role (Interim Executive Leadership) described in paragraph E, "Various Capacities of an Interim Pastor" in the chapter entitled "Interim Pastor."	Estimates based on eight months of service consisting of 4 days in the office each week, preaching two services on Sunday, staff and board meetings, and pastoral care. That would include everything with the exception of food and lodging. It should also be noted that the church would not be paying a lead pastor's salary.	\$?	\$?	
	Lodging expenses	Sunday through Wednesday (\$?? a night)	\$?	\$?	
	Food expenses		\$?	\$?	
	Total Interim Pastor Costs				\$?
1	PRE-SEARCH PREPARATION				
	Sustainability letter of invitation and sheets with daily prayer focus	Three pieces of paper, envelope, and postage		\$?	
	Board or search committee retreat at hotel or bed and breakfast	1 night retreat with 2 dinners, 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, meeting space for 2 days, beverage service, and private rooms: \$?? per guest (plus tax)		\$?	
	Total Stage 1 Costs				\$?
2	ADVERTISING THE OPENING				
	Online posting fees for 4 months	Costs for services mentioned in the appendix entitled "Advertising the Ministry Opening"		\$?	
	Total Stage 2 Costs				\$?
3	SEEK COUNSEL FROM DISTRICT LEADERSHIP/CONGREGATION				
	Inviting district superintendent/network pastor to come to the church board meeting for advice.	Honorarium (\$??) and reimburse lodging (\$??) and meals (\$??)		\$?	
	Letter to church informing them of online survey and questions.	Letters at 55 cents each (envelopes and postage) \$?		\$?	
	Total Stage 3 Costs				\$?
4	TARGETING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES				
	Weekly pulpit committee meetings	Perhaps one confidential meeting a month offsite at a rented conference center (\$?? an hour for small room; \$?? an hour for large room)	\$?	\$?	
	Refreshments each week	Refreshments for weekly meetings	\$?	\$?	
	Total Stage 4 Costs				\$?
9	CONTEXTUAL VISIT				

	Airfare	Projections made using expedia.com with reservations made two weeks ahead of time. Round trip for two committee members flying from your location to a 10-city average. Three trips to visit the churches of the top 3 candidates.	\$?	\$?	
	Lodging	Two separate rooms	\$?	\$?	
	Meals		\$?	\$?	
	Miscellaneous		\$?	\$?	
	Update letter to church	Letters at 55 cents each (envelopes and postage) \$?		\$?	
	Total Stage 9 Costs				\$?
10	3 PERSONAL INTERVIEWS				
	Airfare	Projections made using expedia.com with reservations made two weeks ahead of time. Three (top three candidates) round trip tickets for two people (candidate and spouse) flying to Denver from a 10-city average. Three trips to interview each of the top three candidates.	\$?	\$?	
	Lodging	One room	\$?	\$?	
	Meals		\$?	\$?	
	Miscellaneous		\$?	\$?	
	Car rental	Three car rentals averaging \$?? each		\$?	
	Letter to church updating them on the process	Letters at 55 cents each (envelopes and postage) \$?		\$?	
	Total Stage 10 Costs				\$?
11	RETURN VISIT OF PRIMARY CANDIDATE				
	Airfare	Projections made using expedia.com with reservations made two weeks ahead of time. Round trip tickets for candidate, spouse, and up to three children flying to Denver from a 10-city average.		\$?	
	Lodging	Two rooms for entire family		\$?	
	Meals			\$?	
	Miscellaneous			\$?	
	Car rental	Family size car rental averaging \$?? each		\$?	
	Total Stage 11 costs				\$?
12	OFFICIAL CANDIDACY				
	Airfare	Projections made using expedia.com with reservations made two		\$?	

		weeks ahead of time. Round trip tickets for candidate, spouse and up to three children flying to Denver from a 10-city average.			
	Lodging	Two rooms for entire family		\$?	
	Meals			\$?	
	Miscellaneous			\$?	
	Car rental	Family size car rental averaging \$? weekly rental		\$?	
	Business meeting announcements	Letter to the membership announcing the selection of a candidate and the day and time of the business meeting vote. Letters at 55 cents each (envelopes and postage) \$?		\$?	
	Total Stage 12 costs				\$?
13	PREPARING FOR NEW PASTOR				
	Moving expenses	Projection made assuming a moving company is used and moving from the farthest point east or west.		\$?	
	New laptop	Apple products for consistency with office set up.		\$?	
	New phone	Apple iPhone		\$?	
	First month's deposit	In the event the candidate is a young family and unable to immediately transition into higher housing costs.		\$?	
	Total Stage 13 costs				\$?
	TOTAL TRANSITION EXPENSES				\$?

- C. Transition fund.** Any transition is going to involve a “best case,” “likely case,” and “worst case” scenario. I believe you should hope for the best but plan for the worst by facilitating a transition fund equal to at least one month of the church’s total income.
- 1. Fund existence.** When I created Highpoint’s transition fund, I used an existing but empty bank account that had previously been known as the “missions savings account.” This fund can then be used to help underwrite transition expenses and finance a new pastor’s early initiatives.
 - 2. Faith deposits.** If you are the pastor, board, or search committee creating this fund for the unforeseen future, I would encourage you and your spouse to be the first ones to make a significant donation to the fund. If at some point you feel comfortable revealing the plan and training an advance team (board officers and alternate), I would also ask them to make a contribution. If you are a board and just getting started, I would suggest you ask each and every deacon to do their very best to give something equal to a month’s tithes BEFORE you ask the church to support the fund later. In the Old Testament, the waters of the Jordan did not part until the leaders walked in first (Joshua 3:13).
 - 3. Church participation.** Members and adherents can then be asked to join the leadership community and contribute to the fund above their normal tithes and offerings as part of the sustainability initiative.

4. **Frugality encouraged.** *The wise store up choice food and olive oil, but fools gulp theirs down* (Proverbs 21:20 NIV). That is why I would encourage the board to use the fund moderately to ensure a significant amount is left to finance the new pastor's first initiatives. That will be a great incentive for potential candidates.

I am convinced that having a budget and a transition fund is as important to this process as the Holy Spirit's direction. Proverbs 27:12 reminds us that *A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences* (NLT).

E. CHURCH, NEIGHBORHOOD, AND COMMUNITY PROFILE ([back to table](#))

To keep the process moving forward without getting bottlenecked by information requests from candidates, the search committee will need to appoint a team to write a church profile. A church profile is a written summary describing your church, neighborhood, and city to prospective candidates. This is where most search committees fail due to procrastination and not assigning the task to a specific team. Remember, EVERY serious candidate is going to want this information. Taking the time now to provide it will help you in the following ways:

- It will show candidates that you are serious, helpful, and prepared.
- It will save time because this information can be attached to emails or made available online.
- It will facilitate more meaningful communication by allowing candidates to have read it and come with more reflective questions.
- It may give you a competitive edge over other churches who have contacted the same candidate but have yet to invest the time in completing good profiles.

It would save the search committee even more time if this information were made available through the internet on a web page, blog, or shared folder. A sample and short video tour of how Highpoint did this can be viewed at <http://www.agspe.org/rutour.mp4>.

Whether you use a document, shared folder, or website, your profile should contain up-to-date and accurate information about your church. I would suggest you create a document with the following headings and then type in your own information after them:

- **Church summary.** A summary of your church, its history, previous pastors, governance, number of members, number of board members, name of board chair, and name of the president of the nonprofit corporation. It should also give service times and statistical averages for total constituents and attendance as well as the annual income, missions giving, debt, and mortgage payment. Include photos of your facilities and floor plans along with square footage as well as any future expansion options you may have with existing or unused land.
- **Community profile.** A description of your church's neighborhood, surrounding community, and city profile. This kind of information can usually be found at the reference desk of your city hall or on county or city websites. Include population, demographics, and things that make your city a unique place to live.
- **Previous pastor.** A brief bio of your previous pastor so candidates may know what type of education, experiences, passions, and hobbies they had that would likely have influenced the church.
- **Vision statements.** Your current mission, purpose, vision, or values statement.
- **Governance and policy.** A link to the church's bylaws and other important financial, fund, child protection, or other policies.
- **Staff bios.** A short bio on any paid staff members and what area of ministry they give leadership to.
- **Recognition.** Include a list of any awards or community commendations your church has received.

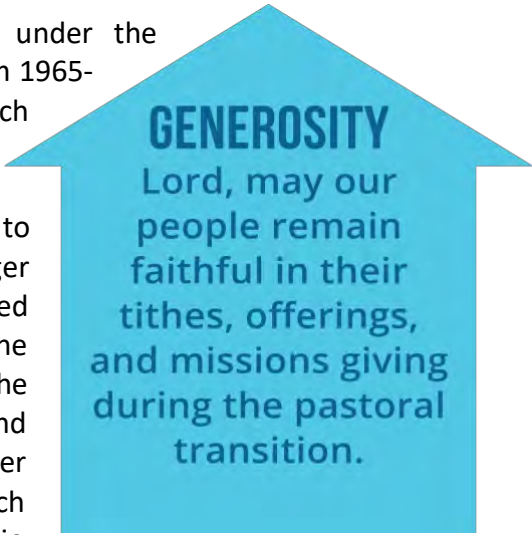


JUDGMENT
Lord, give the board clarity as they interview, eliminate, and move forward with candidates in the interview process.

Knowing it is easier to improve something than create it from nothing, I have provided an example of a **FICTIONAL** church profile below. Seeing it may help you design your own.

Vista Community Church, Vista, Colorado

- A. Summary.** Vista Community Church is a Spirit-filled evangelical church affiliated with the Assemblies of God. The church feels more like a Spirit-filled interdenominational community church, and its constituency comes from very diverse ethnic, spiritual, and social backgrounds made up of primarily middle-aged professionals and young families. All of Vista Community's efforts center around the four core values of worship, discipleship, service, and outreach. The church worship is led by a band and worship team that facilitates a more contemporary style of worship, primarily geared for those between the ages of 35-55. As a Spirit-filled church, Vista Community embraces a more conservative expression of Spirit-filled faith. The gifts operate occasionally followed by a biblical explanation and invitation for salvation. Its discipleship centers around small groups, and its community involvement and outreach produce an above-average participation level of service opportunities. Vista Community has an excellent reputation in the city and is often called upon by city leaders to assist in community problem solving.
- B. Governance.** Vista Community has a hybrid congregational/presbyterian form of governance. The membership is the final decision-making body of the church but delegates authority and duties through the bylaws to others (board, pastor, Assemblies of God doctrine) to act on their behalf. Authority is delegated and, at times, even shared in overlapping areas. This enables Vista to have sufficient accountability structures while at the same time benefit from a board of directors and be led by visionary leadership. It helps Vista be accountable, decisive, and responsive all at the same time. The pastor is elected to an indefinite term. Find out more about Vista's governance, bylaws, and policies at ([insert your web or document link here.](#))
- C. History.** Vista Community was first organized in 1965 under the leadership of Rev. and Mrs. C. N. Preacher who served from 1965-1970. The church's early meetings were held at 45 Church Street in Vista, Colorado, under the pastoral leadership of Rev. and Mrs. C. L. Longwinded who served from 1970 to 1971. Rev. and Mrs. T. P. Shortsermon served from 1971 to 1991, and the congregation grew consistently. W. L. Jogger was elected pastor in 1991, and the church purchased property at 23 Worship Street. By New Year's Day 1992, the church was completed and dedicated—debt free. Under the leadership of W. L. Jogger, the church continued to grow and thrive until 2000. In 2001, Pastor Hipster was elected. Under his leadership, the church focused on community outreach and doubled in size. Pastor James Hipster and his wife Julie resigned for the mission field in 2011. In early 2012, Pastor Kurt Egghead was elected pastor and started the daycare and elementary and high schools by building a separate school facility. The church and school continued to grow until his resignation in 2019.
- D. Previous pastors.** Vista Community Church has had six pastors in its history:
1. Rev. C. N. Preacher who founded the church in 1965 and served until 1970.
 2. Rev. C. L. Longwinded who served from 1970 to 1971.
 3. Rev. T. P. Shortsermon who served from 1971 to 1991.



GENEROSITY
Lord, may our
people remain
faithful in their
tithes, offerings,
and missions giving
during the pastoral
transition.

4. Rev W. L. Jogger led the church from 1991 to 2000.
5. Rev. James Hipster led the church from 2001 to 2011.
6. Rev. Kurt Egghed led the church from 2012 to 2019.

E. Vision, mission, and values. Vista Community Church seeks to usher people into spiritual maturity by:

1. Experiencing God in worship. Creating a community to worship.
2. Learning and living God’s Word. Learning and living the teachings of Jesus.
3. Serving God and others. Identifying and using our spiritual gifts to serve.
4. Loving our world. Providing opportunities for outreach and evangelism.

F. Governance.

1. Governance model: Self-governing and autonomous hybrid congregational/presbyterian form
2. Voting members: 182. Individuals requesting membership must attend a formal membership class.
3. Official board: 7 members consisting of 1 lead pastor and 6 deacons
4. Elected deacons: 6 with 3-year terms with annual vacancy rotation of 2, 2, and 2
5. Board chair: Lead Pastor (with voting privileges)
6. Chief executive officer: Lead pastor
7. Board officers: President (lead pastor), secretary and treasurer (elected from existing board members)

G. Statistical averages.

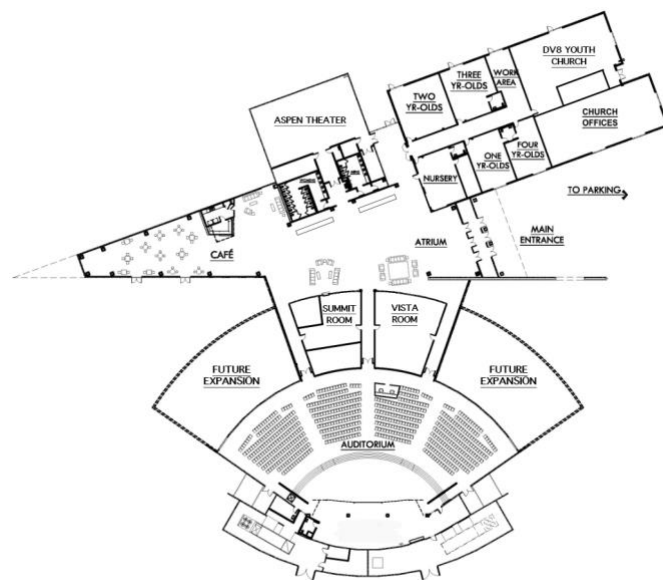
1. Constituents who call Vista their home church: 400
2. Sunday total attendance: 350
3. Service times: 9 and 10:30 a.m.
4. Small group participation: 150
5. Total number of members: 182

H. Church budget.

1. Annual income: \$660,000
2. Missions giving (city, state, region, and international): \$105,000
3. Debt: \$900,000 financed through AG Financial
4. Monthly mortgage payment: \$15,000

I. Church property. Vista Community Church is located at 50 S. Vista Parkway, Vista, CO 86017.

1. **Facility.** The facility is a total of 40,000 square feet consisting of the main auditorium with a maximum seating of 500, chapel with a maximum seating of 120, educational wing with 6 classrooms, office space, and a dedicated children’s meeting space. The current property is 20 acres with about 3 acres suitable for future buildings and an additional 4 acres for parking expansion.



2. **Parking:** Five parking pods with a total of 180 parking stalls.
3. **Future expansion:** In addition to an unused 3 acres, the educational building has existing wall and roof structures that can facilitate a future second story (12,000 sq. feet).
4. **Appraised value:** In January 2019, the facilities (land and buildings) were appraised at \$4,615,000.
5. **Photos:** Pictures of the interior and exterior of the facilities can be viewed at ([insert your link or document file location here](#)).

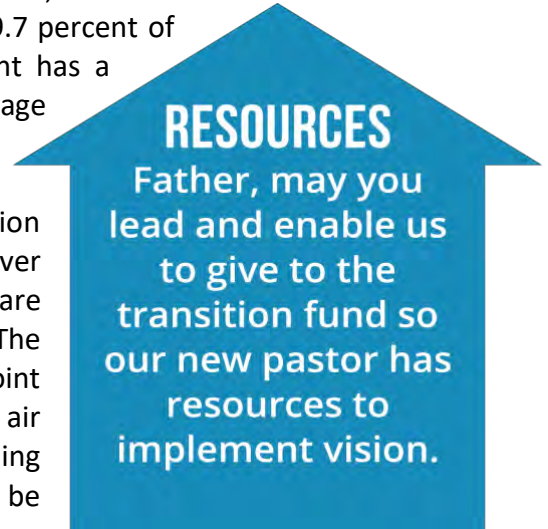
J. Staff.

1. **Full-time staff:** Lead pastor, associate pastor, and children’s pastor.
2. **Part-time staff:** Receptionist, bookkeeper, and lead pastor’s administrative assistant.
3. **Contract services:** Janitorial, exterior grounds, maintenance, and snow removal.

K. Primary ministries.

1. **Worship team and band.** The worship is contemporary with an occasional infusion of relevant hymns. The team is led by a worship leader who leads the team, makes schedules, and assigns tasks. The instruments include a keyboard, bass guitar, two electric guitars, drums, acoustic guitar, and vocalists.
2. **Children’s, Student, Young Adult, Men and Women’s Ministries.**
3. **Missions.** Foreign missions is specifically focused on supporting AG missionaries. U.S. missions is strategically focused on reaching inner city and urban areas in the United States.

L. Immediate neighborhood. Vista is a growing community that is the tenth largest city in Colorado. Although the church’s primary target area is the I-64 corridor from Jones to Highway 34, it is located in the 86017 zip code in Iron County, Colorado, which has a population of 143,044 (51 percent female and 49 percent male). The total number of households is 10,042 with 2.86 people per household on average. Regarding education, 39.7 percent of the zip code has at least a bachelor’s degree, 21 percent has a graduate degree, and 25 percent has some college. The average household income is \$68,990, and the median home sale price is \$242,784. Total household expenditures are right at the national average. The median age of the current population is 36.25 with 66.5 percent being married and 24 percent never married. The employment numbers show that 56 percent are white-collar employees and 44 percent are blue-collar. The recorded weather temperatures oscillate between a high point in July of 86.9° F and a low point of 20° F in January. The air pollution index is 96. Additional demographics concerning housing, education, income, and spiritual trending can be accessed online.



M. City profile. Once a budding frontier town of farmers and ranchers, Vista is Colorado’s tenth largest city with a diverse population of more than 143,000. The city of Vista is now a full-service city governed by a council/manager form of government which combines the political leadership of elected officials with the managerial expertise of an appointed local government manager. At 75 square miles, the city is in Iron County. Vista’s strategic comprehensive plan emphasizes the formation of livable, full-service neighborhoods. Vista also provides access to quality education with one school district and six campuses of higher learning meeting the instructional needs of residents and those beyond the city limits. Just an hour away from Denver International Airport, Vista is home to a growing business environment including major industries of health care, transportation, and

logistics. Businesses large and small are welcomed and nurtured through such programs as the Vista Advantage 4 Business and the Vista-Metro Small Business Development Center. Tree-lined streets, open prairie, majestic views of the mountains, and ample neighborhood parks make Vista neighborhoods a comfortable place to call home. More than 100 neighborhoods complete the fabric of the community. Vista's climate is mild and dry with more than 300 days of sunshine a year offering residents and visitors ample opportunity to get outside, stay fit, and enjoy all that Colorado living has to offer. Vista has 1 golf course, 1 reservoir, more than 30 parks, and over 1,000 acres of open space and trails. Situated at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, Vista is a gateway to all Colorado has to offer. Each resident has a right to expect a safe city and trust that they will be helped in an emergency. Nearly 50 percent of the city's general fund budget supports Vista's public safety functions.

N. Online presence.

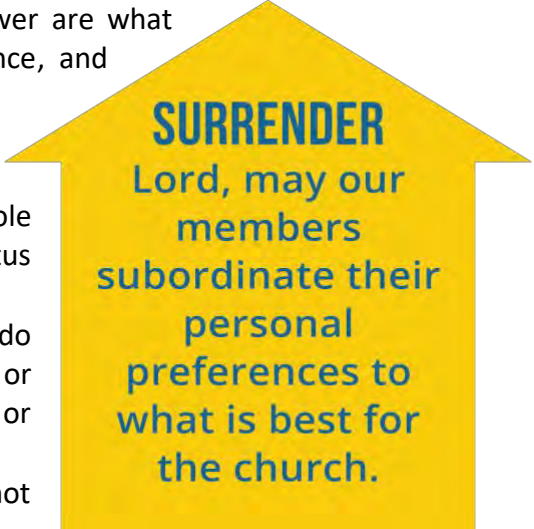
1. Website: www.vistachurch.com
2. Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/vistacommunity>
3. YouTube: Vista Church
4. Instagram: vistacolorado

F. DESIRABLE QUALITIES ([back to table](#))

You will soon discover that the search committee has different ideas about the kind of leader your church needs. Personal preferences, unfamiliarity with biblical qualifications, past experiences, and many other things make consensus difficult at first. As time goes by, however, the committee relearns something they already knew: There is no perfect candidate; and every minister has different strengths, weaknesses, and leadership abilities.

The questions the board and search committee need to answer are what characteristics are principal, what characteristics are preference, and what characteristics are innate?

- **Principal qualities** are qualifications God's Word requires pastors to have. Most church bylaws and the Assemblies of God require ministers to fulfill the biblical role as pastor and overseer of the church (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- **Preferred qualities** are those individuals may want but do not demand. These qualities may even be developed or learned after a pastor is elected (skills, education, or giftings).
- **Innate qualities** are those a person is born with and cannot be taught. A person either has them or not.



SURRENDER
Lord, may our
members
subordinate their
personal
preferences to
what is best for
the church.

Following are a few questions that may help individuals on the search committee process the traits on the worksheet below:

- Are there qualities, skills, or giftings that the former pastor had that the board, search committee, or congregation would also like to see in the new pastor's life and ministry?
- What are the characteristics of the ideal candidate for this position that cannot be compromised because they cannot be taught?
- Does the candidate have the capacity to get the job done, and have they demonstrated these skills already in the past?
- What expectations could be suspended in light of the candidate's other strengths and giftings?

Following is a comprehensive list of biblical and logical qualities a lead pastor should have. The list may help the board or search committee identify common needs, wants, and observations.

BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS

- _____ To administer the ordinances (Matthew 28:19-20)
- _____ To be a person of prayer (1 Timothy 2:1)
- _____ To warn the flock (1 Timothy 4:1, 6)
- _____ To study the Word (2 Timothy 2:15)
- _____ To preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2; Acts 6:2-4)
- _____ To exhort and rebuke (1 Thessalonians 5:12; Titus 2:15)
- _____ To watch over souls—their own and the souls of others (Acts 20:28-31; Colossians 4:17; 1 Timothy 4:6, 6:11; Hebrews 13:17)
- _____ To feed and lead the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2)
- _____ To be an example to all (1 Corinthians 11:1, 4:16, Philemon 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:9; 1 Timothy 4:12; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3)
- _____ To be above reproach (1 Timothy 3:2)

- _____ To be the husband of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2)
- _____ To be temperate (1 Timothy 3:2)
- _____ To be self-controlled (1 Timothy 3:2)
- _____ To be respectable (1 Timothy 3:2)
- _____ To be hospitable (1 Timothy 3:2)
- _____ To be able to teach (1 Timothy 3:2)
- _____ To be gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)
- _____ Not given to drunkenness (1 Timothy 3:3)
- _____ Not violent (1 Timothy 3:3)
- _____ Not quarrelsome (1 Timothy 3:3)
- _____ Not a lover of money (1 Timothy 3:3)
- _____ To manage their family well (1 Timothy 3:4)
- _____ To have children who are obedient and respectful (1 Timothy 3:4)
- _____ Not a recent convert (1 Timothy 3:6)
- _____ To have a good reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:6)
- _____ To be a shepherd of God’s flock (1 Peter 5:2)
- _____ To serve out of willingness and initiative (1 Peter 5:2)
- _____ To be eager to serve (1 Peter 5:2)
- _____ Not eager for money (1 Peter 5:2)
- _____ Not overly authoritarian—“lording it over” (1 Peter 5:3)
- _____ To be an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:3)
- _____ Other _____

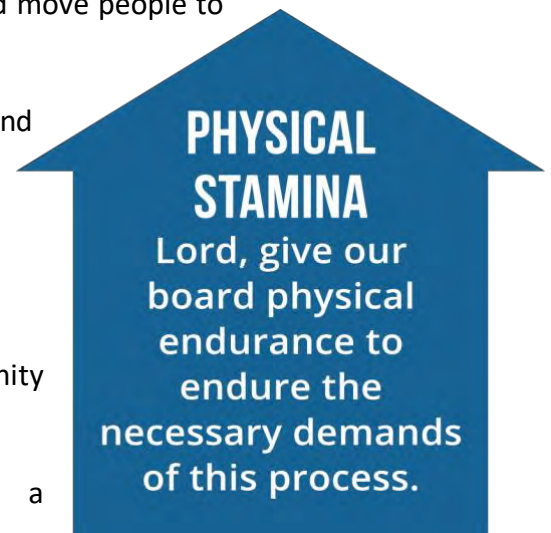
PREACHING AND TEACHING

- _____ Arouses interest and gets attention
- _____ Biblically-based and theologically-sound sermons
- _____ Interesting topics that are relevant to life
- _____ Good use of time, focused, does not ramble
- _____ Points or principles that are stated in a clear, concise, and complete way
- _____ Conclusions bring sermon to an effective close and move people to action
- _____ Sermons show evidence of deep study
- _____ Maintains focus and avoids detours, tangents, and repetition
- _____ Illustrations have direct correlation to text
- _____ Other _____

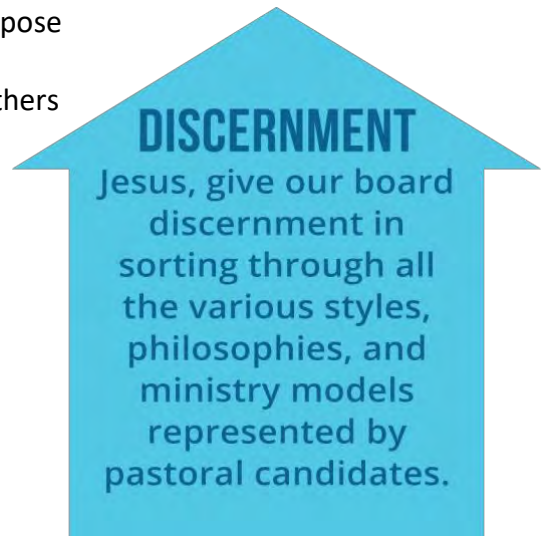
CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

- _____ Relevant to the culture of the city
- _____ Relevant to the culture of the immediate community or zip code
- _____ Relevant to the culture of the church
- _____ Respected by outsiders and recognized as a community leader
- _____ Builds relationships with the community, other leaders, and other organizations
- _____ Involves church in solving community problems
- _____ Other _____

LEADERSHIP OF CHURCH



- _____ Able to challenge organizational ineffectiveness and bring needed change
- _____ Has willingness to take risks and act in faith
- _____ Has willingness to admit and learn from mistakes
- _____ Sees and articulates vision for the future
- _____ Casts vision, communicates clearly
- _____ Able to enlist, motivate, and attract others to purpose
- _____ Able to get people to work together
- _____ Equips, resources, and shares information with others
- _____ Leads by example in important areas
- _____ Shows appreciation for the contribution of others
- _____ Celebrates organizational accomplishments
- _____ Trains, mentors, and equips other leaders
- _____ Invests in personal growth and development
- _____ Has the ability to foresee possible problems
- _____ Identifies battles that need to be fought
- _____ Has good conflict resolution skills
- _____ Makes good use of organizational resources
- _____ Has willingness to take responsibility as a leader
- _____ Has willingness to make personal sacrifices
- _____ Leads paid staff
- _____ Communicates expectations of performance (uses job descriptions)
- _____ Addresses problems with staff as needed
- _____ Delegates to middle management
- _____ Facilitates growth and expansion
- _____ Other _____



EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

- _____ Must have graduated from high school
- _____ Must have some college education
- _____ Must have at least a four-year degree
- _____ Must have at least a master's degree
- _____ Must have at least a DMin or PhD
- _____ Must be certified with the Assemblies of God (lowest level of credential)
- _____ Must be licensed to preach with the Assemblies of God (intermediate level of credential)
- _____ Must be ordained by the Assemblies of God (highest level of credential)
- _____ Must have been in the full-time ministry at least _____ years
- _____ Must have been at least an associate pastor in a church as large or larger than our current church
- _____ Must have senior/lead pastor experience
- _____ Other _____

ADMINISTRATION

- _____ Plans strategically and is intentional before moving forward
- _____ Stays on top of details
- _____ Initiates good policies and procedures
- _____ Has ability to create and execute a plan
- _____ Other _____

CHAIR OF THE BOARD

- _____ Facilitates meetings and uses time wisely
- _____ Formulates agendas and addresses issues
- _____ Keeps members informed of issues
- _____ Is skilled in parliamentary and deliberative procedures
- _____ Provides pre-meeting information
- _____ Executes board decisions
- _____ Has financial management and stewardship skills
- _____ Facilitates group discussion of issues
- _____ Provides opportunities for discussion on issues
- _____ Communicates board decisions and positions to the church
- _____ Other _____

SPIRITUAL PULSE OF CHURCH

- _____ Conversions and decisions for Christ
- _____ Leadership of morning services
- _____ General direction to age-level ministries
- _____ General direction to worship services
- _____ Clearly articulates Spirit-filled distinctive
- _____ Leads and explains the supernatural manifestations that occur in the worship service
- _____ Evangelism and outreach
- _____ Other _____

COMMENTS OR NOTES

G. JOB DESCRIPTION ([back to table](#))

Candidates will need to know the expectations that the board and church will have of them. The official board will also need to help the search committee by establishing reasonable expectations for the new pastor while leaving room for their unique giftings and temperament. The best way to do this is by making a summary job description. Kenneth Russell, district superintendent of one of Canada's largest districts, gives the following advice to boards when they are drafting a pastoral job description:

When a Search Committee sits down to decide what kind of pastor they want, they have a tendency to want everything they can think of. Each church has its own unique strengths and weaknesses; your task is to find someone who is capable of meeting the needs of your assembly. It is a fallacy to expect one person to have all the qualities related to the pastoral role and task. Beware of asking for one person to embody all the talents and giftings which your church needs. Keep in mind that the church is a composite; the body of Christ has many members to do the work of the ministry. What you need to look for is the key leadership abilities needed for your church.¹⁰⁹

In every church, some of the pastor's responsibilities are direct (performed by the pastor) while others are indirect (delegated by the pastor but performed by staff and volunteers). Most bylaws of Assemblies of God churches clearly require the lead pastor to have some kind of credential with the General Council in addition to those listed in scriptures like 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. If your bylaws require your pastor to have a credential, you cannot violate them by presenting a candidate who does not or is "almost there." Consequently, be sure your job description is not in conflict with your bylaws.

Making a job description is easier if you focus on the major categories of the lead pastor's biblical and organizational responsibilities. These are usually things like:

- A. Overseer of the church.** The lead pastor as the overseer of the church is responsible for setting vision and directing staff and ministries as well as managing the day-to-day operations of the church (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4) as set forth in the bylaws.
- B. Preaching and teaching.** The lead pastor is the primary preacher/teacher in what takes place during Sunday morning services and supervises the doctrine taught in any discipleship applications the church may have. It would also involve, either directly or indirectly, approving all guest speakers, substitutes, and curriculum on a churchwide level.
- C. Establishing and communicating vision.** The lead pastor is responsible for setting, casting, mobilizing, and communicating new vision.
- D. Leadership.** The lead pastor provides executive leadership to manage the staff, board, and volunteers. In most cases, they are both the chair of the board and president of the nonprofit corporation.
- E. Administration.** The lead pastor ensures that effective policies, procedures, and accountability structures are in place to manage the ministries, finances, facilities, and governance of the church.
- F. Pastoral care.** The lead pastor mobilizes people, platforms, and volunteers to provide care, counseling, weddings, funerals, baptisms, baby dedications, and other needed ministries.



**AFFECTED
MINISTRY**
Lord, give the
ministry that our
future pastor will be
leaving faith and
wisdom in their own
transition.

Obviously, no one person can do all of these things well. The finances and size of the paid staff will also greatly influence a pastor's ability to lead well.

It is also important to remember that high-capacity candidates are not looking for a role to fill but a mission to be joined; therefore, be careful not to create an endless list of impossibilities. Following are some questions William Vanderbloemen suggests boards ask themselves after drafting a job description:¹¹⁰

- Is the job description appealing to high performers while also being true to the character and culture of the church?
- Did you give potential candidates a clear picture of the community your church is in as well as the unique culture of the church?
- Is the job description clear, thorough, and concise?
- Would this job description be appealing to the type of pastor you think you need?
- Did you place a link to the church website on the job description and church profile?

H. PASTOR PROFILE [\(back to table\)](#)

Before considering any candidate, the board acting as the pastoral search committee should develop a profile of the type of pastoral leadership they believe their church needs. Sometimes members of the selection committee may be tempted to allow the preferences of one or two strong personalities to dominate the list. Kenneth Russell, district superintendent of one of Canada's largest districts, has produced one of the best manuals I have read. He gives great advice to boards writing a pastoral profile:

Make sure that as a committee, there is consensus on this matter. If you don't, it will lead to frustration later in the process. Remember, this is a good tool but don't be rigidly bound to it. A candidate may come your way which may not fit the rigid guidelines of your Pastor Profile. The value of the Pastor Profile is that it is a concise summary of your self-study results and what you may feel the Holy Spirit has been saying to you.¹¹¹



PATIENCE
Father, give our church the ability to invest the necessary time and resources in the pastoral search.

It is also important to be realistic. It has been estimated that 50 percent of all pastors reach a point of emotional burnout by the fifth year of their ministry. Another sad statistic suggests that 80 percent of all pastors permanently leave pastoral ministry before retirement.¹¹² Another authoritative study found that the average tenure of a pastor in America is six years.¹¹³ The main reason is related to not being able to meet the increasingly high and unreasonable expectations of boards and congregants. Following are some additional points to consider:

A. Matters to be considered. The following considerations are suggested by the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network:¹¹⁴

- 1. Past history, present condition, future vision.** Where is the church spiritually at this point in its history and where does it wish to go are essential questions to be considered. For instance, if the previous pastor was strong in outreach, you may want a pastor who can continue with that same emphasis; or you may want one with a strong teaching or discipleship ministry.
- 2. Education.** What minimal level of educational experience are you comfortable with or requiring from the candidate?
- 3. Experience.** What kind of experiences and skills do you want the new pastor to have? What is required and what is preferred?
- 4. Leadership style.** Different ministers have different gifts. The expression of those gifts results in a particular style of leadership. The committee may feel that a change of leadership style is needed; but they are cautioned not to radically change the style, especially if the church is doing well. Abrupt change can create instability, uneasiness, and defections.
- 5. Communication.** What kind of preaching and teaching style are you looking for in your new pastor?
- 6. Church style.** Each church has a certain style. People are attending because they like that style of ministry; consequently, selecting a pastor who will create substantial deviation from the accustomed approach can be counterproductive. However, when a church has reached a plateau or is declining, a change may be in order.
- 7. Community culture.** Some ministers will fit more comfortably in a rural setting and others in a suburban or metropolitan culture. Some know how to fit in, but others struggle to adapt. Some thrive in an isolated setting while others are always yearning for the city. Know your culture and

get to know the candidate well enough to know whether or not they can adjust. Remember, past performance is the best predictor of future success.

8. **Other considerations.** The board may want to prioritize other considerations like theology, spiritual disciplines, marriage health, creativity, charisma, compassion, sense of humor, collaborative skills, learning capacity, builder, strategic, or administrative.

Once a pastoral profile has been developed, the committee can use it as a grid by which to evaluate prospective pastors. The profile should never be so rigid as to disallow positive candidates. It should not be so detailed and lofty that only Jesus would be able to measure up, but it can be a helpful tool in the selection process. I should also note that this research has exposed me to more pastoral profiles than I can remember. However, I could not help but notice that those of larger and growing churches tended to be shorter, tighter, and more concise while those of smaller and plateaued churches were often longer, detailed, and more verbose.

- B. **Sample pastoral profiles.** Following is a sample lead pastor profile that was used for a church of about 150 people in Windsor, Colorado:

1. **Organized by desired qualities.** The ideal profile for our next lead pastor would consist of the following characteristics in prioritized order:

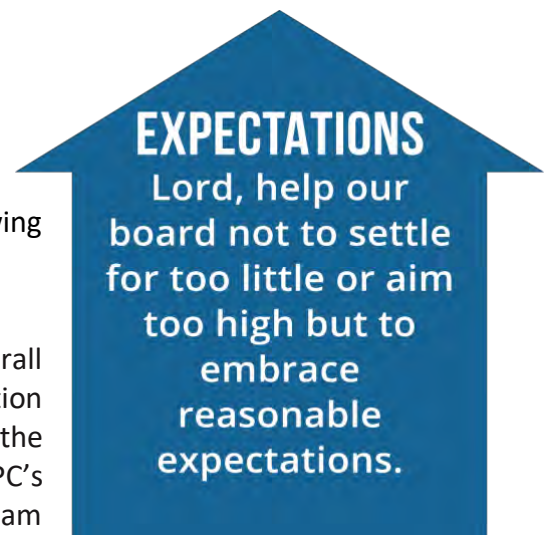
- Ordained and in good standing with the Assemblies of God
- Lead pastor experience
- Strong family and core values
- A person of faith and prayer
- Loves people
- Inspirational communicator
- Outstanding leadership skills
- Able to mentor and develop leaders
- Primary change agent
- Creative
- Able to resolve conflict
- Pastoral counseling/makes referrals
- Education (college/seminary or equivalent)
- Cultural fit
- Contemporary ministry philosophy
- Experienced in church growth
- Missions minded

2. **Organized by category.** Another possible way to organize the profile is by category like the following sample from a pastoral search manual:¹¹⁵

Position Summary:

The lead pastor of CPC is responsible for the overall spiritual and executive leadership of CPC's congregation and staff, the fulfillment of CPC's purpose and mission, the alignment of CPC's values, and the realization of CPC's goals. Position is accountable to the CPC Leadership Team (Board).

Lead Pastor Qualifications:



- Has a heart for worship, evangelism, teaching, and revival.
- Called and determined to see the establishment of God’s kingdom in our Assembly, in our community, in our country, and in our world.
- Is a visionary leader of leaders and a builder of people who can employ, develop, and release people in their areas of strength.
- Meets the scriptural prerequisites found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5:2, and Matthew 28:19-20.
- Holds credentials with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), the Assemblies of God (AOG), or one whom the executive officers of the BC/Yukon PAOC District approve.
- Has a proven track record of pastoral leadership, preferably having served as the lead pastor or senior associate pastor of another assembly that was larger than 500 people and/or leading a team of at least 15 people.

Worship Style:

- Does not necessarily have to possess musical skills or vocal ability; however, they must be a fervent, Spirit-filled, charismatic worshipper who is supportive of contemporary and culturally relevant expressions of biblical worship.
- Endorses the use of various worship teams within the church and campus locations.
- Seeks to encourage the use of the manifestation gifts of the Holy Spirit within corporate worship.

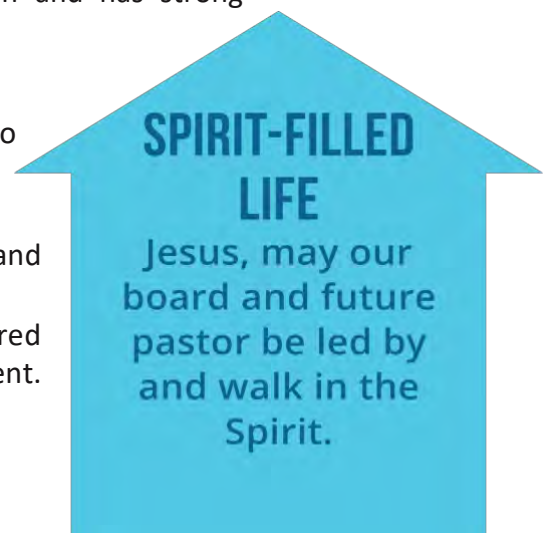
Pulpit Ministry and Communication Skills:

- Is able to motivate our congregation to fulfill the eternal purposes of God and the vision of our assembly through the preaching of anointed, life-applicable, and scripturally-based sermons.
- Is the main speaker at services but shares the pulpit and provides opportunity for others to develop.
- Is passionate about sharing and teaching God’s Word in a multicampus environment where sermons are recorded and distributed through video links and the website.
- Is able to develop and clearly communicate the vision and missional priorities of the church.
- Is proficient in all forms of communication and supporting technologies.
- Demonstrates effective communication and public relations skills.
- Demonstrates proficiency with conflict resolution and has strong people skills.

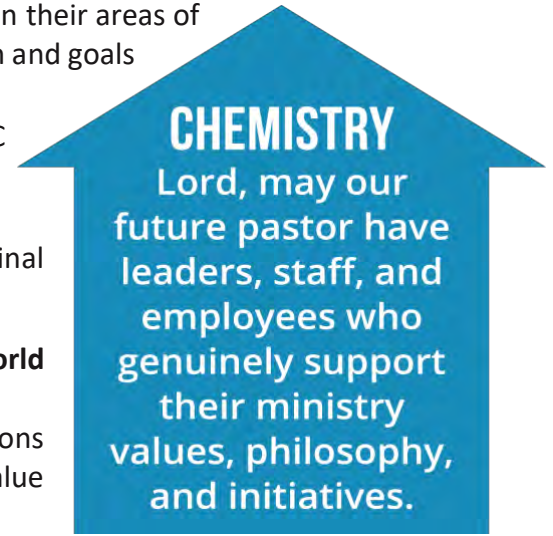
Administrative and Leadership Skills:

- Is able to develop a management leadership team to lead and execute CPC’s global activities, ensuring that all required skills are developed.
- Is able to establish and promote teamwork and relationship as core values of staff and volunteers.
- Possesses efficient time management skills required to accomplish objectives in a fast-paced environment.

Pastoral Care and Focus:



- Is able to build, teach, and develop a core group of leaders who would assist in meeting the needs of our people and extending God’s kingdom.
- Is a visionary leader who is able to deploy people in their areas of strengths and keep them accountable to the vision and goals of CPC.
- Is able to nurture strong relationships with the CPC Leadership Team members and together pursue a healthy, functioning team environment.
- Champions and guards the spiritual and doctrinal values of CPC.



Community Involvement, Evangelism, and World Missions:

- Considers local, national, and international missions and community outreach a priority and a core value of the church.
- Encourages the church to be involved with community events that impact the lives of all the people in the local communities that CPC serves.
- Embraces a cross-cultural ministry context.
- Promotes and expands the work of world missions and the regular support of CPC’s missionaries.

In closing, let me say that one of the most regrettable mistakes search committees make is to start receiving résumés and talking with candidates before they have written and agreed upon a pastoral profile. The entire search committee must give whatever time and attention is needed to construct their own pastoral profile. That profile should summarize the kind of pastor they feel would best fit their church. However, after the search committee creates one, they should feel free to amend the profile to reflect results of the congregational survey or significant insight acquired during the search process.

I. CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY ([back to table](#))

A 2019 research project by the Barna Group on pastoral transitions found that the higher the degree of congregational involvement, the more positive congregants feel about the outcome.¹¹⁶ That is why the search committee should give the congregation an opportunity to submit input concerning the pastoral selection. Taking a congregational survey or “self-study” is one of the ways this can be done. This can be easily accomplished by creating an online survey in www.surveymonkey.com or by passing out a paper survey that can be filled out and returned in a sealed box.

Before I left Highpoint, the officers and I chose to use Survey Monkey to facilitate an electronic version of the survey found below. We made this decision for the following reasons:

- **Convenience.** It would allow us to send a link to the survey to our people so they could take the survey from the privacy of their own homes.
- **Participation.** We felt more people would participate because the link could be emailed to them as opposed to passing it out and explaining it at church when some people would not be present.
- **Data entry.** Having people type their own responses into the system would enable us to have the data in a digital format to be stored, shared, and configured in several applications.
- **Evaluation.** Using an electronic format allowed us to sort and filter data by different criteria (age, tenure in church, common responses, and prioritized preferences. With a click of a button, it also allowed us to identify trends, patterns, and relationships in data.
- **Cost savings.** Using the electronic format saved us paper and photocopy expenses, time, and payroll costs by not having to input data and expedited batching and the creation of reports.
- **Team briefing.** Having the results in an electronic format allowed all the members of the pastoral search committee to read the same data and each individual response.

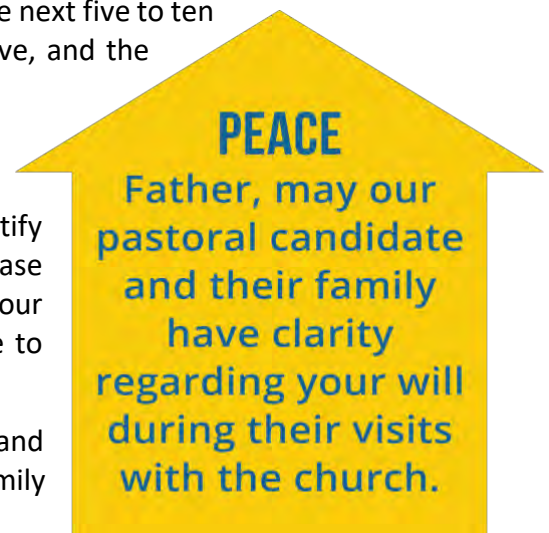
A. Best practices survey questions. Following is a compilation of the best survey questions I discovered in my research followed by information to access an electronic version as well.

Your Church Congregational Survey

As a part of our work in finding a new pastor, the Pastoral Search Committee would like your input in describing our church as you presently experience it. We would like your thoughts about its strengths, its weaknesses, the needs you foresee for our church in the next five to ten years, the priorities you think our next pastor should have, and the qualities you believe our next pastor should possess.

It will probably take between 20-30 minutes to thoughtfully answer the questions on this questionnaire. Please consider this as an investment in helping us identify God’s person to effectively lead our church in the next phase of its growth. Try to be as honest as you can. Your questionnaire will remain anonymous unless you choose to sign it.

This survey was created exclusively for current attendees and members. Please do not share this link or ask friends or family members outside our church family to participate.



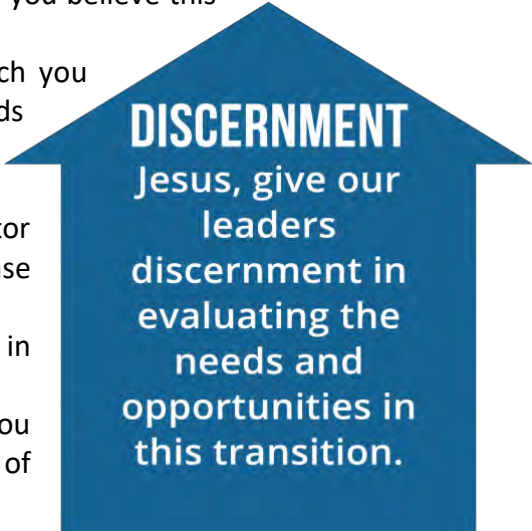
Thank you for your thoughtful input. It will be carefully reviewed by the committee.

Gender: Male _____ Female _____

Age Group: 15-20 _____ 21-35 _____ 36-50 _____ 50-64 _____ 65+ _____

of years a Christian _____ # of years you attended our church _____ # of years a member _____

1. **Strengths.** Please identify three or more areas in which you believe this church meets your needs or the needs of others well.
2. **Challenges.** Please identify one or more areas in which you believe this church is not meeting your needs or the needs of others well.
3. **Outstanding problems.** Are there any problems within the congregation you believe the board or the next pastor should attempt to address? If no, leave blank. If yes, please be specific in explaining them.
4. **Future ministries.** What ministries will the church need in the next five to ten years that it does not have now?
5. **Christian growth.** In what areas of Christian living do you think you need to be challenged to grow by the ministry of the next pastor?
6. **Priorities.** Pastors are often expected to do much more than their time will permit. As a consequence, they have to make decisions about priorities. In this process, it is helpful for them to know what their congregation views as important priorities. Please look through the following list of items two times. You will be circling two numbers to represent their importance to you. Go through the entire list and check the number "1" for items you feel are the most important for the pastor to do. Then go back over the list a second time and check the number "4" for items you feel are the least important for the pastor to do. Check numbers "2" or "3" to indicate levels of moderate importance.



Pastoral Activity	1	2	3	4
Preaching and teaching; study and preparation				
Hospital and emergency visitation				
Conducting weddings, baptisms, baby dedications, and funerals				
One-on-one counseling				
Preparing and training volunteers for ministry				
Planning all-church worship, teaching, and social meetings				
Foreign missions involvement				
Local outreach and evangelism efforts				
Involvement in community efforts				
Overseeing the discipleship efforts and curriculum of the church				
Leading the church staff				
Church administration (finances, facilities, policies, and structures)				
Interfaith community participation				
Involvement in denominational meetings, events, and gatherings				

Providing oversight to the board, committees, and ministry teams				
Developing small groups				
Conflict resolution and dealing with divisive individuals				
Fundraising (developing tithes, offerings, and missions giving)				
Leadership development (training, seminars, books, and conferences)				
Crisis management (unexpected emergencies or developments)				
Spending one-on-one time with individuals who request meetings				
Vetting outside requests for support, partnership, or volunteer sharing				

7. **Female pastors.** Would you be willing to consider a woman as your lead pastor? Please explain your reason for either yes or no.
8. **Rehabilitated leadership.** Would you be willing to consider a minister who has been successfully rehabilitated and restored to ministry after a moral failure? Please explain your reason for either yes or no.
9. **Divorce.** Would you be willing to consider a minister who has been divorced? Please explain your reason for either yes or no.
10. **Desired qualities.** Based on your knowledge of our church, its present strengths and weaknesses, and the needs we may have in five to ten years, please identify the qualities you think are important for our next pastor to have.
11. **Additional comments.** Do you have any additional comments you would like the Search Committee to consider? If so, please write them here.

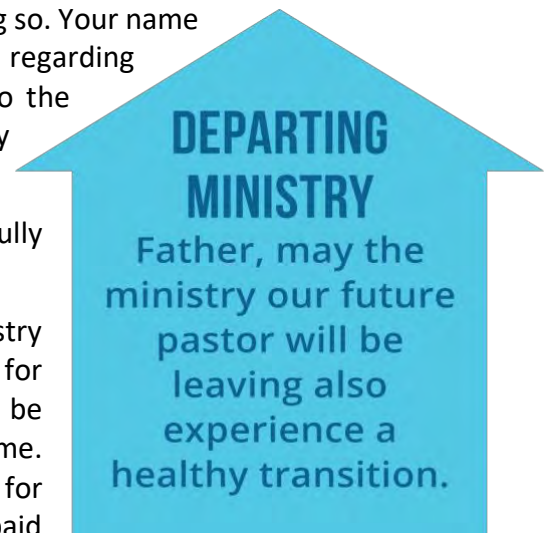
Please leave your name below if you feel comfortable doing so. Your name will only be used in the event we need to get clarification regarding any of your responses. Your name will only be known to the Search Committee, and your answers will be kept strictly confidential. We very much value your candor and input.

Thank you for your time. Your responses will be carefully considered by the Search Committee.

- B. **Shareable online version.** The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network has paid a statistician to create a design template for an online version of a congregational survey. It can be customized with your church name, logo, and color scheme. We can run that off our subscription and send you reports for free, or you can transfer the template to your own paid [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) account. You can view an example and even take the survey at the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RMMNchurch>

The RMMN can send a copy of this survey design to your own Survey Monkey account as long as you already have a paid account with www.surveymonkey.com. Everything from the Design Survey



section is copied to your own account in seconds and will appear in your dashboard. This includes the survey questions and pages, options, logic, theme, and logo option. You can then customize or add your own questions.

To request a copy of the survey design, email your request to gene@rmdc.org as well as the username and email address associate with your own paid Survey Monkey account.

J. ADVERTISING THE MINISTRY OPENING ([back to table](#))

After the search committee has compiled the church profile and candidate profile, the most important thing to do is to get the word out by advertising your pastoral opening. This will help to maximize networking potential and get others working for you. Following is a list of options to accomplish this important step:

A. Church search site. Create a Google blog to use as the committee's primary communication platform. If you turn the comments off, a new discussion thread can be used for each important category listed at the end of the chapter entitled "Communication." More information can be found at <https://www.blogger.com>. You can also watch a short video tour of the blog Highpoint Church created to advertise the opening and help educate potential candidates at

<http://www.agspe.org/rutour.mp4>.

B. Open ministry websites. Use online ministry job sites to advertise your pastoral opening. There is a cost to use them, but they can really help stir interest and spread the word. REMEMBER, your bylaws probably require the pastor to hold credentials with the Assemblies of God. If you do not mention that in the ad, you will be inundated with résumés from every denomination or affiliation under the sun. It would be wise to place an ad for five months on at least four of the following sites. You can always cancel them when they are no longer needed.

1. Christian Jobs.com <http://www.christianjobs.com/jobs/category/church-ministry/>
2. Church Staffing.com <http://www.churchstaffing.com>
3. Ministry Jobs.com <https://ministryjobs.com>
4. Indeed.com <https://www.indeed.com/q-Ministry-jobs.html>
5. Church Job Finder.com <https://churchjobfinder.com>
6. Zip Recruiter.com <https://www.ziprecruiter.com>
7. Monster.com <https://www.monster.com>
8. Slingshot <http://slingshotgroup.org/home/senior-leadership>
9. Red Letter Jobs www.redletterjobs.com

C. District superintendents/network pastors and officials. Few people know who is doing well, is available, or is seeking a new ministry assignment better than district superintendents/network pastors. Taking the time to email each one of them will not only help you get recommendations but will also help spread the word that you are looking. This will take time, but it is well worth the effort. The search committee could hire a research assistant for 5-10 hours to gather the data. Use the following steps:

1. Go to www.ag.org.
2. Click the "RESOURCES" tab on the top.
3. Click the "DIRECTORIES" tab.
4. Click the "DISTRICT/NETWORK OFFICES" tab.
5. Several pages will appear listing each and every district/network in the Assemblies of God in alphabetical order along with a link to their website.
6. Right click the website for each and open it in another window. This will take you to the website for that district. Find the place on the site that lists the district/network leadership team with their email addresses. Try to send an email to at least three leaders (district superintendent/network pastor, assistant superintendent, and secretary/treasurer).
7. Click the email address and copy and paste the following text:

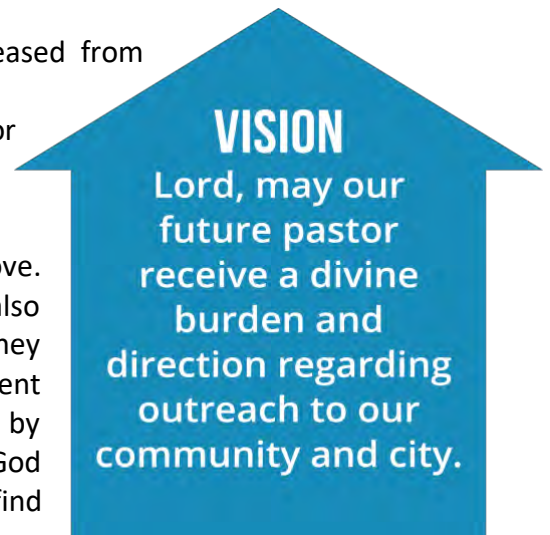
My name is (insert name), and I am on the pastoral search committee for (insert church name), an Assemblies of God church in (insert city, state). You were referred as someone who may be able to recommend a candidate to us. I have attached a bio about the church and the type of candidate we would like to connect with (or say, I have included a link to a pastoral search website that will tell you a little more about our church and the type of person we are seeking). Should you have any ideas or know anyone who would, please feel free to reply and let me know.

Even if you do not hear back, you will at the very least have informed an influential leader of your ministry opening. They will most likely bring it up in a discussion with someone else which will result in an expansion of your information network or at least a referral.

D. Top 100 pastors. If you are a larger church, another way to get the word out is to seek recommendations from the top 100 pastors in the Assemblies of God. This has the potential to help you in two ways:

1. One of them may know of a friend who feels released from ministry and will let them know.
2. One of them may know of a very sharp associate pastor from a larger church who may be an ideal candidate and is now ready and eager to take their first church .

Again, use the same text you used for district leaders above. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. You can also send the email to senior staff serving at these churches. They may know of friends who feel released from their current ministry. The list of top 100 churches can be found by googling the phrase “Largest 100 Assemblies of God churches.” You will then need to go to their websites to find the most recent email or contact information.



K. RECRUITING CANDIDATES ([back to table](#))

It is important to remember that some of the most effective pastors are not looking to leave their current ministry. God sometimes uses an unexpected contact from a pastoral search committee to start the process of releasing them and causing them to be open to praying about a change. Consequently, it is helpful to identify potential candidates. This will require that you initiate contact with potential candidates who were referred or recommended to the committee. It is important that every contact you have with candidates be professional, organized, and show respect for their privacy. The Rocky Mountain District has recommended the following considerations regarding this kind of contact:

Most of the work of the committee is confidential until a candidate for the pastorate is presented to the congregation. By confidential, we mean that what takes place in the pastoral selection process is not shared with others, even best friends or spouses. It is a matter of integrity. Confidentiality is essential for the sake of potential candidates. A pastor may presently have a position. He may or may not be ready to leave but wants to explore a pastoral opening as part of the process for determining the will of God. If word of his inquiries to an open pastorate gets back to his congregation, his present position could be at risk. Confidentiality is essential for the integrity of the selection process. If word gets out to the congregation who the different candidates are, it is possible that some members may begin to “campaign” for a particular minister being considered. We would like to think that would never occur, but experience has proven otherwise. It puts additional pressure on the committee that is trying to make unbiased, objective, and Spirit-directed decisions.¹¹⁷

Following are some helpful tips to accomplish this:

- A. Call first unless a potential candidate emailed you first.** Because some pastors manage their many emails through administrative assistants, it is not wise for your first contact with a recruited candidate be by email unless they have sent you an email first. When you call, it is likely you will be directed to an administrative assistant. If this occurs, say,

Hello, my name is _____; and I am calling Pastor regarding a confidential matter that (he/she) is aware of. Would it be possible to schedule a short phone appointment with them or leave my phone number for them to return my call at their earliest convenience?

- B. Ask if they are willing to “explore the possibility” of a ministry change.** When you do speak with candidates, do not ask if they would like “to be considered” or “make a ministry move.” That is too fast and abrupt; instead, say something like:

Hello, my name is _____; and I am a member of the pastoral search committee from (insert the name of your church) in (insert city, state). You were recommended to us as a potential candidate, and I wondered if I could send some information about our church to your private email in the event you are open to exploring the possibility of a ministry change? We wanted to call first to respect your privacy.

- C. Send information to their private email only.** If the candidate expresses an openness to exploring the possibility of a ministry change, email them the church profile and pastor profile along with a request that they reply with their résumé. A sample letter can be found in the section entitled “Sample Letters.”

L. CANDIDATE RESPONSE FORM [\(back to table\)](#)

In some cases, you will want to make an affirming response to a promising candidate who has either contacted you or has responded favorably to your recruitment efforts. The following response and suggested attachment are effective ways to get things moving forward:

Your Church Name Pastoral Candidate Response Form

Thank you for your recent contact. As the acting chair of **(insert church name)** Pastoral Search Committee, I am excited about connecting with the best possible candidates. Our church has been praying hard, and we are using a methodical process to help us find God's will and future leader.

We are eager to learn more about you; and I have attached a questionnaire that will help us be exposed to your calling, gifts, current ministry, and values. It is our hope that you will be able to return it at your earliest convenience. Please feel free to type right in the attached document and email your responses back to me.

We appreciate your openness to exploring the possibilities of God's will.

Sincerely,

(Insert name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee



1. Describe how you came into a personal relationship with Christ?
2. Describe your call to the ministry and what motivates you to stay in ministry.
3. Tell us a little about your family, their interests, and ministry involvement.
4. Tell us about your favorite hobbies and interests outside of ministry.
5. Describe your personal goals in the next 5 to 10 years.
6. What formal education do you have?
7. What is your current credential status with the Assemblies of God (certificate of ministry, licensed, or ordained), and how long have you been at this level?
8. Please comment on the growth your current ministry has experienced in the following areas:
 - Numerical
 - Spiritual
 - Financial
 - Specific ministry that has flourished
 - Current staff size and history of growth
9. Please tell us about the primary demographic of the community your current ministry is in.
 - Average age
 - Average income
 - Average home value
 - Average educational level
 - Population
 - New growth or old growth

10. Every pastor has ministry priorities that tend to follow them wherever God may call them. What are yours?
11. Every pastor seems to have a “life theme” that overlaps their preaching, leadership, and communication. What is yours?
12. What are your primary spiritual gifts, and how have you seen the Lord use them in pastoral ministry?
13. What primary methods do you use to achieve corporate worship?
14. What primary methods do you use to disciple new and existing believers?
15. What primary methods do you use to recruit, develop, and place people in serving opportunities?
16. What primary methods do you use to achieve local outreach?
17. What primary methods do you use to involve the church in foreign outreach and missionary partnership?
18. If numerical values did not characterize either good or bad and Spirit-filled ministry were represented on a scale of 1-10 with a more seeker-sensitive model being on the lower end of that scale and an aggressive revival model being on the high end, where (what number) would you find yourself most comfortable?
19. What do you feel are the core responsibilities of a lead pastor?
20. How do you preach (e.g., expository, topical, doctrinal)?
21. How would you prioritize the following list of pastoral functions in your own personal ministry style?
 - Preaching and teaching
 - Community involvement
 - Creating new ministries and applications
 - Administration, strategic and detailed planning
 - Pastoral care (counseling, hospital calls, weddings, and funerals)
 - Big event planning
 - Local outreach and evangelism
 - Foreign missions and missions trips
22. How have you led your church to reach nonbelievers in your community?
23. How have you intentionally discovered the unique needs, characteristics, and emerging trends within your community?
24. How would you go about learning the unique culture of our city, community, and church?
25. What is your understanding of our church’s ministry style, community demographic, values, and church?
26. Our church has had a rich history of **(insert quality that applies)**. What types of skills or sensitivity do you think that may require from a new pastor in this context?



M. CANDIDATE COVER PAGE [\(back to table\)](#)

To keep track of the progress of each candidate, you will need to use a candidate cover sheet that allows you to record what steps have been taken for each candidate. This can be an electronic document kept in candidate folders or a paper version placed inside a physical file. Following is a sample that can be modified:

Candidate's Name: _____

Address _____ City _____ State/Zip _____

Email _____ Cell _____

Current District _____

Current District Superintendent/Network Pastor _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Source (applied, recommended, or enlisted): _____

1. _____ Pastor's Information Form received
2. _____ Initial verification letter sent
3. _____ CD or web address with sermons received
4. _____ Second verification letter sent
5. _____ First elimination decision
6. _____ If definite "no," send nonacceptance letter
7. _____ Telephone references completed
8. _____ Sermon evaluations completed:
Committee member 1 (Initials) _____ Score _____
Committee member 2 (Initials) _____ Score _____
Committee member 3 (Initials) _____ Score _____
9. _____ Second elimination decision
10. _____ Schedule of first phone interview
11. _____ Schedule of second phone interview
12. _____ Schedule of phone video interview
13. _____ Contextual visit
14. _____ Decision based on personal interview
15. _____ Notification of decision sent

SPECIAL NOTES:

*Suggestion: Staple this to the inside of the file folder for each candidate.

N. EXPOSURE TO SPEAKING MINISTRY [\(back to table\)](#)

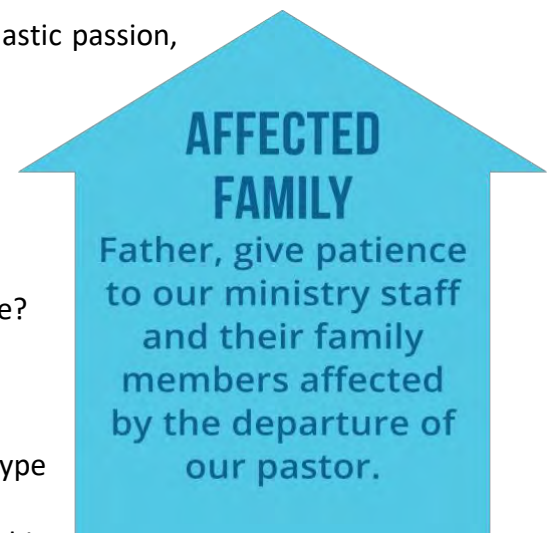
Because the lead pastor is the primary communicator of the church, it is important that the search committee be exposed to the preaching and teaching ministry of serious candidates. It would be wise for the search committee to request that links to the preaching ministry of all candidates be placed into the body of the candidate's résumé. Your team will want to listen to as many sermons as possible for candidates in the "A" category. Do not interview anyone until you have been exposed to their speaking ministry in some way, shape, or form more than one time.

A. Sources of exposure. Go to the church's website to view or listen to sermons. Googling different variations of the person's name may also give you access to podcast or audio files from previous ministry positions as well. Be sure to check their church or personal social media pages also.

B. Review team. Appoint different members of the search committee to listen to the sermons and report their thoughts and impressions back to the committee.

C. Suggested criteria. As members of the search committee, listen to or watch the candidate's sermons and report back to the committee with your prevailing impression regarding the following questions:

1. Was the introduction interesting, and did it capture your attention?
2. Was the message expositional (explaining the biblical context and the meaning of the passage) or topical (on a topic supported by various scriptures)?
3. Was the sermon primarily based on scripture, enthusiastic passion, or personal experiences?
4. Was the message appealing to hear?
5. Was the sermon scripturally sound?
6. Was it interesting? How so?
7. Were the illustrations captivating?
8. Was it based on the Bible or was it storytelling?
9. Were you able to identify one "big idea" of the message?
10. Was the message too short, too long, or just right?
11. Did they use their sense of humor?
12. Was the theme and message relevant to real life?
13. Would our church like, understand, and support this type of preaching?
14. Am I drawn to want to hear another sermon by this candidate?
15. On a scale of 1-5, my overall evaluation of this sermon is a _____.



D. Live experience. For candidates who make your final list of two or three, it is important to hear them live in their own setting. A member or small team should visit the church where the candidate ministers to personally see, hear, and feel the vibe of the candidate in a local ministry setting. Be sure to call the church beforehand to find out who is preaching the Sunday you plan to be there. When you arrive, the group should not cluster together or do anything to draw attention to themselves. No contact should be made with the candidate nor should they receive prior notice. Slip in right when service is starting and leave the service promptly. If asked where you are from, just say you are visiting with friends in town (with your friends being the other committee members joining you). The team will also want to swing by the facility after hours to see how well things are kept up or get a feel for the life of the church.

E. Perspective. It is important to remember that you cannot judge a person's preaching ministry by one sermon. That is why the same people who are evaluating should also listen to more than one message from the same person. It is also important that more than one person from the committee do this as all have different preferences and tastes.

O. CATEGORIZING AND EVALUATING RÉSUMÉS [\(back to table\)](#)

If networking and advertising is done properly, the search committee should expect to receive several résumés with 15-20 being worthy candidates. Some candidates may have even created a web page, web-résumé, or YouTube channel to introduce themselves. Those electronic sources will enable you to download their résumés, listen/watch sermons, and get other valuable information about the candidates. If not, be sure to request one in PDF format. The committee should then go through the process of organizing candidate in categories of A, B, and C.

A = Strong candidate worthy of contact and exploration. These are candidates the search committee feels have potential. The candidate matches the pastoral profile well, has experience that is beneficial to the church, and is highly regarded by others. A letter or email is immediately sent to the candidate informing them that their résumé has been received and giving them a brief description of your church's search process. See the appendix entitled "Sample Letters" for examples. Should the search committee find immediate interest in a résumé and want to accelerate the process, I would suggest sending a letter asking the candidate to return a "Candidate Response Form" which can be found in the appendix of the same title.



MULTIGENERATIONAL
Lord, give our new
pastor the ability to
relate to the various
generations and
cultures
represented in our
church.

B = Possible candidate to be considered at a later time. These are candidates the search committee feels have merit or that the committee does not have consensus on concerning their potential. They seem to have a few of the characteristics mentioned in the profile but less than others. They are not dismissed but rather placed "on hold" until the committee feels they merit reconsideration. A letter or email is immediately sent to the candidate informing them that their résumé has been received and giving them a brief description of your church's search process.

C = Unqualified or undesirable candidates to be dismissed immediately. These are candidates whose résumé and information immediately reveal that they do not show compatibility with the pastor profile or experience required. They lack the education, experience, or maturity to lead your church. A letter or email is immediately sent thanking them for applying and informing them that the committee feels led to move in a different direction. See a sample letter in the appendix entitled "Sample Letters."

It is important that the search committee decide to which category each candidate will be assigned as a whole and not delegate this task to a single member or smaller group. Each categorization decision should be made by an official vote of the committee. For sample letters to confirm receipt of a résumé and notification of concluding interest, see the appendix entitled "Sample Letters."

The North Texas District of the Assemblies of God recommends an excellent form to help search committees evaluate résumés. Each member of the committee should be given a copy of the résumés and complete the evaluation form on the following page. ¹¹⁸

Candidate Résumé Evaluation

Name of Candidate _____ Date Received _____

Give your perception of the candidate based on the following indicators. A score of 1 is the lowest and a score of 5 the highest. If you are vacillating between scores, you may average the two (example: 2.5, 4.5).

- Poor = 1
- Fair = 2
- Average = 3
- Good = 4
- Exceptional = 5

1. How well does the candidate portray himself/herself when it comes to spiritual insight/wisdom?

2. How would you evaluate the candidate's character/integrity?

3. How well does the candidate portray his/her ability to communicate verbally or in writing?

4. How well does the candidate exhibit organizational/administrative skills?

5. How capable does the candidate seem at managing others?

6. How well does the candidate represent his/her ability to recruit, assess, and train leaders?

7. How would you evaluate the candidate's ability to relate with other spiritual, secular, and governmental entities?

8. How well does the candidate meet the qualifications for the position?

9. How do you rate the candidate overall?

Total score out of a possible 45: _____
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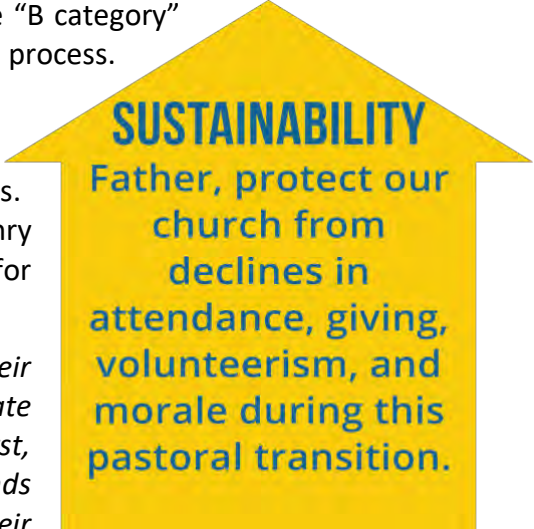
P. CHECKING REFERENCES ([back to table](#))

It is very important that the committee call all possible ministry, employment, and character references for all candidates in the “A” category. It is also important to do background checks on the final three candidates. Do not agree to ANY in-person interviews before all references are checked. In addition, do not forget to do reference checks on any candidates from the “B category” that the search committee decided to revisit later in the process.

Following are some suggestions on how to check references:

A. Calling references. In most all cases, references provided by the candidate will produce glowing recommendations. That is why you must take the time to go deeper. Author Henry Virkler gives excellent advice when calling references for pastoral candidates:

Many Pastoral Search Committees fail to fulfill their mandate by not checking references which the candidate has supplied. Several things need to be kept in mind. First, the ones who are listed as references are most likely friends of the candidate and would not wish to hinder their chances to be involved in any ministry position. Secondly, people are fearful of legal repercussions if their comments were misrepresented. With these things in mind, be encouraged to do all your reference checks by phone. When speaking to a reference, the first task is to assure him or her complete confidentiality. Nothing that they say will get beyond the committee or to the candidate without the reference’s expressed permission. The telephone conversation includes a lot of communication which a letter fails to achieve. The confidence/hesitation or tone in the voice of the one giving the reference when responding to questions by the committee member can be a means to gaining a fuller understanding of the candidate in question.¹¹⁹



SUSTAINABILITY
Father, protect our church from declines in attendance, giving, volunteerism, and morale during this pastoral transition.

When choosing those who will contact references, pick one to three people who are skilled in expressing themselves well and have a disarming demeanor about them. This can help the reference to loosen up and be candid. Some initial questions might include:

1. How long have you known this person?
2. What is your relationship?
3. Would you recommend this candidate as a pastor? If yes, why?
4. What are the candidate’s greatest strengths as a pastor?
5. In what areas is the candidate “still growing?” (This is better than asking for weaknesses.)
6. Please tell us about a time the candidate faced conflict.
7. Describe the candidate’s leadership style.
8. What are the candidate’s primary passions or core values in ministry?
9. How does the candidate cast vision?
10. How does the candidate build a team?
11. Is the candidate more collaborative or independent?
12. How would you describe the candidate’s marriage?
13. Does the candidate normally do _____ (fill in some of the church’s greatest expectations of a pastor’s role)?
14. Can you give me the name and contact information for a couple of other people who can provide a reference for this candidate?

B. Calling the candidate's district superintendent/network pastor. Whether the candidate lists their district superintendent/network pastor as a reference or not, the board and search committee should seek to secure a reference from that person and not a subordinate. Some initial questions might include:

1. How long have you known this person?
2. Is the candidate a member in good standing in the district/network?
3. Does the candidate tithe or pay district dues regularly? (Some districts operate on a tithe system while others require a set amount as dues.)
4. Is the candidate known to be cooperative with the district/network?
5. Is the church the candidate presently pastors supportive of missions?
6. What are the candidate's strengths and weaknesses?
7. What adjectives or descriptive phrases come to your mind when you think of this individual?
8. What style of leadership does this individual have?
9. On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the candidate's effectiveness in their present pastorate?
10. Is there anything in the candidate's past the church should know about? Previous disciplinary action? Voted out of another church? Church split while pastoring? Financial indiscretions? Marital discord?

C. Interpreting vague, cautious, or negative reviews. Although most references will be hesitant to say anything negative about a potential candidate, you will need to read between the lines and look for red flags. Following are a few suggestions as to how to navigate these times:

1. **Listen carefully.** It is common for references to try to tell you something without actually saying it, so listen carefully to what they might be trying to tell you. Take note of intentional vagueness, pauses, or redirection.
2. **Tone of voice.** A lack of interest, excitement, or a generally apathetic tone can say a lot about a candidate. On the other hand, if a reference is upbeat and positive, it is a good sign.
3. **Theoretical language.** Some references will talk in theoretical terms saying things like, "If Steve put in more time and effort, he could be a successful pastor," or "Jan could be a huge asset to a church if she found the right role." When you hear these types of statements, the reference is often trying to tell you to be cautious and ensure they are right for this position.
4. **Holes and inconsistencies.** One of the most important things to look for is inconsistencies. Be on the lookout for anything that is inconsistent with the candidate's résumé, what other references tell you about them, or what the candidate said about their duties, skills, and experience. If there are significant differences, you should consider asking the candidate to explain them before you move forward.
5. **Pseudo references.** Sometimes a candidate may imply that a person is their supervisor when in reality they are more like a peer or respected colleague. If they do not enjoy the favor of their lead pastor or executive leadership, they may provide the name of a colleague who likes them but has little to no supervision over their ministry. In this case, it is best to request another reference from the candidate.



PROTECTION
Lord, protect our church from selfish ambition and those attempting to promote their own agendas during this leadership vacuum.

Denominational leaders can be cautious about giving detailed recommendations so it will be important to notice the absence of positive comments regarding the candidate. You may also stumble

across negative or overly cautious reviews. However, it should be noted that many successful and high-octane leaders can be viewed as mavericks and even experience jealousy or resentment from their peers. It is important to ask the Holy Spirit to give you discernment and not allow one or two negative reviews to overly influence your opinion. It is patterns and repetition that should give the search committee a reason to pause.

D. Checking social media outlets. Your committee will also want to review the presence, comments, and pictures of your “A list” candidates on social media outlets. You will learn an awful lot about what is important to them, how they spend their time, and any strong opinions they may have. Should you find anything surprising or alarming, do not rush to a decision prematurely. We have all said and done things we regret. Instead, use the instance to create a diplomatic and nonjudgmental question that can be asked later in a phone or live interview. You may learn an admirable or human side to the candidate you otherwise would not have known. This task is as easy as assigning a member of your committee the task of going to the major social media sites and searching different variations of the candidate’s name. Following is a list of the most popular social media networks and their web pages at the time of this writing:

1. Facebook: www.facebook.com
2. YouTube: www.youtube.com
3. WhatsApp: www.whatsapp.com
4. Instagram: www.instagram.com
5. Twitter: www.twitter.com
6. Snapchat: www.snapchat.com
7. QZone: www.qzone.qq.com
8. Reddit: www.reddit.com
9. Pinterest: www.pinterest.com
10. Ask.fm: www.ask.fm
11. Tumblr: www.tumblr.com
12. Flickr: www.flickr.com
13. LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com
14. Meetup: www.meetup.com

E. Background check. It is important that your church do a comprehensive background check on your top two candidates. Unfortunately, I would also recommend that your church do a background check on both the minister and minister’s spouse. One church in our network overlooked this important step only to be surprised to learn after their new pastor arrived that his spouse had been found guilty in a court of law for embezzlement. Sadly, that church did not survive a string of moral and financial accusations that continued to surface in the months and years after their arrival.

To help you in this area, the network is willing to provide your official board with a free background check on the minister and the minister’s spouse for your top two pastoral candidates. If you are interested in this free service, please contact the district superintendent/network pastor’s office. The church can also use the same background service they already use for volunteers; however, it is unethical to check without the written consent of the candidate. Following is an example of text that can be used on such a waiver:



CLARIFICATION
Father, give the board clarity as to the characteristics, goals, and responsibilities that should be included in the pastor’s position description.

Background Check Information Release

I hereby authorize (insert church name) to check my background and legal history with all appropriate sources. Such information may be obtained for the years of _____ to the present.

Minister's Name _____

(Other names minister has used, if appropriate, such as maiden name, prior married name, etc.)

Minister's Driver's License Number _____

Minister's Social Security Number ____ - ____ - _____

Minister's Signature _____

Date _____

Minister's Spouse's Name _____

(Other names spouse has used, if appropriate, such as maiden name, prior married name, etc.)

Spouse's Driver's License Number _____

Spouse's Social Security Number ____ - ____ - _____

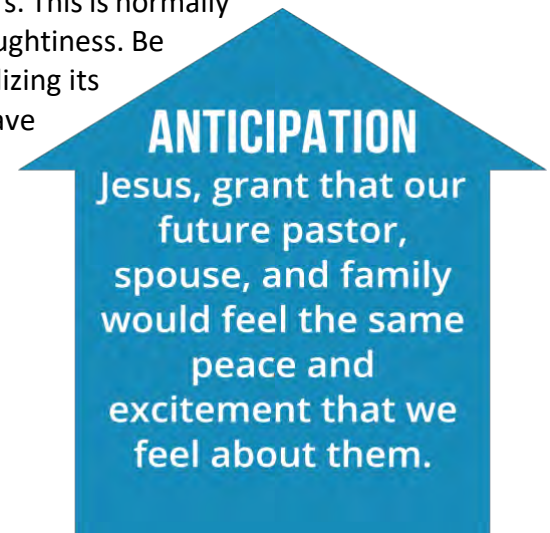
Spouse's Signature _____

Date _____

Q. SAMPLE LETTERS ([back to table](#))

The art of communication is the language of leadership.¹²⁰ During the course of the pastoral search, it will be necessary to communicate with candidates, references, district officials, and others. It is important that all potential candidates receive communication in a timely manner. Word gets out if search committees fail to confirm receipt of résumés, emails, or letters. This is normally due to busyness or oversight, but others can interpret it as haughtiness. Be sure to be polite, timely, and efficient in communication. Realizing its easier to make something better than to create it, I have provided several form letters that can be used as templates for the following occasions:

- Paid pastoral and support staff
- Guest speakers
- Asking for recommendations
- Person recommending a candidate
- Receiving résumés
- Requesting phone contact
- Request for written response to questionnaire
- Concluding consideration
- Contacting a recruited candidate
- Dismissal after interview
- Notification of candidate
- Formal resolution of nomination by the board
- Confirmation of election and official invitation
- Notification to district/network



A. Paid pastoral and support staff. It is common for pastoral and support staff to experience anxiety concerning the uncertainty a pastoral transition brings to their lives. The search committee can head this off quickly by sending them a letter similar to the one below.¹²¹ Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

The resignation of a lead pastor is always a little unsettling and creates many challenges. We are sure it has raised a few questions in your own mind as well. One question we do not want you worrying about is your job status.

On behalf of the church board, I am asking that you stay on in your present position during the transition period. We need you now more than ever. We do not know how long this interim period will be, and circumstances could change should it be prolonged. However, at the present time we believe keeping the staff intact will help provide stability and certainty during this season of change.

Of course, the new pastor will have the prerogative of selecting his own team, and you could well be part of that team. In the meantime, we are grateful for your contribution and faithfulness to our church and the Lord.

Sincerely,

(Insert name here)

Acting Board Chair

(Insert your church name)

B. Guest speakers. Scheduling local guest speakers for the first four to eight weeks who have a good rapport with your church will give your team time and margin to consider and select an interim pastor. However, those speakers will need guidelines if they are to be productive. Following is an example of the letter we used at Highpoint:

Dear Rev. **(insert last name)**:

Thanks for getting back to me on your availability to preach at **(insert your church name here)** during the transition period. The Board wanted to schedule familiar faces and personalities that will give our people a sense of calm and confidence. The schedule will help give them time to determine what type of interim pastor they will need and may be changed to accommodate current needs. Here are a few points of information:

1. YOUR PREACHING DATES. We would like to schedule you on the following dates you had open.

Schedule

Sunday, June 2, 2019	name
Sunday, June 9, 2019	name
Sunday, June 16, 2019	name
Sunday, June 23, 2019	name
Sunday, June 30, 2019	name
Sunday, July 7, 2019	name
Sunday, July 14, 2019	name
Sunday, July 21, 2019	name
Sunday, July 28, 2019	name
Sunday, August 4, 2019	name
Sunday, August 11, 2019	name
Sunday, August 18, 2019	name
Sunday, August 25, 2019	name

2. SERVICE TIMES. Highpoint’s services are at 9 and 10:30 a.m. Please report to the media team at 8:30 a.m. to receive your preferred microphone and get a sound check. The service team will then meet with you behind the stage at 8:40 a.m. for a team huddle, briefing, and prayer.

3. TEACHING NOTES. We like to keep our teaching slides simple, so please email a brief outline of your message to **(insert coordinator’s name here)** by the Monday before you speak so **(he/she)** can make the sermon slides early in the week. **(His/her)** email is **(insert email address here)**.

4. HONORARIUM. Highpoint will provide an \$800 check for each Sunday you minister.

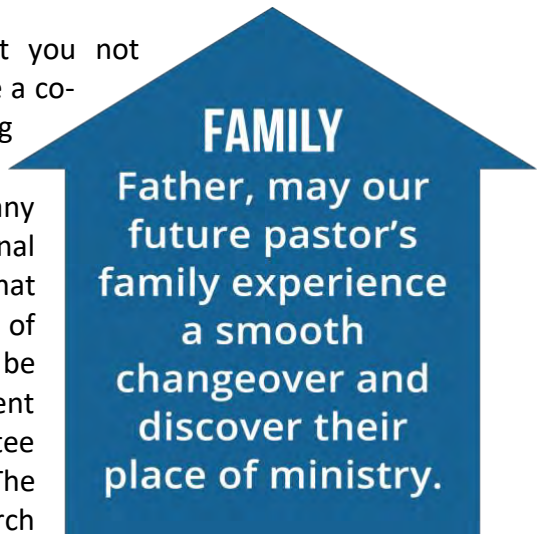
5. LUNCH. Vern Lentz, the current chair of the search committee, will take you and your spouse to lunch following the services or arrange for someone else to do so..



FAMILY
 Father, may our
 future pastor’s
 family experience
 a smooth
 changeover and
 discover their
 place of ministry.

6. **REQUESTS.** The Board would request that you give special attention to the following requirements that will help our transition go more smoothly:

- We ask that you preach positive, encouraging, and faith-building messages to encourage the hearts of our people.
- Without our prior permission, we ask that you not subcontract this invitation, trade, or introduce a co-presenter while part of the interim preaching team.
- We ask that you be careful not to make any statements that may reflect your personal opinions regarding our pastoral transition that could be interpreted as speaking on behalf of (insert your church name here) board. It would be better to reply to such questions with a comment like, "I am not a member of the search committee and am unaware of their deliberations. The Search Committee has been updating the church regularly, and you probably know more than I do."
- We ask that you not present yourself as a potential candidate should people ask.
- When your ministerial peers learn that you are part of the interim preaching team, some may press you for inside information or updates. We ask that you refrain from giving information that ministerial colleagues or potential candidates may request from you.
- We ask that any questions you have or clarification you need regarding Sunday ministry go through (insert service coordinators name here) at (insert their email address here).



I cannot thank you enough for your help and am thrilled the board decided to include you in the transition plan. I will be leaving in two and a half weeks and feel safe knowing you will be feeding the souls of those who mean so much to Rhonda and me.

Gene Roncone
Lead Pastor, Highpoint Church

C. **Asking for recommendations.** The following letter can be used as a generic email to send to district offices and the staff of the larger churches to request leads or recommendations. This can also be a creative way to identify someone who may feel released from their current ministry. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

(Insert your church name) in (insert your city, state), is in the process of seeking a new lead pastor. We understand you to be an influential leader in our Fellowship and thought you may have a recommendation or could forward this email to someone who may qualify.

We have (attach information or create a special website) where potential candidates can learn more about (insert your church name) and our search process at (insert web address for your web/blog info page). Please feel free to forward this information to anyone you may feel meets these needs.

Sincerely,
(Insert name here)
Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert your church name)

- D. Person recommending a candidate.** Over the course of the search, you will receive résumés and name recommendations from district officials, other pastors, members of the church, missionaries, and others. Following is a sample letter that can be used to confirm receipt of their recommendations. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Thank you for your willingness to submit the name of a possible pastoral candidate to the Pastoral Search Committee. We value your input and will ask the committee to give full consideration to your suggestion.

We have developed a pastoral profile that we believe will help us in evaluating candidates in relation to the type of pastor (insert church name here) needs in the immediate future. We will use that as an objective guide when looking at the candidate you have recommended. Please pray that the Lord will give the committee clear guidance through this process.

Sincerely,

(Insert name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert church name)

- E. Receiving résumés.** A letter or email should be sent within three days to all candidates who have submitted their names and résumés. The letter should thank them for their interest and inform them that all applications are under review and they will be informed if further consideration will be given to them. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Rev. (insert candidate's last name):

Thank you for your interest in being considered as a candidate for the position of lead pastor at (insert church name). It is still early in the process, and we have made your résumé available to members of the Search Committee. We are prayerfully reviewing your résumé along with others we have received and wanted to assure you we will give attention to the information you have provided.

We will contact you should the Search Committee desire additional information.

Sincerely,

(Insert name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert church name)

- F. Requesting phone contact.** Following is an example of a letter or email to a candidate requesting a preliminary phone conversation to explore the possibilities of God's will. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Rev. (insert candidate's last name):

As you may know, the lead pastor of (insert church name) in (insert city, state), has resigned; consequently, the Pastoral Search Committee has begun the process of a pastoral selection. We have developed a pastoral profile that details the type of leadership we believe our church needs at this point in its history. You can review it (attach file or give your weblink here).



Your name has been suggested as one who could possibly be a good match with the profile. A special website/blog has been created where you can learn more about (insert church name) and our search process at (insert website/blog address).

We do not know what the Lord may have been saying to you recently, but we are hopeful that you would at least be open to a conversation about the lead pastor position here. Within the next week, I would like to call you to determine whether you might be interested in taking a first step with us.

We want you to know we are casting a wide net in this process, so other candidates are also being considered. Nevertheless, we are desirous of talking with you about your interest. Should you wish to initiate contact, my phone number is (insert phone number), and my email is (insert email address).

I will look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,
(Insert name here)
Chair, Pastoral Search Committee
(Insert church name)

- G. Request for written response to questionnaire.** In addition to the interviews, it may also be wise to consider asking candidates to respond in writing to a list of questions prior to the interview. This allows you to hear from several candidates and use time in other interview formats for follow-up questions. However, it would not be wise to do this with all the questions. Remember, you want to be able to ask questions in a way that allows you to experience the candidate's instantaneous response. Following is an example of a letter requesting a written response to a list of questions. This should be emailed to the candidate's personal email account. See the appendix entitled "Candidate Response Form" for a sample questionnaire that can be used. This form helps you to see more quickly if a candidate is strategically aligned with your pastoral profile. If you like what you read, you can extend an invitation to interview. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

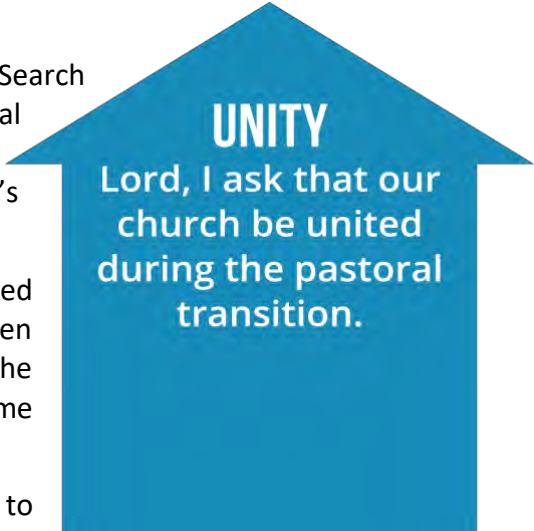
Dear Rev. (insert candidate's last name):

Thank you for your willingness to work with the Pastoral Search Committee of (insert church name) in the pastoral selection process. We are seeking to do "due diligence" on the details while at the same time praying for God's clear direction.

We are at a point where we are asking a few selected candidates to consider responding to some written questions we have drafted. Our desire is to keep the questions pointed and succinct so that large blocks of time are not needed for their completion.

We have attached these questions; and if you are willing to take another step with us, we would appreciate your response in writing and then emailed to us by (insert deadline here). Feel free to use a word document if that is convenient. We will look forward to receiving your response.

May God's blessing be yours.



UNITY
Lord, I ask that our
church be united
during the pastoral
transition.

Sincerely,
(Insert name here)
Chair, Pastoral Search Committee
(Insert church name)



H. Concluding consideration. During the process, candidates who are no longer being considered should be sent a letter apprising them of the decision immediately. A word of encouragement to dismissed candidates would be appropriate and go a long way to alleviate any emotional letdown they may experience. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Rev. (insert candidate's last name):

You will recall that we were recently in touch with you concerning your interest in our need for a lead pastor. Along with yours, we have been blessed to receive a number of outstanding résumés in consideration of the lead pastor position at (insert church name). It has been a joy to read them and observe the many ways men and women of God have been used to build His church. We thank God for your (insert admirable qualities and contribution to the kingdom).

However, as we have walked through the pastoral selection process, we have moved in the direction of other candidates. Thank you for allowing us to consider you as a possible candidate. We wish you God's blessing and leading as you seek where He would have you serve.

Sincerely,
(Insert name here)
Chair, Pastoral Search Committee
(Insert church name)

I. Contacting a recruited candidate. If the candidate expresses an openness to exploring the possibility of a ministry change, email them the church profile and pastor profile along with a request that they reply with their résumé. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Rev. (insert candidate's last name):

Thank you for your time on the phone this week. Our Pastoral Search Committee is currently seeking God's will for capable leadership for (insert church name). You were recommended as someone who may have the leadership and spiritual giftings to lead our church. I appreciate your openness to explore the possibility of God's will and have attached a church profile describing (insert church name) as well as a Pastor Profile describing the type of leader we believe can lead our church into the future.

We have also created a special website/blog where potential candidates can learn more about (insert church name) and our search process at (insert web/blog address). If after reviewing this information you are open to discussing this matter in greater detail, we would appreciate your sending your résumé so we may share it with the other members of our committee.

Sincerely,
(insert name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee
(insert church name)

- J. Dismissal after interview.** This is a template that can be used to release a candidate that is no longer in consideration following one or more interviews. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear (insert candidate's name):

The Pastoral Search Committee of (insert church name) sincerely appreciates your time, effort, and interest in the position of lead pastor.

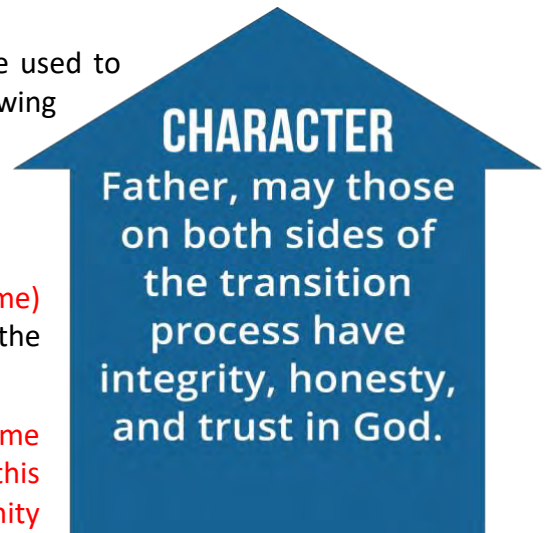
While we were impressed by (insert a comment of some of the things the committee especially appreciated in this candidate; e.g., your heart and desire for our community and church), we have identified another candidate whose background and experience better matched our profile and the needs of our church (or: we have decided to pursue other candidates).

We pray for the Lord's direction in your life and ministry.

Sincerely,

(Insert name here)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee
(Insert church name)



- K. Notification of candidate.** After the search committee has prayerfully selected one candidate to be voted upon by the membership, they should send a letter to the church. The letter should inform the church of the candidate's name, the date they will be presented to the church, and how they can become better acquainted with the candidate. Following is a template that may be helpful. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear (insert church name) Family:

For some time now, the Pastoral Search Committee has been reviewing résumés and interviewing prospective candidates for the lead pastor position at (insert church name). It is with joy and anticipation that we announce to you that we have invited (name of candidate) to visit our church and speak on Sunday morning, (insert date).

To allow the church an opportunity to become personally acquainted with (him/her) and (his/her) family, we have planned a dessert social at 7 p.m., Saturday, (insert date). Bring your family, and let's enjoy this time together.

A special business meeting of the membership has been called for Sunday afternoon at 4 p.m. on (insert date) for the exclusive purpose of voting on (insert name of candidate).

In addition, the following three things are enclosed for your convenience:

1. Background information about (his/her) ministry experience, personal background, and family.
2. Our official nomination in the form of a resolution.

3. Helpful reminders of specific requirements in our bylaws concerning the election of a new lead pastor.

Please continue to pray with us through the coming days for God's will to be done.

Sincerely,

The Board of Deacons

(Insert church name)

L. Formal resolution of nomination by the board.

(INSERT YOUR CHURCH NAME HERE)

RESOLUTION 01: NOMINATION OF PASTORAL CANDIDATE

Whereas, (insert church name) has been seeking God's will concerning our need for a pastor since (insert month and year), and

Whereas, our Bylaws in (insert the correct reference in your bylaws) charge the search committee with the responsibility of prayerfully evaluating candidates and making a final nomination to serve as the lead pastor, and

Whereas, after several months of diligently executing our duties as outlined in our bylaws and prayerfully seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit, the search committee believes we have identified God's will and the spiritual leader for our church, be it therefore

Resolved, that the search committee, without reservation, officially nominates Rev. (insert candidate's full name) as the pastoral candidate for (insert church name), and be it further

Resolved, that we will meet together on (insert month, day, year), at (insert time) at (name of church) to hold a special business meeting for the purpose of thanking God for sustaining our church during this interim period and voting on this pastoral candidate.

Sponsored by the unanimous vote of the Pastoral Search Committee on (insert month, day, year) by Motion #(insert number).



IMPORTANT INFORMATION: It is important that the board and search committee follow any and all bylaw requirements concerning the election of a new lead pastor. Please double check your bylaws regarding the following topics:

1. **Official nomination.** The search committee must make a formal written or verbal nomination of no more than one pastoral candidate to the membership of the church.
2. **Term of office.** Be sure to inform the candidate and church membership of any reference the bylaws may give concerning the term of office (length or indefinite) the pastor is elected to serve.
3. **Form of voting.** To protect the rights and privacy of all present, be sure the vote is taken by secret ballot.
4. **Type of vote.** Be sure to confirm the type of vote required for an election. Most pastoral elections require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all votes cast. However, some churches may be different. Proxy voting and absentee balloting shall not be allowed in the conduct of business unless the bylaws specifically allow and prescribe how they are collected and counted.
5. **Call to meeting.** The special meeting must be called by an official motion of the board. The meeting notification must list the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting.
6. **Prior notice and venue announcement.** Most bylaws require that special business meetings be announced a certain number of days or Sundays before the meeting. Make sure your meeting notification and the way in which they occur (mail or verbal announcement) comply with the requirements of your bylaws.
7. **Agenda restrictions.** No business other than that mentioned in the call to meeting shall be in order or permissible during that same meeting.
8. **Minutes.** A special business meeting to elect a pastor requires official minutes by the corporate secretary. These minutes should record the meeting's being called to order, a roster report (number of members present), a summary of its proceedings, the teller's report (ballot report), results of the election, and motion to adjourn. The minutes should then be presented at your next annual business meeting to be received as you would any other minutes for membership meetings.

M. Confirmation of election and official invitation. After a candidate has been elected by the membership, the board should send the candidate an official confirmation of the vote and invitation to serve. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Dear Rev. (insert the name of the newly elected pastor):

On behalf of (insert church name), I am delighted to extend an official invitation to become our lead pastor. The vote of the congregation was overwhelmingly positive (give the percentage [%] of the vote received and the minimum vote required). We believe God has given us direction, and we look forward to your ministry with us under God's blessing.

Our compensation offer is as follows:

***See details regarding this matter in the appendix entitled "Presenting an Offer."**

It is a normal practice for a minister to receive honorariums for weddings, funerals, etc. Such income is in addition to your salary.

Please let us know of any questions you may have on any of these points.

Let me assure you of our sense of excitement and expectancy as we anticipate working together to win our community for Christ.

We look forward to your arrival.

Sincerely,

(Insert name of board secretary)

Board Secretary

(Insert church name)

(Insert name of board chair)

Chair, Pastoral Search Committee

(Insert church name)

N. Notification to district/network. After your new pastor is elected, use the template below to notify the district/network office. Feel free to cut, paste, or edit accordingly.

Superintendent (insert first and last name of superintendent)

The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network of the Assemblies of God

Suite 202

6295 Lehman Drive

Colorado Springs, CO 80918-8434

Dear Superintendent/Network Pastor (insert last name):

At an official business meeting of the membership of (insert church name) in (insert city, state), held on (insert date), in full accordance with the bylaws of the church, Rev. (insert first and last name of new pastor) was elected as lead pastor by a (insert percentage) vote. Pastor (insert last name) will assume pastoral responsibilities on (insert date).

We are thankful for the leading of the Lord in this direction and the assistance of the district/network leadership. Feel free to contact me if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

(Insert first and last name)

Acting Chair of the Board

R. THREE PERSONAL INTERVIEWS ([back to table](#))

The committee should narrow down their list of potential candidates to two or at the most three who will be invited to your city with their spouse and family (at the church's expense) to interview in person. Larger churches should bring in at least three potential candidates for a face-to-face interview at different times before narrowing it down to one candidate. The search committee should plan a loose itinerary that will accomplish the goals of this trip. If needed, childcare should be arranged ahead of time so the spouse can be available for the interview without being distracted. Since this round of interviews will likely produce the lead candidate, this trip should accommodate three important things:

- A. An opportunity to deal with outstanding issues, questions, or concerns.** This would be in the form of an interview with the search committee, the candidate, and the candidate's spouse over significant issues that have not previously been discussed.
- B. An opportunity for the candidate to discern God's will within the context of your surroundings.** This should be an opportunity for the candidate and the candidate's spouse to enjoy margin while they are in the community to look around, pray together, and reflect upon the visit.
- C. An opportunity for the search committee, the candidate, and the candidate's spouse to interact.** This visit will provide a rare opportunity for the candidate and the candidate's spouse to have an informal Q&A with the deacons and their spouses. If the candidate is a male, it would be wise for a team of deacons' wives to schedule a fun "women-only event" to avail themselves of the candidate's spouse in a relaxed social setting. This allows the search committee to get input from their spouses and see how the couple functions together. If the candidate is a female, the men can do the same. In his book about pastoral transitions, Tom Mullins stressed the importance of including the candidate's spouse in the interview saying, *Years ago we realized how important it was to not only interview the candidate himself, but to invite his spouse to an interview as well. It's possible to learn so much more from the people who live with the candidate day in and day out. During the interview, ask a lot of interactive questions so you can observe how the two of them interact with each other.*¹²²



DISCERNMENT
Father, may our board and future pastor have the wisdom to ask the right questions and discern between better and best.

This is a critical stage because it will most likely result in the emergence of a front-runner. It will also be the search committee's last opportunity to reflect, pray, and follow up on any concerns or red flags they may have. Following this stage, the search committee should pause and complete any due diligence (background, credit, criminal, and educational reference checks) before moving forward and committing to an individual.

S. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATE ([back to table](#))

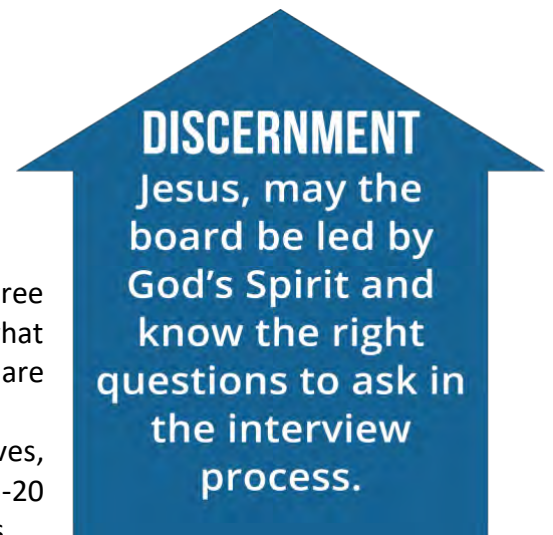
The interview process can be intimidating. Knowing it is easier to make something better than to create it, I have provided an extensive list in this chapter of possible questions the search committee might ask as well as ones they should be prepared to answer in the next.¹²³ If you try to use them all, you will need an overnight bag for your meeting. That is why it would be good to eliminate ones you do not like or add others you would like to address. Following are some suggestions to consider when coming up with a strategy:

- **Listen to the short podcast we created on how to interview pastoral candidates.** It will help your team function as a group, avoid pitfalls, and host effective interviews. The link can be found on the Rise Up audio resource site at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
- **Your attitude is more important than your questions.** The spirit in which you ask questions is more important than the questions themselves. While interviewing a candidate, be careful not to come off as condescending or as though you are relishing the opportunity to put them on the spot.
- **Everyone has weaknesses that God can use and even accommodate.** Like you, every candidate will have strengths and weaknesses. Believe it or not, God can use both to grow a healthy church.
- **Interviews are a two-way street.** It is also important to remember that a sharp candidate is going to expect to be given as much opportunity to interview you as you are to interview them. Be sure to accommodate time to be fair and create a win/win situation as you explore God's will.
- **Select your questions wisely for each candidate.** Time will not permit you to ask every question on this list. They are there to help you compile a list and then assign them to different members of the search committee to ask at the appropriate time and place.
- **You need a plan BEFORE the interview.** It is important that the search committee as a whole have a plan. One way to do that is to select questions as a group as well as the order in which they will be asked. Avoid having one person ask all the questions. Each member should be assigned a topic or series of questions with others feeling free to chime in with follow up or requests for clarification.
- **Suspend judgments until the end of the interview.** Do not make premature decisions based on the first few minutes of the interview. Consciously try to suspend making a decision about the applicant until you have had time to reflect upon the interview.¹²⁴
- **Written responses can supplement the process.** In addition to the interviews, it may also be wise to consider asking candidates to respond in writing to a list of questions prior to the interview. This allows you to hear from several candidates and use time in other interview formats for follow-up questions. However, it would not be wise to do this with all the questions. Remember, you want to be able to ask questions in a way that allows you to experience the candidate's instantaneous responses. See the appendix labeled "Sample Letters" for an example of a letter requesting a written response to a list of questions.
- **Do not drag things out unnecessarily.** Do not allow your series of interviews to drag on so long you lose potential candidates to competing job offers. On the other hand, do not move so fast that you overlook red flags.



**AFFECTED
MINISTERS**
Lord, give the staff
on both sides of
this transition
faith, trust, and
the ability to bless
their church.

- **Set a time schedule and agenda for the interview.** Having an agenda for the interviews will help keep them focused and succinct. The total length of any one session should not be longer than three hours with one break halfway through. A possible agenda should include:
 - Welcome
 - Opening prayer (by one of your team members)
 - Introductions
 - Questions by the committee
 - Questions by the candidate
 - Concluding comments and process update
 - Closing prayer (by the candidate)
- **Listen, listen, and listen.** It is important to listen with three ears: to hear what candidates are saying, for what candidates are not saying, and for what candidates are having a hard time saying.
- **Plan time to debrief as a group.** After the candidate leaves, the committee should stay back and debrief for 15-20 minutes while things are fresh in their minds and spirits.



Each stage of the interview process should focus on gaining knowledge about specific themes in logical sequence.

- **The first phone interview** should focus on identifying immediate disqualifications concerning ethics, education, experience, and doctrine and gaining a feel for the candidate's spouse and family relationships.
- **The second phone interview** should focus on the candidate's theology, ministry values, and philosophy of ministry.
- **The third interview** over a video conference call should include the candidate's spouse and focus on the candidate's ministry focus, leadership style, and overarching ministry preferences that could be expected to be seen in any ministry position they serve.
- **The fourth interview** should be face-to-face and focus on getting a feel for the candidate's compatibility with the church culture, chemistry with other leaders and staff, their appearance, and the general vibe they leave behind. The search committee will need to come to an agreement on the date, time, place, travel and lodging required, hosts, dress, and the reimbursement for any expenses the candidate may have. It is also important that the entire search committee be in agreement and have established a written compensation package by this time.
- **The fifth interview** should not be done unless the search committee has narrowed things down and identified one primary candidate. Its purpose is solely to introduce the candidate to the membership in a way that displays their life story, ministry history, gifting, and temperament.

A. Interview #1: Phone interview. The interview should focus on getting to know the candidate and the candidate's family, ministry experience, preferred work environment, personal convictions, and spirituality as well as identifying possible disqualifiers.

1. You, your spouse, and family.

- Tell us about your spouse, how you met, how long you have been married, and how you function as a team.
- Does your spouse have a career outside the home? If so, tell us about it.
- Tell us about your children, their ages, passions, and involvements.
- Are you more task-oriented or people-oriented?
- Tell us about your favorite hobbies and interests outside of ministry?

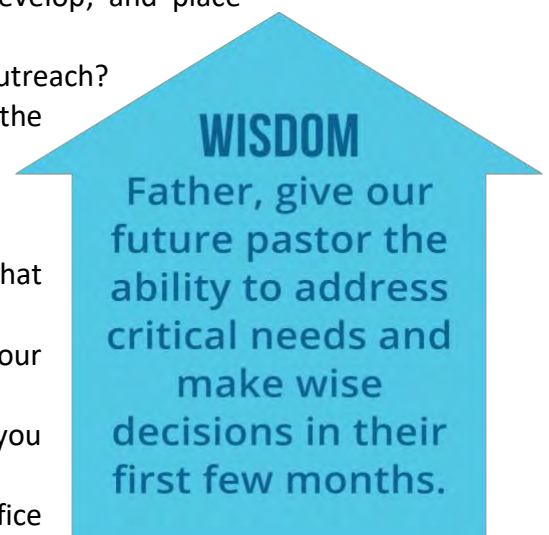
- How do you find balance and rhythm between family and ministry?
- How is your spouse involved in ministry?
- How do deal with the pressures of the ministry and the high expectations of church people?
- How do you maintain a quality relationship with your spouse?
- How do your spouse and family feel about the possibility of a ministry move?
- How do you function as the spiritual leader of your family?
- What project or achievement do you see as your greatest accomplishment? Why do you think you were successful?
- What are your primary spiritual gifts?
- What are your spouse's primary spiritual gifts?
- Every minister seems to have a "life theme" or message that overlaps their preaching, leadership, and communication. What is yours?
- Are you bilingual? If so, what other language or languages do you speak?

2. Ministry preparation and experience.

- Describe how you came into a personal relationship with Christ?
- Describe your call to the ministry and what motivates you to stay in ministry.
- What formal education do you have?
- Before you were a lead pastor, in what areas of ministry were you involved as an associate or assistant pastor?
- Are you licensed or ordained with the Assemblies of God?
- Have you ever been under any kind of discipline with the Assemblies of God? If so, for what and what was the result?
- How long have you been at your last two full-time ministry positions?
- What was your reason for wanting to leave?
- What experience do you have in leading other full-time staff?
- How many paid full-time and part-time staff do you presently lead?
- Why are you leaving your current position?
- What primary methods do you use to provide worship services?
- What primary methods do you use to disciple believers?
- What primary methods do you use to recruit, develop, and place people in serving opportunities?
- What primary methods do you use to achieve local outreach?
- What primary methods do you use to involve the church in foreign outreach and missionary partnerships?

3. Work environment.

- What kind of computer skills do you have, and what software programs are you most familiar with?
- Do you have a paid administrative assistant in your current position?
- What type of personal administrative support do you require?
- What office hours do you keep, and how many office hours a week do you usually put in to facilitate ministry?



4. Personal convictions.

- What is your opinion about females serving in leadership and teaching positions (ministry leaders, deacons, and pastors)?
- Are there any points in the Assemblies of God official doctrinal statement that you struggle with?
- What is your view of the baptism and infilling of the Holy Spirit?
- What are your views on the following subjects: divorce, LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual), marijuana, and abortion?

5. Personal spirituality.

- What are the last five books you have read?
- How do you reconnect with Jesus when you are feeling drained?
- Which of the spiritual disciplines come naturally for you and which ones are more difficult?
- How do you seek God's direction?
- What have you been learning about God in the past year?

6. Personal goals.

- Do you have any educational goals in the next 5 years?
- What are your personal goals in the next 5 to 10 years?
- What are your marriage and family goals in the next 5 to 10 years?
- What are your ministry goals in the next 5 to 10 years?
- If you could ask us any question, what would it be?
- Would you like to submit a list of questions you may have for us to respond to as a group?

B. Interview #2: Phone interview. The interview should focus on learning the candidate's theology, ministry values, and philosophy as well as identifying possible disqualifiers.

1. Influencers and role models.

- Who in ministry has been a mentor to you, and what have you learned from them?
- Who are your heroes and why?
- If you could have dinner with anyone in history, who would it be and why?

2. General philosophy.

- Which of the Assemblies of God's sixteen fundamental truths have been the most difficult for you? Why?
- What do you believe your fundamental calling is as a minister of the gospel?
- What do you perceive the prime directive of the church to be, and what do you see as your role in that?
- What are your views on the relationship between the staff and board of deacons?
- What are your views about how the following ministries contribute to growth: children, youth, single adult, senior adult, missions, outreach, worship?
- What do you see as the primary purpose for the Sunday morning services (evangelism, equipping, worship, etc.)?
- How do you handle disagreements with the board as a whole as well as individuals on the board?
- How would you like the board and individuals on the board to handle disagreements with you?

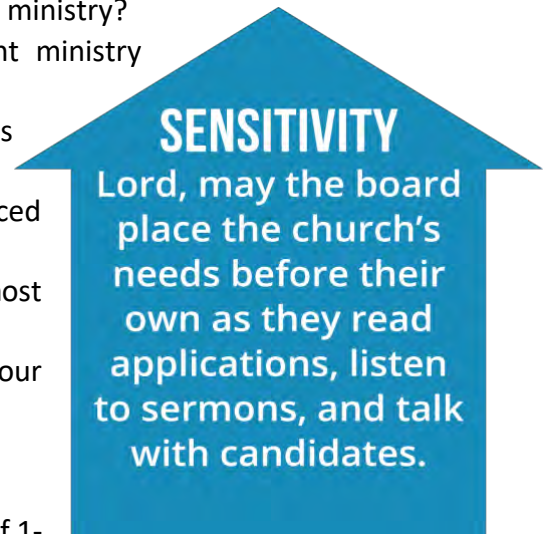


AGREEMENT
Jesus, may the
board be in
agreement
regarding the
background and
experience needed
by the next pastor.

- What is your style of leadership (hands-on, laid-back, fast-paced, facilitator, CEO)?
- What expectations do you have of the board in this type of church?
- What expectations do you have of the church in regard to your family?

3. Ministry passions.

- What would you identify as your greatest passion in ministry?
- What is the most enjoyable part of your current ministry position?
- Describe your spiritual gifts and how the Lord utilizes them in ministry.
- In what areas of ministry do you feel most experienced and competent?
- In what areas of ministry do you feel most incompetent?
- What spiritual gifts have you found to operate in your life and ministry?



4. Worship.

- Describe your philosophy of worship.
- If Spirit-filled ministry were represented on a scale of 1-10 with a more seeker-sensitive model being on the lower end and an aggressive revival model being on the higher end, where would you find yourself most comfortable?

5. Discipleship.

- How do you define “discipleship?”
- How have you intentionally ushered people through different levels of spiritual growth?
- What role do you see small groups fulfilling in the church?
- What experiences do you have with small groups?
- What is your view regarding pastoral counseling? How have you handled pastoral counseling in the past? How much time (weekly) have you carved out of your schedule for counseling?

6. Service.

- What role do you see lay leadership and volunteers having in the local church?
- How do you usher people into opportunities for Christian service?
- How do you link service opportunities with outreach?

7. Outreach.

- How do you articulate the heart of the gospel in today’s culture?
- What have you done to personally connect with nonbelievers in your community?
- How have you led your church to reach nonbelievers in your community?
- How have you intentionally discovered unique needs, characteristics, and emerging trends in your community?
- What role do you see evangelism playing in a believer’s life?
- If you could ask us any question, what would it be? Would you like to submit a list of questions you may have for us to respond to as a group?

C. Interview #3: Video interview. This interview should use video conferencing software to help identify the candidate’s ministry focus, leadership style, and overarching ministry focus. It will also help you interact with the candidate and candidate’s spouse in a way that helps you experience body language, appearance, and communication styles. For example, one video interview a search committee had with a candidate helped identify a person’s inability to make eye contact and maintain a relational

connection with others while talking. The résumé and phone interview never would have surfaced this uncomfortable trait.

1. Reflective learning.

- How has your theology changed or matured in the past five years?
- How has your ministry focus changed or matured in the past five years?
- What are your greatest accomplishments and failures in ministry?
- As you think about your ministry over the past few years, what tends to bring you the most joy? What tends to be areas of frustration?

2. Roles and governance.

- What do you feel are the core responsibilities of a lead pastor?
- What do you feel are the core responsibilities of a deacon or board?
- What would be your desired method of church governance?
- Our church has a hybrid congregational/presbyterian form of governance. Would that require any adjustments for you? If so, what kind?
- After reading our church bylaws, governance, and policy manual, do you have any questions? Concerns? Suggestions?
- How do you interact with the following leadership communities: staff, board officers, full board, and volunteers?

3. Change.

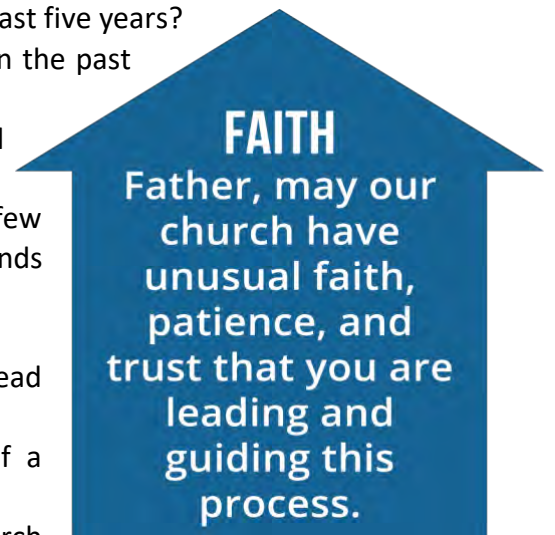
- How do you identify the need for and go about developing a new area of ministry?
- How do you facilitate change?
- Tell me about a time when you tried to help a church change. What strategy did you use? How did it turn out?
- Tell me about the steps you take when implementing a new program or ministry?

4. Ministry preferences.

- With what personality type do you work best, and with what type do you struggle?
- What type of staff structure and environment do you function in most effectively?
- Is your preaching primarily expositional, topical, or doctrinal?
- What are your thoughts and methods for worship on Sundays?
- Do you have a “hands-on” type of leadership or an “administrative” style?

5. Leadership.

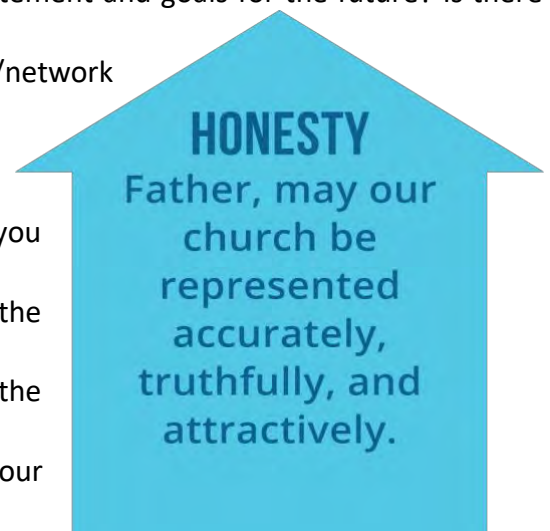
- What would the first ninety days look like in this role?
- What opportunities at our church are most exciting to you, and which would be the most challenging?
- Which pastoral traits do you feel are your strengths, and which do you feel are your weaknesses?
- How would you address an unexpected budget shortfall?
- What is your philosophy of missions, and how would that look?
- How would you personally prioritize the following list of functions:
 - Preaching and teaching



- Community involvement
- Creating new ministry applications
- Administration and strategic and detailed planning
- Pastoral care (counseling, hospital calls, weddings, and funerals)
- Big event planning
- Local outreach and evangelism
- Foreign missions and missions trips
- When you have to make an important decision, what are the first five things you do?
- How do you delegate?
- How do you cast vision?
- How do you develop leaders in your ministry?
- How do you encourage the people who work with you?
- How do you handle mavericks?
- Do you see yourself as the main speaker, or do you build a preaching team?
- If you could ask us any question, what would it be? Would you like to submit a list of questions you may have for us to respond to as a group?

D. Interview #4: Face-to-face interview. This interview should be face-to-face with the candidate, the candidate's spouse, and the board. It should seek to identify compatibility, chemistry, and the general vibe of the ministry couple.

- Is practicing church discipline important to you? Why or why not?
- What do you feel is your greatest strength as a lead pastor?
- What do you feel is your greatest weakness as a lead pastor?
- Tell us about your most challenging ministry position. What was it like, and why was it challenging?
- Tell us about your least challenging ministry position. What was it like, and why do you think it was not challenging to you?
- What do you do that makes your heart leap?
- Tell us about a time when you had to overcome major obstacles to meet a challenge.
- Tell us about a time when you tried to do something and failed. How did that affect your leadership style?
- What is your plan for personal growth and development?
- How do you feel about our church's current vision statement and goals for the future? Is there anything that you still need us to clarify for you?
- How would you see our church involved in the district/network and General Council?
- What age category do you see yourself most comfortable with?
- After viewing our facility, did you notice anything that you feel is lacking or necessary for effective ministry?
- How do you keep the board informed and involved in the decision-making process?
- What kind of things do you feel are important for the pastor and board to work together on?
- How would you go about learning the unique culture of our city, community, and church?
- What are your concerns about a possible move?



- Is there anything about our church that would cause you apprehension if you were called to come here?

T. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR BOARD ([back to table](#))

Warning! Times have changed, and the interview process is now a two-way street. Pastoral candidates are expecting the same level of disclosure, due diligence, and accountability as pulpit committees. There was a day when the search process focused entirely on the candidates. Churches expected to be able to call references, ask penetrating questions, verify facts, and do extensive background and credit checks. Candidates, however, had to take the search committee at their word and had no way of verifying attendance, financial statements, calling references, talking with staff, and confirming the current involvement and commitment level of key leaders. Now the interview process goes both ways. The search committee should be prepared and expect candidates to do as much due diligence as they intend to do. This may involve a candidate's requesting:

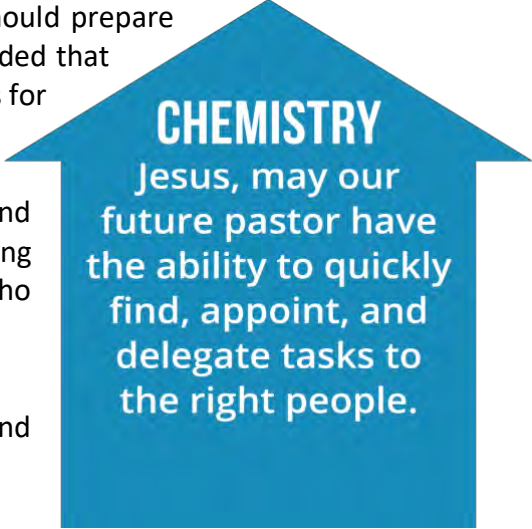
- Current financials and a signed statement by the board officers verifying their truthfulness and accuracy.
- A bio on each board member, their level of current ministry involvement, education, and history with the church. They may also request a signed statement verifying that each board member possesses the spiritual disciplines of tithing/stewardship, commitment, and active involvement in the church's ministries.
- A list of references including current and previous staff members, community leaders, and prior pastors who can be called to give a reference on the church.

This is often a surprise to boards who are used to being in the driver's seat. I personally think it is healthy as it requires both sides to meet halfway on the journey of transparency, honesty, and due process. In email correspondence about this topic with Maggie Richter, marketing assistant for the Vanderbloemen Search Group, she said, "Smart candidates will want to do their homework, ask about tangible things such as attendance and financials, and generally want to know more about the church for which they are applying. The church's response and preparedness will ultimately come down to its desire to recruit a certain candidate."¹²⁵

It should be remembered that although the church is looking for a pastor, a potential candidate may not necessarily be looking for a church. The search committee should prepare themselves for any of the following questions. It is recommended that the search committee appoint a small team to prepare answers for each question. They should then submit them to the full committee for suggested amendment and approval. That will allow them to be readily available as talking points or copied and pasted to emails. You may also want to consider impressing candidates by providing them as an FAQ document for those who are serious contenders.

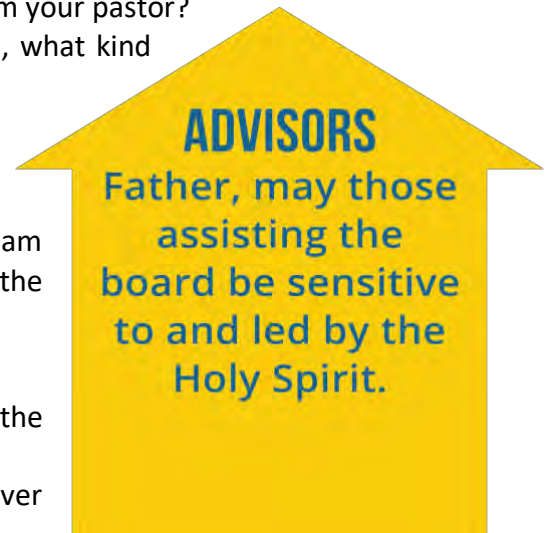
A. Questions concerning the pastor and the pastor's family.

1. What tasks do you feel are critical for the pastor and cannot be delegated?
2. What amount of visitation did your previous pastor do?
3. What are your expectations of the pastor's spouse and family?
4. What kind of events or functions in the lives of your members does the board have expectations for the pastor to attend?



CHEMISTRY
Jesus, may our
future pastor have
the ability to quickly
find, appoint, and
delegate tasks to
the right people.

5. When should the pastor be expected to seek the board's counsel regarding day-to-day operations regarding bills, repairs, purchase of items, or expenses related to situational and creative ministry applications (sermon series, events)?
6. Does the church have a written position description outlining ministry expectations for the lead pastor?
7. What are the three most important things you want from your pastor?
8. Has the church ever given a pastor a sabbatical? If so, what kind (working, study, or full) and how long?
9. What would be the biggest challenge as your pastor?
10. What were the strengths and weaknesses of your previous pastor?
11. Will the pastor be given freedom to shape a ministry team and board that are supportive and committed to the pastor's vision?



B. Questions concerning the interim period.

1. What policy, financial, ministry, or staff changes has the board initiated since the previous pastor departed?
2. What leadership responsibilities has the board taken over between the time the pastor resigned until now?
3. What financial commitments has the board made between the time the pastor resigned until now?
4. What resources (books, manuals, and mentoring) has the board used to prepare themselves for the interim period?
5. How have any retired missionaries or ministers within the church been used during the interim period?

C. Questions concerning the church board.

1. Has the board received church leadership and board training?
2. How has the board led the church in showing appreciation to its pastoral staff over the years?
3. Do all members of the board believe in and practice tithing?
4. Do any members of the board have a problem if the pastor knows who is tithing?
5. How will board members respond when people complain to them about a decision the pastor has made? When they agree with the person? When they disagree?
6. How will the board deal with "preference" and "principle" issues?
7. Is the entire board committed to faithful church attendance and participating in large "all-church" events?
8. How many hours a week (outside of church service times and board meetings) has each member of the board volunteered to the church in the four months before they were without a pastor?
9. Has the board made any changes in governance, bylaws, or ministry structure during the time the church has been without a pastor? If so, what kind and why?
10. What in particular made you interested in talking with me as a candidate? What is your biggest concern about me?
11. Would you describe your church as more "risk taking" (daring) or "caretaking" (cautious)?

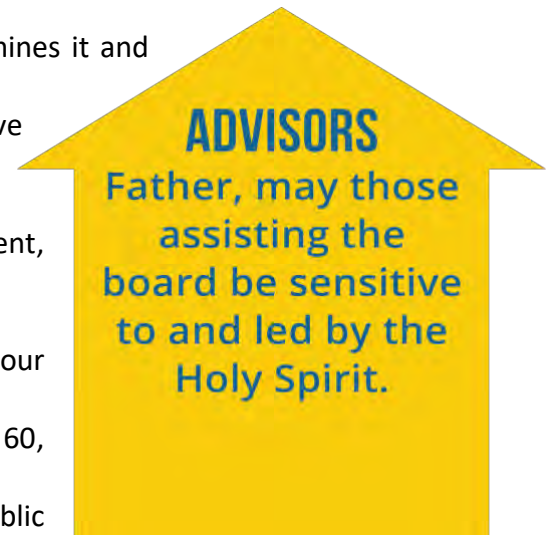
D. Questions concerning church leadership.

1. Have ministry leaders and volunteers been exposed to leadership training? If so, how often?
2. How long has each major ministry head been in the church, and how long have they led their respective department?

3. Do any members of the board have family members who have applied?
4. Are any of the previous pastor's family still in the church? Do they serve in a leadership position?
5. Does your church have or has your church had women in leadership on the following levels: pastoral, deacon, lay leadership?

E. Questions concerning church finances.

1. Does the church have an annual budget? Who determines it and how?
2. What policies are currently in written form? May I have copies of them?
3. What is the church's financial condition?
4. May I review each month's individual financial statement, the annual report, and the audit?
5. How does the church raise money?
6. Has the board made any financial commitments since your previous pastor's resignation that are still outstanding?
7. Does the church have any outstanding debts of over 30, 60, or 90 days? If so, to whom and for what amount?
8. Does the church have any private, institutional, or public debts?
9. Are any notes/certificates or bonds due in the future?
10. Does the tithe from any one or two families of the church make up more than 15 percent of the total tithing income?
11. How are missions and outreach funded, and what was last year's expenses/giving?
12. How are the ministry departments funded and empowered for ministry?
13. How many fundraising initiatives does the church have in a given a year?
14. Over the past twelve months, what percentage of the church's tithes and offerings (not counting other ministries or departments) is spent in each of the following categories?
 - Wages and compensation (salaries, housing, medical, dental, life and disability insurance, Social Security, other taxes, workers' compensation insurance)
 - Office management (supplies, postage, equipment, repair and maintenance, stationery, printing, information technology, communications)
 - General operations (vehicles, advertising, printing, literature, entertainment, equipment, and other general ministry expenses)
 - Facilities (mortgage, insurance, property tax, interior and exterior maintenance, equipment, janitorial and maintenance salaries, garbage, workers' comp, heating and cooling expenses)
 - Departmental and ministries (age-level, discipleship or affinity groups)
 - Organizational development (books, conferences, and other leadership development opportunities for entry level lay leaders, ministry leaders, board, staff, and lead pastor)



F. Questions concerning the church.

1. How long has the church been without a pastor?
2. Describe the church's greatest strengths?
3. Where do you see opportunities the church is not taking advantage of?
4. What are the three greatest threats the church is facing?
5. What is the church doing well?
6. What is the church doing poorly?
7. What improvements, if any, must be made immediately?

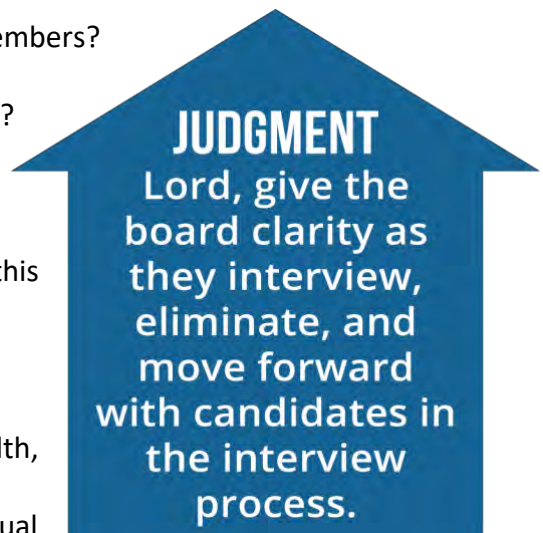
8. What is the average attendance for each of the services?
9. How many tithing units does the church have?
10. Besides finding a pastor, what are the church's greatest needs?
11. Does the church have any policies regarding divorce, remarriage, membership, or qualifications for holding leadership or official office?
12. Does the church make any provision for administrative help for its pastoral staff?
13. How open is the church to change and growth as well as community, national, and foreign outreach?
14. Is the church located in a favorable shopping district or housing development with good visibility?
15. Does the church have a good reputation in the community?
16. If a call to the church were accepted, would it be for an indefinite period of time?
17. What is the church's position on the following subjects: divorce, LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual), marijuana, and abortion?
18. What is the atmosphere like on Sunday mornings (relaxed, casual, formal)?
19. How is the church different from the others in your city?
20. How are ministry, staff, and financial decisions made?
21. Does the church work with others in the community? Please give examples.
22. How are newcomers assimilated into the church family?
23. What challenges is this congregation facing at the moment? In the next 5 to 10 years?
24. What are the best things the church has done in the last five years?
25. What is the church's purpose or core values?
26. What is your unique role in this community?
27. What would people who live in the neighborhood, the Chamber of Commerce, the police and fire departments, or city officials say about the church?
28. What are the three areas you feel must be changed in the church? What are three areas that should not be changed?
29. What new ministry initiatives has the church launched in the last five years?
30. What are the statistics on church attendance for the last five years?
31. What is the single biggest obstacle to growth in the church?

G. Questions about staff.

1. What has been the tenure of previous pastors/staff members?
2. Who are the staff and support staff responsible to?
3. Does the pastor have the freedom to hire and fire staff?
4. Do any of the staff, members, attendees, credential holders in the church, or leaders entertain personal aspirations concerning the pastoral selection?
5. What staff turnover do you anticipate resulting from this process?

H. Questions regarding salary and remuneration.

1. What salary is offered?
2. What benefits are paid by the church (medical, health, dental, car, gas)?
3. How many day/weeks are included in the pastor's annual vacation?
4. Is the pastor permitted to preach at other churches, conferences, etc., a few times a year without counting it as vacation time?



5. Does the church make provision for moving expenses? If so, how is that determined?
6. Does the church have a policy of reviewing the pastor's salary package each year? Has it been followed?

U. PRESENTING AN OFFER ([back to table](#))

At some point, the search committee will invite their best candidate to return as the committee's nominee to meet key leaders, interact with the people, and be voted upon. However, there are some important logistical matters that must be finalized before this takes place. Do not invite a minister to candidate until you have agreed upon a total remuneration package. Following is some advice on how to prepare for that.

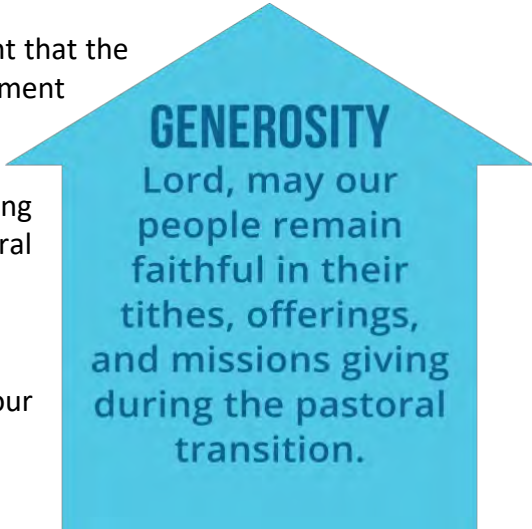
A. Provide a written remuneration agreement. It is important that the search committee provide a written remuneration agreement that has been approved by the full board in the form of a motion and signed by its officers. A failure to do this accurately can start things off on the wrong foot.¹²⁶ Following are some things to consider while determining pastoral support:¹²⁷

1. Gross income of the church
2. The community, cost of living, and housing costs
3. The average median family income in the zip code of your target area
4. Overall church debt and financial responsibilities
5. The pastor's:
 - Education and past ministry experience
 - Longevity in the ministry
 - Needs in terms of family size
 - Unique needs regarding medical insurance
 - View of retirement (Social Security/MBA)
6. The current inflationary spiral
7. Appropriate housing allowance to live in the same community as the church
8. Travel allowance
9. A minimum of 56 cents per work-related mile should be considered if the church does not provide a vehicle. Since this is a business-associated expense, it should not be computed in the net income of the pastor.
10. Expenses for attending conferences and seminars within and outside the district/network
11. Educational and book allowance to improve ministry skills
12. Financial and numerical growth of the church
13. Annual or semiannual review

It is also important to remember that there may be circumstances where a pastor needs additional financial compensation to assist with relocation expenses. This may involve short-term rent/mortgage assistance, reimbursement for the extra travel expenses until the pastor is able to permanently relocate to the community, rental deposits in expensive communities, and other unique needs. Talking about these needs and expectations will usually lead to a resolution that is acceptable to all parties.

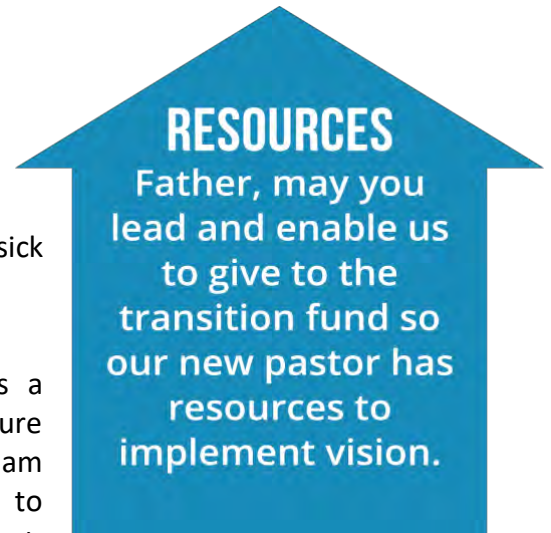
B. Contents of the remuneration agreement. A good remuneration agreement should contain the following:

1. Term of office: Indefinite or voted on every (**insert number**) years
2. Start date for office hours and start date for first Sunday ministry
3. Base salary



GENEROSITY
Lord, may our
people remain
faithful in their
tithes, offerings,
and missions giving
during the pastoral
transition.

4. Policy for reviewing the pastor's salary
5. Participation in Social Security
6. Retirement contribution from the church
7. Moving expenses paid by the church and how they are paid
8. Convention expenses: District/Network Council (annual), General Council (biennial), Minister's Retreat (annual)
9. Provision of a church credit card
10. Provision of a private study or office
11. Policy regarding reimbursements
12. Time allowed and frequency of sabbaticals
13. Paid time-off policy
14. Number of days for paid time off (vacation, personal, or sick days)
15. Retirement planning reimbursable expense



Preparing your new pastor's remuneration agreement is a wonderful opportunity to make an investment into future transitions. Transition and succession specialist William Vanderbloemen claims that one of the biggest obstacles to succession is the outgoing pastor's failure to plan for retirement.

Vanderbloemen believes one of the best things a board can do is to invest in future transitions by including \$2,000-\$3,000 each year in the annual budget for the current pastor to receive professional coaching for retirement planning. Vanderbloemen advises boards to set this up as a reimbursable expense requiring receipts from a financial planner of the pastor's own choice. He also warns boards not to assign a consultant or use one from within the church. If a church is unable to afford that much on an annual basis, it would at least be wise to consider funding a small savings account of \$500 a year. This would then allow your lead pastor to access the balance every five years to evaluate their retirement plan with a professional.

C. Sample Remuneration Agreement.

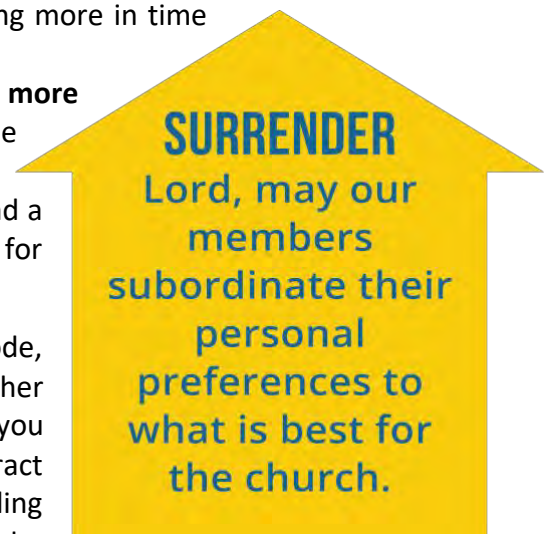
[INSERT YOUR CHURCH NAME HERE] Remuneration Package for Lead Pastor Approved by the Board on (insert date) with Motion # (insert number)	Annual	Month	Total Annual
Cash Remuneration			
Salary (cash benefit paid on 1 st and 15 th of each month)	\$	\$	
Housing (cash benefit paid on the 1 st of each month)	\$	\$	
Total Cash Remuneration			\$
Health and Medical Benefits			
Medical (noncash benefit for individual and eligible family)	\$	\$	
Dental (noncash benefit for individual and eligible family)	\$	\$	
Life Insurance (noncash benefit for individual and eligible family)	\$	\$	
Total Health and Medical Benefits			\$

Other Benefits			
Cell Phone (noncash benefit)	\$	\$	
Car Allowance	\$	\$	
State Taxes Paid by Church	\$	\$	
Federal Taxes Paid by Church	\$	\$	
Retirement Contribution	\$	\$	
Disability Insurance	\$	\$	
Reimbursable Annual Retirement Planning and Consultation	\$	\$	
Total Other Benefits			\$
TOTAL REMUNERATION PACKAGE			\$
MILEAGE: Reimbursement for ministry use of personal vehicle			
VACATION: 25 days annually (not to exceed 4 Sundays)			
MINISTRY ENRICHMENT: As approved by the board			
WEEKLY DAY OFF: As communicated to the board			
EMPLOYMENT EFFECTIVE: (insert date here)			

D. Avoiding snags in salary negotiations. There may be an occasion where salary negotiations can end up sabotaging the process. Following are three suggestions given by William Vanderbloemen to consider:¹²⁸

- 1. Give a signing bonus instead of increasing the annual salary.** Sometimes the board may find their salary is slightly below that required to secure a candidate. Consider creating margin and putting the candidate at peace by offering a signing bonus in the amount of the short fall. This gives the board budgetary peace of mind and the candidate an opportunity to prove themselves.
- 2. Spend a little more because restarting the search process is expensive.** One of the biggest mistakes a search committee can make is not accounting for the immense amount of time and loss of momentum accumulated during the search process. A disagreement over a few thousand dollars is not worth restarting the process and spending more in time and money.
- 3. Do not be held hostage by someone who “needs more money.”** If a candidate presents a last-minute surprise for more money, be very careful. It may be an indication of their inability to live within their means and a tendency to see the church as responsible for accommodating wants rather than needs.

I would also suggest using a cost-of-living study by zip code, NOT by city or state. Some zip codes have a considerably higher cost-of-living index than the city or state they are in. If you want your new pastor to be part of the community, interact with neighbors, and know the needs of the surrounding neighborhood, provision should be made for the family to be able to live, work, and play as close to the church address as possible.



Additional coaching can be found in a short podcast we created entitled “Maximizing Your New Pastor’s Salary Package.” The link can be found on the Rise Up audio resource site at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

V. HOSTING THE CANDIDATE ([back to table](#))

Once the search committee identifies a primary candidate, they must set the stage for the church to be exposed to the candidate and for the membership to vote upon them.

A. Schedule. I interviewed Jim Braddy, retired district superintendent of Northern California and Nevada, to gain wisdom on how to host a candidate for election.¹²⁹ He suggested the following schedule:

- 1. Wednesday:** The candidate and the candidate's family fly into town.
- 2. Thursday through Friday:** The candidate and the candidate's family can meet with staff, board, or key leaders in the church as well as check out the community, schools, and any other areas of interest.
- 3. Saturday:** The search committee will host a dessert social at 7 p.m. for the church and its members to interact with the candidate and the candidate's family. The schedule may consist of:
 - 7-7:05 p.m. Welcome and opening prayer by a member of the search committee
 - 7:05-7:25 p.m. Introduction of family members and their interests or hobbies
 - 7:25-8 p.m. Open meet and greet
 - 8-9 p.m. Q&A with questions prescreened by the search committee
 - 9-9:15 p.m. Concluding remarks by the candidate
 - 9:15 p.m. Closing and a reminder by a member of the search committee of the election on Sunday

- 4. Sunday:** Sunday should be treated like any other day. Be sure not to add so many components into the service that your candidate feels rushed and short on time while speaking. Schedule enough time for the candidate to preach a full message and introduce them adequately. Ask the candidate how they plan on concluding the service and work with your worship leaders and band to support that purpose. Remember, all your efforts have worked towards this special moment. Following are some options to accommodate one or multiple services:

- 9-10:15 a.m. First service with candidate being introduced by the search committee and then preaching
- 10:30-11:45 a.m. Second service with candidate being introduced by the search committee and then preaching
- 4-5 p.m. Business meeting and election

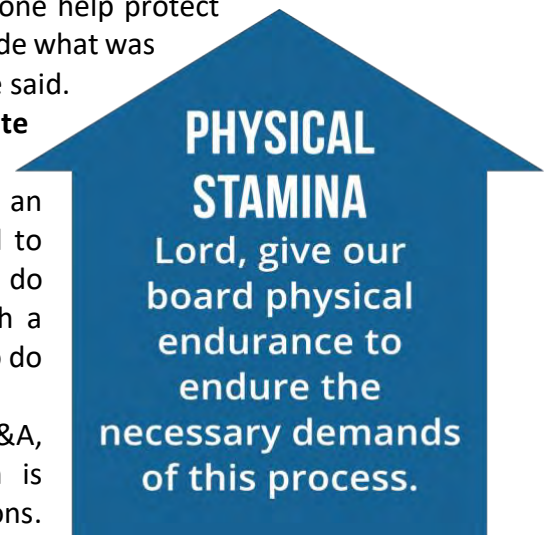


**AFFECTED
MINISTRY**
Lord, give the
ministry that our
future pastor will be
leaving faith and
wisdom in their own
transition.

B. Suggestions. Following are suggestions for a smooth visit:

- 1. Be sensitive to the needs of the candidate and the candidate's family.** There is a temptation to smother them or fill every minute of their schedule with activity. However, they will need time alone as a family to pray, talk, and get the feel of the community. Tell them you have left margin in the schedule to give them this kind of time. Remember your candidate and your candidate's family need margin to process what God is doing to make important decisions regarding their possible relocation.¹³⁰
- 2. Provide a full-size rental car.** A rental car will allow the candidate and the candidate's family to be independent and have the freedom to see the city, check out housing, and explore.

3. **Protect the candidate from overly ambitious people.** Every church has people who need to dominate the pastor's time, inquire about their opinion on controversial subjects, secure their commitment to a certain ministry, or benefit from the relocation (realtors, missionaries, and others). You may need to protect the candidate by diplomatically interrupting and giving them "an out."
4. **Appoint a couple to receive and host the candidate and the candidate's family on Sunday morning.** One pastor's wife who read this manual told me how much she appreciated the inclusion of a Sunday hospitality team for the candidating family. The church had just survived an attempted coup and split by a disappointed associate pastor. When they arrived for their first Sunday, her husband was off with the board, and they forgot to include her. "I was left on my own to wander and say hello to people. At the time I didn't know it, but the people I would walk up to and greet were the ones who were part of the church's recent conflict, so my first initial weeks were rough. It would have been so nice to have someone help protect me from those that would eventually leave. I think it made what was supposed to be an exciting time be quite deflating," she said.
5. **Provide leadership in the morning services the candidate is to preach.** The morning service should be led by the chair of the board or pastoral search committee or by an associate pastor. The candidate should only be asked to give the sermon or pastoral prayer if they wish. Please do not unnecessarily distract them by asking them teach a Sunday school class or small group unless they desire to do so.
6. **Screen questions for the Q&A.** If you plan to host a Q&A, ensure that neither the candidate nor the church is embarrassed by frivolous or uncomfortable questions. Provide index cards and require people to write them down and submit them to the chair of the search committee who can remove inappropriate questions. Then make sure the candidate has time to process them and formulate answers before they are scheduled to do so.
7. **Provide activities or babysitting for their children during interviews.** To ensure the candidate and the candidate's spouse can be fully engaged in the interview, be sure to provide supervision or activities for their children. Another family in the church who have kids the same age could be asked to provide a fun activity (expenses paid by the church) so their children can begin connecting with others their own age.



W. ELECTING A PASTOR ([back to table](#))

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: It is important that the board and search committee follow any and all bylaw requirements concerning the election of a new lead pastor. Please double check your bylaws regarding the following topics:

- 1. Official nomination.** The search committee must make a formal written or verbal nomination of no more than one pastoral candidate to the membership of the church.
- 2. Term of office.** Be sure to inform the candidate and church membership of any reference the bylaws may give concerning the term of office (length or indefinite) the pastor is elected to serve.
- 3. Form of voting.** To protect the rights and privacy of all present, be sure the vote is taken by secret ballot.
- 4. Type of vote.** Be sure to confirm the type of vote required for an election. Most pastoral elections require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all votes cast. However, some churches may be different. Proxy voting and absentee balloting shall not be allowed in the conduct of business unless the bylaws specifically allow and prescribe how they are collected and counted.
- 5. Call to meeting.** The special meeting must be called by an official motion of the board. The meeting notification must list the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting.
- 6. Prior notice and venue announcement.** Most bylaws require that special business meetings be announced a certain number of days or Sundays before the meeting. Make sure your meeting notification and the way in which they occur (mail or verbal announcement) comply with the requirements of your bylaws.
- 7. Agenda restrictions.** No business other than that mentioned in the call to meeting shall be in order or permissible during that same meeting.
- 8. Minutes.** A special business meeting to elect a pastor requires official minutes by the corporate secretary. These minutes should record the meeting's being called to order, a roster report (number of members present), a summary of its proceedings, the teller's report (ballot report), results of the election, and motion to adjourn. The minutes should then be presented at your next annual business meeting to be received as you would any other minutes for membership meetings.

The bylaws of your church will outline procedures for pastoral elections and must be followed implicitly. Any procedure not outlined in your bylaws must not conflict with the rules contained in the latest edition of your parliamentary authority. Most church bylaws prescribe *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* as their parliamentary authority. With that said, following are a few questions and answers to common parliamentary situations that might arise in church business meetings:

A. What do your bylaws say about issues related to the lead pastor's election? Double check your bylaws regarding the following topics:

- 1. Official nomination.** In most cases, the search committee must make a formal written nomination of no more than one pastoral candidate to the membership of the church.
- 2. Term of office.** Be sure to know the term of office prescribed in your bylaws. They will usually mention an initial term the pastor is elected to serve or an indefinite period.
- 3. Form of voting.** To protect the rights and privacy of all members, your bylaws determine the way members are to vote. In almost all cases, it will be by secret ballot.
- 4. Type of vote.** Be sure to know the type of vote required for an election. Most pastoral elections require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of all votes cast. However, some churches may be different. Proxy

voting and absentee balloting should not be permitted unless the bylaws specifically allow and prescribe how they are to be dispersed, collected, and counted.

5. **Call-to-meeting.** The special meeting must be called by an official motion of the board; and the meeting notification must list the date, time, place, and specific purpose of the meeting. Be sure your call-to-meeting specifically mentions the sole purpose is to vote on a pastoral candidate. Since the purpose stated in the call-to-meeting determines what can be discussed at the meeting, be sure it is specific and not vague.
6. **Prior notice and venue announcement.** Most bylaws require that special business meetings be announced a certain number of days or Sundays before the scheduled meeting is to take place. Make sure your meeting notification and the way in which they occur (mail or verbal announcement) comply with the requirements of your bylaws.
7. **Agenda restrictions.** No business other than what is specifically mentioned in the call-to-meeting shall be in order or permissible during that same meeting.
8. **Minutes.** A special business meeting to elect a pastor requires official minutes by the corporate secretary. These minutes should record the meeting's being called to order, a roster report (number of members present), a summary of its proceedings, the teller's report (ballot report), results of the election, and motion to adjourn. Then they should be presented at your next annual business meeting to be received as you would any other minutes for membership meetings.



DISCERNMENT
Jesus, give our board
discernment in
sorting through all
the various styles,
philosophies, and
ministry models
represented by
pastoral candidates.

Please see the chapter entitled "Sample Letters" for an example of a letter to the church, resolution of nomination, and call-to-meeting.

- B. Why do our bylaws prohibit voting on more than one candidate?** There are many reasons why most church bylaws prohibit voting on more than one pastoral candidate at a time. Following are just a few:
1. A candidate needs the confidence to lead, and voting on more than one candidate would deprive all of them of the committee's full endorsement and a majority vote by the entire membership.
 2. Voting on more than one candidate causes factions and divisions. It opens the door for peer competition and activism on the behalf of members whose candidate was not selected.
 3. The board/search committee has had more exposure to all of the candidates' experience, track records, references, and philosophies of ministry than the membership as a whole. Their exposure to information better qualifies them to prioritize available candidates.
 4. Leading a church in today's culture requires strong support and buy-in from those being led. Voting on more than one candidate splits the votes and deprives the winner of decisive support from at least two-thirds (2/3) of the membership.
 5. Voting on multiple candidates is a long and outdated practice that has proven to have more disadvantages than benefits.
- C. Why must we follow and be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order*?** If your bylaws prescribe *Robert's Rules of Order* as your parliamentary authority, you should have a copy of that reference on hand for the business meeting. This will help you deal with any issues that may not be specifically addressed in your bylaws. *Roberts Rules of Order* also says:

When a society or an assembly has adopted a particular parliamentary manual—such as this book—as its authority, the rules contained in that manual are binding upon it in all cases where they are not inconsistent with the bylaws (or constitution) of the body, any of its special rules of order, or any provisions of local, state, or national law applying to the particular type of organization (Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12 Edition, 2:18, p. 15).

- D. Why can members who are unable to be present not vote by absentee ballot?** Most church bylaws specifically prohibit absentee ballots or proxy voting. If your bylaws are silent on the issue and prescribe *Robert’s Rules of Order* as your parliamentary authority, you still cannot use them. *Robert’s Rules of Order* states:

Absentee Voting. It is a fundamental principle of parliamentary law that the right to vote is limited to the members of an organization who are actually present at the time the vote is taken in a regular or properly called meeting, although it should be noted that a member need not be present when the question is put. Exceptions to this rule must be expressly stated in the bylaws (Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 45:56, p. 401).



PATIENCE
Father, give our church the ability to invest the necessary time and resources in the pastoral search.

- E. Can we override (suspend) our bylaws with a vote of the membership in a business meeting?** According to *Robert’s Rules of Order*, the bylaws cannot be suspended without that option being prescribed in the church’s bylaws.

The Bylaws “cannot be suspended (with the exception of clauses that provide for their own suspension under specified conditions” (Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 2:8, p. 11).

Rules That Cannot Be Suspended. Rules contained in the bylaws (or constitution) cannot be suspended—no matter how large the vote in favor of doing so or how inconvenient the rule in question may be—unless the particular rule specifically provides for its own suspension (Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 25:7, p. 248).

- F. Can members nominate candidates other than those presented by the board or search committee?** If your bylaws charge the board or search committee with screening and presenting one candidate to the membership, then a motion to nominate a person other than who was recommended by the search committee is out of order.
- G. What is the default vote needed if the bylaws do not prescribe?** If your bylaws are silent on the type of vote needed, you are required to default to a “majority vote.”

As stated in 1:6, the basic requirement for approval of an action or choice by a deliberative assembly, except where a rule provides otherwise, is a majority vote. The word majority means “more than half”; and when the term majority vote is used without qualification—as in the case of the basic requirement—it means more than half of the votes cast by persons entitled to vote, excluding blanks or abstentions, at a regular or properly called meeting (Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 44:1, p. 379).

- H. **How should blank ballots be handled when recording the results of a vote?** *Robert's Rules of Order* says that blank ballots should be ignored as though they were not turned in.

Tellers ignore blank ballots and other ballots that indicate no preference, treating them as abstentions (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 45:31, p. 394).

- I. **What are illegal votes and how should they be tabulated and handled when recording the results of a vote?** According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, the following types of votes should be counted as illegal:

Unintelligible ballots or ballots cast for an unidentifiable or ineligible candidate are treated instead as illegal votes—that is, they are counted as votes cast but are not credited to any candidate or choice. Similarly, a ballot that contains votes for too many candidates for a given office is counted as one illegal vote cast for that office because it is not possible for the tellers to determine which candidate(s) the voter prefers. Technical errors, like the misspelling of a word or name, do not make a vote illegal if the meaning of the ballot is clear. If the meaning of one or more ballots is doubtful, they can be treated as illegal if it is impossible for them to affect the result; but if they may affect the result, the tellers report them to the chair who immediately submits to the assembly the question of how these ballots should be recorded. When reporting doubtful ballots, the tellers must be careful whenever possible not to show how the decision would affect any of the candidates (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 45:32-33, p. 394).

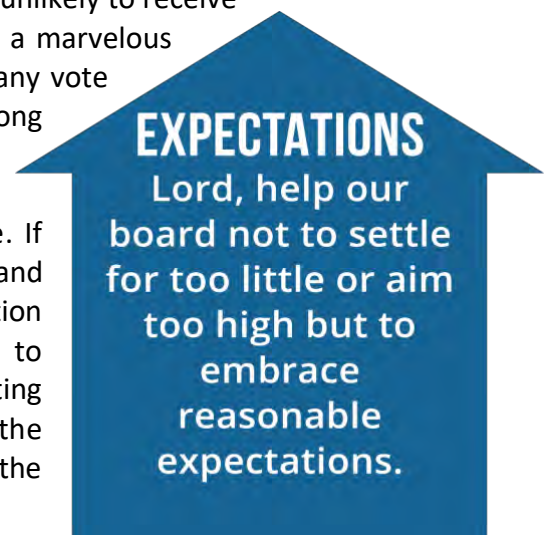
The total number of illegal votes is recorded on the report and taken into account when determining the number of votes cast for computing the results.

All ballots that indicate a preference—provided they have been cast by persons entitled to vote—are taken into account in determining the number of votes cast for purposes of computing the majority (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 45:32, p. 394).

- J. **What kind of outcomes should the board and search committee be prepared to expect?** There are several possible outcomes to the election process. Following are the most common with some suggested advice:

1. **Nearly unanimous.** Even the strongest candidates are unlikely to receive a unanimous vote (100 percent yes). If they do, it is a marvelous wave upon which to start a new ministry. However, any vote higher than 90 percent should be considered a very strong affirmation of support and confirmation. If the candidate has chosen to be there, they should be asked privately if they accept the results of the vote. If they accept, the vote is announced; and the candidate and the candidate's family are introduced to the congregation as the new lead pastor and given the opportunity to address the membership. If they are off-site, the acting chair of the board should call them to inform them of the decision and inquire as to whether they will accept the vote before announcing the acceptance.

2. **Barely two-thirds.** There are times when the candidate receives barely enough votes to be elected. In these cases, the candidate may request additional time to pray about the matter before getting back to the search committee with an answer. If so,



the acting chair should inform the congregation that the candidate has requested a few days (be specific) to pray about the matter and the members will be notified of the decision in church the next Sunday.

- 3. Failure to elect.** On rare occasions, a candidate may fail to receive the votes required for election. These are almost always the result either of a rushed or impulsive decision by the committee or a division over an internal candidate. In this instance, the acting chair must inform the membership that there was not an election and lead the committee back into the selection process. These can be awkward decisions to report, but following is a suggested way of informing the membership right after reading the teller's report:

Unfortunately, our pastoral candidate has not received the votes required for an election. I would imagine we all feel a sense of vulnerability and disappointment. Although we may not understand how this reality fits into God's will, we must trust that God is too wise to make a mistake; and the committee will return to the selection process.

- 4. Candidate withdrawal.** Occasionally, a candidate will either withdraw from the process or not accept the membership's invitation to pastor the church. This is usually the result of a serious red flag the candidate sensed while there or the failure to receive a specific vote they felt would be required to successfully pastor the church. There is no easy way to announce these decisions, but following is a suggestion:

Unfortunately, after prayer and reflection, (insert candidate's name) has decided to withdraw (his/her) name from consideration and declined the invitation to be our lead pastor. I would imagine we all feel a sense of vulnerability and disappointment. Although we may not understand how this disappointing reality fits into God's will, we must trust that God is too wise to make a mistake and return to the selection process.

Should this occur, the committee should at least ask the candidate for a debriefing interview to identify any contributing factors that could be avoided in the next round.

- K. Are there resources to help an acting chairman chair the business meeting?** Yes, Superintendent Roncone has prepared a sample chairman's script, roster report and teller report specifically designed for the election of a pastor. They are available to download and customize at the links below.

- **Chairman's script:** www.agspe.org/RUchairnotes.docx
- **Roster report:** www.agspe.org/RUrosterreport.docx
- **Teller report:** www.agspe.org/RUtellerreport.docx

- L. What if our acting chair does not feel comfortable chairing the special business meeting to elect the pastor?** Superintendent Gene Roncone is a tested member of the National Association of Parliamentarians (<https://www.parliamentarians.org>) and is very knowledgeable in *Robert's Rules of Order* and chairmanship. Provided he is given copies of your bylaws, he may be available to chair the business meeting with a two-week notice or coach your team leader on how to chair the meeting. You can reach him via email at gene@rmdc.org

X. PREPARING FOR PASTOR'S ARRIVAL ([back to table](#))

After the new pastor is elected, the board and search committee's work is not done. The new pastor's getting a good start will be dependent upon the committee's preparation. The last step is to prepare for their arrival and help provide a smooth transition. Few things will give the pastor a glimpse into the heart and health of the church than how it prepares for the pastor's and the pastor's family's arrival. Following are some practical ways listed by chronological importance to help the new pastor hit the ground running. ¹³¹

- A. Make the necessary announcements.** Help foster a culture of excitement and anticipation by spreading the good news.
- 1. Write a short press release for distribution announcing the pastor's election.** Be sure it sounds upbeat and briefly describes the pastor's qualifications and date of arrival. Post it to all your social media outlets and the church's website and distribute it to the local newspapers.
 - 2. Notify the district superintendent/network pastor.** Notify the Rocky Mountain district superintendent/network pastor of the results of the election within one day. See the appendix entitled "Sample Letters" for an example of a district notification letter.
 - 3. Keep the church informed regarding the pastor's and pastor's family arrival.** Build anticipation by updating them on the pastor's relocation efforts and sharing bios about family members, hobbies, interests, and passions. When they arrive, this will help them connect with others who share similar interests.
- B. Facilitate a "head start."** Instead of waiting for the pastor to request certain necessities, give the pastor a head start by being proactive.
- 1. Provide for moving expenses.** It is the responsibility of the church to pay all the moving expenses including rental trucks/moving vans, fuel expenses for automobiles, lodging, and food. Once the pastor has selected a moving company, contact the company and arrange for direct billing to the church. If you cannot afford a moving company and plan to use a rental truck, be sure to send a check to your new pastor now so they do not have to personally finance the move. Let the pastor know beforehand what the budget is so they can begin planning as soon as possible.
 - 2. Help the new pastor secure housing by providing a salary confirmation letter.** The letter is more beneficial if it quotes the total remuneration package instead of breaking it up into subcategories. This will help the new pastor to secure a rental or get preapproved for a mortgage should the family choose. Some home lenders may require employment contracts in order to preapprove an out-of-state home buyer. To accommodate this when hiring staff, I have prepared a contract that satisfies the lender's needs and a second contract making the first null and void after the home is purchased. The second contract is kept confidential between the candidate and the church board. This protects the church in the event the candidate does not work out.
 - 3. Set up the pastor's office with everything needed to be effective the first day.** Instead of the pastor's having to spend their first 7-10 days setting up their personal work environment, get it done before they arrive. Have the laptop and/or desktop, cell phone, software applications, programs, keys, email account, voicemail, Wi-Fi, password list, and any other unique needs the pastor may have set up and running before the first day. Nothing communicates your enthusiastic anticipation better than your new pastor's being met by your preparedness on their first day in

**SPIRIT-FILLED
LIFE**

Jesus, may our
board and future
pastor be led by
and walk in the
Spirit.

the office. When I arrived at Highpoint, I had a 5,000-volume library that would not fit in the pastor's office. A couple of board members set up wall-to-wall shelving in a vacant storage room to house my library. It was a blessing to unpack my library right away and to "hit the books running."

- 4. List and contact information for key leaders.** Prepare an electronic document listing the names, positions held, and contact information for all staff, board members, ministry leaders, and those who will have regular contact with the pastor and the pastor's family.

C. Appoint a transition team. By the time the new pastor comes, the board can feel exhausted. To be able to run through the red tape, consider appointing a special transition team of dependable people (nonboard members) to help meet logistical needs for the relocation. This team should be given specific responsibilities during the first thirty days following the pastor's election and then be disbanded. Some of their responsibilities could include:¹³²

- 1. Welcome team.** When the new pastor and family arrive, have a team of people there to help them move in, assemble beds, organize furniture, and get settled for their first week. A team that can have the house or rental cleaned and cabinets lined with new contact paper (shelf liner) before they arrive would be a plus.
- 2. Meal provision.** A few gift cards to local restaurants may help your first family until they can get their kitchen set up. Meals are great as long as people know not to stay too long. Dropping a meal off can turn into an entertainment obligation for a new family and become unsettling after a few days. A welcome basket is a classy touch. Some items to consider putting in the basket would be plastic dinnerware, cups, bowls, napkins, paper towels, garbage bags, and a pack of bottled water. It may be a day or two before they are able to unpack their kitchen, and having some disposable items handy will be helpful.
- 3. Mobilize peers to reach out to the first family.** Recruit others in the church who share the first family's hobbies, family size, or age grouping to invite them to a social or entertainment event. Arrange for a few individuals in the church to invite the pastor's spouse out. If they have children, arrange for other children their age to include them. The sooner they develop initial friendships, the easier the relocation will be, especially for their children or teens.
- 4. Children's assimilation.** Set up social interactions so the pastor's spouse and family can interact with others who share their age, school, preferences, or hobbies. If the pastor has elementary or teenage children, this is very critical.
- 5. Referral list.** Prepare a referral list of service providers the first family may need. This may include realtors, plumbers, contractors, mechanics, doctors, dentists, schools, hairdressers, clubs, sports programs, and utility providers (cable, internet, gas, water, electric, telephone, cell phone providers with the best signals). It is important that you not set up appointments, make commitments on their behalf, or introduce them to these people as that would limit their options should they already have someone else in mind. When I came to Highpoint, I had already decided upon a realtor; however, a realtor in the church had been given my cell phone number by a board member. The realtor assumed I would want to use her and was deeply disappointed when I informed her that I had already contracted with a realtor. Disappointingly, she ended up leaving the church over the matter.

CHEMISTRY

Lord, may our future pastor have leaders, staff, and employees who genuinely support their ministry values, philosophy, and initiatives.

6. Sunday hospitality. The first few Sunday mornings can be hard for a new pastoral family. Assign one or two people to host the pastor's family and help orientate them to the facility, get children placed in appropriate classrooms, sit by them in church, and introduce them to others. The key is to be helpful without being intrusive. The host person should initiate contact a few days before Sunday and set up a time and place to meet at the church on Sunday morning.

D. Begin the transition of power. During the pastoral search, the board and or search committee will have had more influence and power than in normal circumstances. However, now it is time to transition that influence back to the biblical office of the pastor.

1. Take care of outstanding business. It is important that your new pastor have a "honeymoon" period in order to get to know the church and establish a pastoral bond. Few things can sabotage that process more than forcing the new pastor to deal with controversial matters, deferred crises, or problem people in the first few months. Some search committees choose to take the path of least resistance by postponing problem solving. However, one area the board or search committee should focus on is dealing with matters they have an overwhelming consensus on when asked, "If I were the new pastor, what five problems would I want solved before I arrived?"

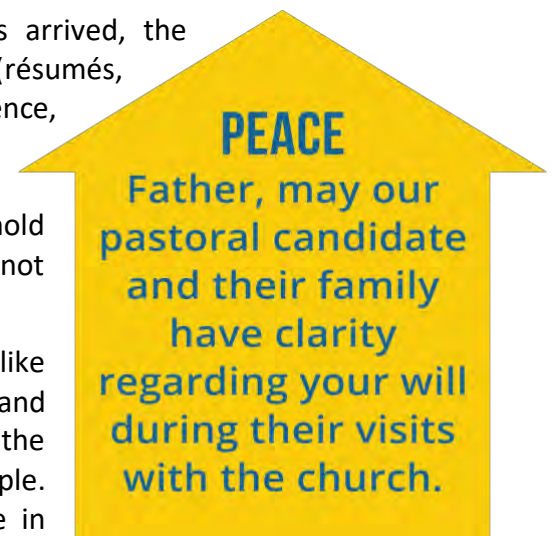
2. Prepare an accurate and detailed financial briefing. A lot can change between the time one pastor resigns and a new pastor arrives. The church treasurer, board secretary, and/or bookkeeper should meet with the new pastor after their arrival and prior to their first board meeting to brief them on the church's financial situation, bank balances, and current financial statements. Written financial reports should be provided. If there are any critical financial issues, this is the appropriate setting to communicate that information if it has not previously been communicated.

3. Consult the new pastor before making any significant decisions. According to parliamentary procedure, the new pastor assumes their role and responsibilities immediately upon election no matter when they officially arrive (unless your bylaws state otherwise). That means even though they have not relocated yet, they are immediately the board chair, leader of the staff and Lead Pastor of the church. No decisions about staffing, salaries, budget, missions support, ministry changes, facilities, or their predecessor should ever be made without their prior knowledge, deliberation and approval.

4. Securing confidentiality. After the new pastor has arrived, the committee will have to sort through all their materials (résumés, reference letters, confidential notes, correspondence, background checks, names of unsuccessful candidates) and decide what information should be immediately destroyed. It is unethical and unwise to hold on to personal information of those who were not selected.

E. Facilitate relational feedback loops. A new pastor is a lot like a missionary. They have to learn the culture, history, and leadership of the church. They also have to sort through the many ideas and suggestions received from so many people. Most of the time, the first people who show initiative in reaching out to a new pastor are those with a particular agenda. A wise mentor once told me

to take note of those who are eager to get you alone and "help you learn the things you ought to know" in your first few weeks. However, the board can assist the pastor in meeting the many wonderful people of your church through a small group tour. A small group tour gives the new pastor



the opportunity to visit each existing small group (if you have them) and ask people questions about the church's strengths. This concept is explained in Robert Kaylor's book entitled *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*.¹³³ This approach is a nonthreatening feedback process called "Appreciative Inquiry" which assumes every organization has strengths and things that have worked well.¹³⁴ The questions are designed to help the new pastor appreciate the past while also building faith for the future. Following is an outline of how Kaylor uses this method:



DISCERNMENT
Jesus, give our
leaders
discernment in
evaluating the
needs and
opportunities in
this transition.

- 1. Purpose.** The purpose of the night is not to provide a way for people to ask questions of the pastor but for the pastor to gain information from the congregation.
- 2. Setting.** The new pastor and the pastor's spouse tour every small group in the church (if you have them) with the ideal size being 15-18 people. The host family is only responsible to provide the location, comfortable seating, and refreshments.
- 3. Welcome.** The hosts open by greeting everyone and clearly stating that the purpose is for the new pastor and the pastor's spouse to ask questions that will help them gain a better understanding of the congregation.
- 4. Introductions.** Participant introduce themselves and briefly describe how they became part of the church. The pastor and the pastor's spouse should go last and share a condensed version of their story and call to ministry. Introductions should take 40-60 minutes.
- 5. Pastoral research.** The new pastor then explains that they have a series of research questions that will help them better know the congregation. The questions only focus on the positive aspects of the church and not perceived problems. This helps people start envisioning the future while at the same time helping the new pastor see a glimpse of the past. Kaylor's suggested questions usually take about an hour to process and are as follows:
 - Remembering your entire experience at our church, when did you feel the most alive, motivated, and excited about your involvement? What made it so exciting? Who else was involved? What happened? What was your part? Describe how you felt.
 - What do you value most about our church? What activities or way of life are most important? What are the best features of our church?
 - If you could make three wishes for the future of our church, what would they be?
- 6. Closing.** When finished, the hosts are thanks for their hospitality and the guests for coming. End in prayer.

It is important to remember that this is ONLY an idea and should not be forced upon the new pastor, planned, or even talked about publicly without their consent. They may have more preferable ways to achieve this goal. If they do, help them make it a reality.

F. Create a culture of inclusion, appreciation, and faith.

- 1. Be prepared to support the pastor's preferences for an installation service.** Many churches conduct an installation service for the incoming pastor. Once your new pastor has selected a date, be prepared to support them in making it a reality. When I arrived at Highpoint, there was a lot of pressure placed on me to pick a date that accommodated the travel schedules of various VIPs in the church. In looking back, I would have liked to pick a date that would have allowed more of my own family to participate. Your district/network office will most likely want to welcome your new

pastor and have an opportunity to participate in a formal installation so be sure to notify them of the date and time.

- 2. Maintain a consistent way to show appreciation to the pastor and the pastor's family.** Although giving the new pastor a warm welcome is appropriate, some boards stop at that and do not continue to show appreciation on a yearly basis. One way is to do something during Pastor Appreciation month in the morning service(s). Church attendees need to see the board honoring the pastor and the pastor's spouse and letting them know their hard work is appreciated.
- 3. Trust God for the future.** With the coming of a new pastor, there will be changes. Some changes may be major and others minor, but be patient and allow God to lead the congregation forward in maturity and development. Some members may react negatively to changes introduced by the new pastor, but the board should stand by the pastor and do everything possible to encourage goodwill.

The best way to accomplish the above is to delegate the items to different members of the board who can report back on the progress to the entire board.

Y. CHURCHWIDE SMALL GROUP STUDY ([back to table](#))

For churches choosing to do a sustainability initiative, we have provided a three-week small group bible study that can serve as a companion resource to the three-week preaching series Superintendent Roncone offers; or it can be used as a stand-alone resource. The Rise Up small group study has three lessons with discussion questions designed to help your people better understand God's purpose for pastoral transitions, equip them for the journey, and build their faith and excitement for the future.

A. Why should we use the small group bible study?

Following are several benefits to using the Rise Up small group Bible study. This powerful resource will help you to:

1. Increase your people's capacity for faith and resiliency throughout the transition.
2. Minister to the fear, confusion, and disappointment commonly associated with pastoral transitions.
3. Prevent a decline in giving, participation, and attendance levels so common in transitions.
4. Prepare your church to anticipate the future with faith and enthusiasm.
5. Create momentum and excitement for the future arrival of your new pastor.
6. Unify your church behind biblical teaching, healthy expectations, and shared commitment.



**DEPARTING
MINISTRY**
Father, may the
ministry our future
pastor will be
leaving also
experience a
healthy transition.

B. What are the topics of each week's lesson? Superintendent Roncone has written a three-week small group bible study that combines teaching and group discussion questions about what the Bible has to say about pastoral transitions.

1. **Part 1, How to Grow in Pastoral Transitions.** Practical teaching from examples of leadership transitions in the Bible. The sessions explain why God moves leaders in and out of our lives and gives your people practical ways they can thrive and grow in a pastoral transition.
2. **Part 2, What Your New Pastor Needs.** This session highlights the essential things every new pastor needs and wants to be successful.
3. **Part 3, Embracing God's New Thing.** The last study focuses on the good things that come from God's "new thing" and the commitment required to experience them. The series ends by inviting your people to make a commitment to remain faithful in attendance, giving, and volunteerism throughout the transition.

You can read each of the Bible studies at www.agspe.org/rusmallgroup.pdf.

C. How should we use the small group bible study? The resource can be used in a Sunday school, midweek bible study, large group table talk, or small group application. There are three basic ways to use this bible study:

1. **Best.** As a companion resource that runs consecutively with the three-week sermon series, Superintendent Roncone preaches at your church. The study is then used in your discipleship applications the week following to go deeper into the topics and their application.
2. **Better.** If Superintendent Roncone is not doing the three-week sermon series, use the small group bible study in all of your discipleship applications for three consecutive weeks.
3. **Good.** If you are unable to use the small group bible studies in a churchwide application, use them for a special three-week leadership huddle for your board, department heads, staff, and volunteers.

- D. What steps should be taken to implement the small group bible study?** Following are some super-simple steps to using the small group bible study:
- 1. Centralize your curriculum for three weeks.** Arrange for all your Sunday school classes, small group bible studies, and other groups to plan the same three weeks to use the Rise Up bible studies. If you do not have small groups or want to pull in those who do not attend your normal bible studies, this topic is a wonderful opportunity to create a temporary series.
 - 2. Recruit your study leaders.** It is important that your group leaders be trusted, positive, and supportive people who can keep your groups focused. One of the most common mistakes made during a pastoral transition is to invite discontented, critical, fringe, and unsupportive people to be part of the search team's efforts. This is often done hoping they will be more likely to accept the result or become more committed if they have a voice in the decision. While this seems logical at first, it rarely works out that way.
 - 3. Call a team meeting to introduce the plan.** Call all your group leaders together for a meeting and introduce them to the plan, curriculum, and starting date. You may even consider copying this chapter and handing it out so they understand how it fits into the big picture of things. After you review each week's topic, close the meeting by praying for the next three weeks.
- E. How can we prepare our small group leaders to use this resource?** We have provided two ways to help you prepare your small group leaders to succeed.
- 1. Briefing page.** We have created a leader briefing with coaching points in a curriculum packet that can be access at www.agspe.org/rusmallgroup.pdf.
 - 2. Podcast.** In addition, Gene Roncone has created a short podcast entitled, "*Rise Up Small Group Leader Coaching*." You or your leaders can access the audio file at: <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
- F. How can we access the free curriculum for the small group bible study?** You can download the curriculum for all three weeks at www.agspe.org/rusmallgroup.pdf and photo copy them or email the document to your leaders.

Z. CHECKLIST BY STAGES ([back to table](#))

The following checklist has been created especially for all those OCD detail types on every church board or committee. It is categorized under headings that correspond with each of the thirteen stages of the pastoral search process. It may help your team stay focused on tasks and objectives along the journey.¹³⁵

Stage 1: Presearch Preparation

1. Set a date for a two-day board retreat. Retreat to be planned even if all cannot attend.
2. Secure a venue that is at a nearby hotel or bed and breakfast.
3. Board officers will determine the retreat schedule.
4. Board officers should meet the day before the retreat to plan the agenda and game-plan through a premeeting huddle.
5. Make enough copies of the succession resource and require the board members to read the “Rise Up” resource before the retreat. (Include other resources such as the church’s constitution and bylaws.)
6. Board will review the succession resource at the retreat.
7. Determine what kind of vote is desired for different decisions. (See Chapter 12 entitled “The Pastoral Search Committee.”)
8. Board will determine individual roles for pastoral search committee such as team lead (chair), secretary, communications lead, prayer lead, networking lead, and hospitality lead.
9. The pastoral search committee should have no less than five people but no more than ten.
10. Write a church summary/biography. (See appendix entitled “Church, Neighborhood, and Community Profile.”)
11. Review of biblical qualifications and characteristics form. (See appendix entitled “Desirable Qualities.”)
12. Group discussion regarding biblical qualifications and desired qualities to isolate common denominators.
13. Determine a search budget and transition fund for the pastoral search process (See appendix entitled “Search Budget.”)
14. Group writes profile of ideal pastor. (See appendix entitled “Pastor Profile.”)
15. Group reviews, explains, and signs the “Member Covenant” (see Chapter 14) and confidentiality agreement.
16. Group discusses the consequences of a breach of confidentiality.
17. Group to determine meeting frequency, location, and time. (See Chapter 15 entitled “Committee Meetings.”)
18. The board’s primary role will be to find a new pastor and manage the church in the interim.
19. The board’s primary focus will be to identify a candidate, manage ministries, remove obstacles, postpone expansion, and create a purpose statement.
20. The board should seek the advice of the district superintendent/network pastor after a pastoral vacancy.
21. Consider securing the services of an interim pastor for the duration of the pastoral search process.
22. Call the church to pray for a pastor.
23. Make a prayerful determination of the goals and needs of the church.
24. The church should contact the district/network office with the name, address, and phone number of the chair of the pastoral search committee so proper communication may be maintained.

Stage Two: Advertising the Opening

1. Board to complete the church biography/profile by **APPOINTING** a team to write the church profile describing your church, the neighborhood, and the city.
2. Attach this profile for each candidate to review online or through an email.
3. Visit <http://www.agspe.org/rutour.mp4> for a sample and short video tour of how Highpoint did this.
4. Church profile should contain up-to-date and accurate information including a church summary, community profile, previous pastor, vision statements, governance and policy, staff bios, and any community recognition.
5. Board to complete a candidate job description by establishing reasonable expectations of the new pastor and looking for key leadership abilities needed for the church.
6. Include a link to the church's website on the candidate job description and church profile.
7. Board to complete candidate/pastoral profile.
8. Create a central website or Google blog.
9. Use online ministry job sites to advertise the pastoral opening for at least five months and cancel the ad when no longer needed. (See appendix entitled "Advertising the Ministry Opening, B.")
10. Contact district superintendents/network pastors, assistant superintendents, and secretary/treasurers. To find names and contact information for each district, visit www.ag.org. click on resources, directories, then district/network offices. (See appendix entitled "Advertising the Ministry Opening.C.7.")
11. Consider hiring a research assistant to gather data needed for advertising.
12. A search committee member should email the district superintendent/network pastor, assistant superintendent and the secretary/treasurer to inform them of the pastoral opening.
13. Google the "Largest 100 Assemblies of God Churches" to find their websites and contact information to share pastoral opening and email with ministry opening.

Stage 3: Seek Counsel

1. Call the district superintendent/network pastor and seek their advice.
2. Board should compile a list of questions to ask the district superintendent/network pastor throughout the process.
3. Invite the district superintendent/network pastor to attend a church board meeting, offer resources, and answer questions the board may have.
4. Email community leaders such as the town mayor, city council members, police and fire chiefs, school superintendent, principals of nearby schools, and your city's neighborhood services department letting them know of the pastoral opening. (See Chapter 4, "Stages of the Process.A.Stage 3.b." for a sample list of questions to be emailed to leaders.)
5. Board should give the congregation the opportunity to submit input concerning the pastoral selection.
6. Use our existing congregational "self-study" template for Survey Monkey, create your own through www.surveymonkey.com, or pass out a paper survey for input concerning the pastoral selection. See compilation of questions for creating a congregation survey in the appendix entitled "Congregational Survey."
7. Email the survey to the congregation or pass out paper surveys that can be returned to a sealed box easily located at the church (board responsibility). Congregational surveys are to remain confidential to the search committee only.

Stage 4: Targeting Potential Candidates

1. ☐ Board will need to be proactive and recruit possible candidates and inquiries of interest.
2. ☐ Send a generic email to district/network offices and staff of larger churches for leads or recommendations. (See appendix entitled "Sample Letters.")
3. ☐ Prioritize a list of possible candidates and those interested initially.
4. ☐ Send letter to person(s) recommending a candidate. (See appendix entitled "Sample Letters.")
5. ☐ Contact possible candidates through a phone call unless they emailed you first. (See appendix entitled "Recruiting Candidates".)
6. ☐ Follow up on all potential candidates in a timely manner.
7. ☐ Board to keep current paid pastoral and support staff up to date with the process by sending them a letter. (See appendix entitled "Sample Letters.")
8. ☐ Initiate contact with potential candidates who were referred or recommended.
9. ☐ Always call candidates initially rather than emailing unless a potential candidate emailed first.
10. ☐ Always respond to a candidate's private email.
11. ☐ Email the church profile and pastor profile to their personal email and request that they reply with their résumé. (See appendix entitled "Receiving Résumés.")
12. ☐ It is important that EVERY contact with candidates be professional, organized, and show respect for their privacy.
13. ☐ The Rocky Mountain District requires contact with potential candidates to remain confidential until a candidate for the pastorate is presented to the congregation. "By confidential, we mean that what takes place in the pastoral selection process is not shared with others, even best friends or spouses. It is a matter of integrity." (See appendix entitled "Recruiting Candidates.")

Stage 5: Receiving Résumés

1. ☐ A letter or email should be sent within three days to all candidates who have submitted their names and résumés.
2. ☐ Download the résumés of the candidates who send information through a webpage or YouTube channel. You can also request one to be emailed to you.
3. ☐ Begin the process of organizing the candidates' résumés in categories A, B, or C:
 "A" = Strong candidate to contact and explore.
 "B" = Possible candidate to be revisited or considered at a later time.
 "C" = Unqualified or undesirable candidate to be notified immediately.
4. ☐ Each category decision to be made by an official vote of the board.
5. ☐ For candidates in the "A" category, the board should follow up with an email or send a letter immediately to the candidate informing them that their résumé has been received and give a brief description of the process.
6. ☐ For strong candidates from the "A" category, the acting chair of the Pastoral Search Committee is to send a pastoral candidate response questionnaire to each candidate. (See appendix entitled "Candidate Response Form.")
7. ☐ Include the background of the history of the church for candidates in the "A" category through a letter or email.
8. ☐ Include a candidate's cover page for each potential candidate. (See appendix entitled "Candidate Cover Page.")
9. ☐ Staple cover page to the inside of the file folder for each candidate.
10. ☐ Every committee member should be given a copy of every résumé for evaluation.
11. ☐ Confirm receipt of résumés and notifications to those no longer of interest. (See appendix entitled "Sample Letters.")
12. ☐ "B" category candidates can be considered at a later time. Place "on hold" until the board feels they merit reconsideration.

13. ☐ If the board finds that a “B” category candidate merits consideration, they must be notified immediately and be sent a brief description of the process.
14. ☐ “C” category candidates are considered undesirable for the position. Send a letter or email thanking them for applying and informing them that the board feels led to move in a different direction.
15. ☐ Every committee member will complete evaluation forms for each candidate to help categorize them. (See appendix entitled “Candidate Résumé Evaluation.”)

Stage 6: Ministry Exposure and References

1. ☐ Committee to review all information on potential candidates (résumés, audio CDs, or internet links for “A” list candidates.)
2. ☐ Do not interview a candidate until step #1 is completed.
3. ☐ Google the candidates’ names to try to find any valuable information on them.
4. ☐ Assign a committee member to check the potential candidates’ church or personal social media outlets.
5. ☐ Search different variations of the candidates’ names.
6. ☐ Check presence, comments, and pictures of “A” list candidates on social media outlets. (See appendix entitled “Checking References.”)
7. ☐ Board/committee will listen to and or watch the candidates’ sermons and report back impressions to the entire pastoral search committee. (See appendix entitled “Exposure to Speaking Ministry.”)
8. ☐ A board member or team of at least three should make anonymous visits to “A” list pastoral candidates’ current churches.
9. ☐ Team should drive by the candidates’ church facility to see how things are kept.
10. ☐ Multiple board members and search committee should listen to more than one sermon/message for each candidate.
11. ☐ Background checks should to be done on the final three candidates before the final candidate is chosen.
12. ☐ Secure written consent from candidate(s) before performing a background check. (See appendix entitled “Checking References.”)
13. ☐ Committee to call ministry, employment, and character references on “A” list candidates.
14. ☐ All reference checks should be done through a phone call. (See appendix entitled “Checking References.”)
15. ☐ Choose one to three committee members with good people skills and disarming demeanors to make contacts for reference calls.
16. ☐ Assure each reference of your complete confidentiality.
17. ☐ Pay attention to vague comments about candidate.
18. ☐ Call the candidate’s district superintendent/network pastor. (See appendix entitled “Checking References” for questions.)
19. ☐ Reference checks should still be done on any candidates from the “B” list to be revisited later if the board/committee decides to.

Stage 7: Preliminary Phone (Audio Only) Interview

1. ☐ Board to send a letter to request a preliminary phone conversation with pastoral candidate. (See appendix entitled “Sample Letters.F.Requesting Phone Contact.”)
2. ☐ When requesting a preliminary phone conversation, include a copy of the church’s history, church website or blog, and the pastoral search process through a letter or email.
3. ☐ Chair of the search committee must include their contact information for candidate.

4. Maintain a positive attitude within the board and committee during every interview.
5. Accommodate time and opportunity allowing the candidate to also interview the board/search committee.
6. Consider providing current financials and a signed statement by the board officers verifying their truthfulness and accuracy.
7. Include a bio on each board member, their level of current ministry involvement, education, and history with the church.
8. Also include a list of references of current and previous staff members, community leaders, and prior pastors who can be called to give a reference on the church to the candidate.
9. Board should be prepared to answer questions from the candidate. (See appendix entitled "Interview Questions for Board.")
10. Submit questions to the full board for suggested amendment and approval.
11. Consider providing serious candidates an FAQ sheet.
12. Board should create a list of questions they want to ask the pastoral candidate as a group (See appendix entitled "Interview Questions for Candidates.")
13. Board should discuss and have a plan BEFORE an interview takes place.
14. Plan an order of interview questions to be asked.
15. Assign different members of the board to ask questions at an appropriate time and place in the interview.
16. Avoid having one person ask all the questions.
17. Assign each member a topic or series of questions and ask others to chime in if needed for follow up or clarification.
18. Suspend judgments until interview is completed.
19. Consider asking the candidate to respond in writing to a list of questions (do not include every question) prior to another interview. (See appendix entitled "Interview Questions for Candidates.")
20. A request for a written response to the pastoral candidate questionnaire should be emailed to the candidate's personal email account.
21. Set a time schedule and agenda for the phone interview.
22. Debrief for about 20 minutes as a group upon conclusion of the interview.

Stage 8: Video Interview with the Entire Committee

1. Video interview should be the THIRD interview with the candidate.
2. Video interview should use video conferencing software to help identify the candidate's ministry focus, leadership style, and overarching ministry focus.
3. Video Interview should include questions concerning reflective learning, roles and governance, change, ministry preferences, and leadership.
4. Board/committee should narrow down a list of questions for the candidate before the video interview meeting. (See appendix entitled "Interview Questions for Candidates.")
5. Time will not allow the committee to ask every question. Select the questions wisely for each candidate.
6. Committee's attitude is more important than the questions.
7. Avoid sounding condescending to the candidate or putting the candidate on the spot.
8. Interviews are a two-way street. A sharp candidate will also want to interview the committee. Accommodate time for this.
9. Use an online meeting application such as gotomeeting.com, apple facetime (iPhone or iMac), zoom.com, or google hangout. (See appendix entitled "Stages of the Process.Stage 8.")
10. Keep time zone differences in mind.

11. ☐ ☐ Test video equipment well before the video interview to make sure it is working.
12. ☐ ☐ Plan BEFORE the interview. Select questions as a group, in the order they will be asked, and by whom.
13. ☐ ☐ Do not make premature judgements based on the first few minutes of the interview.
14. ☐ ☐ Take time to reflect upon the interview before making a final decision about the candidate.
15. ☐ ☐ List of interview questions. (See appendix entitled "Interview Questions for Candidates.C. Interview #3: Video Interview.")
16. ☐ ☐ Since written responses will benefit the process, ask the candidate if they would like to submit a list of questions for the board to respond to. (See appendix entitled "Sample Letters G. Request for written response to questionnaire.")
17. ☐ ☐ Do not allow the interview process to drag on too long or move too fast.
18. ☐ ☐ Set a time schedule and agenda for the interview. No more than three hours with a break half-way through. Format: Welcome and prayer, Introductions, Questions by the committee, Questions by the candidate, Closing comments and prayer.
19. ☐ ☐ Listen between the lines to what candidate says and does not say.
20. ☐ ☐ Plan time to debrief as a group after each interview for about 15-20 minutes.

Stage 9: Contextual visit

1. ☐ ☐ Board/committee to review preaching and teaching of ministry candidates.
2. ☐ ☐ Committee should be given CDs or internet links to see (video) or hear (audio) the ministry of all "A" list candidates.
3. ☐ ☐ Send one to three people from the board and pastoral committee to make an anonymous visit to hear candidates live in their current church setting.
4. ☐ ☐ The goal of the anonymous visit is to see, hear, and get a feeling for the candidate in their local ministry setting.
5. ☐ ☐ No contact should be made with the candidate, nor should they receive prior notice.
6. ☐ ☐ Slip in when the service is starting and leave the service promptly.
7. ☐ ☐ How does the facility look on the inside? Is it maintained well?
8. ☐ ☐ View the outside of the facility after hours. How does the landscaping and exterior of the building look?
9. ☐ ☐ How does the candidate interact with their current congregation?
10. ☐ ☐ How does the service flow?
11. ☐ ☐ Remember not to judge a person's communication ministry by one sermon. Listen to more than one message from the same candidate.
12. ☐ ☐ Allow more than one board member to listen to the candidate's message since everyone has different tastes and opinions.

Stage 10: Personal interviews

1. ☐ ☐ choose two to three potential candidates along with the candidate's spouse and family to interview at the church's expense.
2. ☐ ☐ Formally invite the potential candidate and the potential candidate's spouse and family to be interviewed in person.
3. ☐ ☐ Larger churches should bring in at least three candidates for a face-to-face interview at different times before narrowing it down to one candidate.
4. ☐ ☐ Set up a date and time to formally interview the pastoral candidate and the candidate's spouse and family. Entire board, their spouses, and pastoral committee should be involved.
5. ☐ ☐ Interviews should not be longer than three hours.
6. ☐ ☐ Meet for a meal together.

7. How does the candidate interact with the wait staff if you are at a restaurant?
8. How are the candidate and the candidate's spouse dressed?
9. How does the candidate treat their spouse and children?
10. Do the candidate and the candidate's spouse manage their children well?
11. Plan a loose itinerary that will accomplish goals.
12. Arrange childcare ahead of time so the candidate's spouse can also be available for the interview.
13. Face-to-face interview includes board/committee, the candidate, and the candidate's spouse to discuss significant issues not previously discussed.
14. Identify compatibility, chemistry, and the vibe of the couple.
15. Give candidate/candidate's family an onsite opportunity to experience your surroundings and sense God's will.
16. Give candidate/candidate's family an opportunity of margin to explore the city, pray together, and reflect upon their visit.
17. Allow for the board, pastoral candidate, and the candidate's spouse to interact together.
18. Plan an informal Q&A with deacons and their spouses.
19. Ask interactive questions to observe the candidate and the candidate's spouse and how they interact with each other.
20. Board to reflect, pray, and follow up with any concerns or red flags.
21. Board to complete any background, credit, criminal, and educational reference checks before moving forward.
22. Reminder that this stage is critical with the final candidate being highly considered.
23. Do not commit to an individual until all critical information has been collected, reviewed, and prayed about.
24. Board should be prepared and expect candidates to interview them and the church as well.
25. A candidate may request a copy of the church's current financials and a signed statement by the board officers verifying their truthfulness and accuracy.
26. A candidate may request a bio on each board member, their level of current ministry involvement, education, and history with the church.
27. A candidate may request a list of references including current and previous staff members, community leaders, and prior pastors who can be called to give a reference on the church.
28. The board should appoint a small team to prepare answers for each question and submit them to the full board for suggested amendment and approval.
29. Consider impressing your serious candidates with an FAQ list. (See appendix entitled "Interview Questions for Boards.")
30. Summary of phone interviews leading to candidate visit:
 - The first phone interview focuses on getting to know the candidate and the candidate's family, ministry experience, preferred work environment, personal convictions, and spirituality as well as identifying possible disqualifiers.
 - The second phone interview focuses on the candidate's theology, ministry values, and philosophy of ministry.
 - The third interview will be a video conference interview. Before this interview takes place, video conferencing software should be tested prior to the interview.
 - The fourth interview should be face-to-face and include the candidate, the candidate's spouse, and the board. The board to agree on date, time, place, travel, lodging required, hosts, dress, and reimbursement for any expenses the candidate may have. Board shall have agreed upon and established a written compensation package prior to the fourth interview.

- ☐ The fifth interview takes place once the board narrows down one primary candidate.

Stage 11: Return trip

1. ☐ Two or three potential candidates have already been interviewed.
2. ☐ At this stage, the board has narrowed it down to one primary candidate, and the fifth interview will take place.
3. ☐ Invite the final candidate and the candidate's spouse and children to return to meet with the board and staff.
4. ☐ Provide a written remuneration agreement to the candidate that has been approved in the form of a motion and signed by its officer. (See appendix entitled "Presenting an Offer.")
5. ☐ Include important contents of the remuneration agreement (See appendix entitled "Presenting an Offer.").
6. ☐ Set up hotel if needed and expense accommodations for the final candidate and the candidate's spouse and family.
7. ☐ Allow for the candidate to freely ask questions and have time to explore the city, tour ministry sites, spend time with staff, and get a "boots on the ground" feel for the ministry.
8. ☐ See appendix entitled "Interview Questions" for suggested questions at this stage.

Stage 12: Official candidacy

1. ☐ Set up a schedule for candidate to be voted on.
2. ☐ Make travel arrangements for the candidate and the candidate's spouse and family.
3. ☐ If out of state, purchase airline tickets for candidate and the candidate's spouse and family.
4. ☐ Set arrival date. (Wednesday preferred.)
5. ☐ Thursday and Friday: Make plans to meet with appropriate leaders at the church and other areas of interest in the community.
6. ☐ Saturday: Host a dessert social at 7 p.m. at the church for members to interact with the candidate and the candidate's spouse and family.
7. ☐ Sunday: Schedule enough time for candidate to preach a full message.
8. ☐ How will the candidate conclude the service?
9. ☐ Depending on how many services your church has, how will you accommodate the service(s)?
10. ☐ Introduce the candidate.
11. ☐ Candidate preaches.
12. ☐ Set up schedule for Sunday services for the candidate.
13. ☐ Let candidate know the arrival time for each service and where you would like to meet at the church.
14. ☐ Include time in the weekend schedule for them to be alone as a family to pray and process.
15. ☐ Provide a full-sized rental car.
16. ☐ Provide hotel accommodations sufficient for the candidate and the candidate's spouse and children.
17. ☐ Two weeks before the candidate's arrival, call the hotel to confirm dates.
18. ☐ Email the candidate with hotel, rental car, and schedule for the pastoral candidacy.
19. ☐ Protect the family during their time from overzealous people with agendas.
20. ☐ Candidate should only be required to preach during morning services.
21. ☐ Morning service led by chair of the search committee or associate pastor.
22. ☐ Questions should be screened if there is a Q&A session and index cards provided for questions.
23. ☐ Require people to write questions down and submit them to the search committee ahead of time.

24. Remove unwanted questions.
25. Give candidate time to process questions and formulate answers prior to the Q&A.
26. Provide childcare for candidate's children during interviews.
27. Start date for office hours.
28. Start date for first Sunday ministry.
29. Moving expenses.
30. Ministry expense provision for district/network council events (annually), General Council (biennially), and Ministers' Retreat (annually).
31. Provide a church credit card for new pastor.
32. Clean and set up the pastor's office before the new pastor's arrival.
33. Provide a policy for ministry reimbursements.
34. Go through current staff manual with new pastor.
35. Vacation allotment, personal or sick days.

Stage 13: Preparation

1. Prepare for the new pastor's arrival.
2. Provide an official letter confirming remuneration package for temporary housing for family.
3. Mobilize move-in teams.
4. Mobilize meal provision.
5. Schedule a welcome day for office logistics for new pastor.
6. Provide computer and set up with needed programs and access.
7. Cell phone.
8. Keys.
9. Email.
10. Office orientation.
11. Make necessary announcements of newly elected pastor.
12. Write a press release and post to all social media outlets and the church's website and notify local press.
13. Notify the district superintendent/network pastor within one day of election process. (See appendix entitled "Sample Letters. N. Notification to district/network.")
14. Update the church before the pastor arrives.
15. Include relocation efforts, bio about their family members, hobbies, interests, and passions.
16. Provide a budget for moving/rental expenses before the elected pastor asks what will be provided and before they secure a moving company or rental truck. If the church cannot afford a moving company and will use a rental truck, provide a check to the new pastor for this expense.
17. Contact the pastor's moving company of choice and arrange for direct billing to the church.
18. Fuel expenses for automobiles.
19. Lodging/hotel expenses.
20. Food expenses.
21. Provide a salary confirmation letter to the newly elected pastor for housing and include the total remuneration package.
22. Provide an employment contract if needed for an out-of-state home buyer. (See contract provided in this resource for samples.)
23. Set up the pastor's office.
24. Laptop and or desktop.
25. Cell phone.
26. Software applications.
27. Programs.

28. Keys.
29. Email account.
30. Voicemail.
31. Wi-Fi.
32. Password list.
33. Any other needs the pastor may have upon arrival. Be sure to ask ahead of time.
34. Provide a list of key leaders' contact information (staff, board members, ministry leaders, and anyone else needed) via email as well as a printed copy.
35. Appoint a transition team of nonboard members to help with logistical needs for the pastor's relocation.
36. Create a welcome team to help the family move in, assemble beds, organize furniture, and get settled their first week.
37. Clean house or rental before their arrival.
38. Meal provision.
39. Gift cards to restaurants.
40. Welcome basket to include cups, plates, plasticware, paper towels, etc., to help with their first few days in a new home.
41. Provide bottled water.
42. Mobilize those in the same age bracket or share the pastor's family's hobbies to invite them to a social or entertainment event.
43. Arrange for a few individuals in the church to invite the pastor's spouse out.
44. Arrange for trusted families with children to include the pastor's children in an event to help them transition.
45. Set up social interactions for elementary or teenage children.
46. Prepare a referral list of service providers such as realtors, doctors, contractors, mechanics, schools, hairdressers, clubs, sports programs, and utility providers.
47. Do not set appointments or speak on behalf of the pastor/pastor's family regarding service providers. Let them make their own choices.
48. Sunday hospitality: Assign one or two people to host the pastor's family to help orient them, get their children placed in the appropriate classrooms, sit by them in church, and introduce them to others. The host person should initiate contact a few days before Sunday and set up a time and place to meet at the church on Sunday morning.
49. Begin transfer of church leadership authority and responsibilities from the board to the new pastor.
50. Board should give the new pastor a honeymoon period and deal with any outstanding business.
51. Deal with controversial matters, deferred crises, or problem people in the first few months.
52. Do not postpone problem solving for the new pastor.
53. Ask yourself: If I were the new pastor, what five problems would I want solved before I arrived?
54. Consult the new pastor before making any significant decisions.
55. The pastor becomes the board chair, lead pastor, and leader of the staff immediately upon election.
56. The committee must sort through all materials such as résumés, reference letters, confidential notes, correspondence, background checks, and names of unsuccessful candidates and destroy confidential information accordingly. It is unethical to hold onto personal information of those not elected.

57. Assist the pastor in meeting people by facilitating small groups.
58. Pastor to give approval of the idea of meeting with groups; this should not be imposed upon them.
59. The board should help set up small groups of 15-18 people in a home setting with refreshments and comfortable seating provided by the host.
60. The hosts open by greeting everyone and clearly stating that the purpose is for the new pastor to ask questions that will help them gain a better understanding of the congregation. Each participant introduces themselves and how they became a part of the church. The pastor shares a condensed version of their story and call to ministry. This should only take 40-60 minutes.
61. Begin to prepare and support the pastor's preference for an installation service.
62. The pastor will select a date for their installation service.
63. Maintain a consistent way to show appreciation to the pastor and the pastor's family. Consider once a year during Pastor Appreciation Month in the morning service(s). Church attendees need to see their pastor and the pastor's spouse being honored and their work appreciated.
64. Board should continue to stand by the pastor and do everything possible to encourage goodwill as changes occur.
65. Delegate above items to different members of the board who can report progress back to the entire board.

III. AUDIO AND VIDEO RESOURCES ([back to table](#))

Following is a list of audio and video resources concerning topics related to pastoral transition and succession. Additional topics will be added as this resource is updated annually. New and existing audio coaching files can be accessed through any electronic device on the network's Sound Cloud account at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

- A. My Pastor Is Leaving! Now What?** The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network is a national leader when it comes to resourcing pastoral search committees. In this episode, Superintendent Gene Roncone tells how to access the network's written plan, transition manual, unlimited coaching, proven methods, practical steps, and other relevant resources for a successful pastoral transition.
- B. Common Mistakes Pastoral Search Committees Make.** In this episode, Pastor Caleb McNaughton of Highpoint Church interviews Superintendent Gene Roncone about the ten most common mistakes pastoral search committee make. Find out what they are and how to avoid them.
- C. Why Secular Hiring Methods Aren't Enough.** If you are like most churches, you have corporate executives, small business owners, or human resources personnel serving on your board. There may be a temptation to employ HR notebooks or secular hiring methods to find your pastor. Although secular hiring methods may help, there comes a point when they are not enough. In this episode, Pastor Caleb McNaughton interviews Superintendent Gene Roncone about four reasons why secular hiring methods can become a short ladder leaning on a high wall.
- D. Why and How to Update the Membership Roster.** One of the most important but often neglected governance tasks the board must do before a pastor leaves is to update and freeze the membership roster. Failing to do this almost always results in embarrassing, regretful, and even botched election results. In this episode, Superintendent Gene Roncone and Pastor Caleb McNaughton talk about the most important reasons why as well as how the board should update and freeze the membership roster.
- E. Rise Up Small Group Leader Coaching.** In this episode, Superintendent Gene Roncone, the author of the Rise Up small group curriculum, gives a 12-minute coaching session for small group leaders. Gene walks you through the purpose and benefits of the study, ideal venue settings, how to use the participant/ teaching notes, an overview of each of the three lessons, how to start and end your group, and pointers on how to be effective. The latest version of the curriculum packet can be accessed at www.agspe.org/rusmallgroup.pdf.
- F. Five Keys to a Successful Pastoral Candidate Interview.** Interviewing pastors can be intimidating. How do you know what to say or how to prepare? Don't worry! Help is on the way! In this episode, Superintendent Gene Roncone "coaches you up" for that first candidate interview you have been so nervous about.
- G. Maximizing Your New Pastor's Salary Package.** Ministers are entitled to unique opportunities to maximize the value of their salary and benefits package provided by the church. Most church boards are not aware of these opportunities, but a skilled financial planner like Richard Varnell can help you and your church structure the new pastor's compensation package in a way that increases the value of the package without increasing the cost to the church. In this episode, Richard will teach you five ways to maximize the salary package.
- H. Six Mistakes Outgoing Pastors Make.** In this episode, Superintendent Gene Roncone talks with Dr. Jerry David about six mistakes outgoing pastors make that sabotage pastoral transitions. After

founding and pastoring Lincoln City Church, Lincoln, Nebraska, for 25 years, Jerry is a partner in the Sierra Group that specializes in working with local churches in transition and succession planning. He is also a coauthor of the newly released book, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*. This is a must-listen for any leader who wants to leave their church better than they found it.

- I. **The Why and How of Mentored Succession, Part 1.** In Part 1 of this mini-series, Superintendent Gene Roncone interviews author Terry Roberts about the why and how of mentored succession. They talk about how a lead pastor and board can collaborate together to select a person to be mentored and trained with the intention of one day leading the church. They discuss how to anticipate and overcome obstacles of turbulence and church governance.
- J. **The Why and How of Mentored Succession, Part 2.** In Part 2 of this mini-series, Superintendent Gene Roncone continues the conversation with author Terry Roberts about mentored succession. They create a hypothetical five-stage plan for mentored succession and talk about what each stage should include and who should be involved as well as the benefits and risks associated with each phase.

More podcasts are added in between the Rise Up manual revision cycles, so be sure to check the audio channel periodically.

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¹Jeff Myers, *The Race of Life: What a Real-Life Relay Coach Can Teach Us About Running to Win*, <https://bible.org/article/race-life-what-real-life-relay-coach-can-teach-us-about-running-win>, accessed on September 30, 2018. Dr. Jeff Myers interviewed Coach Nigel Hetherinton, National Manager of Sprints and Hurdles for Scottish Athletics, on success in relay races. This quote was from that interview.

²Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 10.

³Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Richard McKeon translation of Aristotle's *The Nicomachean Ethics* as seen in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, 1941, Book II.1, p. 1103a-b.

⁴Jone Johnson Lewis, "Jackie Joyner-Kersey Quotes," About Women's History, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/joyner_kersey.htm, accessed March 30, 2018.

⁵This definition of pastoral succession was first articulated by Dave Travis, CEO of Leadership Network, at Leadership Network's online video conference on March 13, 2013.

⁶The following individuals served as a focus group in evaluating various chapters of this resource and making suggestions for improvement. Their names are listed in alphabetical order. Jim Braddy (Retired District Superintendent, Northern California and Nevada District), Nathan Hawk (Deacon, Broomfield, CO), Robert Kaylor (Author and transition consultant, Monument, CO), Gary Larson (previous cochair of the Pastoral Search Committee, New Life Church, Colorado Springs, CO; and current elder/trustee for Church of the Highlands, Birmingham, AL), Bill Leach (Retired District Superintendent, Michigan District; and professional interim pastor), Vern Lentz (Deacon, Aurora, CO), Mike Miratsky (Deacon, Aurora, CO), Todd Musser (Director, Promotion and Partnerships, Interim Pastor Ministries), Phil Nielsen (Deacon, Aurora, CO), Steve Ogbum (Deacon, Broomfield, CO), Terry Roberts (Author, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*), and Wally Weber (professional interim pastor, Windsor, CO).

⁷Email from Gary Larson, June 25, 2018.

⁸Bob Russell and Bryan Bucher, *Transition Plan: 7 Secrets Every Leader Needs to Know*, Ministers Label Publishing, Louisville, KY, 2010, p. 18.

⁹William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2014, p. 57.

¹⁰Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, pp. 50-51.

¹¹Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. xix.

¹²Jim Ozier and Jim Griffith, *The Changeover Zone: Successful Pastoral Transitions*, Abington Press, Nashville, TN, 2016, p. 5.

¹³William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 2.

¹⁴Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastors*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD, 2012, p. 21.

¹⁵Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 40.

¹⁶Congregational survey adapted from one that Gene Roncone received from Wally Weber.

¹⁷William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 59.

¹⁸Cam Taylor and Alan Simpson, *Between Pastors: Seizing the Opportunity*, Outreach Canada Ministries, 2014, p. 29.

¹⁹IN REFLECTION: During the time between the previous pastor's resignation in June 2002 and my election in October 2002, there were several critical decisions, misunderstandings, and assumptions that remained unresolved. What is the takeaway? Do not start interviewing candidates until ALL significant decisions regarding salary, roles, and privileges are agreed upon in writing by all parties, signed, and documented by official board minutes with approval by the full board (not small committees or representatives) in a regular meeting.

²⁰Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 2015, p. 137.

²¹One of the most common mistakes made during a pastoral transition is to invite discontented, critical, fringe, and unsupportive people to be part of the search team. This is often done hoping they will be more likely to accept the result or become more committed if they have a voice in the decision. The following authors (listed in alphabetical order) had consensus regarding the negative effect this has upon the search: Alaska Ministry Network, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Year, p. 5; British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 9; Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 24; Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 3; William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, pp. 39, 44.

²²IN REFLECTION: Most frustrating transitions are the result of power grabs that occur after a pastor's resignation and before the new pastor's arrival. Overly ambitious board members, staff, or department heads can be tempted to use the transition as a way to advance their agendas, increase their budgets, get better facility use, or upgrade their influence. If you are not careful, so many people can "grab the helm" during the interim that when the new pastor arrives, there are no resources left with which to lead.

²³"General Council Affiliated Church Governance Minimums," 2019, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed December 19, 2019.

²⁴The content of this chapter was significantly improved by the advice of the following district and national leaders (listed in alphabetical order): Bret Allen (District Superintendent, Northern California and Nevada District), Donna L. Barrett (General Secretary, The General Council of the Assemblies of God), Glen Beaver (District Superintendent, West Texas District), James Braddy (Retired District Superintendent and General Council General Presbyter, Northern California and Nevada District), David Dillon (District Superintendent, Appalachian Ministry Network), Larry Griswold (Retired District Superintendent, Illinois District; and General Council Executive Presbyter), Gordon Houston (Secretary-Treasurer, SoCal Network), Jay Herndon (District Secretary-Treasurer, Northern California and Nevada District), Jeff Hlavin (District Superintendent, Michigan District), Lee McCloud (Pastor of Church Development, Oregon Ministry Network), Don Miller (District Superintendent, Southern Missouri District), Jim Palmer (Assistant Superintendent, Ohio Ministry Network), Randy Popineau (Secretary-Treasurer, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network), Phil Schneider (District Superintendent, Illinois District), Don Steiger (Retired District Superintendent and General Council General Presbyter, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network), Bill Wilson (Network Pastor, Oregon Ministry Network), and Bob Wine (District Superintendent, Nebraska Ministry Network).

²⁵*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 2:18, p. 15.

²⁶*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 2:8, p. 11.

²⁷*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 25:7, p. 248.

²⁸ *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 25:7, p. 248.

²⁹"General Council Affiliated Church Governance Minimums," 2019, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed December 19, 2019.

³⁰"Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Constitution, Article XI, Section 1, subsection a (6), <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

³¹"Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Bylaws, Article VI, Section 5, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

³²"Constitution & Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Constitution, Article VI, Section 4, subsection c, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

³³Information regarding correspondence courses with Global University's Berean School of the Bible can be obtained at <https://globaluniversity.edu/academics/continuing-education>.

³⁴Information regarding how to become a certified minister through Global University's Berean School of the Bible can be found at https://www.globaluniversity.edu/berean_index.cfm.

³⁵This inspirational story about Don Popineau was told to me in a December 26, 2019, email from his son, Randy. Don passed away in 2018 and left a powerful legacy. Four of Don's sons and one daughter would go on to become credentialed ministers and serve in full-time ministry. In addition, at the time of this writing, three of his grandchildren are in pastoral ministry, two are on church boards, one is a lay leader, and three others have served in a parachurch ministry.

³⁶"Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Constitution, Article VII, Section 3, subsection c(3), <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

³⁷"Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Constitution, Article XI, Section 1, subsection a (6), <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>; and "Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Bylaws, Article VI, Section 5, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

³⁸"Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Constitution, Article XI, Section 1, subsection a (6), <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

³⁹"Constitution and Bylaws with Minutes," 2017, General Council Constitution, Article XI, Section 3, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed on December 19, 2019.

⁴⁰IN REFLECTION: Even though my predecessor announced his retirement in June and my election took place the following October, his farewell party still was not scheduled, planned, or financed by the time I arrived in late November. I finally had to get the ball rolling myself in February. Looking back, it would have been preferable for the board to honor him by setting the day, determining the budget, and hosting the event before the arrival of the new pastor.

⁴¹Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, New Jersey, 2004, pp. 29-40.

⁴²The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Constitution and Bylaws, Bylaws, Article IX. Doctrines and Practices Disapproved, Section 8. Violations of Ministerial Courtesy, Revised August 7–11, 2017, Anaheim, California, p. 171.

⁴³*A Guide to Healthy Senior/Lead Pastor Transitions*, Oregon Ministry Network, Keizer, OR, 2019, p. 7.

⁴⁴Recommended Bylaws of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Article XI, Section 3, subsection c, <https://ag.org/About/Leadership%20Team/General%20Secretary#ByLaws>.

⁴⁵This prayer list was compiled by Pastor Gene Roncone from different resources over many years. Unfortunately, it would be impossible to recall their original sources.

⁴⁶ Shared internet folder with daily prayer graphics at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gfvgym207wfztyd/AABYh6cHcvTYXF08sbEfHEcXa?dl=0>

⁴⁷David L. Bittinger, “A Model of Interim Pastoral Coaches for Ohio Assemblies of God Churches in Pastoral Transition,” DMin dissertation, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri, 2007, p. 56.

⁴⁸Justin Tull, *Interim Ministry: Positive Change in Times of Transition*, Published by Justin Tull, 2012, p. 2.

⁴⁹Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015, p.4.

⁵⁰Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 2.

⁵¹Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, 2015, Nashville, TN, p. 6.

⁵²May 1, 2019, email from Bob Cook.

⁵³*Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 2:8, p. 11.

⁵⁴*Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 25:7, p. 248.

⁵⁵Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 3.

⁵⁶The following authors (listed in alphabetical order)had consensus regarding the negative effect this has upon the search: Alaska Ministry Network, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Year, p. 5; British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 9; Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God’s Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 24; Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 3; William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, pp. 39, 44.

⁵⁷William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 37.

⁵⁸William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, pp. 38-45.

⁵⁹Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 26.

⁶⁰David L. Bittinger, "A Model of Interim Pastoral Coaches for Ohio Assemblies of God Churches in Pastoral Transition," DMin dissertation, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri, 2007, p. 2.

⁶¹IN REFLECTION: Before working on Highpoint's bylaw revision and this manual, I contacted the previous district superintendent (who had since retired) to inquire about the kind of coaching he gave the board during their search prior to my arrival. He had no recollection of being invited to speak with the board or give advice concerning the transition of pastoral leadership. Although he was asked to give a character reference for a few of the potential candidates, his network, wisdom, and resources were not utilized. He had written a small manual to assist district churches involved in a pastoral search that could have been made available. His office was also only an hour away which would have made coaching convenient. I wish I could tell you how much smoother that transition would have been had the church availed themselves of the district superintendent's advice and counsel. Every search committee should ask the district superintendent to come to a meeting of the full board to give advice and conduct a Q&A. Never be afraid to reach out later on in the search process to seek situational advice when wisdom is needed.

⁶²Thom S. Rainer, *Six Reasons Pastoral Tenure May Be Increasing*, March 15, 2017, <https://archive.thomrainer.com/2017/03/six-reasons-pastoral-tenure-may-be-increasing/>. The study concluded that since 2012, the median tenure of a pastor in America is only six years. Other studies show averages as low as four years which means there are many churches that may have experienced between two to three pastoral transitions in a decade.

⁶³IN REFLECTION: In my case, my predecessor was wise enough to inform the board of his intention to retire five months before my arrival. He left the office on a Friday, and I started on Sunday. What seemed like a seamless transition had complicated elements in that there was no margin for the church to process what change meant and who would deal with sensitive issues. In looking back, it would have been wise for an interim pastor to serve during the transition to give the board advice, deal with sensitive issues, and prepare the church for the arrival of the new pastor.

⁶⁴IN REFLECTION: I do not know who did this job when I candidated for the church, but they did it well. I remember being flown in to meet with the board at one of the member's home. When I walked past the kitchen, I saw all kinds of materials laying out for display. It had articles I had published, newsletters that highlighted ministries I had led, a book I had written about discipleship, my résumé, and lots of other internet hits associated with my name or ministry. They knew I loved camping, and I even saw maps of camping locations and outdoor activities. I remember being impressed that someone took the time to do the research. You will not have the time to do that for every candidate, but these men were savvy enough to take the time to do their homework for anyone they interviewed face-to-face. They also had made these materials available for members of the board to leaf through at a previous meeting.

⁶⁵IN REFLECTION: It is always an advantage for a church to show initiative and diligence when planning to reimburse candidates for expenses they incurred related to the board's requests. If reimbursements are slow or overlooked, a candidate who is still uncertain about God's will may be scared off and the church will lose the opportunity of considering a good candidate.

⁶⁶ "Interim/Transitional Ministry," Presbyterian Church (USA), <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/ministers/interim-pastors>, accessed January 10, 2018.

⁶⁷This job description for an interim pastor was formulated after reading several books, attending a two-day intensive seminar, and spending an afternoon with Wally Weber. Wally has spent his retirement serving as an interim pastor and is a wealth of practical wisdom.

⁶⁸David L. Bittinger, "A Model of Interim Pastoral Coaches for Ohio Assemblies of God Churches in Pastoral Transition," DMin dissertation, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri, 2007, p. 29.

⁶⁹Michael Durall, *Don't Wait until the Pastor Leaves: Planning for Ministerial Transitions Helps Ensure That One Successful Minister Follows Another*, Common Wealth, Golden, CO, 2015, p. 15.

⁷⁰Justin Tull, *Interim Ministry: Positive Change in Times of Transition*, Published by Justin Tull, 2012, p. 47.

⁷¹Three-hour interview with Wally Weber, January 22, 2018.

⁷²Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, pp. 31-32.

⁷³Cam Taylor and Alan Simpson, *Between Pastors: Seizing the Opportunity*, Outreach Canada Ministries, 2014.

⁷⁴David L. Bittinger, "A Model of Interim Pastoral Coaches for Ohio Assemblies of God Churches in Pastoral Transition," DMin dissertation, Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Springfield, Missouri, 2007, p. 2.

⁷⁵Some of these characteristics are from Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM) under the page entitled, "Key Qualities of Today's Interim Pastor" at <http://www.interimpastors.com>.

⁷⁶Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 30.

⁷⁷Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 42.

⁷⁸James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*, Harper Business, New York, 2001, p. 32.

⁷⁹William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2014, p. 136.

⁸⁰William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2014, p. 29.

⁸¹This recommendation came in an email from Dr. Tom Harris, Executive Director of Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM). IPM trains and places more interim pastors and works with more churches experiencing pastoral transitions than any other organization in the nation.

⁸²The General Council of the Assemblies of God, Constitution and Bylaws, Bylaws, Article IX. Doctrines and Practices Disapproved, Section 8. Violations of Ministerial Courtesy, Revised August 7–11, 2017, Anaheim, California, p. 171.

⁸³William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 57.

⁸⁴Andrew Flowers, *Leading Through Succession: Why Pastoral Leadership Is Key to a Healthy Transition*, Published by Andrew Flowers, 2017, pp. 6, 8.

⁸⁵Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NJ, 2004, p. ?.

⁸⁶Gary L. Johnson, *Leader Shift: One Becomes Less While Another Becomes More*, 2013, Published by Gary L. Johnson, Foreword.

⁸⁷Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015, p.7.

⁸⁸Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 17.

⁸⁹Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015, pp. 27-36.

⁹⁰Frank Damazio, *The Vanguard Leader: A New Breed of Leader to Encounter the Future*, Bible Temple Publishing, Portland, OR, 1994, p. 309.

⁹¹Jeff Harlow, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading a Healthy Church Transition*, Epiphany Publishing, Indianapolis, IN, 2017, p. 68.

⁹²Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 24.

⁹³Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 2015. Mullins and his board were wise enough to recognize that a seasoned and proven staff member had a better chance at succeeding him than a promising outsider. Mullins selected a successor and then systematically and strategically mentored him until he retired. The church continued growing through the transition.

⁹⁴Jeff Harlow, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading A Healthy Church Transition*, Epiphany Publishing, Indianapolis, IN, 2017.

⁹⁵Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015.

⁹⁶Gary L. Johnson, *Leader Shift: One Become Less While Another Becomes More*, Published by Gary L. Johnson, 2013.

⁹⁷Bob Russell, *Transition Plan: 7 Secrets Every Leader Needs to Know*, Ministers Label Publishing; 1st edition, 2010.

⁹⁸Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, pp. 95-101.

⁹⁹Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019.

¹⁰⁰Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NY, 2004, p. 26.

¹⁰¹Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. 6.

¹⁰²Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NY, 2004, pp. 29-40.

¹⁰³Alaska Ministry Network, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Year, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 41; and Robert Kaylor, *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*, Seedbed Publishing, Wilmore, KY, 2013, p. 71.

¹⁰⁵Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NY, 2004, pp. 29-40.

¹⁰⁶Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NJ, 2004, p. 31.

¹⁰⁷Ira M. Levin, *New Leader Assimilation Process: Accelerating New Role-Related Transitions*, Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research 62.1, 2010, p. 61.

¹⁰⁸Jeff Harlow, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading A Healthy Church Transition*, Epiphany Publishing, Indianapolis, IN, 2017, p. viv.

¹⁰⁹British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 20.

¹¹⁰William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 94.

¹¹¹British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 19.

¹¹²British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 30.

¹¹³Thom S. Rainer, *Six Reasons Pastoral Tenure May Be Increasing*, March 15, 2017, <https://archive.thomrainer.com/2017/03/six-reasons-pastoral-tenure-may-be-increasing/>.

¹¹⁴Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 5; and William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, TN, 2016, p. 163.

¹¹⁵British Columbia and Yukon District of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, *Pastoral Transition Manual: A Practical Guide for Pastoral Search Committees*, Langley, BC, 2017, p. 71.

¹¹⁶Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 24.

¹¹⁷Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 4.

¹¹⁸Mike Harper, *Passing the Baton: Transition in Leadership*, North Texas District, Year, p. 62.

¹¹⁹Henry A. Virkler, *Choosing a New Pastor: The Complete Handbook*, Wipf & Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR, 2006, p. 117.

¹²⁰Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. 36.

¹²¹Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 135.

¹²²Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 2015, pp. 78-79.

¹²³During my time at the Northern California and Nevada district office, one of my responsibilities was resourcing sovereign churches engaged in a pastoral search. These questions are a compilation of those from other manuals, personal research, and resources I wrote when I led a small internet ministry called Leadership Clearinghouse.

¹²⁴"A Pastor Selection Process Model," Ministerial Enrichment Office of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, PDF, p. 11.

¹²⁵Email correspondence with Maggie Richter, Marketing Assistant, Vanderbloemen Search Group, January 2, 2018.

¹²⁶IN REFLECTION: In one of my own pastoral transitions, I was informed two weeks after moving to town that the board member responsible to email me the salary breakdown had made an error by sending a figure 5 percent higher than the board had agreed. I was asked if I would absorb the difference and agreed to since we had already moved to town. Looking back, it was not a good way to start the relationship and gave me reasons to lack confidence in the board's ability to make and carry out financial decisions. Years later, another member of the board brought this to the board's attention; and they gave me a raise in the amount of the shortfall. His sensitivity was much appreciated.

¹²⁷"A Pastor Selection Process Model," Ministerial Enrichment Office of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, PDF, p. 14-15.

¹²⁸William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 116.

¹²⁹Phone interview with Jim Braddy, retired district superintendent, Northern California and Nevada, concerning how to host a candidate for election, January 3, 2018.

¹³⁰IN REFLECTION: During one of my pastoral transitions, we were flown out two times to interview with the pastoral search committee. The church set a very aggressive schedule that left little time to be alone, look for housing, or meet with the board. Meetings with several people (church architect, missionaries, commercial realtor, and others) were scheduled without our prior knowledge. We ended up having to plan an additional trip just to find temporary housing for when we arrived. Looking back, it would have been better to have allowed margin to look at schools for our children, identify temporary housing, and talk alone as a family. Most of those meetings, if not all, could have been scheduled a few months later after our young family had a chance to get settled.

¹³¹This list was initially created by my wife, Rhonda Roncone, and then expanded upon by input from pastor friends who recently experienced a relocation.

¹³²The concept of a welcome team and their possible duties was compiled by my wife, Rhonda Roncone, after reflecting upon how helpful many of the families were to us when we arrived in Aurora. We came the week before Thanksgiving and had to acclimate quickly. A few gracious families were quick to connect and help us find our way.

¹³³Robert Kaylor, *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*, Seedbed Publishing, Wilmore, KY, 2013, pp. 24-32.

¹³⁴Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*, Alban Institute, 2004, p. 58.

¹³⁵This task list was originally created by Dawn Bryant and categorized under headings that correspond with each of the thirteen stages of the pastoral search process.