

Guidelines for Seeking a Minister

GUIDELINES FOR SEEKING A MINISTER?

(From the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference)

The ministry of the Church of Jesus Christ is a composite one, comprising both a congregation and a Pastor. We think of its activities being on the Lord's Day in a Church building, but actually its ministry is being carried on continually, wherever the Lord's people may be found.

Churches, like people, vary from community to community, and from one generation to the next, however, eventually the time comes when a Church finds it necessary to seek a new under-shepherd for the flock. For some, this occurs every so often, while for others it is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and they find themselves in a totally unfamiliar situation. Whichever the case, it is often wise to take into consideration several issues and suggestions that could serve to ease what might be a difficult situation and at the same time, forestall possible serious problems in the future.

The best time to think about these matters is while you are enjoying the ministry of your present Pastor. To wait until he has announced his call to another Church, or has already left, is a poor time to suddenly come under the pressure of establishing guidelines and procedures to be followed. Therefore, it would be wise to have a previously planned procedure spelled out, either within the Church's By-laws, or else, as part of the permanent records of, for example, the Board of Deacons. It would be well for the Deacons to be substantially represented on a Pulpit Committee, the size and makeup of which should be part of these suggested plans.

As we make these suggestions, it is a presupposed matter that the Search Committee and the Church are constantly praying for the leading of God in their lives, and the special gift is sought whereby personalities and special interests are set aside. This being done, the following suggestions are worthy of your consideration:

1. Your local Conference Area Representative is available for counsel.
2. Names of possible candidates can be obtained from the Conference office.
3. A retired minister, a former missionary, or a particularly gifted layman should be sought to serve as interim minister. This provides continuity of leadership at a critical time.
4. When the names of possible candidates are obtained, it is very desirable for the Committee to visit the Churches they are serving, unannounced. In doing so, they may

observe these men and their congregations in their “home territories.” Be careful, however, to disburse yourselves throughout the congregation. To sit in a body could create an awkward situation for the Pastor later on.

5. Wait until after the service to make yourselves known, and arrange to meet with the Pastor later on in the day.

After hearing several men in the above manner, and after concentrated prayer and discussion, the Pulpit Committee should then invite the one who is their choice to preach as a candidate, with a vote of the Church following soon after. A candidate called as the result of any vote less than a two-thirds vote may prove to be an unwise choice.

Before a Church votes to call a particular candidate, and before he gives his answer accepting or declining, a clear and frank discussion should be had between the candidate and the Search Committee on the following issues:

Moving expenses, salary, other allowances, vacation and parsonage. These should be agreed to in writing. The candidate should not hesitate being frank about his financial needs and habits.

1. Any particular strengths or weaknesses the Church may have.
2. The reason for the previous Pastor’s leaving.
3. The reason for the candidate’s wishing a change.
4. The position of both the Church and candidate on:
 1. Baptism
 2. The Charismatic Movement
 3. Marriage and Divorce
 4. Missions
 5. Relationship with the Conference, Council of Churches, etc.

There should be a full and comprehensive discussion of the above issues, followed by a written statement of agreement (if felt desirable) on these matters, signed by both the candidate and the chairman of the Search Committee.

1. 1. Does the candidate unreservedly accept the Church’s Statement of Faith?
 2. Is there a clear understanding of the role and responsibility of the Pastor’s wife?

Pastors and their congregations are human and fallible, but in a direct manner as they center their lives and ministries around the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and maintain a balance of both doctrine and experience, the work of Christ will go on, God glorified, the saints edified, and the lost won to Christ.

It is our prayer that Churches making use of these suggestions will be led in God’s own time to the Pastor of His choice.

Revision #1

Created 2026-04-27 11:54:28 UTC by Anton Brown

Updated 2026-04-27 11:54:28 UTC by Anton Brown