

RISE UP

BY GENE RONCONE

THE MOST
COMPREHENSIVE,
RESEARCHED, 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



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 a 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, Presbyterian, 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 Presbyterian, 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, Urban Islands Project



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 Presbyterian, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network

Rise Up

A Practical and Comprehensive Reference for Pastoral Transitions and Successions

1/1/2023 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, utilize 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. You can also use the search bar in the upper right-hand corner to quickly find topics or resources of your choice.

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1. FROM THE AUTHOR GENE RONCONE ([back to table](#))



If you are reading this, you are probably on your church board 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 have spent years writing and updating this transition resource. **If your church is part of the Rocky**

Mountain Ministry Network, I would like to meet your team to encourage you and make the following five commitments in person.

- **I commit to resourcing your leadership community.** I will place the entire family of *Rise Up* pastoral transition resources at your disposal. I will also give you a free copy of the most comprehensive, researched, and practical resources available concerning pastoral transitions and successions. Think of it as an encyclopedia highlighting best practices and the latest body of work.
 - Section one contains short chapters on important issues and steps you must take.
 - Section two is full of helpful resources, advice, form letters, and examples.
 - Section three offers digital resources and customizable download templates, videos, and a coaching podcast to help you navigate common obstacles.
 - Section four is a detailed index to help you quickly find what you need when you need it.
 - Section five lists hundreds of books, articles, and interviews used to create this valuable resource.

Take what is helpful, customize it, or even ignore what is not relevant to your context. The entire family of *Rise Up* pastoral transition and succession resources can be accessed at www.generationconcone.org/riseup.

- **I commit to being accessible 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, 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. My email is gene@rmdc.org.
- **I commit to respecting your uniqueness.** No two churches are alike, and every transition demands some level of customization. I can help you build upon your strengths and honor your unique identity as a church.
- **I commit to helping your church experience a 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 help launch you into a new and exciting future.
- **I commit to pray for you.** Most importantly, I will help to mobilize our network staff, leadership community and your entire church to pray WITH and FOR you during this transition.

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 (“AKA helper”)
Rocky Mountain Ministry Network

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. 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 challenge 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. Today you are reading an updated version of the manual I created for my own church board while pastoring Highpoint.



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

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 given 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.
- 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 lacks 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. 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). 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 (Nehemiah 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.

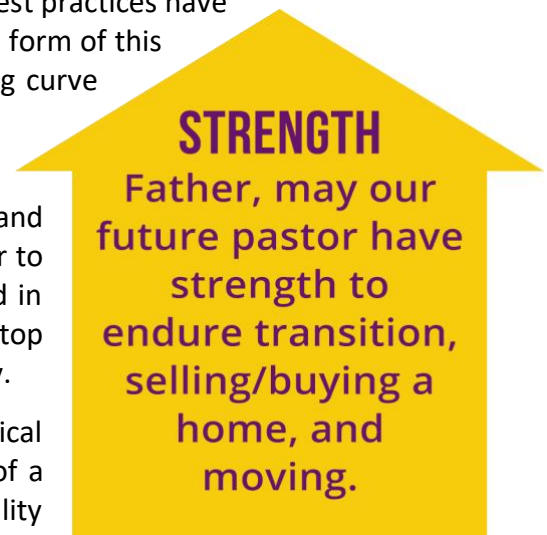
B. Shortened learning curve. Most churches facing pastoral transition spend the first 30-60 days gathering materials, reading books, and participating in training to acquire the needed knowledge. Then they must invest time synthesizing this information and applying it to their unique situation, bylaws, and culture. However, this learning process and best practices have already been assembled and made available to you in the form of this reference resource. It will help you shorten your learning curve and the length of your search.

C. Exposure to best practices. This resource is the compilation of the best books, manuals, thinking, and practices of succession plans. It is also updated every year to incorporate any new thinking or best practices contained in newly released publications. This manual is your one-stop resource for the latest thinking and practical methodology.

D. Practical resources. This resource is filled with practical examples of what your team will need. It has 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 topics associated with pastoral transitions.

E. 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.

- It contains a thirteen-stage plan to guide your leadership community through the process.
- It provides access to short audio podcasts where knowledgeable guests coach your team on how to navigate critical challenges.
- It outlines a churchwide forty-day prayer focus with a daily prayer emphasis.
- It delivers a three-week sustainability initiative to help your church minimize declines in involvement, giving, attendance, and morale so common in pastoral transitions. This includes a sermon series option, a short paperback book, small group curriculum and discussion questions that correspond with the book or sermon series.
- It gives you the structure and schedule for a board planning retreat to establish a unified strategy for the search process.



- It contains downloadable and customizable drafts of letters, forms, worksheets, meeting agendas, a congregational survey, and interview questions the board may ask as well as those candidates might be expected to ask the board.
- It includes a template for a transition budget that can be amended as needed.
- It provides board and member encouragement to sustain commitments during the transition.
- It has one of the most detailed ministry descriptions available for an interim pastor.
- It has one of the most practical checklists to help prepare for the new pastor’s arrival.
- It has a master checklist for those who enjoy working from sequential lists.
- It has a new small group Bible study and companion paperback book for small group interaction. The four-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.

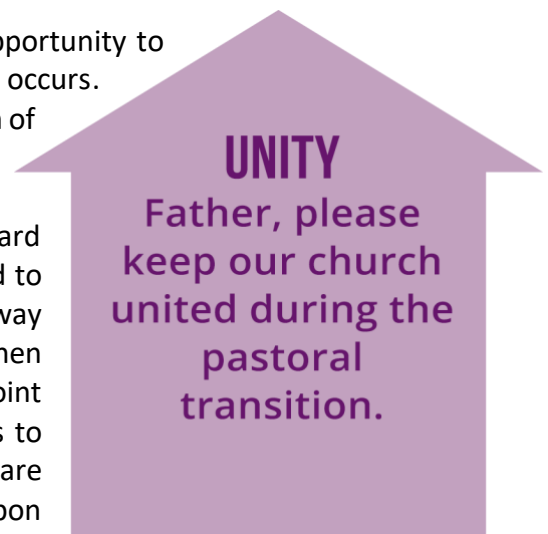
F. Successfully vetted. This resource has been reviewed by experienced interim pastors, district superintendents/network pastors, authors, and deacons who have experienced a pastoral transition.⁶ Their feedback and suggestions have been incorporated into this resource. Gary Larson served as cochair of 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 this resource. 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. 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.

G. Succession planning. 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. When God called me to serve as district superintendent, Highpoint already had a written plan and 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. 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 transitions in their own church and learn from past mistakes.¹⁰ That is why I have included a few honest footnotes entitled “In Reflection” where I share some of my own lessons learned.

H. Spiritual encouragement. *Rise Up* is the only pastoral transition resource that offers a daily devotional specifically for search team members called *Refreshed*. As a member of your church’s pastoral search team, you are excited about the future, while at the same time, challenged by the weight of responsibility. The journey will have its ups and downs and the weight of it all can at times be exhausting. That’s why I partnered with John Cionca and Ministry Transition to provide you with short devotionals and practical encouragement as it relates to your role on the search team. The Refresh Devotional page features several topics with links to short, relevant, and timely encouragement. The devotional can be accessed at <https://generoncone.org/blog/refreshed>.

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 22 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.

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

At this point, you may be feeling a desperate need for God’s help, wisdom, and direction. The most important thing to remember is you are going to make it! Thousands of churches experience a pastoral transition 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 gives them a familiarity 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, hire a pilot, or run an airline. Your familiarity with church life cannot be mistaken for expertise in ministry or even the pastoral search process. Author Chris Brauns warns search committees about a lack of teachability and humility: “If a person does not think he or she needs to learn—and to learn a great deal—about calling a pastor, then he or she will be much more of a hindrance to the pastoral search than a help.”¹² Consequently, stay humble and allow God, district leaders, and others on your team 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.

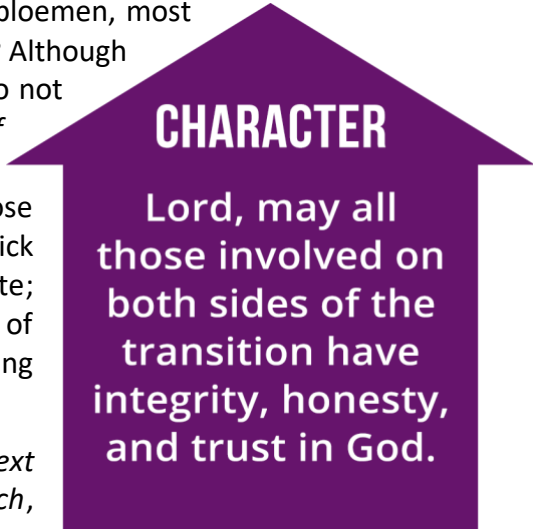
C. Sacrifice. Although these seasons are temporary, they will require your undivided attention and diligent commitment. You may even need to take a few things off your plate to create more margin in your life. Stay engaged in the process, keep up with your reading and research, and be flexible in accommodating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

D. Availability. It is paramount that the entire board realize that this process will require the availability and commitment 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. Transition specialist Ryan Austie identified regularly scheduled meetings as one of the seven best practices of search committees and the lack of them as one of the primary reasons for failure. Austie said, “Countless search teams leave scheduling until the last minute, which invariably leads to a



significant lag in progress. It is near impossible for a team to be effective in searching for the next pastor if the best they can do is occasionally attend sparse meetings.”¹³

- 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.¹⁴ 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 will be tested and revealed. Some candidates will ask penetrating questions that may 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.”¹⁷ If you or your board lacks confidence in one of its members in 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 to compromise confidentiality. Most breaches of confidentiality are the result of one or more of the following tactics of the enemy:

- **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 assembling the entire puzzle.

- **Relational leveraging.** This breach of confidentiality comes from people you love, trust, or admire. They leverage your relationship to learn more than they should know.
- **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.
- **Hacking.** This breach of privacy is the result of someone's hacking into your computer, smart phone, text messages, or email because they illegally or dishonestly gained access.
- **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, 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 confidentiality as well.

- I. **Self-Control.** Word will travel fast, and the board will be tempted 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 understand 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 from start to finish. 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 selection process. Following is a brief description of each stage and where to find additional resources concerning their execution in the appendix section. A digital image and stand-alone documents for the board and the church can also be downloaded from the “[Digital Resources](#)” section of the PDF version of this manual.



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 or saving time will find themselves victims to chronic stalls in the process. No meeting will be more important than this one for it is where the board will go over this resource, determine roles, strategize, write up a church bio, job description, and profile of the ideal candidate. They will also 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 “[Transition Budget](#)” for a practical example of a planning meeting schedule. These resources are also available as customizable downloads in the “[Digital Resources](#)” section of the PDF version of this manual.

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 does not commit to securing employment or large initiatives requested by members of your team, 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.

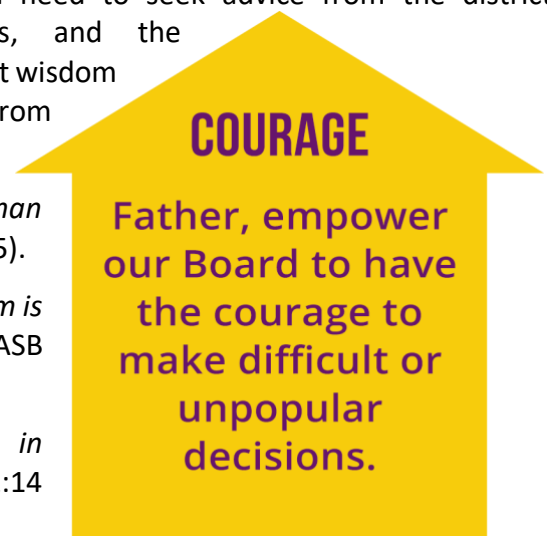
Stage 2: Advertising the opening. After the board has compiled the church profile and candidate profile, the most important thing is to get the word out. This will help to maximize networking potential and get others working for you. This can be done by creating a shared internet folder, central website or blog informing influential people about the opening and posting it on several ministry job sites. Your Network office will also have an open church list to help as well. 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 in the process.

- **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 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.
- **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 a short list of questions to interview city leaders every 2-3 years. A customizable version of this letter can be downloaded from links in the digital resources

section. 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 department 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.

- **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 is 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. 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 also 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.¹⁸



DISCERNMENT
Lord, direct our
Board and future
pastor to ask the
right questions
and discern
between better
and best.

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 following dynamics have converged to create a national shortage of lead pastors.

- The wave of baby boomer ministers moving into retirement.¹⁹
- The exodus of younger and near-retirement age ministers in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis.
- The cost of Bible college has skyrocketed in the last four decades. Superintendent Phil Schneider of the Illinois Assembly of God notes that, "a college education, adjusted for inflation from 1980 should cost \$45,000, instead of the \$160,000 it costs today."²⁰ A minister's salary just can't service student loan payments for a debt that high.
- Most local churches no longer preach, teach, or invite people to explore the call of God as a vocation.

This will require the board to actively advertise, recruit and initiate contact with potential candidates as well as those who were 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. The growing shortage of ministers will result in less résumés being received. If networking and advertising is done properly, churches over 500 can expect 40-50 résumés. Churches between 200-500 should expect to receive anywhere from 20 to 35 résumés. Churches between 80-150 will most likely receive around 10-25 résumés, and churches between 20-50 can expect 5-7 résumés. Smaller or rural churches will receive proportionally fewer résumés.

After receiving résumés the board should organize candidate résumés in categories of A, B, and C.

A = Strong candidate who fits the profile to contact and explore.

B = Possible candidate to be revisited or considered later.

C = Unqualified or undesirable candidate to be notified immediately.

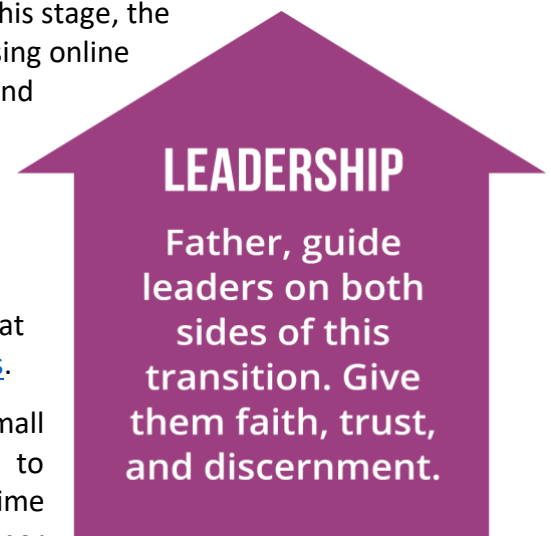
It is important that the board do this as a whole and have consensus on every decision. This task should NOT be delegated to a smaller group within the board. See the appendix labeled "[Categorizing and Evaluating Résumés](#)" for additional information and form letters.

Stage 6: Ministry exposure and references. In this stage, members of the committee review résumés, audio and video sermons, and 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 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. Author Tom Brennan echoes the importance of this visit saying, "I am mystified by most pulpit committees in this respect. They peer into every corner of a man's life, but it apparently never occurs to them to visit the church he is actually serving in at the moment."²¹

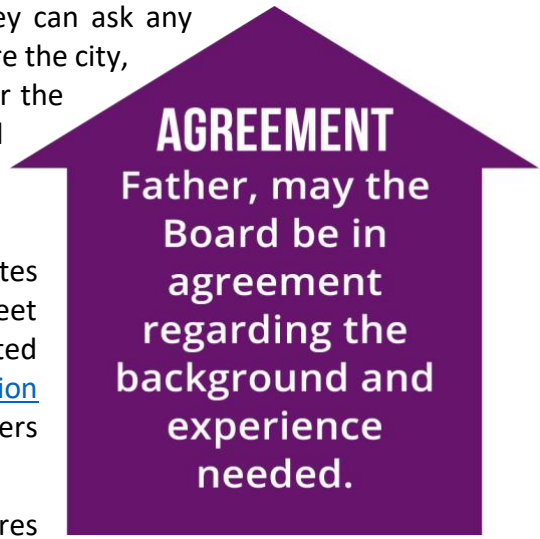


Stage 10: Personal interviews. The board should narrow down their list of potential candidates to two (2) or preferably three (3) who will be invited to visit with their spouse and family (at the church's expense) to interview in person. This gives the board and their spouses and the candidate and spouse 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 a couple's body language, hesitation, or demeanor over a phone or video interview.²² See the appendixes entitled "[The Last Face-to-Face Interview](#)" 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 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 volunteer leaders, interact with the people, and be voted upon. See the appendixes entitled "[Presenting a Remuneration Agreement](#)" 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 the 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 notifies the 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.

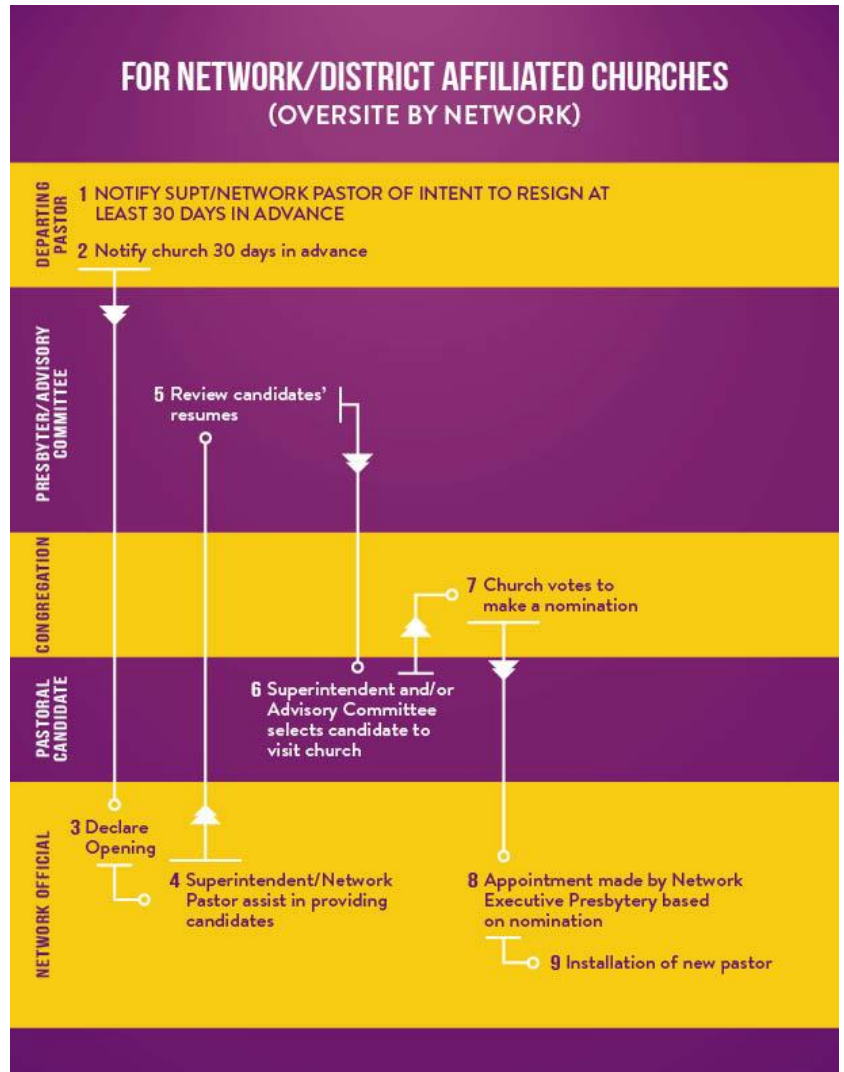
Stage 3: Opening declared. The district superintendent/network pastor will declare the church as officially “open” and advertise the opening through existing promotional methods.

Stage 4: Coaching and resourcing. The district superintendent/network pastor or their designee will assist the church by providing coaching, resources and résumés for potential candidates.

Stage 5: Review of candidates. The district superintendent/network pastor and the local advisory committee will review résumés and interview potential candidates.

Stage 6: Candidate selection. The 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 nomination. After the candidate has met the local advisory committee and presented their ministry, the church will give their formal recommendation to the Executive Presbytery in the form of a nomination vote. The nomination is not an official election but a nomination to the Executive Presbytery revealing the church’s opinion regarding the possibility of that candidate serving as their new pastor.



Stage 8: Official appointment or denial. After evaluating the local church’s 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.

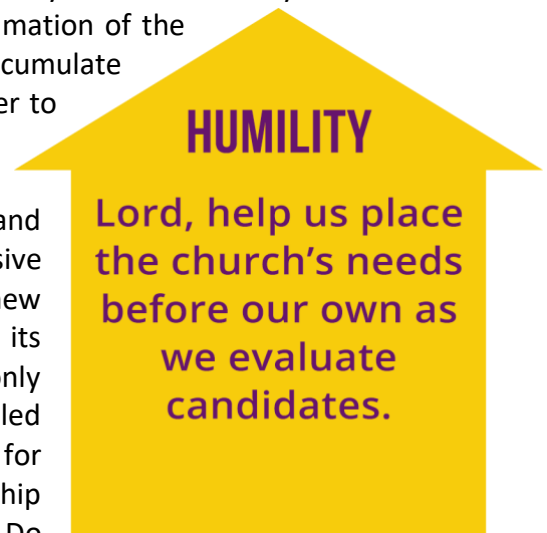
Stage 9: Installation of new pastor. The new pastor, local advisory committee, and district superintendent/network pastor will collaborate to select a day and time when a network official can officiate the installation ceremony of the new pastor.

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 commitments (building expansion, staff enlargement, salary adjustments, the increase of debt or other financial obligations). 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 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 unbiblical, 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 refresh 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."²³ During the transition, it is important that all the board's energy and resources be focused on the following five priorities:

- A. Identifying a candidate.** The board's first priority should be to fulfill their duty to the people, Scripture, and the bylaws by identifying the most qualified, willing and available candidate.
- B. Managing ministries.** The second priority is to keep systems running, momentum moving, and morale high.
- C. Removing obstacles.** The third priority should be to resolve any 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 baby crocodiles when they are small instead of allowing them to grow into twenty-foot man-eaters that some new pastor is going to have to jump into the swamp and wrestle into submission. Dealing with debilitating or divisive conflict before the arrival of the new pastor gives the new pastor time to build credibility and learn the church, its people, and the community. Postponing tough decisions only removes options that may be needed later.²⁴ Tom Mullins led a successful transition and one of the eleven tips he gives for success 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.²⁵



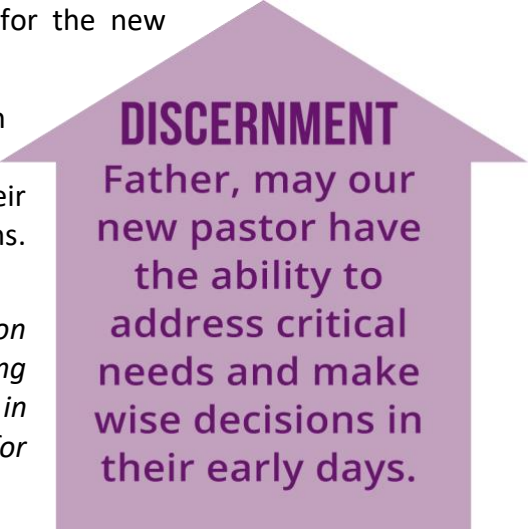
Another way to remove obstacles is to be preventative. One of the most common mistakes made during a pastoral transition is to invite discontented, critical, and unsupportive people to be part of the search team's efforts. This is often done hoping they will be more likely to accept the result or become more committed if they have a voice in the decision. While this seems logical at first, nearly all the experts agree that it rarely 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 saying: “There must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized” (1 Corinthians 11:19 ESV). 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.²⁶

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, legislate 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 create a short purpose statement to guide their efforts, 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.



DISCERNMENT
Father, may our
new pastor have
the ability to
address critical
needs and make
wise decisions in
their early days.

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 they will be unable to clear. The board of one church I worked with made the mistake of allowing one opinionated member to talk them into using their pastoral vacancy as an opportunity to change the vision, bylaws, and governance structure of the church. Three and a half years later they still can't find one candidate willing to buy into their vision and church attendance has decreased by 70%. It's a costly and painful lesson to learn.

Boards and search committees must remember that 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.²⁷

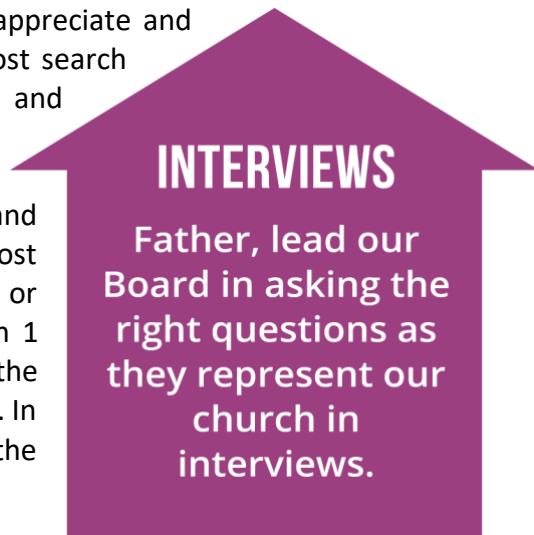
6. THE IMPORTANCE OF AG CREDENTIALS ([back to table](#))

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.²⁸ 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. 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 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 your lead pastor.

As the church is beginning the search process, allow me to share some combined wisdom from other district leaders in addressing this subject.²⁹ I would like to answer four practical questions:

- **Theological preparedness.** What levels of credentials are there in the Assemblies of God, how are they different, and why are they important?
- **Contributing factors.** What factors most often contribute to a church 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. Theological preparedness. Although your church may appreciate and want your new pastor to be theologically prepared, most search committees are unfamiliar with the different levels and requirements of an Assemblies of God credential. Ministerial credentialing is the method by which an ecclesiastical authority acknowledges the divine call and qualifications of a person to serve in ministry. In most denominations, credentialing is only available to men or women who meet the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These people fulfill one of the types of equipping ministries described in Ephesians 4:11. In the Assemblies of God, this endorsement is usually in the form of certification, licensing, or ordination.



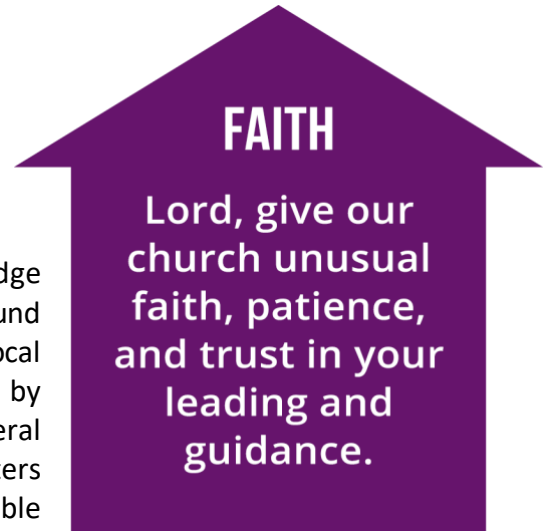
If an applicant has graduated from an accredited Assemblies of God school with a degree in Bible, theology, ministerial studies, or other church-related major, they may have already satisfied some or all the educational requirements. There are also some cases in which life experience or the transfer of a ministerial credential from another denomination may meet some or all the Assemblies of God requirements. In most cases, however, those achieving these levels will have fulfilled the following requirements:

1. **Certified.** The entry level credential in the Assemblies of God is called certified. Those who are granted certification have met the minimal educational requirements for that level, shown promise of usefulness for gospel work, exhibited evidence of a divine call, and been actively

engaged in some aspect of ministry. Those who are certified have successfully completed the following classes:

- New Testament Survey
- Old Testament Survey
- Christ in the Synoptic Gospels
- Introduction to Hermeneutics
- Relationships and Ethics in Ministry
- Beginning Ministerial Internship
- Introduction to Pentecostal Doctrine
- Intro to Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective
- Assemblies of God History, Missions, and Governance
- A Spirit-Empowered Church

In addition, they have also passed the Bible Knowledge and Doctrine exams as well as credit and background checks and have been interviewed by their local presbyter and sectional committee, recommended by the Network Presbytery, and approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. Certified ministers holding current ministerial credentials are not eligible to vote in the business meetings at District and General Councils or to serve as district officers, General Council officers, executive directors, Executive Presbyters, and General Presbyters. However, they are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church. In the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, certified ministers are eligible to participate in most of the normal resources, training and seminars provided by the Network office.



2. Licensed. The intermediate level credential in the Assemblies of God is called licensed. Those who are granted this credential have met the minimal educational requirements; shown clear evidence of a divine call, character, and preparation suitable for that calling; have practical ministry experience; and shown an evident commitment to devote their life in service to the proclamation of the Gospel. Those who are licensed have also successfully completed the classes for the certified level as well as the following classes:

- Acts
- Prison Epistles
- The Local Church in Evangelism
- Romans
- Introduction to Homiletics
- Effective Leadership
- Intro to AG Missions
- Conflict Management
- Intermediate Ministerial Internship
- Eschatology

In addition, they have also passed the Bible Knowledge, Doctrine, and AG Polity exams as well as credit and background checks and have been interviewed by their presbyter and sectional committee, recommended by the Network Presbytery, and approved by the General Council of the Assemblies of God. Licensed ministers holding current ministerial credentials are eligible to vote in the business meetings at District and General Councils but ineligible to serve as district officers, General Council officers, executive directors, Executive Presbyters, and General Presbyters. However, they are authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church. In the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, licensed ministers are eligible to participate in most of the normal resources, training and seminars provided by the Network office. In addition, they are also eligible for free admission into our 16-week cohort on how to prepare for a lead pastorate. More information on the Charles T. Crabtree School of Pastoral Ministry is available at <https://www.rmdc.org/csm>.

3. Ordained. Ordination is the highest and most coveted level of credential. Those who are granted ordination have met the minimum educational requirements for that level, shown evidence of a divine call, possessed a ministerial license, and been observed for a period of at least two years and found to have met the biblical qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9. Those who are ordained have successfully completed the classes for the certified and licensed level as well as the following classes:

- Corinthian Correspondence
- Pentateuch
- Poetic Books
- Preaching in the Contemporary World
- Church Admin, Finance, and Law
- Pastoral Ministry
- Advance Ministerial Internship
- Prayer and Worship

In addition, they have also passed the Bible Knowledge, Doctrine, and AG polity exams as well as credit and background checks and have been certified and licensed, interviewed by the Executive Presbytery, recommended by the Network Presbytery, approved by the General

Council of the Assemblies of God, and recognized in a formal ordination service involving an ordination charge and the laying on of hands by the Network's eldership. Ordained ministers holding current ministerial credentials are eligible to vote in the business meetings at District and General Councils and eligible to serve as district officers, General Council officers, executive directors, Executive Presbyters, and General Presbyters. They are also authorized to perform the ordinances and ceremonies (sacerdotal functions) of the church.

In the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, ordained ministers are eligible to participate in most of the normal resources, training and seminars provided by the Network office. In addition, they are eligible for the following leadership development opportunities.

- **CTC School of Pastoral Ministry.** This is a free 16-week cohort on how to prepare for a lead pastorate. More information on the Charles T. Crabtree School of Pastoral Ministry is available at <https://www.rmdc.org/csm>.

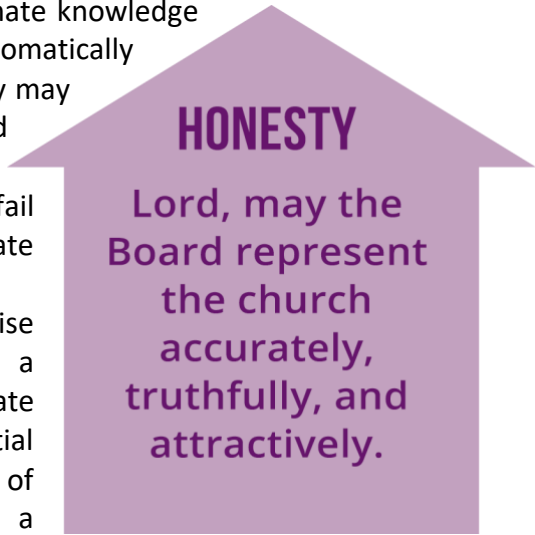


- **Trinity Ordination Scholarship.** This is a 50% discount on all Masters and PhD programs at Trinity Bible College and Graduate School. More information on the Trinity Ordination Scholarship is available at <https://www.rmdc.org/tos>

On another note, don't be shy about informing promising candidates about these benefit that would be available to them should they relocate to the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network!

When selecting a candidate, your team will want to know what level of ministerial credential is needed to pastor your church, what level of credential your candidate has, and what plan they may have to advance in ministerial training. You will also want to check your bylaws to see if they prescribe a specific level of credential your lead pastor will be required to have. For additional information concerning how to apply, advance, transfer, or renew a ministerial credential, see www.rmdc.org/credentials.

- B. 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 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.
- C. 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.*³⁰

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)”.*³¹

*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.*³²

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



SPirit-LED
Father, empower
those outside the
church who are
assisting the
Board to be
sensitive to the
Holy Spirit.

*rule in question may be—unless the particular rule specifically provides for its own suspension.*³³

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.*³⁴

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:

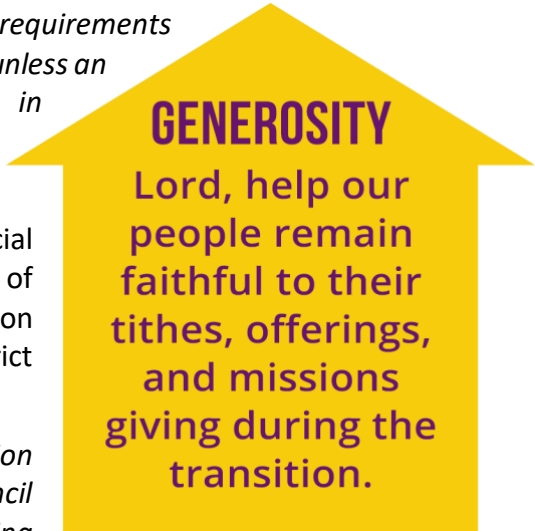
*Make provision for a pastor who is a credentialed minister in good standing with the General Council and a district council.*³⁵

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 the General Council Constitution.*³⁶

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.*³⁷



GENEROSITY
Lord, help our people remain faithful to their tithes, offerings, and missions giving during the transition.

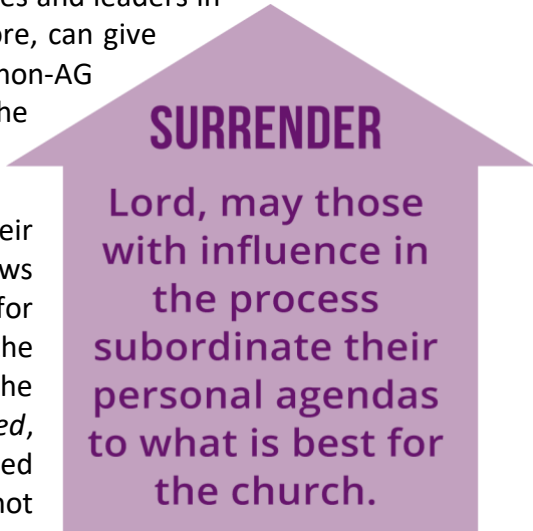
- 8. Loss of assets.** As a district superintendent/network pastor, my service enables me to view the network from the "top of the mast," so to speak. I see a trend growing larger on the horizon, and I am deeply concerned. We are losing sacred space, hard-won property, and critical beachheads in strategic 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.

D. 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:

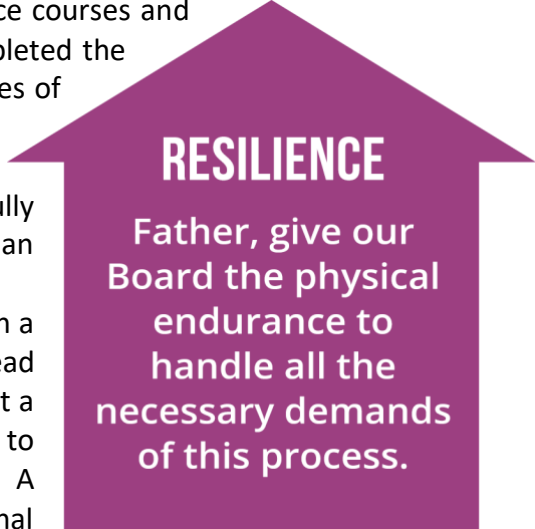
- 1. Seek seasoned advice.** Any small, medium, or large church considering a non-AG pastor should seek the advice of the district superintendent/network pastor. For example, small, remote, and rural churches can find it difficult to identify healthy, available, and qualified ministers. The superintendent/network 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 online courses.³⁸ 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.³⁹ 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 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.⁴⁰

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.⁴¹ 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.

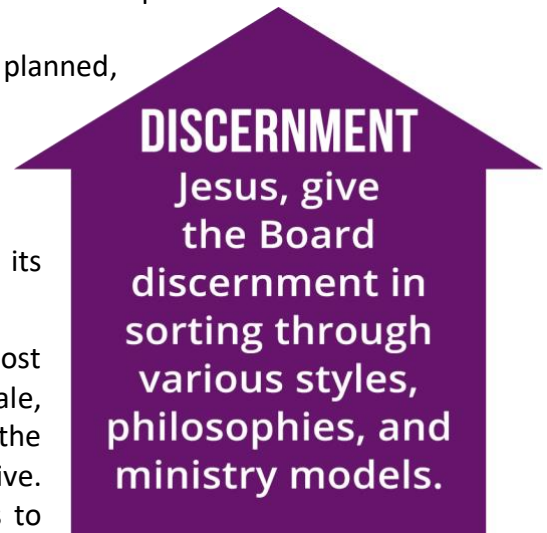
6. **Seek district affiliated status.** Because the church does not have an AG credentialed lead pastor and thus is unable to meet the minimal requirements of a General Council affiliated church, a majority of the board can vote to request the district/network to revert the church to district affiliated status until they are able to qualify as a General Council affiliated church.⁴² 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.⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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. SAYING GOODBYE ([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 excitement and sadness and involve 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 the 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 affirming the prior leadership (if possible) and outlining 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.⁴⁵ 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, 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 decline in morale, attendance, and giving.⁴⁶ Instead of just accepting that, the board should consider launching a sustainability initiative. The purpose of this 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 resource offers 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 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.⁴⁷

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.



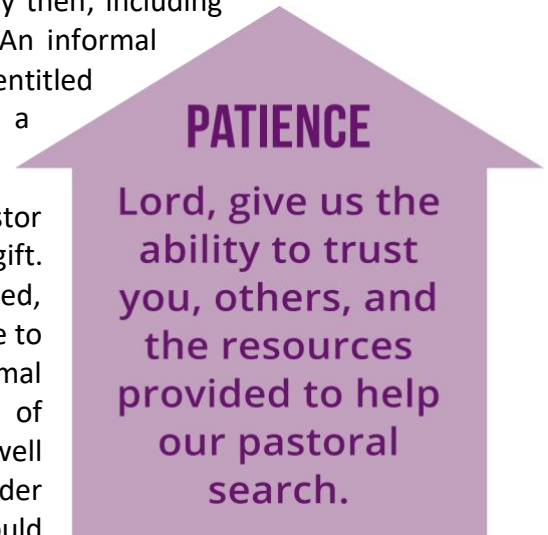
AFFECTED MINISTRY
Father, give the
ministry our future
pastor will be
leaving faith,
wisdom, and divine
leading.

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 social media, 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 "Departures, Ministry Ethics, and Etiquette."

- 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 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](#)" and as a download in the section titled, "[Digital Resources](#)."
- 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 saying, *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 to pray and cry together (Acts 20:32-36). Many of Paul’s epistles conclude with a prayer of blessing for the recipients.

The departure of a pastor is a wonderful opportunity to honor this biblical 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](#)” and the “[Digital Resources](#)” section as a download.



H. Severance and monetary gifts. The departure of a pastor raises the matter of severance or an additional monetary gift. Severance pay is considered if an employee was terminated, asked to resign, or disqualified themselves from office due to inappropriate behavior. A monetary gift in addition to normal pay or unused vacation time is considered as a token of appreciation for exceptional service or a lengthy tenure well beyond that of an average pastorate. If you decide to consider severance pay or a monetary gift, the following factors should be considered:

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

The Oregon Ministry Network suggests the following for severance:⁴⁸

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

If a pastor has served longer than ten years with great effectiveness, a good attitude, and notable distinction, the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network suggests a monetary gift between the amounts of \$500 to \$1,000 for each year of service.

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.⁴⁹

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.

There are varying opinions regarding the degree of sensitivity, financial provision, and deference that should be shown to an outgoing pastor with a long tenure. Some are inadequate while others are excessive. However, multiple layers of planning, timelines, written agreements, sensitivity, and accommodation will ensure an outgoing pastor is ready to leave without being hurt or offended. As someone who left a long pastorate and understands the emotional challenges involved, I would warn boards that no amount of generosity or honor can or should alleviate the need for an outgoing pastor to express faith. It is a mistake to assume that one's length of tenure means they should no longer need faith in the twilight years of ministry. The same faith that leads us to answer the call of God in our early years of ministry will be needed in our later years as well. Author Gary Smith says it best when he warns retiring pastors that "the reality is we must all face our giants alone before God."⁵⁰ The Apostle Paul also recognized the need for balance saying, "*Carry each other's burdens*" (Galatians 6:2 NIV) and then two verses later added, "*Each one should carry their own load*" (Galatians 6:4 NIV). At the end of the day each believer must embrace the challenges of each season of life. Balance is the key, and any commitments should represent the needs of the outgoing pastor, the church, and the incoming pastor all at the same time.

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

Next to the Spirit's divine leading, prayer is the most important ingredient 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 and your entire church to bring to the table.

Prayer is often presumed to be occurring during a pastoral search. However, one of the most regretful mistakes search committees make is failing to bathe the entire process, from beginning to end, in prayer. Research of those directly involved in a pastoral search committee by Jason Lowe found that prayer throughout the entire process was ranked as the number one priority, best practice, and reason for success among effective search committees. Respondents who were dissatisfied with the result of their search process identified the lack of prayer as one of the primary reasons for their failure.⁵¹ Jesus provided the best example for the role that prayer should have in the selection of spiritual leaders. We are told in Luke 6:12-15 that Jesus prayed all night the day before He selected the apostles. Acts 14:21-25 shows us that the early church prayed and fasted before appointing local pastors.

During my own research on pastoral transitions, nearly every resource I read mentioned the need for and importance of prayer. However, I only recall two that provided practical examples and resources on how to apply prayer to the pastoral selection process.⁵² Author Chris Brauns laments this fatal omission: "Most pastoral search committees struggle with a presumption of self-sufficiency . . . The biggest clue to self-reliance felt by pastoral search committees is the small amount of attention they devote to prayer."⁵³

EXPECTATIONS

Father, help us
maintain fair and
reasonable
expectations of our
new pastor.

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, 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.
- Implement the *Rise Up* prayer guide to provide a prayer covering for every person, group and ministry impacted by your pastoral transition.
- 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 transition.⁵⁴ Feel free to copy and paste the list below or use the PDF version that

can be downloaded at www.agspe.org/Rise_Up_Prayer.pdf, photocopied, and made available to your people on Sundays. The PDF version also includes a hyperlink to a short podcast outlining six positive things your people can do to support the board during the pastoral transition. The resource can be downloaded from the digital resource section of the PDF version of this resource.

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

Knowing that the most underutilized source of spiritual power in ministry is prayer, 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 our 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 our 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 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 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.

Few things can help your team overcome obstacles, find God's will, and be led by the Spirit than prayer. Decide now to make it a priority for your church throughout the entire transition.

9. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCHES IN TRANSITION [\(back to table\)](#)

Literature and testimonies from those who have served as interim pastors have given rise to a list of general reactions people tend to have during a 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.⁵⁵

- 1. Receptivity to change.** Congregations in transition can experience a greater openness to change than other seasons of organizational life. They tend to be more open to trying new things, receiving outside advice, and accepting change. Concerning his own 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. During transition and even chaos, the church is often more open to change than in times of the status quo.”⁵⁶
- 2. Openness to outside assistance.** Congregations in transition are more open to outside help, assistance, and advice. They are also more prone to seek the assistance of denominational leaders, interim pastors, consultants, and helpful resources.
- 3. Increased commitment.** Congregations in transition tend to “circle the wagons” and possess increased levels of commitment, sacrifice, and involvement. The organizational “survival instinct” kicks in, and some churches even experience an increase in volunteerism.
- 4. Dealing with grief.** Congregations in transition can experience 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 also 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, competing factions, staff conflict and the emergence of domineering personalities with competing interests.⁵⁷
- 6. Amplification 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 can become more pronounced. 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. Returning 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 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



SPIRIT-DRIVEN

Father, may our
Board and future
pastor be led by
and walk in the
Spirit.

uncommon for a church to continue experiencing staff turnover a year after the transition is completed. This second wave of change is quite normal.

9. **Loss of momentum or vision.** In many unplanned transitions, church vision and momentum can 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. 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 also 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 if the pastor leaves under negative circumstances. Anger often is directed toward persons who are perceived to be 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 promotion 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.⁵⁸ Right now, this task may seem intimidating. However, it should encourage you that over sixty thousand churches survive a leadership change each year.⁵⁹ You are experiencing something uncomfortable and challenging but also very normal. You've got this!

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

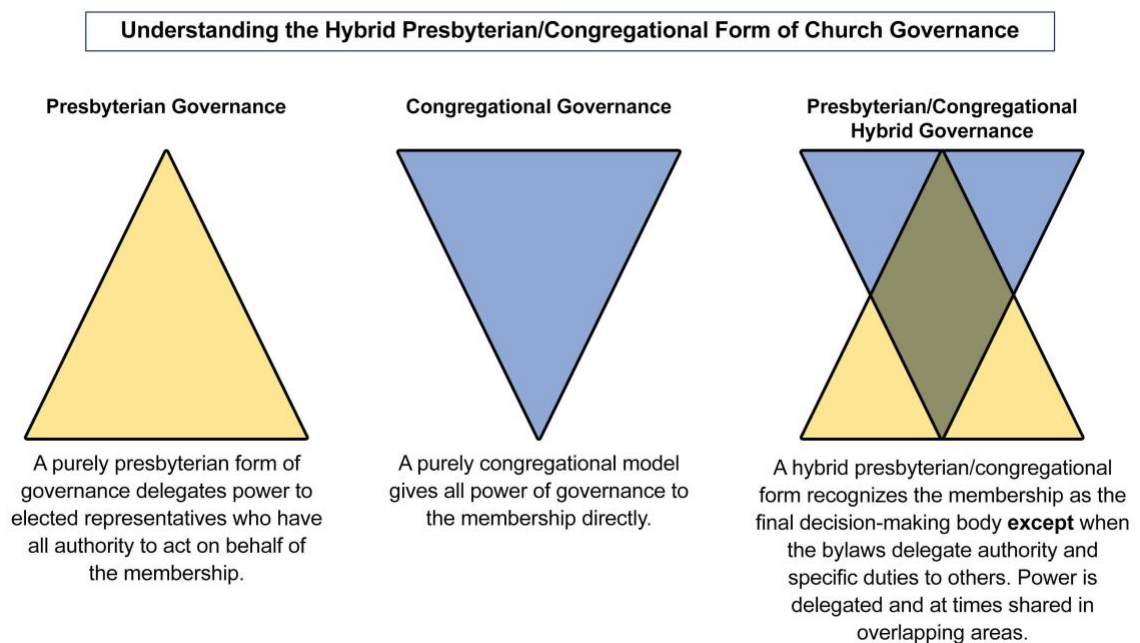
Although every church affiliated with the Assemblies of God shares similar doctrine, they are given the freedom to choose their own governance, values, and vision. Candidates will want to know what your bylaws say about these things, so you will need to take the time to briefly describe them on paper.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

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 a 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 inundated with division, are often slow to change, and are usually small.
- 3. Presbyterian governance** delegates authority and responsibility to elected representatives who are authorized to act on behalf of the congregation. These 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, benefit from a board of directors and being led by visionary leadership. It helps with being accountable, decisive, and responsive all at the same time. Your team can watch a short 2-minute video that explains the difference between the three most common forms of church governance at [https://youtu.be/ K7wL37fXJo](https://youtu.be/K7wL37fXJo).

B. Purpose, mission, and 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 in the past will help candidates better understand your church.

Seeing an example of how this can be laid out may help. Below is an example of a church with four core values.

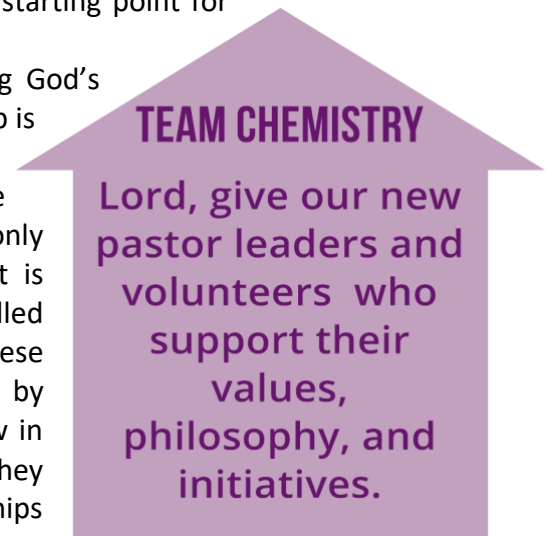
1. Experiencing God through worship. Soon after a person becomes a follower of Christ, the Bible encourages them to start identifying with a community of faith in public worship. Public worship is the combined expression of our love to God—for who He is, for what He has said, and for what He is doing 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.

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 it is enhanced by providing discipleship opportunities called “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 life.

3. Serving God and others. God has designed everyone for service and created each of us with a unique mix of spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, temperaments, and experiences that complements where God wants us 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 we provide opportunities for 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 of us to set aside individual preferences and combine our 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, supportive of its finances and ministries, and 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 the 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. 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."⁶⁰
- 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 of votes as 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 the 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 several examples of members who did not like the candidate and challenged the legitimacy of an election by claiming new members were either added or removed after a candidate was introduced and before the scheduled election. Updating and freezing your roster will protect you from this possibility.

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>.

11. 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. Most pastoral search committees are made up of one of the following four arrangements:

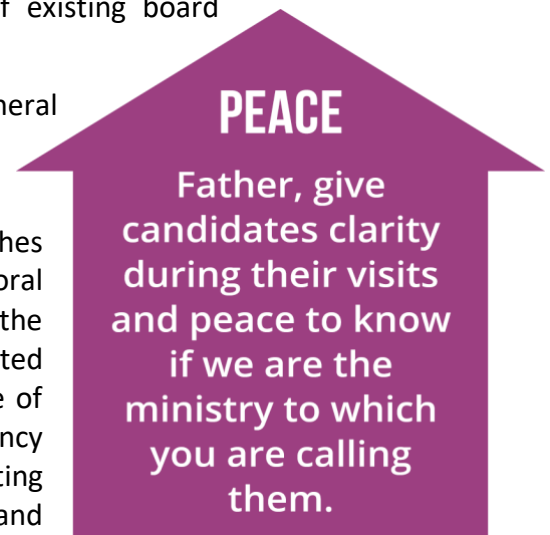
- **Existing board.** About 75 percent of pastoral search committees are made up of the existing board. In other words, the existing board automatically becomes the search committee when a vacancy in the office of lead pastor occurs.
- **Majority board.** About 15 percent of pastoral search committees are made up of a majority of existing board members and a minority of non-board members.
- **Equal split.** About 5 percent of pastoral search committees are made up of an equal representation of existing board members and non-board members.
- **Majority non-board.** About 5 percent of pastoral search committees are made up of a majority of non-board 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, available, and willing candidate. In my opinion, this option results in the most productive and successful search process.
- B. Mixed search committee (board and non-board 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 non-board participants in the event your bylaws require them.
- 1. Appoint people who meet the specific qualifications prescribed in your church’s bylaws.** The 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 expedient 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 that process being explained and prescribed in the bylaws.

The Bylaws “cannot be suspended (with the exception of clauses that provide for their own suspension under specified conditions).”⁶¹

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.⁶²

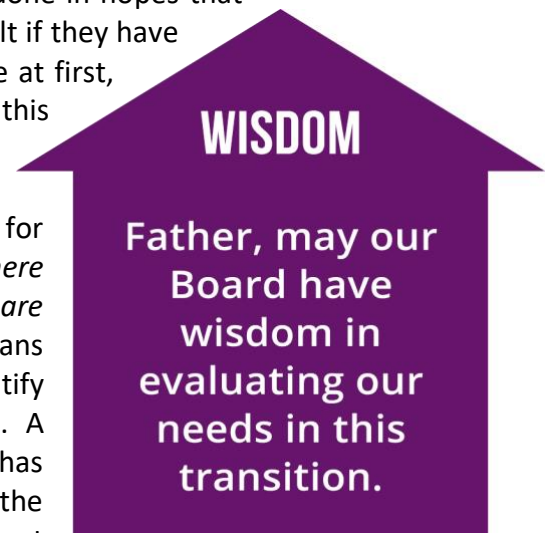


That is why it is imperative to start the process right and meet all requirements your church bylaws may prescribe concerning the selection and size of your search committee as well as how it selects a chair. Where the bylaws may be silent or may not be prescriptive, the official board or church members then can 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.⁶³ As a general rule, the pastoral search committee should have no less than five people but no more than eight. 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, 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.⁶⁴ 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). God often permits conflict so we may identify who is not qualified to serve during critical times. 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:

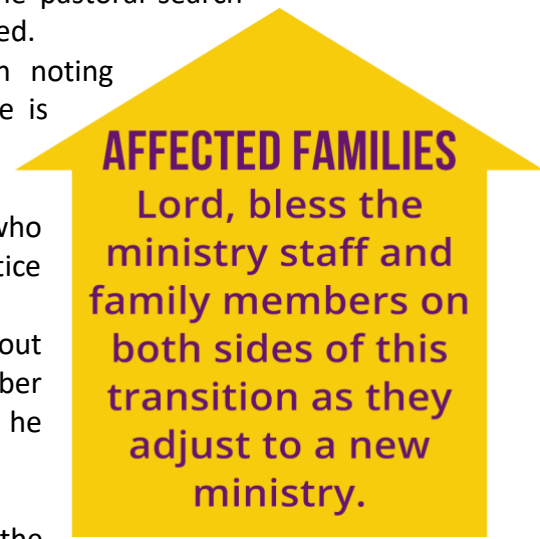
- Do they talk more than they listen?
- Do they oppose more than they support?
- Do they seem to be more articulate about what they are against than what they are for?
- Do they divide more than they unify?
- Do their expectations seem higher than their commitment level?
- Do they criticize more than 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."⁶⁵ 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, stewardship, and outreach. Spiritually mature people create spiritually mature results.



4. **Appoint people who have skills that are strategically aligned with the task.** Pastoral search specialist William Vanderbloemen recommends you appoint people with the following qualities:⁶⁶
- 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 do not try 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.⁶⁷ 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.

Richard Blackaby adds another important policy worth noting saying, “Placing staff members on the search committee is unwise, because it is difficult for them to separate their role and concerns from those of the broader church. For example, the search committee might interview someone who holds staff to high standards of accountability. This practice may be great for the church but intimidating to a staff person. It is wiser to consult with staff without making them committee members...If a staff or board member would like to be considered for the senior pastor role, he should not serve on the committee.”⁶⁸



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 prepare and 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 15-20 times in any given year. It is not uncommon for a district to see 27 percent of its churches experience a pastoral

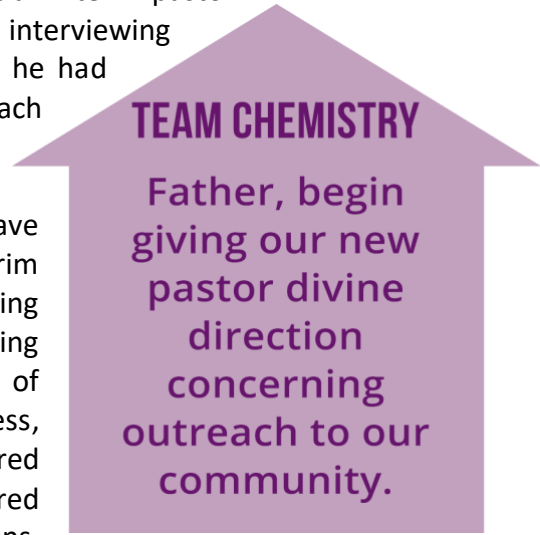
transition in a three-year period.⁶⁹ Repeated exposure has given them a unique perspective on everything from the most regrettable mistakes to the most effective practices.

- **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 who can give references on candidates 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, service in a large church setting, inability to sustain confidentiality, or potential bias might prohibit 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.⁷⁰

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.⁷¹ If your church has enjoyed a long pastorate, it also means you will not have had 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.⁷² 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 “Do We Need an 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 and for a 40-day prayer guide.
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.** It is important for the committee to remember that they are not given the authority or expected to select the next pastor. They are only charged with serving as a nominating/selection committee to present the most qualified, available, and willing candidate. In most cases, the church members are the only ones empowered to vote on and elect an individual to be the lead pastor. 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.

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 comfortable with technology and able to save and send electronic documents, email attachments, share files on the cloud (Dropbox, Google docs, or others), and set up 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, email address, and phone number of the chair of the pastoral search committee so proper communication may be maintained.
2. **Secretary/Communications.** 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 and minutes following a meeting, coordinate with an approved person at the church office, and set up confidential folders the committee can access on Dropbox (or other cloud-based system). This person should also be responsible to lead the board's communications efforts in keeping the congregation informed. They should make sure that 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 also work under the direction of the Team Lead and the liaison with the church office or whoever prints the weekly bulletin. It is important to note that this person **should not** be employed by the church or the church secretary who helps the board with minutes as this would be a serious violation of confidentiality and a conflict of interest. Only elected board members should serve in this capacity.
3. **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.
4. **Resource Liaison.** *Rise Up* has become the most researched, comprehensive, and practical reference work on pastoral transitions available. Between articles, coaching podcasts, digital templates, and the many other practical resources behind this manual, a pastoral search team may miss what could have been the solution to an important obstacle. That is why it would be wise to appoint one member of your team to serve as your *Rise Up* resource specialist. Their job is to familiarize themselves with every chapter, appendix, podcast, and tool in the *Rise Up* family of resources so

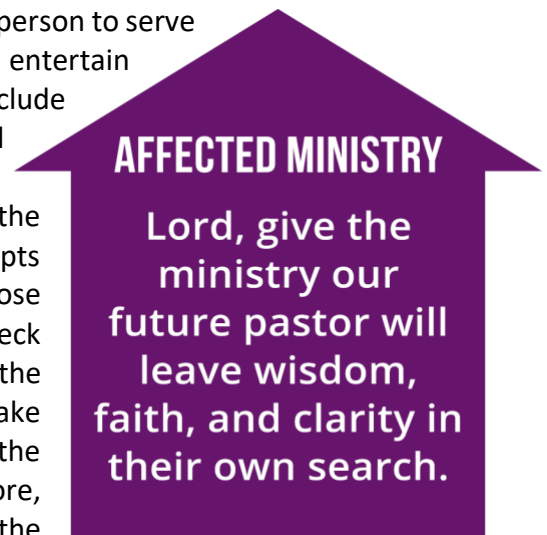
DIVINE CALL

Lord, give our new pastor an irresistible call and mandate from you to lead this church.

they can recommend solutions to the team when needed. This person will also 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.⁷³

- 5. 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 and thoughtful 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.⁷⁴ Although the hospitality lead may want to take them to meetings, a car should be rented 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.** One of the most important things your team will need to resolve is how you will make decisions. Finding God’s will is not always easy, and no one member of your team will have a direct line to heaven. Your team will need to identify God’s will as a group. The early church modeled this kind of collaborative discovery in their own decision-making process. After having to make a difficult decision, they said of the result, “*It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us*” (Acts 15:28). There are two facets the board will need to discuss and come to agreement on:

1. The minimum vote needed for both routine and big decisions.

- A unanimous vote: Every member present votes the same way (yes or no).
- A consensus vote: All members consent to the decision believing it to be the best option, even if they may personally prefer something different.
- A majority or two-thirds vote: A number greater than half of those voting 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 _____.

Some boards make the well-intentioned mistake of thinking the decision regarding a final candidate must be unanimous. John Cionca and Fred W. Prinzing in their book, *Search Counsel, A Devotional Coaching Guide for Call Committees*, give some of the best advice on this matter. They write,

“But what exactly does consensus mean? Is it the same as unanimous? Early in the search process you as a team will need to be unanimous about your understanding of consensus. In other words, the committee must be in complete accord and of one mind (unanimous) that they will present the candidate for whom they have general agreement (consensus). If on the other hand, consensus is understood as the team presenting to the church the candidate who best fits our profile (irrespective of whether that minister is everyone's personal number one choice), then the committee can make progress and accomplish its task.”⁷⁵

Although your team may not have unanimous agreement on one particular candidate, what they must be unanimous about is that they will present by consensus to the congregation the most qualified, available, and willing candidate who best meets their profile criteria. I for one believe this is what Paul meant when he wrote, *“Be of one mind and live at peace”* (2 Corinthians 13:11). I did a *Rise Up* podcast interview with Dr. Cionca entitled, *“Consensus and Unanimous Decision Making, What’s the Difference?”* John talked about the danger of search committees requiring unanimous decisions on a final candidate. The podcast can be found in the Podcast Coaching section in the digital resources.

12. TEN COMMON MISTAKES SEARCH COMMITTEES MAKE ([back to table](#))

The pastoral search process has its own share of challenges. Some of those challenges cannot be anticipated, but others can be avoided with a little bit of guidance. As a pastoral transition specialist leading a network of nearly 170 churches, I have coached many churches through the pastoral search process. Following are ten of the most common mistakes pastoral search committees make.

1. They do not plan for success. Many boards and pastoral search teams lack a “plan.” However, when I say a plan, I am not talking about advice from a relative or notes from a missionary friend written on a napkin. I am talking about a real plan put down on paper to adopt, improve upon, or measure progress. Following are five things that make up a good pastoral transition plan:

- **A written plan** with structure, process, and action steps.
- **Expert coaching** from a trained person who has led multiple transitions successfully.
- **Proven methods** that reflect current culture, best practices, and situational wisdom.
- **Practical steps** that enable a team to work sequentially through the process.
- **Relevant resources** that include customizable templates, podcasts, and companion tools.



Pride is almost always the biggest contributing factor to failure. Many board members think their business or hiring experience immediately qualifies them to lead a pastoral search. First-class passengers may know the airline, crew, or even the layout of the plane well; but they have never been a pilot and would have a lot to learn before hiring one. That is why medium-sized churches historically make better decisions than larger ones. The larger the church, the less likely they are to ask for help or seek coaching.

2. They do not prepare the church for the journey. A pastoral search is a journey that can either weaken or strengthen the church. Statistics show that most churches in transition experience a decline in morale, attendance, and giving. Instead of just accepting that, a sustainability initiative can help the church get out in front of those challenges and defy gravity. A sustainability initiative is a month-long intentional process that calls the church to focused prayer, Sunday morning teaching, a congregational survey, small group engagement, and increased commitment that can fortify morale, giving, and attendance. Knowing it is easier to make something better than to create it, I have developed a sustainability initiative called “Defying Gravity” that churches can improve upon or customize. It is further explained in the appendix entitled, “[Sustainability Initiative](#)”.

3. They get ahead of the process. Many churches allow anxiety and impatience to lead them into a premature start. They advertise the opening and begin receiving résumés before doing the heavy lifting at the front end that shaves months off their search process. Taking the time to start right with a strategic planning meeting, prayer focus, congregational survey and a good pastor, church and community profile often determines the differences between success and failure.

4. **They choose the wrong transitional leader.** When the pastor leaves, the board must choose a temporary board chairman. However, many boards mistake strength of personality or conviction for leadership. This can result in choosing the wrong person as an interim board chair. As a result, someone may be selected who is too busy, not tech savvy, or is driven by a carnal ego. Remember, this is a spiritual process—not a corporate hiring activity.
5. **They do not schedule for success.** Not scheduling regular meetings is one of the most costly mistakes search committees make. If the search is going to be effective, weekly transition meetings apart from your normal board meetings (where usual church issues are handled) will be needed. A recurring meeting should be scheduled on the same day and time each week rather than trying to pull meetings together every ten days or so. Everyone is busy, but a separate search team meeting schedule is needed to set the search committee up to win and protect them from procrastination and indecision. An example would be to have the normal monthly board meetings at its regular time and an additional search committee meeting every Wednesday from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. The following meeting agenda template could be used as a guide (but not necessarily as a rule).

Pastoral Search Committee Meeting

1. Prayer (5-10 minutes)
2. Meeting Objectives (5 minutes)
 - Specific tasks or objectives that must be accomplished in the meeting
3. 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
4. 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
5. Post Meeting Objectives (10-15 minutes)
 - Tasks to be assigned
 - Brainstorming
6. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)



6. **They procrastinate.** Procrastination, not spiritual assault, stalls more pastoral search efforts than anything else. Here is the common areas where procrastination occurs.
 - **Correspondence.** Not staying on top of emails, texts, or phone calls from candidates.
 - **Milestones.** Procrastinating on important milestones that result in giant leaps forward will also hinder progress. Examples include things such as profile creation, personal interviews, reference checks, and a written remuneration package that the entire board has approved through a vote.

- **Insecurity.** Feeling unqualified to conduct interviews, talk with district superintendents, use of technology in order to move with speed and efficiency (older boards), or checking references.
- **Dealing with conflict** or misunderstandings that arise in the process. Pastoral search committees need to do what I call “stepping on baby crocodiles.” Instead of waiting until problems grow into twenty-foot man eaters that require us to jump in the swamp and wrestle them into submission, your team must be proactive in addressing obstacles. This usually involves dealing with divisive people, overly ambitious staff, or other team members drifting outside of their lane.
- **Updating the membership roster** and freezing it immediately after the pastor has resigned rather than a week before the election of a new pastor.

7. They lead instead of manage. One of the temptations pastoral search committees face is the urge to overstep their boundaries or become addicted to their newfound power. They forget their role in the transition is more of a management role than a leadership role.

If a board uses this microscopic window of time as an opportunity to modify vision, launch new initiatives, make significant organizational changes, and take on additional expenses, they are writing a check they will be unable to clear. Their prime directive needs to be fourfold:

- Identify the most qualified, available, and willing candidate.
- Remove obvious obstacles to immediate success, health, or growth.
- Manage existing ministries and “keeping the trains running on time.”
- Create an opportunity for someone to lead with the wind at their back.



It is important for them to remember that their purpose is not to be change agents but to identify a candidate in a way that creates margin, options, and opportunity for their future leader. Sometimes that means fighting battles that need to be fought before—not after—the pastor arrives.

8. They under communicate. It is common for search committees to fail to keep the church informed weekly and foster hope and optimism. Even if the search committee thinks their last meeting was minor, it probably was not in the perspective of a normal church attender. An informed congregation is a trusting congregation.

9. They blow interviews. When a group of people from various backgrounds and vocations who never served in a full-time ministry are around a table interviewing a pastor, just about anything can happen—including sabotaging candidate interviews. The most common causes are usually:

- A lack of humility resulting in a candidate’s smelling pride and withdrawing as a result—not to mention passing that information on to colleagues.
- Confusing their personal preferences with church priorities and needs.
- Forgetting they are representing the church and NOT themselves, a gender, race, age demographic, or ministry department.
- Missing divine interactions. Sometimes churches reject the things their church needs the most; namely an innovative, relevant, and visionary pastor.

- Not knowing how to ask behavioral questions. Asking the question, “Is evangelism important to you?” is not as effective as, “Tell us about one or two evangelistic events you have led this past quarter.” Behavioral questions ask for examples of what a person routinely does while situational questions only ask what a person might do in the future or a hypothetical situation.

10. They forget their purpose. A search committee’s job is not to pick the next pastor. That is the responsibility God has given the membership to steward in the form of a vote. A pastoral search committee’s job is simpler than they might think. It is to identify and recommend to the congregation the most qualified, willing, and available candidate to lead their church into the future.

A wise pastoral search team will do well to avoid these pitfalls and humbly steward the trust that has been given to them.

13. BOARD & SEARCH COMMITTEE COMMITMENT ([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. To fulfill your duty, it will be necessary to honor each other with the highest levels of integrity. To 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 mutual agreements.

It is also important that each member of the board and/or search committee sign a confidentiality agreement like the one below. 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. This commitment is also available as a customizable download in the “Digital Resources” section.

1. **Prayer.** To pray daily for God’s direction, the church, the board, and its work.
2. **Focus.** To stay focused on our 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.*
3. **Availability.** To make this process a priority, fulfill my duties, and be an equal contributor to the pastoral search process.
4. **Confidentiality.** To keep confidential from family and friends 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.
5. **Honesty.** To be entirely honest and forthright in representing the church, its current financial situation, attendance, challenges, history, culture, and previous commitments.
6. **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.
7. **Clarity.** To provide clarity to the process by creating a clear and reasonable church and community profile, and pastor profile before interviewing any candidates.
8. **Surrender.** To subordinate my own personal preferences, agenda, or priorities to the will of the committee as a whole and to support the final decision and candidate.
9. **Thoroughness.** To vet the final candidate to the best of our abilities through interviews, references, and background checks.
10. **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

14. CHURCH MEMBER COMMITMENT ([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. This is a powerful way to end the sustainability initiative on the last Sunday. A customizable template of the member commitment in Microsoft Word format can be downloaded from the Digital Resources section of the PDF version of this manual. Following is an example of what that commitment might look like:

Church Member Pledge

The Apostle Paul mentions two different types of commitment in 2 Corinthians 8:5, "*First they gave themselves to the Lord; and then, by God's will, they gave themselves to us as well.*" While becoming a Christian means to commit ourselves to Christ, being part of a church means we commit ourselves to other Christians. As our church begins our pastoral search, 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 MEETING SAMPLE AGENDA ([back to table](#))

The search committee will need to be prepared to meet at least weekly 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.⁷⁶ 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 search 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 to 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. Generally, regularly scheduled board meetings should be confined to dealing with 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. A digital version is also available as a download in the "Digital Resources" section.

January 1, 2023

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, decisions, 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 that is overlooked. The Presbyterian Church of America has given the following five scenarios that may justify engaging an interim pastor:⁷⁷

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

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](#)" as well as the section labeled "[Digital Resources](#)."

Following are some points and a draft job description to consider:⁷⁸

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 Corinthian church was encouraged to recognize the unique value and contribution of temporary 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



PROTECTION

Father, protect us from those who have their own agenda and allow the Spirit to lovingly correct them.

process their grief and confusion while transitioning into a new understanding of the resurrected Christ.⁷⁹ There is a Biblical precedence of temporary leaders being used by God to prepare His people for the future.

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 preacher each week.
2. **Board focus.** Gives the board the freedom to focus on the pastoral search and governance 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 income 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 lead pastoral experience.
8. **Neutrality.** Gives an interim pastor the ability to interact with the outgoing pastor concerning needed information regarding things like file locations, keys, historical documents, and other items that 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 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.⁸⁰

Justin Tull is a respected and experienced interim pastor who chronicled his observations in the 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."⁸¹

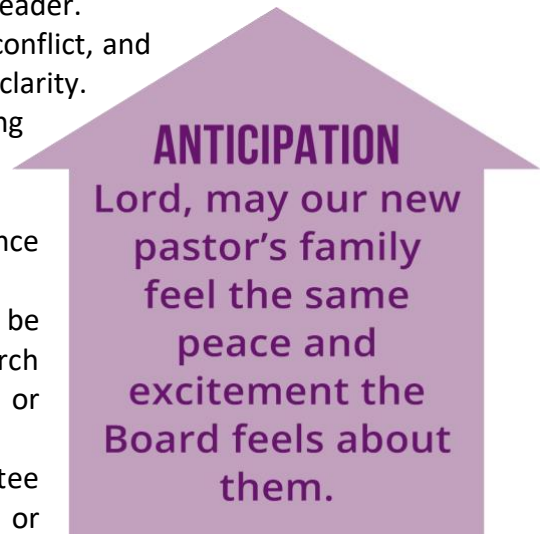
- C. **A word of caution.** It should be noted that not every pastoral transition warrants an interim pastor. The concept of interim pastors was made popular in the 1980's. However, culture, preaching methods, and expectations has changed and intensified the negative impact of prolonged pastoral vacancies upon the church. Author Lee Kricher sites recent research and makes a strong case that the interim model is fast becoming outdated, prolongs transitions, and if protracted can be detrimental to a church's momentum.⁸²

SENSITIVITY

Lord, give our Board direction, clarity, and peace concerning who should be interviewed.

D. 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:⁸³

1. **Recommended.** One who has served as both 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.⁸⁴ 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 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 needed.
4. **Experienced.** One who has prior management skills and staff leadership abilities adequate for the church and size of the 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 can 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 businesspeople who desire to raise funds or promote their ministries within the church during the interim.
7. **Flexible.** One who is capable of being flexible and understands that each church has different needs, culture, and history. They must not lead from nostalgia or 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.



E. Responsibilities of an interim pastor.

1. **Teach/preach.** Be part of the Sunday morning teaching team. 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 hijacked by 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 existing leaders.
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.

F. 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, involvement and remuneration 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 most of the preaching (teamed with guests and staff), provides pastoral care, and serves as a staff liaison with the board. 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.⁸⁵ 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.

G. 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. There are several sources to acquire leads for a potential interim pastor.

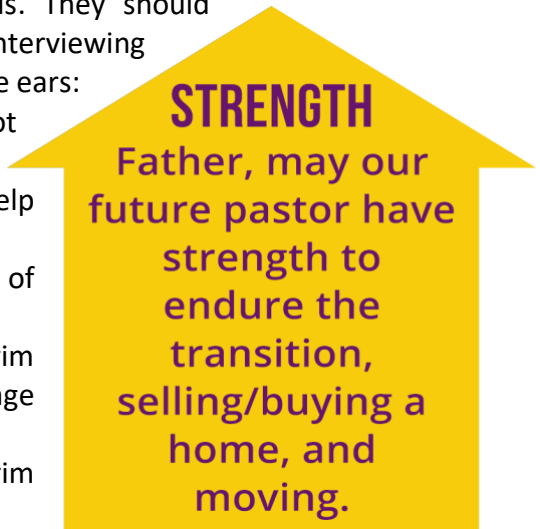
- 1. District Superintendent/Network Pastor.** District superintendents/network pastors are very experienced in the art of pastoral transitions. While most churches only experience transition once or twice a decade, a district superintendent/network pastor may see this occur 15-20 times in any given year. It is not uncommon for a district to see 27 percent of its churches experience a pastoral transition in a three-year period.⁸⁶ 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 the formal training and certification of interim pastors. 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 IPM, and they then pay the interim (like a temp agency does). Rhonda and I completed their two-day training, and it was outstanding. However, as a 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>.
- 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 35-40% of the church's total remuneration package for the lead pastor. 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 can have a conflict of interest in many cases. Not only do they charge the church for search services, but they may also be charging unemployed ministers to provide career coaching. Others believe their success rate is less than that of a well-planned, board-led succession.



H. Needed qualities of an interim pastor.⁸⁷

- 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.
- I. **Interview questions of an interim pastor.** A board should not assume an interim pastor has the 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. The following questions may help determine situational fit:
1. Tell us about your call to ministry and give a summary of your ministry experience.
 2. Briefly summarize all your past experiences as an interim pastor—what size churches they were, the average length, 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 most of the 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?



STRENGTH
 Father, may our future pastor have strength to endure the transition, selling/buying a home, and moving.

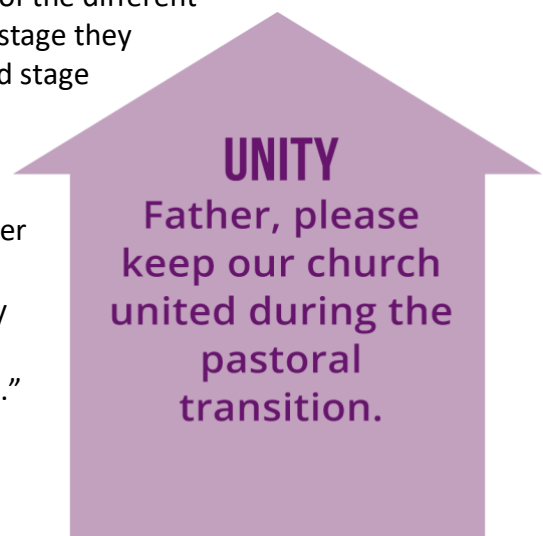
6. What topics do you usually address from the pulpit (teaching and preaching) during a pastoral interim?
7. How do you handle situations when the board does not take your advice?
8. Are you willing to remove yourself from consideration as a candidate for the lead pastor position?
9. How do you manage 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. Where can we find links to listen to your preaching ministry?
17. 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.⁸⁸ 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 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.⁸⁹
- 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 non-board 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 report can include:
 - 1. Committee composition.** The names and bios of those on the board or pastoral search committee.
 - 2. Process updates.** Regular updates keep anxiety at bay and breeds confidence, patience, and trust among the membership. A general summary of the different stages of the process and then identifying in what stage they are currently engaged in is also helpful. A simplified stage summary graphic and Q&A document that can be distributed to the church is available in the digital resource section of the PDF version of *Rise Up*.
 - 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 received several résumés for vetting and categorization."
 - "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.** Engage the church by requesting prayer for the specific stage the committee is in or may be moving into over the next few weeks. That goes a long way in creating buy in.



E. Candidate 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 communication with the search committee.

F. Potential candidate information page. A web page, splash page, or google blog could be created to help the search team keep those interested in applying for the position updated. 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 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 acting 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 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 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 more 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 be both but not desirable or 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.

CHARACTER

Lord, may all those involved on both sides of the transition have integrity, honesty, and trust in God.

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 to learn the city, 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 several common denominators that successful businesses share. Ten out of eleven businesses that went from good to great found CEOs from within the company.⁹⁰

B. What are the advantages of internal candidates? Assuming the church has a qualified staff member with lead pastor potential, 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.⁹¹ 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 also has a better chance of not experiencing 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.⁹²

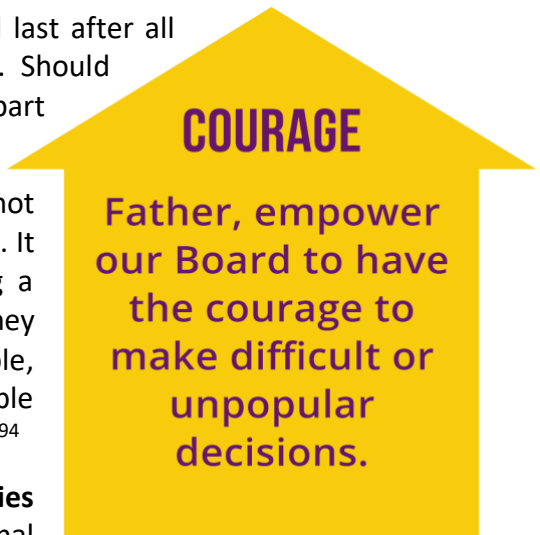
C. What are the disadvantages of this model? Even though this model is becoming the norm in larger churches, there are some disadvantages that need to be addressed. Some succession plans get messy and political. Joseph Umidi cautions, “An associate pastor, for example, who may be well-liked and respected in their present role, may not make a suitable senior pastor in the same organization.”⁹³ 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 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, unwise, and divide the loyalties and emotions of the people at a time when they need to be unified behind one leader.⁹⁴

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. These issues can be compared to the difference between stepping on a baby



alligator or waiting to wrestle it later when it has grown into a twenty-foot man eater! This issue is too important to neglect.

Phil Schneider has been the district superintendent of the Illinois District Council since 2012 and witnessed churches being crippled by 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:

- 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.⁹⁵

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.



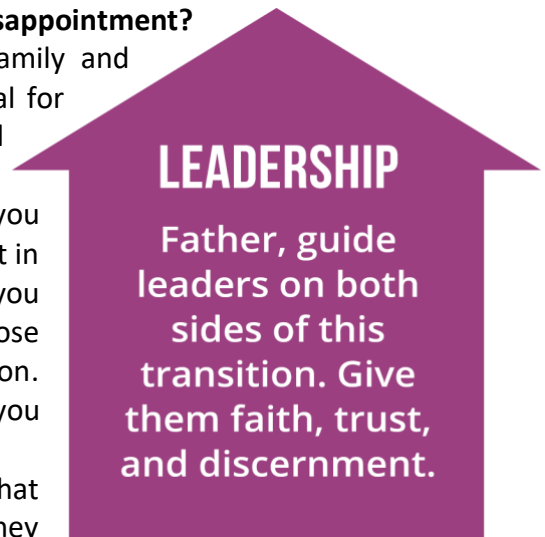
- The internal candidate will not plant a new church or join the staff of an existing church of any affiliation or non-affiliation within 30 miles of the church's current location.

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 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, 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 associate that another candidate has been chosen. The suggestions

below are listed in order of their ascending intensity of conflict to help your board limit the impact of destructive disappointment.

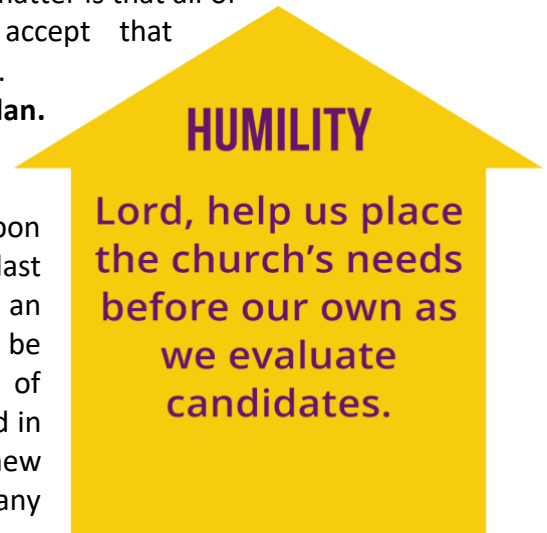
- 1. Take preemptive actions at the time an internal candidate applies.** As soon as a staff member communicates a desire to apply for the lead pastorate, be sure to schedule a private meeting with the board to consider the possible outcomes. Inform them that as a candidate, it would be unfair and unethical 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 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 the staff member 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 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 the staff member was 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



AGREEMENT
Father, may the
Board be in
agreement
regarding the
background and
experience
needed.

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 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 not getting out in front of these issues early. The second is that they try to limit the fallout by negotiating with a disappointed staff member or making concessions, giving raises, 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."⁹⁶ 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. FEMALE LEAD PASTORS: A DISCUSSION WORTH HAVING [\(back to table\)](#)

Your church is currently seeking God's will for leadership. It is our hope that the thoroughness of your search will include both male and female candidates. To assist your search committee in exploring the possibilities of God's will, I have collaborated with 29 District leaders, representing sixty-seven percent of the Assemblies of God districts. 23 were District Superintendents and 6 were District Secretary/Treasurers representing nearly 5,700 churches; 17,000 ministers; and 1,566,000 constituents to help you consider the issues surrounding female leadership.⁹⁷ Few people understand the dynamics of pastoral transitions better than district/network superintendents. They frequently assist churches experiencing pastoral transition while also leading a diverse constituency of ministers. Their combined wisdom is reflected in this unprecedented report which will address:

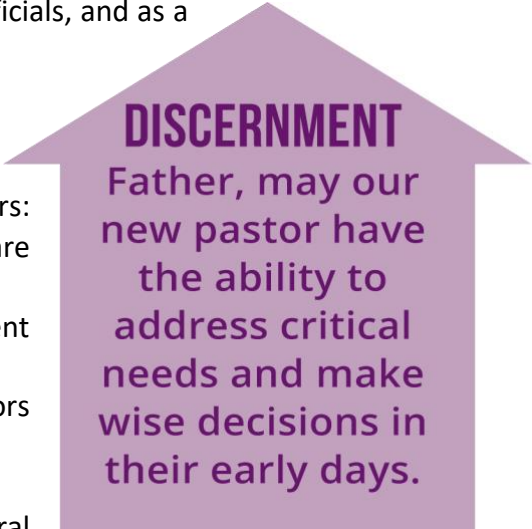
- Female Ministers and The Assemblies of God
- Scripture and Female Leadership
- Practical Reasons to Consider Women
- When Caution Is Warranted
- Unique Contributions of Female Leadership
- Questions to Consider
- Common Challenges to Overcome
- Moving Forward

Female Ministers and The Assemblies of God

Since its formation, the Assemblies of God has recognized the call of God upon female leadership. Today, our Fellowship is blessed with female leaders serving as deacons, board members, missionaries, chaplains, associate pastors, lead pastors, presbyters, district/network officials, and as a member of our National Executive Leadership Team.

At the time of this writing, the Assemblies of God USA has 37,713 ministers. Twenty-seven percent or 10,281 of our credentialed ministers are female. Of our 10,281 female ministers:

- 2,214 are certified; 4,016 are licensed; and 4,051 are ordained.
- Of our 21,444 ordained ministers, 4,051 or 18.9 percent are female.
- Of our 12,930 churches, 630 are led by female pastors which represents 4.9 percent of our churches.
- 1,030 are missionaries (244 AGUSM and 786 AGWM).
- 22 are General Council general presbyters. The General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God is made up of approximately 375 elected representatives who serve as the official policy-making body of our Fellowship when the General Council is not in session. As of the August 2021 meeting of the General Presbytery, 7 percent were female.
- 4 are district/network officials.
- 55 are elected by their colleagues to serve as sectional presbyters representing a region of churches and sit on a District/Network Presbytery board of directors. There are 687 sections in the Assemblies of God USA, and female presbyters lead 8 percent of them.



DISCERNMENT
Father, may our
new pastor have
the ability to
address critical
needs and make
wise decisions in
their early days.

- 3 are General Council executive presbyters. The Executive Presbytery is the Executive Board of the Assemblies of God and consists of 15 members, 20 percent of whom are females.
- 1 is a member of the six-person Executive Leadership Team which is 17 percent of that group.

These statistics reveal the valuable and increasing contribution of females at every level of leadership within the Assemblies of God,⁹⁸ but what about female lead pastors on the local level? How should qualified females be considered for a lead pastorate and what issues should be addressed?

Scripture and Female Leadership

The most repeated concern raised by district/network superintendents who were surveyed was the lack of knowledge among pastoral search committees concerning whether Scripture permits women to serve as lead pastors. Our district/network leaders are also concerned that so many of our churches are out of step with the Assemblies of God's position and our rich history of female ministers and leadership.

The Assemblies of God does not believe there are any biblical grounds to limit the role of women in ministry; however, some disagree with this position for various reasons. With that said, let's consider why some do not believe women should serve as lead pastors as well as the overwhelming biblical evidence for why they can.⁹⁹

1. Reasons some believe lead pastors must be male.

Complementarianism is a theological view that precludes women from specific leadership functions within the church. The term egalitarianism is a view meaning the exact opposite—that God calls and bestows spiritual giftings without partiality to gender, race, or background.

Those who oppose women being ordained and/or serving as a lead pastor claim the Bible prohibits women from leadership roles in ministry. However, there are only two passages in the entire New Testament which might seem to forbid females from ministry.

The first is 1 Corinthians 14:34 (NIV):

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.

However, there is a problem with this isolated interpretation. Instead of identifying the specific situation in Corinth that Paul was addressing, proponents of this view try to associate Paul's demand for silence as if he were speaking about one's call to ministry. The entire context of this passage is addressing the disorderly, chaotic, and confusing use of spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church. That is why Paul would later close this thought unit with the admonition that *everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way* (1 Corinthians 14:40 NIV).

Apparently, there were women in the Corinthian church who made a significant contribution to the confusion surrounding spiritual gifts, orderly worship, and unity in that specific community of faith. Paul chose to address the specific situation and the individuals involved. However, Paul was NOT addressing a woman's call, qualifications, or ordination to the ministry. Lifting this verse out of its proper context is a step away from sound biblical interpretation.

INTERVIEWS

Father, lead our Board in asking the right questions as they represent our church in interviews.

The second verse that is often used to prohibit women from serving in the ministry is 1 Timothy 2:12 (NIV):

I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.

Paul is again addressing the subject of orderly worship to a church in the wake of conflict and division. Ephesus also had several problems that seemed to center around a group of influential but divisive women. The issues addressed to this church seem to imply that these women may have:

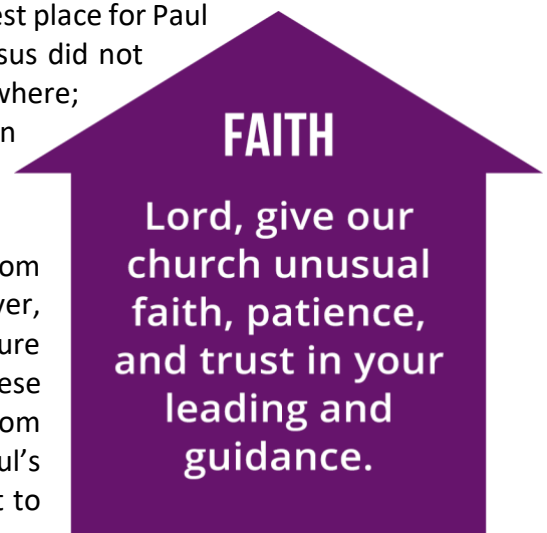
- Participated in disorderly worship and misguided public prayer (1 Timothy 1:1-2).
- Distracted men in worship with immodest dress and materialistic apparel (1 Timothy 2:9-10).
- Practiced gossip, idle talk, and nonproductive discussion (1 Timothy 5:13).
- Embraced heresy and false teaching (1 Timothy 1:3-7). Some believe these women were the wives of false teachers who were seeking positions of spiritual influence in the church.

It seems that these issues were being initiated by a group of women who recklessly ignored social customs and may have attempted to usurp authority over the male leaders in their community of faith. To correct the problem, Paul was using the authority of his apostleship to place a restraining order upon their teaching ministry and vocal participation in worship in Ephesus.

However, some sincere but misguided believers cut verses 11-12 out of the context of a local church problem and try to paste it as a universal rule relating to all women in all circumstances, all times, and all cultures when, in fact, Paul is giving Timothy advice about how to deal with heretical teaching and the behavior of women within the Ephesian church.

In light of Paul's recognition of the ministry of women in nearly all his writings, it seems obvious that he was addressing an isolated incident with a specific solution that was not meant to be a universal application. Had Paul meant for gender to be a criterion for ministry, he would have included it in his other writings which list very specific qualifications for pastors and spiritual leaders (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and Ephesians 4:11). In addition, when Paul addresses the spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:7-11, and Ephesians 4:11-12, he does not indicate that these gifts are given according to gender, ethnicity, or class. If being a woman disqualified a person from serving as a pastor or spiritual leader, would not these passages have been the best place for Paul to make that clear? In other words, the situation in Ephesus did not warrant a prohibition of women in leadership everywhere; otherwise, Paul's prohibition would have been repeated in his other writings that mention the spiritual gifts of teaching, leadership, or pastoring.

At the outset, Paul does appear to restrict women from speaking in the church in these two specific letters; however, Paul was addressing specific problems that involved immature women within the context of certain situations. Using these two scriptures as proof texts to restrict ALL women from speaking publicly would be as unwise as using Paul's admonition in Titus 2:9 for Christian slaves to be obedient to their masters as a biblical endorsement of slavery.

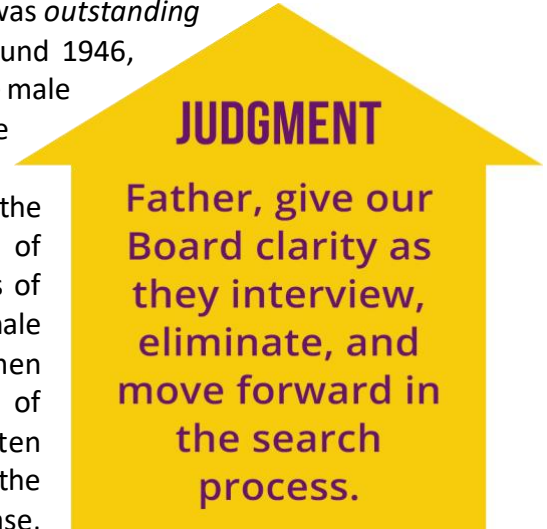


- 2. Reasons the Assemblies of God believes females can serve as lead pastors.** The Assemblies of God has always believed that God has called and continues to call women into ministry as lead pastors, associate pastors, and missionaries. As Spirit-filled believers, we take Paul at his word when he said that God distributes spiritual gifts *to each one, just as he determines* (1 Corinthians 12:11 NIV).

Nowhere in Scripture are we told that God's distribution of the spiritual gifts is confined to any one gender. That means women can receive and use any spiritual gift the Lord bestows upon them including teaching, pastoring, and every other gift mentioned in Scripture. There are several reasons why an increasing number of denominations ordain women into ministry.

First, we believe that Scripture, not culture, should be the rule of faith and conduct. Instead of allowing the Bible to transform our culture, we sometimes allow our culture to interpret the Bible. There are two examples of this in the history of biblical translation.

- The first is where Paul mentions Junia and says she was *outstanding among the apostles* (Romans 16:7 NIV). Until around 1946, some Bible translators translated that name into the male form of "Junias," implying the person the Apostle Paul said was an outstanding apostle was a male. However, the earliest translations of the Bible have the female name "Junia," not the masculine form of "Junias." Why? In the Middle Ages, the translators of the Bible changed the female name "Junia" to the male name "Junias" because of a cultural belief that women could not be apostles.¹⁰⁰ We even have writings of Saint Jerome and John Chrysostom which were written three hundred years after Christ that speak of the noble qualities of this *woman*, Junia.¹⁰¹ In this case, cultural bias robbed us of seeing a woman not only as being recognized as an apostle but also being an outstanding example of one at that.
- A second example is found in Romans 16:1-2 where, in closing the epistle, Paul commends the ministry of a female deaconess by the name of Phoebe. In calling her a deacon, Paul used the Greek word *diakonos*, the same word he used to describe other positions of leadership in the New Testament church. However, the bias of some modern translators has obscured Phoebe's position of leadership by choosing to translate the word "servant" or "helper" rather than "deacon."¹⁰² As a result, cultural bias blinds us from seeing Phoebe as she really was—a female deacon in the church of Cenchrea who had won the respect and admiration of the Apostle Paul.



Let me say it again—as believers, we must allow the Bible to shape our perspective and not our perspectives to shape the Bible.

Second, there have always been women who were active in leadership and service within Biblical history. In addition to the Apostle Junia, other examples would include:

- **Miriam:** A prophet among Moses' leadership community during the Exodus (Exodus 15:20).
- **Deborah:** A prophet, judge, and military leader who led the armies of God in successful battle (Judges 4-5).
- **Huldah:** A prophetess who authenticated the scroll of the law and helped lead a national revival (2 Kings 22; 2 Chronicles 34).
- **Priscilla:** One who had a teaching ministry in Ephesus along with her husband, Aquila. Five of the seven times the couple is mentioned in the Book of Acts, her name is given first. In one of those instances, she is even said to have taught the scholar Apollos and *explained to him the way of God more adequately* (Acts 18:26).
- **Anna:** Called a prophet (Luke 2:36).
- **Philip:** Had four unmarried daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9).

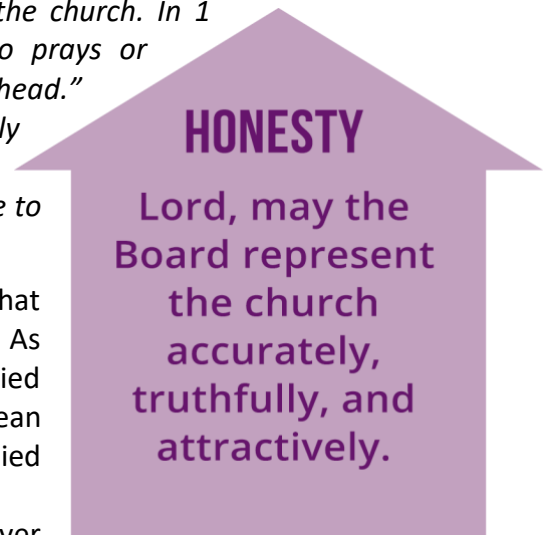
The Bible’s “big picture” image of women is of God using them as leaders, apostles, prophets, advisers, teachers, and servants. On top of this, biblical history proves that God continued to use women even when they may have lived among cultures that viewed them as less than equal to men. There is overwhelming evidence throughout God’s Word that He calls and uses women in ministry. Ignoring this and focusing on two texts that correct the behavior of women in a specific situation is like quoting two instances of divorce as proof texts condemning marriage.

Third, Spirit-filled faith has always embraced women in ministry. The Bible makes it very clear that the gifts and the outpouring of the Spirit were given for ministry. Nowhere does God’s Word limit the expression of these gifts to men. As a matter of fact, we find the opposite. When the New Testament describes the Holy Spirit’s sovereign distribution of gifts, we are told they are given for service without regard to gender. For example, the gift of prophecy is for both men and women. Author Debby Lamm Bray writes:

Paul also expected women to pray and prophesy in the church. In 1 Corinthians 11:5, he wrote that “every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head.” Paul’s concern was not that women were verbally participating in the gathering but that they were doing so without their heads covered—a cultural issue unique to that time and place.¹⁰³

At Pentecost, Peter quoted the Prophet Joel in predicting that *your sons and daughters will prophesy* (Acts 2:16-17 NIV). As stated above, we are told that Philip had four unmarried daughters who exercised the gift of prophecy in the Caesarean church (Acts 21: 9). We are also told that women prophesied in the early church (1 Corinthians 11:5).

God does not show favoritism (Romans 2:11). He calls whomever He wants and gives gifts and ministries to whomever He chooses. Paul made an all-encompassing statement that defined a whole new perspective for followers of Jesus: *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:28).



Practical Reasons to Consider Women

In addition to the biblical precedents mentioned above, there are a few practical reasons why a search committee should consider female applicants in their selection of a lead pastor. Those surveyed stated the following:

- 1. Maximizing opportunity.** Finding a good match for your church is hard enough. “By excluding female candidates, a search committee is potentially eliminating a good match for their church. It is important to cast the net as far as you can,” said Andy Smith, secretary/treasurer of the Central District.¹⁰⁴
- 2. Due diligence.** The people of your church expect the search committee and board to represent them well, take their time, be guided by process, make wise decisions, and vet all potential candidates. Nicole Heidt is not only a female but also a network officer in the Wyoming Ministry Network and said, “A local search committee would not be doing its due diligence if they did not look at every possible candidate.”¹⁰⁵
- 3. Proven success.** Don Detrick, secretary/treasurer of the Northwest Ministry Network, reminds search committees about the priceless contribution women have made in Assemblies of God

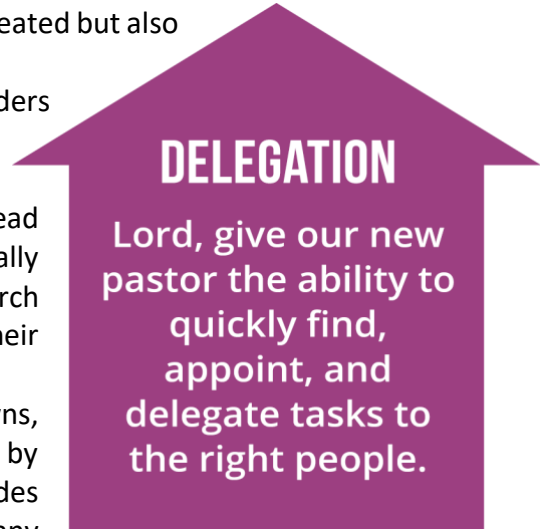
history. “The Assemblies of God has a long history of women in ministry and many of our churches were planted by women,” Detrick reminds.¹⁰⁶ As a matter of fact, when writing about why the Assemblies of God has been so successful in the Mormon dominated state of Utah, one Mormon scholar even went so far as to attribute female leadership as one of the primary reasons Spirit-filled Christians have been more effective than their evangelical counterparts in reaching Mormons in Utah.¹⁰⁷ Many district/network superintendents who participated in the survey mentioned that they have numerous success stories regarding female lead pastors. “The ladies leading our churches in South Texas serve with distinction and bring a perspective that is unique. In each case, these churches are among our growing numbers,” said Tim Barker, superintendent of the South Texas District.¹⁰⁸

4. **Called and qualified.** If a female minister has the required theological preparation, ministry experience, pastoral gifting, and leadership capabilities, every respondent felt they should be considered as a candidate for your pastoral search. If God has called and gifted them with pastoral gifts, then the body of Christ needs them.

When Is Caution Warranted?

While activists tend to be “all in” despite the cost, obstacles, or outcomes, district/network superintendents are inclined to be more pragmatic. Although those surveyed do not believe the Bible disqualifies females from serving as lead pastors, they do believe there are certain situations that may require better timing, cultural fit, and preparation before engaging female leadership. When asked the question, “When might a female candidate not be a good choice for a church?” they responded with seasoned wisdom. Following are a few common denominators they felt should be considered.

1. **High resistance.** When resistance to the idea of female leadership is so prevalent that it would create a high likelihood of failure for a female candidate, search committees should proceed with caution. There is little to gain in setting a new pastor up for endless conflict and resentful resistance. In this case, more training for that congregation and its leadership community should be pursued so that a culture of acceptance is not only created but also given a chance to thrive.
2. **Inferior motives.** Some churches may want female leaders for no other reason than to appear open minded or to make a social statement. This alone is not a good enough reason and places unfair pressure on female lead pastors to “live up to something” that is not normally required of male lead pastors. The only motivation a search committee should have is to embrace God’s will for their church no matter what gender a candidate may be.
3. **Community fit.** There are some small communities, towns, and church cultures that are heavily influenced by Calvinistic and Reformed theology that have for decades believed females cannot be ordained or serve in any positions of authority (complementarianism). This view may even have become the accepted perspective of nonbelievers in these communities. “Board members and congregants who were raised with, educated by, or hold Calvinist theology will often struggle accepting female pastors”, said Superintendent Bret Allen of the Northern California and Nevada District.¹⁰⁹ In these cases, it may be wiser to find a male candidate who can introduce a more biblical perspective and represent an egalitarian understanding of Scripture.



4. **Inadequate qualifications.** When a female does not have the character, theological preparation, competence, potential, or qualifications to serve as a lead pastor, the search committee owes it to the church to identify a more competent candidate.
5. **Leadership division.** When a search committee or board is extremely divided as to whether it is biblical or the right time or if the church is ready, it should pause to better understand the situation. A word of caution would be in order here. Some search committees make the mistake of thinking that all decisions must be unanimous before moving forward. However, making one dissenting member a “super delegate” with veto power over the entire group is not wise. One superintendent who participated in the survey told a story about a church whose board had ten members in favor of amending the bylaws to provide for female leadership with only one opposed. Believing they needed to be united and fearing division on the board, the revision was reviewed annually but was stalled for nearly a decade. Finally, one member resented the fact that one person was holding the group back. They decided to move ahead only to see the amendment met with applause and cheers from the congregation in the annual business meeting. Sadly, they had allowed a few opinionated people to cause them to become disconnected from biblical truth and the desires and tolerance levels of the congregation they served.



There is no simple test to know if female leadership is God’s will for your church other than to examine all qualified candidates, no matter their gender.

Unique Contributions of Female Leadership

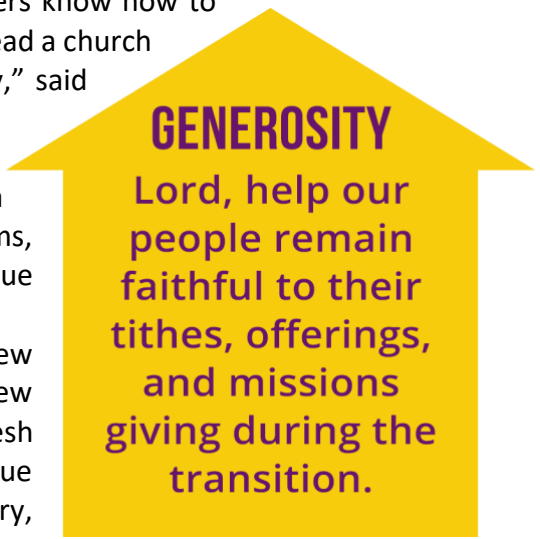
Although genders do have unique qualities, it would be a mistake to assume they do in every case and circumstance. Some leadership scholars even claim that the higher a person goes up the organizational ladder, the more gender differences seem to give way to common characteristics that most effective leaders have whether male or female. One extensive study even found that arguments for female leadership based upon the assumption that they possess gender qualities that make them better leaders creates more resistance to the idea, not less.¹¹⁰

Nevertheless, when asked what positive attributes they personally saw female lead pastors bring to the table, there were several common denominators that district/network leaders mentioned in the survey. Following is a summary of the recurring feedback under general headings:

1. **Inclusivity.** Female leaders can be more relational in their approach, collaborative, and inclusive because they understand what it is like to be a minority in leadership circles. They often enjoy an instant connection with church volunteers who, in most cases, are women as well.
2. **Pastoral.** Female leaders can be more maternal, caring, generous, relational, and empathetic.
3. **Leadership.** Organizationally, female leaders can be more detailed, analytic, organized, methodical, and gifted at multitasking. Rich Guerra, Superintendent of the SoCal Network and Southwest Regional Executive Presbyter, has been an advocate for female lead pastors for decades. "I would challenge search committees to consider a female credentialed minister as their lead pastor, as they are the fastest growing credentialed group in the Assemblies of God. I believe

they have the three qualities that are needed to lead a church in today's culture. They communicate a compelling vision, build teams to accomplish vision and generally manage conflict well. If we're going to reach our communities for Christ, we are going to have to change our approach, and with change comes conflict. Great leaders know how to manage that conflict and I believe a female pastor can lead a church to impact their community for Christ in a positive way," said Guerra.

4. **Outreach.** Female leaders tend to be more community oriented both in and outside the church. They enjoy a quicker connection with children, mothers, single moms, single-parent families, and nonbelievers who value diversity.
5. **Perspective.** Female leadership introduces a new perspective on many things. The church can see new opportunities for outreach to the community, a fresh perspective on life, Scripture, family ministry, unique wisdom, diversity, mentoring young females for ministry, etc. Phil Schneider, superintendent of the Illinois Ministry Network, reiterated this point saying, "Women have a different perspective that can be a breath of fresh air from the pulpit to the execution of a church's strategy."¹¹¹
6. **Authenticity.** Having a female lead pastor can communicate to the community that your church is consistent in its theology of gender. It is living proof that equality and inclusion is more than a tagline. Superintendent Toby Schneckloth of the Nebraska District has seen this firsthand and affirms that "female lead pastors can increase the influence of the church in your community. As every other aspect of society is reaching for more inclusion and diversity, the church is seen as valuing them as well."¹¹²



GENEROSITY
Lord, help our people remain faithful to their tithes, offerings, and missions giving during the transition.

Perhaps Superintendent Aaron Hlavin of the Michigan District summarized the thoughts of his colleagues best saying, "Female leaders bring a perspective that is needed in leadership within the Kingdom. We are not the same without them."¹¹³

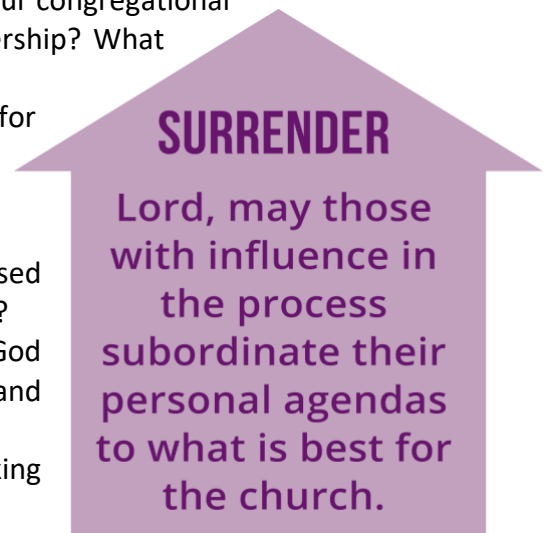
The most important thing to remember is that the image of God is most accurately reflected in both male and female, not in just one gender (Genesis 5:1-2). Female leadership helps us see the fullness of the Lord's character and divine nature in humanity.

Questions to Consider

What are the most important things a pastoral search committee would need to ask themselves before considering a female candidate? That was the question posed to district/network superintendents in the survey. Their responses could serve as an invaluable list of questions your search committee can use as a springboard for discussion.

1. Does each individual member of the search committee subscribe to the Assemblies of God's interpretation of Scripture as it relates to females in ministry? Why or why not?
2. Are we willing to accept that God may call a female to serve as the lead pastor of our church? Why or why not?

3. Can we as a board support a female pastor in the same way and to the same degree that we have supported male lead pastors in the past? If no, then why?
4. Does the theology, culture, and leadership community of our church allow for the acceptance of a female lead pastor?
5. What kind of resistance might we expect from those in our church and community who might not be able to accept a female lead pastor? How will we address any objections that may come from influencers and stakeholders?
6. How can a specific female candidate help us address the needs and weaknesses of our church? How can they help build upon our strengths?
7. What are our motives for considering a female lead pastor? Are they based on God's will or a desire to make a social statement?
8. Do we have a female candidate who possesses the qualifications, experience, and leadership skills to lead our church? Why or why not?
9. Will female candidates be exposed to the same kind of examination, respect, honor, and remuneration as male candidates?
10. Will having a female lead pastor make Jesus more or less appealing to nonbelievers in our surrounding neighborhood, town, or city?
11. How did our people respond to the two questions on our congregational survey that asked if they were open to female leadership? What insight do these responses give us in this process?
12. Have we asked our district/network leadership for résumés or recommendations of female candidates that meet our spiritual, educational, experiential, and leadership standards? Why or why not?
13. What practical impact points might need to be addressed as a result of having a female lead pastor in our church?
14. Are we capable of seeing a female leader as one whom God has placed in spiritual authority over us as individuals and our church?
15. Are there any other questions we should be asking ourselves regarding this matter?



Even if you do not have a female candidate that is qualified at this time, having this discussion now can strengthen your leadership community, increase your church's capacity for inclusion, and better equip your church for future pastoral searches.

Common Challenges to Overcome

When asked what the most important challenges a local church may need to overcome before considering a female candidate, those surveyed seemed to focus on five recurring themes: biblical illiteracy, male bias, apportionment, adjustments, and stereotypes.

1. **Biblical illiteracy.** As mentioned earlier, the most repeated obstacle raised by district superintendents was the existence of biblical illiteracy concerning the topic of female leadership. The Assemblies of God does not believe there are any biblical grounds to limit the role of women in ministry or pastoral leadership. Despite published position papers on the topic, our rich history of female leadership, and the growing number of female ordained ministers and elected female

leaders, some in our Assemblies of God churches seem unwilling to embrace a biblical view on this matter. “This is about the Bible, and biblical leadership is not gender specific,” writes Superintendent Rick Ross of the North Carolina AG Network.¹¹⁴ Superintendent Hilario Garza of the Northwest Hispanic District echoes this conviction saying, “God makes no exceptions when calling people to shepherd His Church; and as for the function of pastoring, women are just as capable as men.”¹¹⁵ Bill Welch of the Alaska District further elaborates saying, “Since early church history, women have been making significant contributions in leadership. Women established the Philippian church and Priscilla taught Apollos. We could go on and on. Leaving women out of the consideration marginalizes what God may want to do in a congregation.”¹¹⁶ If your team is considering a female candidate, it may be worth the effort to ask your district/network superintendent to teach on this subject during a Sunday morning service while you are in the search process. It may help your people better understand what Scripture says on the topic by hearing it from a person who represents the Fellowship in an official capacity.

RESILIENCE

Father, give our Board the physical endurance to handle all the necessary demands of this process.

- 2. Internal bias.** Nearly every superintendent mentioned the existence of a bias towards male leadership as an obstacle. The reasons given for this bias were the overwhelming prevalence of males in the upper levels of local church leadership. Although females normally make up most of a church’s volunteers, more men seem to serve in leadership positions such a Bible teacher, board member, deacon and on important teams like finance, missions, and search committees. Because male leadership has been so prevalent, it has found a seat front and center in our comfort zone. As a result, many church leaders who have an internal bias towards men have become one of the largest obstacles for women serving in lead pastoral roles.
- 3. Secularized apportionment.** Bias can often be found on the opposite ends of most controversial issues. A challenge has emerged in recent years from believers who aim for quotas without equal regard to qualifications. On the opposite end of the spectrum from the male bias mentioned earlier, the goal of apportionment is to grant or necessitate female leadership on the grounds that they are underrepresented. The result may be the perception that females should be lead pastors even if they lack the qualifications, theological training, or ministry experience. Just as male bias hinders female consideration, so also does a congregation’s fear of what may appear to be a form of gender activism.
- 4. Needed adjustments.** Getting a new pastor is a lot like a heart transplant. It takes time for the body to accept the heart and for the heart to adjust to the body. In the same way, the church will need to adjust to the realities of female leadership. Meeting places, decorum, potential pregnancy leaves, the level of spousal availability, the role of the pastor’s husband, and other stylistic differences are all things that will require time and adjustment. Hosting town hall meetings to prepare your people for these adjustments will go a long way.
- 5. General stereotypes.** Pop psychology has made a fortune selling gender stereotypes to the American public. We can mistakenly believe that men are more task oriented, and females are more relational or perhaps that women are more emotional, and men are more logical. The list can go on and on. The fact of the matter is that we cannot evaluate candidates through the prism of our own stereotypes. Your team will do well not only to avoid this pitfall but also to educate your church to do so as well.

Despite these obstacles, there was a general sense of optimism among those surveyed concerning the church's ability to overcome these obstacles. Over 600 churches nationally have already embraced female leadership and paved the way for others to follow. Don Detrick of the Northwest Ministry Network shared this sense of confidence saying, "Many congregants are open to having a woman lead pastor but need more information about AG history and a biblical theology about women in ministry."¹¹⁷

Moving Forward

As of 2021, the Assemblies of God has 37,713 ministers. Of that number, 21,442 are ordained males; and 4,051 or 18.9 percent are ordained females. If all churches required ordained lead pastors (which they do not) and those lead pastors represented our current proportion of female ordained ministers, then out of our 12,938 churches, 2,443 would be led by female pastors. At the present time, there are only 630 female lead pastors which means we have more work to do to close the gap. It begs the question: What can your search committee do now to explore this possibility? Allow me to suggest six practical things to move forward.

- 1. Include a female minister in the interview process.** Explore God's will by including a female candidate among those you interview. No matter what the outcome may be, this enables your board to do due diligence, get ahead of the learning curve, and communicate your openness to all the possibilities of God's will in the search process.
- 2. Ask your district/network superintendent for help.** There are several things they can do to help your team consider female leadership:
 - Meet with your pastoral search team to discuss the subject of female candidates, explaining the Assemblies of God's position on the subject, and answering any questions your team may have.
 - Share positive success stories of other churches in the district/network that have or have had female lead pastors.
 - Recommend qualified female candidates and identifying emerging female leaders as well as providing contact information and résumés.
 - Connect your search committee with other superintendents who have already explored these possibilities to share their observations.
 - Provide the names of current female lead pastors and churches that your team can speak with to better understand what female leadership looks like in its working gloves. Please see the footnotes for a list of the top four districts/networks that have the most female lead pastors.¹¹⁸
- 3. Use the online congregational survey the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network provides free of charge.** It can be customized for your church and one of the questions on the survey asks congregants if they would be open to female leadership. The follow up question asks why or why not. Using the survey and reviewing the results will help you navigate this possibility. A generic sample can be viewed at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/riseupsample>.



4. **Facilitate honest discussion.** Budget time in your search committee meeting to have an honest discussion about this topic. Using the discussion questions listed above in the section entitled “Questions to Consider” is a great place to start.
5. **Review your bylaws.** It is common for older and outdated bylaws to use words like he, him, his, himself, men, man or male to refer to the lead pastor and other leadership roles in your church. Replacing these gender specific words with more inclusive language will help your church consider all the possibilities of God’s will now and in the future.
6. **Prepare your church.** If your church is not open to female lead pastors or cannot come to an agreement on this issue, help your church wade into the water slowly by exposing them to effective female guest speakers on Sundays (other than Mother’s Day), female board members, or female associate pastors.

The Assemblies of God affirms that God calls women and gives them spiritual gifts for ministry. We believe our local churches should as well and now is the time for your team to ask, “Have we prayed about whether God has called a female to be our lead pastor?”

If you would like to use this chapter as a stand-alone resource to help your church better understand the Assemblies of God’s position on this issue, a PDF e-book version can be downloaded at [this link](#).

20. 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 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 pastorates. 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.*¹¹⁹

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.*¹²⁰

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.*¹²¹

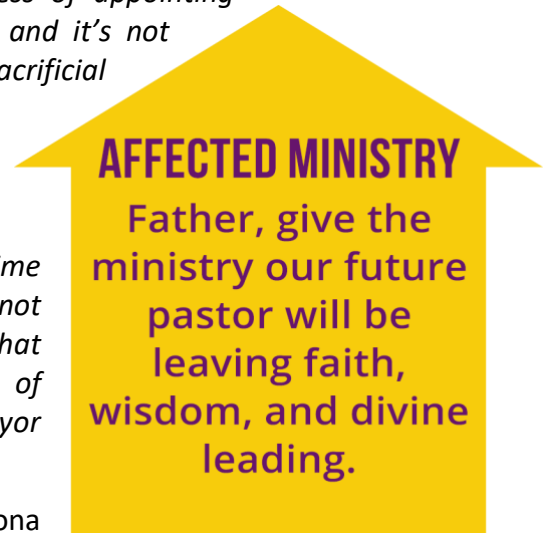
This frustration has resulted in a growing popularity of other succession models. Author Terry Roberts says:

*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.*¹²²

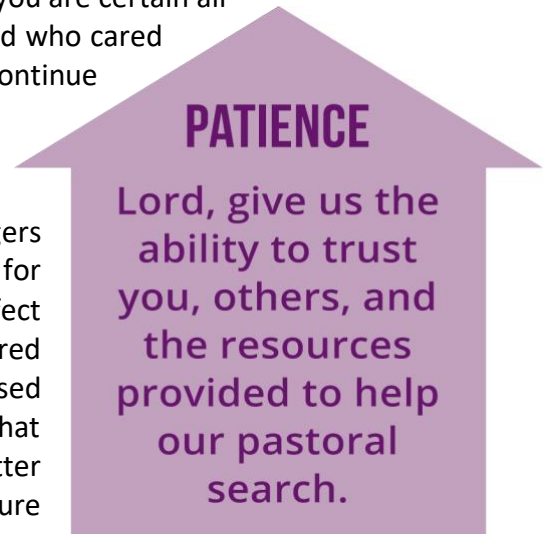
The results of a 2019 Barna research project found that "while the majority of church transitions occur because a pastor initiates their departure, planning ahead for an inevitable transition makes a big difference in congregants' experiences."¹²³

With that said let's jump into a few of the common reasons why leaders avoid succession planning.

A. Why leaders neglect succession planning. Moses trained, empowered, and released Joshua. The Bible mentions the names of 19 of King David's sons, but God told David that Solomon was to succeed him (1 Chronicles 22:9). Elijah mentored Elisha, Paul mentored Timothy, and Barnabas mentored John Mark. Even Jesus prepared His disciples to succeed Him; yet despite the biblical precedence for mentored succession, the process is difficult for most leaders to begin. Why might seasoned ministers neglect this noble task?



1. **Fearful procrastination.** Unfortunately, some ministers allow fear to suffocate their faith. They worry that succession will mean they will no longer be relevant or they will exist in a lame-duck status. Some are afraid it will deprive them of the joys of ministry or the opportunity to depart on their own terms. Others dread a future where they are not in control, leading the charge, financially stable or no longer possess a title. However, time never relieves us of the obligation of faith. Abraham understood this in his senior years and obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8 NIV). Waiting until you are certain all your questions are answered is not faith. The same God who cared for and directed us in the early days of our calling will continue to do so in our golden years as well.
2. **Unreasonable prerequisites.** Sometimes ministers neglect succession planning because they are waiting for the perfect situation to materialize. Often these triggers are as unreasonable as they are unlikely. They may wait for the perfect season, the perfect person, or the perfect opportunity. Other times they hold out for assured financial stability, a convenient timeline, or a promised severance. A few wait so long for an ideal scenario that time melts like an ice cube in the desert. There is no better day than today to start prayerful planning. Scripture encourages us to not despise small beginnings, because *“The LORD rejoices to see the work begin”* (Zechariah 4:10 NLT).
3. **Surrender of critical mass.** Critical mass is the minimum amount of resources required for an organization to grow on its own. The saddest stories about planned succession are those of ministers who allow the church to decline numerically, financially, and spiritually to the point where planned succession is either unattractive to a qualified successor or impossible for the church to accomplish. If they are not careful, these communities of faith may find themselves echoing the regret of God’s people who said, *“The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved”* (Jeremiah 8:20 NIV).
4. **Deferred opportunity.** Some seasoned and effective leaders enjoy a tenure of stable leadership that may last decades. However, if they are not intentional about planned succession, they can outlive their ability to be change agents. The lack of strategic mentoring can result in the next generation aging out while waiting on the bench. As a result, the church is not able to benefit from those who could have kept it relevant, current, and multigenerational. Consequently, the church must now jump two generations in a single bound. *“Carpe diem”* is a popular Latin phrase that means *“seize the day.”* In this case, however, some ministers defer opportunity.
5. **Absence of release.** Some ministers have a philosophical belief that succession planning should only be started after they feel a release from that ministry. They are not against succession planning but do not see a need for it because they still possess a strong call, vision, and energy level to lead the church. I would argue that is the time one should start planning.
6. **Misplaced identity.** A few ministers have allowed their current title or ministry to become the centerpiece of their identity. Their sense of belonging, self-esteem, and status are derived from their work rather than their relationships with God and family. To them, succession planning means the loss of self-worth, fulfillment, and happiness. Because they cannot imagine being or doing anything else other than their current title or role, they hold on with white knuckles until misfortune pries them loose.



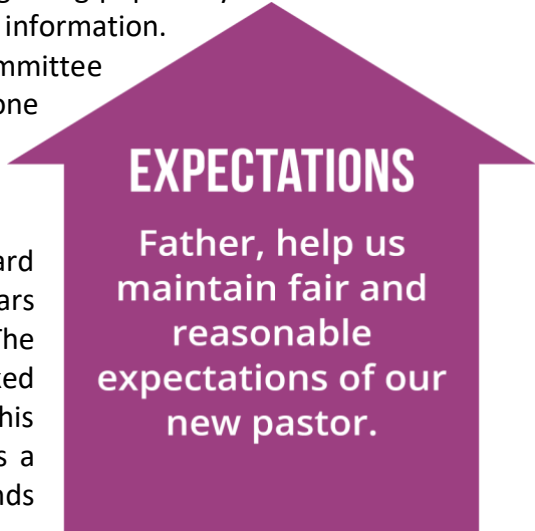
7. **Emotional anchors.** All of us journey through life with emotional baggage—even ministers. Whether it is fear, insecurity, disappointment, deferred hope, or sadness, some ministers allow their emotional anchors to keep them and their churches close to the harbor. In Numbers 27:15-17, Moses prayed that God would send a successor to lead the nation; but when God took him up on the offer, Moses struggled with letting go, complained, and lashed out at others (Deuteronomy 3:23-27). In the end, however, he prevailed over his dark emotions and ended up obeying God (Numbers 27:27). You can also.
8. **Disobedient existence.** God told Moses to prepare for a leadership transition by mentoring Joshua to be his successor. Numbers 27:12-23 and Deuteronomy 3:23-28 record this command that is punctuated with the phrase, “*Moses did as the LORD commanded him.*” Many leaders know God has already told them to start preparing a successor. They can sense it in their spirit, may even long to be released from the heavy burden, and feel the tide turning in their ministries. However, they just cannot bring themselves to obey. As a result, they choose to embrace convenient disobedience rather than joyful adventure.

Good and wise succession planning need not limit a leader’s options or stamp an expiration date on their ministry. Moses continued to lead the people of Israel and prepare his successor for several years after God told him to equip Joshua. The important thing was that he started; and once he started, momentum carried him along and the Spirit filled in the blanks. He can do the same for your church.

Now that we have identified the most common obstacles, let me comment on the four most common succession models and why two are gaining in popularity.

- B. **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 succession that are gaining popularity and proving effective. They are listed briefly for the sake of information.

1. **Traditional succession.** The board or search committee interviews prospective candidates and recommends one of them to the congregation for a vote. This resource goes into detail and presents 13 stages of how this can be accomplished.
2. **Relayed succession.** 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.** The lead pastor and the board collaborate to select a person (current staff or future staff member) who is 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 outgoing pastor, and loved and trusted by the people. This model is becoming increasingly popular in churches with over 500 attendees.
4. **Scheduled succession.** The lead pastor informs the board one to two years before they intend to step down or retire. The first year is spent searching for 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 upon by all (pastor, successor, and board).

C. The gaining popularity of mentored succession. In mentored succession the lead pastor and the board collaborate and select a person (current staff or future staff member) to be mentored and trained with the intention of one day leading the church. This model has proven successful and is gaining popularity in larger churches where the outgoing pastor has had an effective, long-term ministry of over ten years. There are several books authored by transition specialists and pastors who have successfully navigated the uncertain waters of mentored succession. Author Terry Roberts has documented the fact that the model has been the cultural norm in many large churches in Asian cultures.¹²⁴

Glen Wolf is one of the first millennials to have made an academic and thoughtful contribution to this body of work. In his doctoral thesis he sounds the alarm and gives the following four reasons why succession planning must become a priority.¹²⁵

- Succession is inevitable in every church.
- Succession is generationally urgent.
- Succession is most important in ministry.
- Succession is a topic most pastors are unprepared and uninformed about.



Although the entire process takes longer than a traditional search, when done right, it has proven to insulate the church from declines in attendance, engagement and giving. Many churches who have used the mentored succession model have actually grown on the other side of the transition.

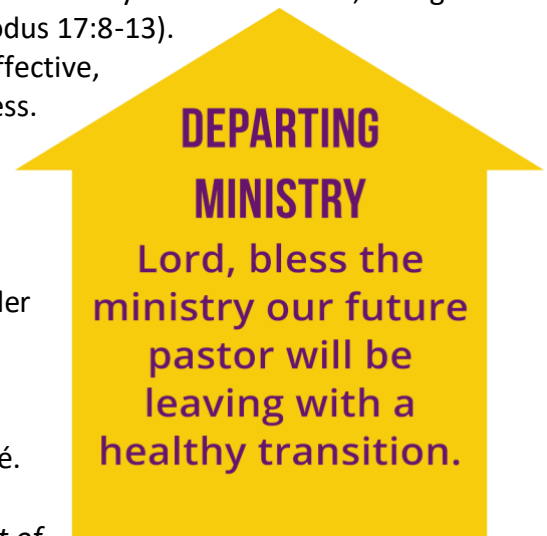
D. Stages of mentored succession. Although each mentored succession story is different, I did notice common denominators and intentional processes that were employed in the handoff. I have summarized them in the following seven stages of varying length:

Stage 1: Embracing change. This stage involves the current pastor becoming ready, willing, and able to let go. This stage may be the most critical step because it requires the leader to be able to let go of responsibility and influence. Some can let go of one of those, but a smooth transition requires a person to be able to gracefully release both. Bryant Wright compares the process to knowing when someone has found the right person to marry. "You just know," says Wright.¹²⁶ Honest self-reflection, repeated years of plateauing or declining ministry, waning vision, a prolonged period of being in maintenance mode, and decreasing energy and physical ability all play a part in coming to grips with reality. One leader told me his moment of enlightenment was when he realized he had not killed or birthed a new ministry in over five years. However, at the end of the day all leaders must be open to hearing God's voice and moving forward with the same faith and surrender they possessed in their early days of ministry. After revealing a succession plan to Abraham when he was 75 years old, God instructed him to "go from your people and your father's household to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Even in the twilight years of his life God required Abraham to walk off the map and enter an unknown season without promises or certainty. Age never relieves us of our obligation to live and transition by faith.

Stage 2: Finding Joshua. This stage involves the lead pastor and board to collaborate in identifying a person (current staff or future staff member) who is mentored and trained with the intention of one

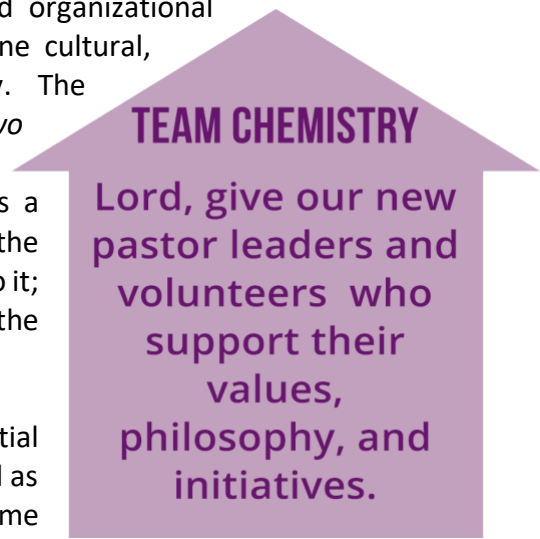
day leading the church. There are many ways leaders have achieved this, but God’s Word gives us a wonderful model. After Moses was told that he would not be leading the children of Israel into the Promised Land, he prayed that God would appoint a new leader for the nation. The Lord instructed Moses to mentor Joshua to succeed him in leadership. *“Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit of leadership and lay your hand on him”* (Numbers 27:18 NIV, emphasis added). What is the “spirit of leadership”? Scholars are not entirely sure, but the context suggests five characteristics successors should have.

- **History of faithfulness.** Joshua had already proven himself faithful to God, Moses, and the nation’s mission. He had served faithfully as Moses’s assistant since Mount Sinai (Exodus 33:11). He was not influenced by negative peer pressure and was willing to be among the courageous minority (Numbers 14:5-9). He won battles, raised up military commanders, and constantly grew into his calling. He had already proven himself to be faithful in leadership positions, was loyal to Moses and attuned to where God was leading the nation.
- **Successful followership.** As strange as it may sound, the best leaders are those who have been successful followers in prior seasons of their development. The capacity to follow reveals that a potential leader is capable of being loyal to something other than themselves, their own ideas, or personal passions. It also shows they know how to be on the implementation side of the leadership equation. Anyone can dream dreams that others must implement, but successful followers know how the parts need to be connected in order to get things done. Not all followers are leaders, but all outstanding leaders have a history of faithfully following in different contexts.
- **DNA carrier.** The successor understands and appreciates the culture of the church and is able to be a "DNA" carrier of the church's values and vision.
- **Proven results.** Joshua had more than God’s confidence; he also had Moses’s confidence and the trust of clan leaders from each of Israel’s tribes. Why? He won battles, brought wins to the table, and had a track record of success (Exodus 17:8-13). If something was entrusted to Joshua, it became effective, grew, and contributed to the nation’s overall success. Unfortunately, we live in a day when optics are valued more than results. Leaders are often judged more by their trendy vocabulary and slick appearance than their track record. There is a difference between faithfulness and results. A leader without results is nothing more than an untested theoretician. Unproven theoreticians usually have ideas, vocabulary, and speech that is more impressive than the results column on their résumé. However, Joshua could deliver results.
- **Divine giftings.** The Lord said Joshua had *“the spirit of leadership.”* Scholars are uncertain as to what that may mean. There appears to be two options. The original Hebrew word used for “spirit” could be applied to mean both “courage to leadership” or a “God-given gift of leadership.” Either way, it appears Joshua was anointed by God in a way that empowered him with courage and leadership. I personally think it implies the overlapping of natural talent and supernatural anointing. Joshua was blessed to have both.



Stage 3: Wading into culture. This stage 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 church, mentoring pastor, board, staff, and local community. At the end of this time, the lead pastor and board decide if the potential successor can advance to the next stage or they need to keep looking.

Stage 4: Testing compatibility. This step 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). Glen Wolf summarizes this process as a hands-on progression. First, the mentor does it and the mentee watches; second, the mentee helps the mentor do it; third, the mentor helps the mentee do it, and fourth, the mentee does it and the mentor watches.¹²⁷



Stage 5: Organizational confirmation involves the potential candidate being interviewed and considered by the board as "pastor-elect." 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 a predetermined date or the lead pastor resigns, retires, or dies.

Stage 6: Facilitating success. This stage 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 backfills their weaknesses. It also may involve giving ineffective, outdated or leader dependent ministries a graceful funeral. This allows the board and pastor to help the pastor-elect by giving them the highest likelihood of future success. Walter Harvey's book compares this stage of mentored succession to an alley-oop pass in basketball. Harvey claims mentored succession requires the predecessor to set up plays that selflessly allow their successor to slam dunk the ball and energize the team and the crowd at the same time.¹²⁸

Stage 7: The handoff. This stage occurs when the lead pastor resigns, retires, or dies. At that time, the pastor-elect is immediately presented to the church as a candidate to be voted upon. The previous pastor's role is to transition into a new phase of ministry while lending influence to their successor. Jeff Adams pastored Graceway Church in Kansas City, Missouri for 33 years. After a successful handoff to his successor, Jeff said, *"My success is inseparable from that of my successor... I was to use my influence to be the bridge for him to the congregation. I was to withdraw all of the funds from my credibility bank and use them to pave his road to success."*¹²⁹

Most succession specialists agree that every church is different and although steps are helpful each plan must be customized to fit the needs and realities of their unique situation. In their book on the

succession process, William Vandebloemen and Bird warn, “While succession is uniformly important and urgent, there is no uniform approach that works for all churches.”¹³⁰

I have 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 channel at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>. I have also written a companion resource entitled, *Mentored Succession, A Better Way*, that can be accessed at www.agspe.org/ms.pdf.

E. 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 mentored succession model through increased collaboration.

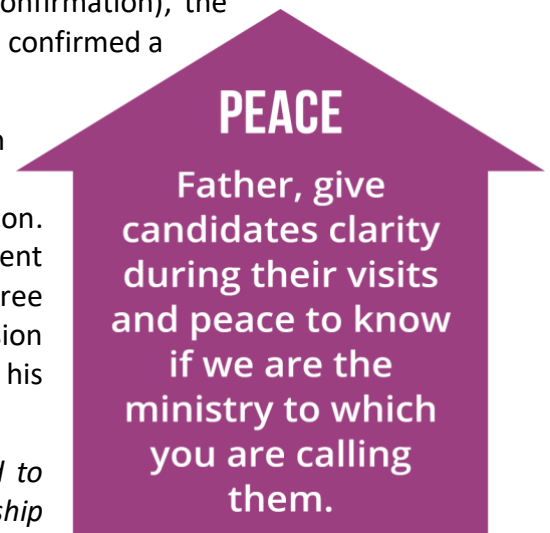
- **Presbyterian** forms of governance require the least amount of organizational-wide collaboration since the governing body is empowered to act on behalf of the members.
- **Episcopal** forms of governance can embrace mentored succession by planning ahead and seeking the blessing and cooperation of the appointing bishop or organizational overseer.
- **Congregational** forms of governance require the most methodical amount of collaboration because the voting members must be persuaded to approve the concept because they see it as in the best interest of the church.

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.”¹³¹ 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), the conviction of the official board (second confirmation), and 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:

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



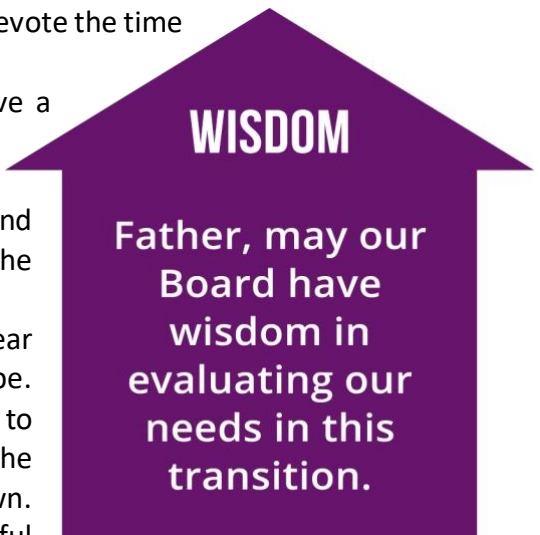
appreciate at risk as well as jeopardizing the very mission you're working to extend beyond your tenure.¹³²

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."¹³³

F. 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.

1. The full commitment, willing involvement, and enthusiastic leadership of the outgoing pastor. Gary Smith's book outlines the following five things the departing pastor must bring to the table if the transition is to work.¹³⁴

- **God's will.** The outgoing pastor must be convinced that the transition for them, the church, and the new leader is God's will and be willing to devote the time and effort needed to ensure its success.
- **Financial security.** The outgoing pastor must have a financial plan to provide for their family without reliance upon the church.
- **Marital unity.** The outgoing pastor's spouse (and family) must be fully supportive of helping the incoming pastor succeed.
- **Future ministry.** The outgoing pastor must have clear direction on what their next stage of ministry will be.
- **Humility.** The outgoing pastor must be prepared to meet the challenge with humility and see the church's success as more important than their own. Without humility, there will be no successful succession.



- 2. The collaboration and participation of the governing board.**
- 3. Patience and respect for the outgoing pastor and the teachability of the successor.**
- 4. 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.**
- 5. A written plan that clearly outlines a process, roles, dates, and "triggers" that start the gradual transfer of authority in several different areas.**
- 6. Fiscal health of the church to finance the transition.**

G. Stand-out literature and best practices. Of all the material I have read on mentored succession, the following are standouts:

- 1. Lee Kricher's book, *Seamless Pastoral Transition, 3 Imperatives – 6 Pitfalls*, is an excellent work focusing on the leadership the outgoing pastor must give to mentored succession. His transparency and practical examples from his own story are outstanding.¹³⁵**
- 2. Will Heath's book, *Embracing Succession, Helping Ministry Leaders Confront the Personal Side of Transition*, is a must read for any minister considering retirement.**
- 3. Gary Smith's book, *Pastoral Transitions, A Seamless Handoff of Leadership*, may be the best on the practical, emotional, and spiritual maturity that will be required of the outgoing pastor.¹³⁶ It is a must read for any minister transitioning out after a long pastorate.**

4. **Glen Wolf** is one of the first millennials to make an academic and thoughtful contribution to this body of work. Not only is he part of City Church in Sanford Florida's succession plan, but he got a doctorate in the subject because he wanted to get it right. His doctoral thesis is an outstanding read that maintains a wonderful balance between academic study and practical application. Chapter five recommends a list of things both the outgoing and incoming pastor must do to contribute to a successful succession. The entire work is outstanding, but chapter five alone is gold.¹³⁷
5. **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.¹³⁸ 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 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.
6. **Jeff Harlow's** book, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading a Healthy Church Transition*, outlines the wise integration of the mentored succession plan while being true to the congregational/presbyterian model of church governance.¹³⁹ His book is a practical and transparent example of how a strong leader can transition a church without being autocratic.
7. **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.¹⁴⁰
8. **Gary L. Johnson's** book, *Leader Shift: One Becomes Less While Another Becomes More*, offers several convincing arguments for this model.¹⁴¹ 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.
9. **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.¹⁴² 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.
10. **Barna Group's** 2019 study entitled, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, offered the following five goals for outgoing leaders:¹⁴³
 - Communicate clearly, honestly, and often.
 - Target unity. Remember, it's about the Kingdom.
 - If you can, plan! Don't coast out but leave with intentionality.
 - Aim for a graceful exit. Make a hard thing easy for others.
 - Keep asking why. Be aware of your emotions, motives, and insecurities.
11. **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.¹⁴⁴



AFFECTED FAMILIES
 Lord, bless the ministry staff and family members on both sides of this transition as they adjust to a new ministry.

12. Expand Consulting Partners' book entitled, *Tsunami, Open Secrets to Pastoral Succession & Transition* is more of an introduction to their paid consulting services and philosophy than a how-to resource. Transition consultant Sam Chand is associated with Expand Consulting and is one of the most knowledgeable strategists working with very large churches. The book's three appendixes also offer outstanding questions and checklists to help identify the needs and expectations of the outgoing and incoming pastor.¹⁴⁵

H. Application to your church. The literature confirms that planned succession is one of the best ways 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. While pastoring a large church, I recognized that our bylaws did not give me the authority to determine either. That is why I tried to lead in a way that provided both options and would recommend the following options:

- 1. Plan A—Mentored Succession:** If possible, the lead pastor and board seek to mentor a successor using the seven stages 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 13-step transition 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 strategy. I am willing and able to offer any advice or coaching along the way.

21. DEPARTING LEADERS & COURAGEOUS INTENTIONALITY [\(back to table\)](#)

I believe fear is the primary reason 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.”¹⁴⁶ 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 strategic contingency, its existence has the potential of becoming an “outstanding task” in need of execution dates, progress, and constant attention.
- **Disunity.** Those who have their own agenda 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. A perceived sense of insecurity can cause staff members to secretly start looking for employment elsewhere. Large givers can feel unsure and restrain or insulate themselves from generosity, capital campaigns, or needed initiatives. Volunteers can be cautious about making commitments, and fringe attenders and members who feel connected to the lead pastor may 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. Author Gary Smith is convinced that “most of the success of a pastoral transition rises and falls on the shoulders of the outgoing pastor.”¹⁴⁷ Succession expert Jerry David claims many transitions are unintentionally sabotaged by insecure leaders who undermine their successors in a way that contributes to their failure.¹⁴⁸ If a transition is dependent upon the outgoing pastor’s support, the pastor must be ready emotionally, financially, intellectually, and spiritually. Some may be more ready to be relieved of their responsibilities than they are of their influence.

TEAM CHEMISTRY

Father, begin giving our new pastor divine direction concerning outreach to our community.

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 was kind enough to make the journey, cut the 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 its lifespan. Seasons of growth produced rings with larger spaces between them. This was a result of the tree 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, long winters, or limited sunlight. Rings scarred by burn marks reflect fires the tree endured, and dark discoloring reveals a temporary infestation of insects or fungus. 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 and healthy. 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 impressed upon me that it is not about me, but the tree's survival. 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. Therefore, I concluded 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 soon, 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 a way that an eventual transition would be staged for success. I could prepare and resource those who would be charged with finding the next pastor. I could even mentor in a way that presented the possibility of both internal and external candidates.

Churches can be like garages in that 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 every one of them on in a patient and methodical manner.

After being at Highpoint for nearly 17 years, I felt I had earned enough trust and credibility to absorb any fallout 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 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 and energy to lead them, but I felt sustaining them would become a burden to someone who did not share my passion or sense of divine mandate.
7. **Exit strategies.** Formulating exit strategies for large 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 our 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 unexpected ever happened to me.

All 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 is 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 outlook.

However, there still was one mountain to climb. I had enjoyed working with a large board of 12 people (including myself). Although I desperately wanted to work arm in arm with my full board to develop and train them for an eventual 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. Two had already exhibited an inability to keep confidence regarding board decisions. Their desire to be liked often blinded them from Kingdom opportunities. I felt their 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



DIVINE CALL

Lord, give our new pastor an irresistible call and mandate from you to lead this church.

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 confidence. 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 serving 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/her departure.*
- **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 may 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. We have served together for nearly two decades. You love me and I love you. 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*

AFFECTED MINISTRY

Lord, give the ministry our future pastor will leave wisdom, faith, and clarity in their own search.

ago, I used an existing but empty church bank account to 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 when it occurs. This would involve the following:

- **A Commitment of Confidentiality.** Have all four of us sign a mutual nondisclosure agreement.
- **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.
- **Partial reveal.** Introduce the critical six select chapters of the manual and allow you to read it independently before our next meeting.
- **Meeting #2.** Discussion of the first six chapters of the partial reveal.
- **Full reveal.** Introduce the entire 140-page manual and allow you to read it independently.
- **Meeting #3.** Discuss the first half of the manual consisting of Chapters 1-19.
- **Meeting #4.** Discuss Appendixes A-Z.
- **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. 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 this chapter and two others entitled "[Internal Candidates](#)" and "[Succession Models](#)."

22. DEPARTURES, MINISTRY ETHICS & ETIQUETTE [\(back to table\)](#)

I never worried that much about Highpoint's future 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 precede 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 influenced 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 my answer to that question and my pledge that I wrote for Highpoint's succession manual, read to the church, had my family members sign, posted to social media, 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. If you are a member of your church's board, it will help you better understand the importance of your church bonding with their new pastor.



ROLE CLARITY
Father, give the Board clarity as they determine the profile and position description for the next pastor.

Pastor Gene's Pledge

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

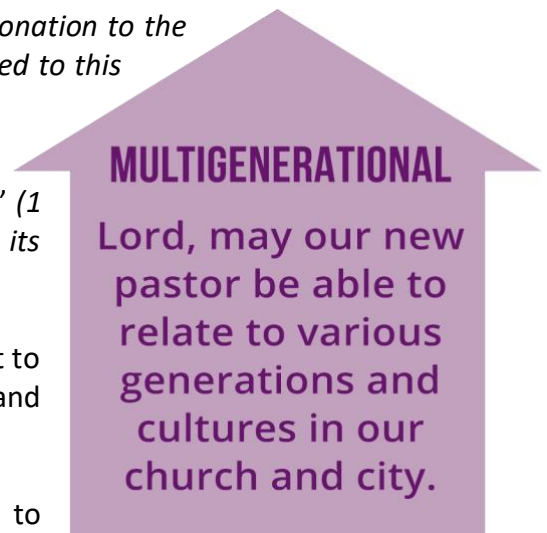
- 1. Not to interfere.** *I pledge to use my influence positively, not to speak critically or to act inappropriately during this or any other transition the church may experience.*
- 2. To facilitate success.** *I pledge to make the transition as smooth as possible by preparing the people, resourcing 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.

- 3. 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 their arrival.*
- 4. 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.*
- 5. 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.*
- 6. 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.*
- 7. 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.*
- 8. 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 like that of John the Baptist who said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30 ESV).*
- 9. 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.*
- 10. 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.*

I made this commitment not only because I wanted Highpoint to succeed but also because God's Word, ministerial ethics, and common sense require it.

- A. The Bible commands it.** The Bible commands ministers to respect the boundaries, seasons, and calling of other ministers. The Apostle Paul spoke of his respect for the ministry and work of others when he said, "*It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation*" (Romans 15:20 NIV, Emphasis added). As a member and minister of the Gospel, God's Word instructs me to respect the unique contribution of other ministers. When speaking of the different leadership transitions that occurred in the Corinthian church, Paul



said, “What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task . . . The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor” (1 Corinthians 3:5,8 NIV). My season of labor was over, and now I needed to honor the purpose God has ordained for the new pastor.

B. Ministerial ethics requires it. As a minister, I have been credentialed with the Assemblies of God. To maintain that credential, I must agree to what is called “ministerial courtesy” (Article IX, Section 8). This includes things like:

1. Not interfering in another pastor’s church.
2. Not communicating with people in a way that may undermine the credibility or influence of the new pastor.
3. Making requests, suggestions, or fundraising through anyone other than the lead pastor.
4. Not criticizing a pastor to the people they lead.

This is called “discourteous conduct,” and I sign a piece of paper each year renewing my commitment to these and other standards.

C. Lastly, common sense affirms it. Leadership is NOT a position, a title, or the address of a church. Leadership is influence. That is why, be it doctors, lawyers, or even insurance agents, every profession has its own professional courtesy. It is also why departing ministers usually make a clean break and give the new pastor plenty of margin to lead and bond with the new congregation. As the outgoing pastor, I knew I had to lead the way and communicate why this was necessary for Highpoint to continue to thrive.

The goal of a transition is NOT to prolong the departing pastor’s ministry, legacy, or influence. It is to help the church bond with their new pastor and ensure a successful future. John the Baptist modeled this kind of ministerial courtesy when he said about Jesus, “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (John 3:30 KJV). So, if you feel your departing pastor pulling back, do not get your feelings hurt or take it personally. They are only putting your needs above their own and being true to their commitment to ministerial ethics and etiquette.

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

Statistics repeatedly reveal that churches in pastoral transition experience a decline in morale, attendance, and giving.¹⁴⁹ 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).

That is why you should consider launching a sustainability initiative that teaches your people about God's purpose for leadership transitions and encourages them to recognize that change is part of God's growth process. It is important for them to understand that 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.

SUSTAINABILITY

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

- A. Initiative purpose.** The purpose of a sustainability initiative is to be proactive in building faith to overcome the common declines in attendance, engagement and giving so common in pastoral transitions.
- B. Initiative benefits.** There are many powerful benefits of a sustainability initiative. Here are few.
1. **Helping** your entire congregation understand the Biblical purpose for leadership transitions.
 2. **Giving** your people a powerful 40-day prayer guide with a daily focus to provide a 360° spiritual covering over everyone involved in the transition.
 3. **Fortifying** your church from the normal decreases in attendance, giving and engagement so often associated with pastoral transitions.
 4. **Empowering** your people by giving them practical things they can do to help the church thrive during the pastoral transition.
 5. **Teaching** your people to embrace biblical, healthy, and reasonable expectations.
 6. **Building** a new faith and willingness to embrace this new season God has ordained.
 7. **Learning** the reasons, requirements, and rewards of supporting the new pastor.
 8. **Encouraging** your people to make a one-year commitment to support your church through the entire transition.
- C. Initiative components.** The *Rise Up* sustainability initiative can include some or all the following eight components:
1. A 40-day churchwide prayer focus.
 2. Churchwide podcast distribution on, "6 Ways to Support Your Church."

3. Independent reading by distributing copies of the short paperback book entitled, *Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition*.
4. Leadership modeling a positive and biblical transition.
5. Preaching series by Superintendent Roncone or his designee for three weeks to prepare the church.
6. Small group curriculum, with the companion resource (*Defying Gravity*), and interactive discussion questions.
7. Pastor-to-person meetings with the congregation.
8. Commitment Sunday where the church consecrates themselves for the journey.

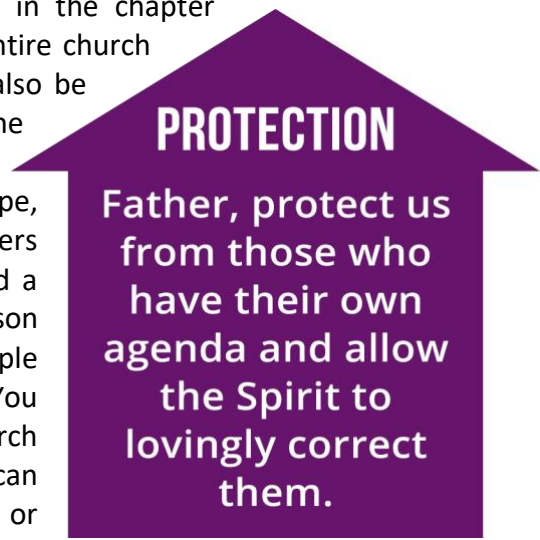
Following are some suggestions on how that might look.

D. Initiative description.

1. **Purpose.** To prepare your church and be proactive in overcoming the common obstacles associated with pastoral transitions.
2. **Title.** *Rise Up. Growing and Thriving in a 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, four-week small group Bible study, companion book (*Defying Gravity*), and 40 days of prayer guide.
5. **Involvement levels.** Sunday morning services, small group meetings, one-on-one interactions, independent reading, and individual prayer focus.

E. Initiative strategy. There is no “one way” or “silver bullet” when it comes to an effective sustainability initiative. Each church has a unique set of circumstances that will influence the strategy they adopt. Go through the list of options below and customize an intentional sustainability campaign that works for your church. I’m here to help make recommendations if you need me.

1. **A 40-day churchwide prayer focus.** The entire church is called to individual prayer. 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. **Churchwide podcast distribution.** To help give hope, faith, and practical instruction to your church members the week after your pastor departs, I have recorded a special podcast interview with transition specialist Jason Lowe. In that podcast we discuss six things your people can do to help the church and board in this transition. You can send the link via email or text to all your church members; and by simply clicking a hyperlink, they can listen to the audio interview on their smart phone or computer. You can also print the link in your church bulletin. Following is an invitation you can copy and paste to an email or mass text to the members of your church.



Change is not always easy, especially when it involves a pastoral transition. To help our people at [insert church name] better understand this process and how to help, the board has provided an audio interview that addresses six positive things church members and attendees can do to grow through a pastoral transition. Click this link to listen: www.agspe.org/RUready.mp3.

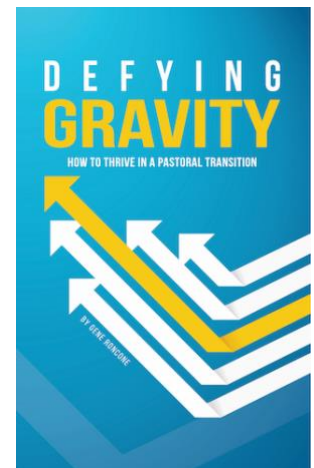
This is an opportunity for the board to show the church you are out in front of these issues and that they can count on your leadership.

3. Independent book reading. Another powerful way to prepare your entire church for this journey is to distribute copies of the short book, *Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition*. The book is in a small paperback format with only 70 pages and very short chapters. It has been strategically priced to enable you to provide a copy to every adult in your church. I would recommend you purchase and distribute as many copies as you are able to the following congregants (in prioritized order):

- Availability to anyone who wants a copy.
- Every person on the membership roster.
- Every volunteer in the church.
- Every ministry/department leader in the church.

Following is a brief description of the book.

Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition by Gene Roncone. *Your church is experiencing a pastoral transition and you're unsettled about the potential changes coming to your church. You and others may even have different theories about why this change has occurred and want to avoid the normal decrease in attendance, giving and engagement associated with pastoral transitions. But God is up to something new and getting ready to take you and your church to the next level of spiritual growth. In this book, pastoral transition specialist Gene Roncone helps you understand the Biblical purpose for pastoral transitions and how they bring something good to our lives. Gene will also help you understand how to pray for your church, how you can thrive during a pastoral change, how to care for your new pastor and how to embrace God's new thing. After reading this book you will be ready and prepared for what can be one of the most exciting seasons of spiritual growth you have ever experienced!*



Although this book was created as a stand-alone resource, it can also be used in conjunction with the small group curriculum. Either way, it is a powerful tool that can be an encouraging resource to your people throughout the entire transition. You can learn more about how to order both small and large quantities of the book by [clicking this link](#).

- 4. Healthy modeling.** A healthy transition will require your leaders to model the traits of a biblical changeover with faith, optimism, honor and mutual respect. This would include having the board, staff, and outgoing pastor meet and be the first ones to sign the “member commitment” and implement the concepts outlined in the appendix entitled, “[Parting Well](#).”
- 5. Teaching series.** Superintendent Roncone has written a three-week motivational 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 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 from your people to be successful in the long run.
 - **Part 3: Embracing God's New Thing.** The conclusion of the series is 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 signing them and bringing them to the altar as an offering to the Lord. The service is then concluded with a corporate time of prayer and consecration.
6. **Small group Bible studies.** For four weeks your entire church can go through the same small group curriculum entitled, *Defying Gravity*. The *Defying Gravity* small group resource contains four Bible study lessons (with discussion 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 either the Sunday morning preaching series, companion paperback book, or Bible study. The small group study can also be used as a stand-alone resource. The weekly small group curriculum and discussion questions can be found in the appendix entitled, "[Churchwide Small Group Study](#)."
7. **Pastor-to-person meetings.** To leverage the influence and trust that people have in the outgoing pastor, the departing minister could host 2-3 evening meetings a week with 6-8 people at a time in his/her 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 donate 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 month 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 face-to-face interaction with 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 who will not be considered as candidates.



SENSITIVITY

Lord, give our Board direction, clarity, and peace concerning who should be interviewed.

8. **Commitment Sunday.** The third week of the preaching/teaching series will consist of a shorter sermon with the board, staff, and outgoing pastor standing together on the platform and explaining the member commitment. The service will end by asking each member to personally sign the member commitment and walk forward to leave it at the altar as an offering to the Lord while the worship team leads in worship. The service will then conclude with prayer asking for God's blessing and favor on the church and the unknown person God has already appointed to be your new pastor. A customizable template of the member commitment in Microsoft Word format can be downloaded from the [Digital Resources section](#) of the PDF version of this manual.

The *Rise Up* sustainability initiative has been a game-changing resource for our churches in Colorado and Utah. Every church that has used it has seen candidates get elected with stronger votes ranging from 93-100%. It was created by Superintendent Roncone and is unique to the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network. You can read testimonials from other search committees that have used this resource under the testimonial tab at <https://generoncone.org/riseup#realtestimonies>.

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, 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 what your letter may look like:

Greetings (insert your church name here),

On Sunday, (month) (date), I announced in both worship services that I will be leaving (insert church name) 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 (insert church name). 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 our 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 search to identify God's person to lead our church into the future. The board will be using the *Rise Up* pastoral transition manual. The manual contains thirteen steps to identify God's will for a new pastor and is the most comprehensive, researched, and practical reference for pastoral transitions available today. The board is capable, resourced, and ready to lead.

My last Sunday will be (month and day). Until that time, I pledge our deepest commitment to prepare the church for your new pastor. The board and I have collaborated to launch a 40-day emphasis called, "*Rise Up: Thriving in Pastoral Transitions.*" We are excited about what God can and will do when *all the people come 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.
- A small paperback book entitled, *Defying Gravity* and small group curriculum to help us understand God's purpose in pastoral transitions.
- "Pastor-to-person" meetings with (insert spouse name) and me in the evenings to say goodbye, 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 where at the end of the message we will commit ourselves to this journey of faith.



ANTICIPATION
Lord, may our new pastor's family feel the same peace and excitement the Board feels about them.

Serving the people of (insert church name) for the past (insert #) years and loving our community has been a privilege we 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, (insert church name) will rise to the occasion and be amazed by what God does!

More in the coming weeks,

Pastor (insert your name)

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.¹⁵⁰ 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 between 6-8 months. However, we believe our prior planning and preparation through the *Rise Up* resource may enable us to identify a candidate sooner. 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.

CONFIRMATION

Lord, give the entire church a sense of peace and confirmation through the vote of our membership.

6. Selecting the most qualified, available, and willing 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 to vote on the candidate 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 God-honoring conclusion without activism 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 or interpretations 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*.¹⁵¹ I have also added a few below that I used during my own season of district service. They can be given out ahead of time so responses can reflect thought 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 to prepare the 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?

D. Employee checklist. I used the following departure checklist while pastoring. It 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. The departing pastor should have removed all personal belongings from their workspace 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 board.
 - 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



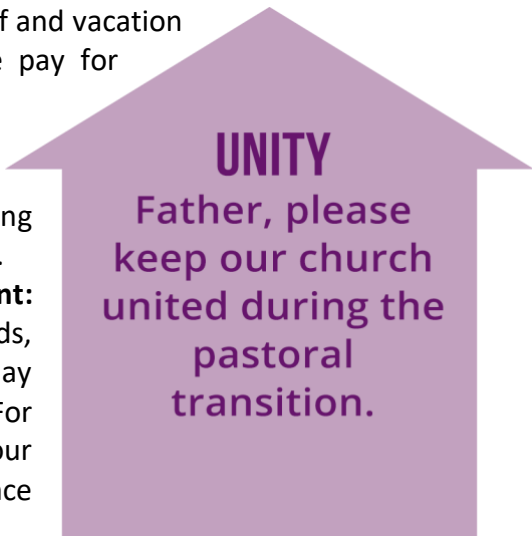
are not permitted to keep company phones or dedicated numbers unless authorized by the board.

- Electronic logins:** All computer and electronic login information 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 other reimbursables.
- 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)
5. Most recent board-approved membership roster with the first and last name of every member.

F. Blessing service. The need for a church to “leave” their bond to a former pastor and freely “cleave” to the new pastor is like the requirement for marriage given in Genesis 2:24. Transition specialist Joseph Umidi writes, “Saying farewell to the departing leader and his or her family, accomplishing good closure, and praying for the blessing of a commission in a corporate prayer time are important to your church members and the departing leader. Well-managed closure prepares the congregation for beginning the new courtship process and helps them remain open to receiving and accepting the unique ministry of the new leader.”¹⁵² The following can be used as a guide for a blessing service. The service can take place informally in a room of the church or publicly as part of a church service.

Your Church

Congregational 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 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. It is a 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 and 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:

CHARACTER

Lord, may all those involved on both sides of the transition have integrity, honesty, and trust in God.

Search Committee Retreat

Friday Evening

5–6:30 pm
6:30–7 pm
7–10 pm

Dinner together.

Prayer (see prayer focus).

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
9:45–10 am
10–11:45 am
11:45 am–1 pm
1–1:30 pm
1:30–2:30 pm
2:30–3:30 pm
3:30–3:45 pm
3:45–4:15 pm

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).

Break.

Write church summary/bio. See the appendix entitled “[Church, Neighborhood, and Community Profile.](#)”

Lunch together.

Review of biblical qualifications and characteristics form. See the appendix entitled “[Desirable Qualities.](#)”

Group discussion regarding biblical qualifications and desired qualities to isolate common denominators.

Group writes pastoral job description. See the appendix entitled “[Job Description.](#)”

Break.

Group writes profile of ideal pastor. See the appendix entitled “[Pastor Profile.](#)”

- 4:15–4:30 pm Group reviews, explains, and signs the “[Member Commitment](#)” 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 “[Transition Budget](#)” for more information.
- 5–6 pm Prayer together.
- 6–7:15 pm Dinner together.

Dismissal

D. TRANSITION 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:

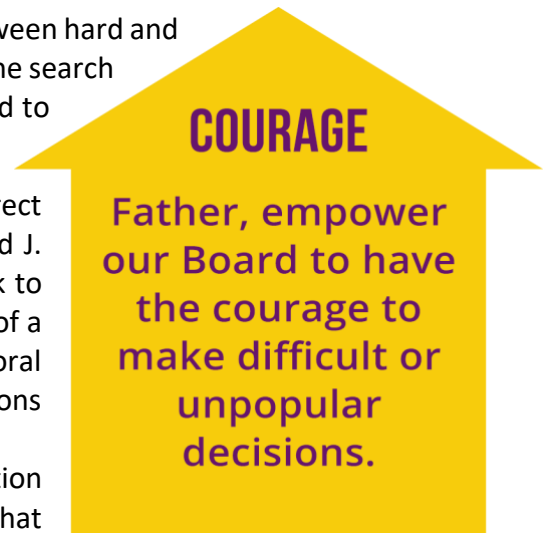
For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish" (Luke 14:28-30 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 transitions, they listed some of the following considerations among their list of hidden costs:¹⁵³

- 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 visitors, new members, and families deciding to make your church their new church home.
- 4. Transition expenses.** Most churches experiencing a pastoral transition will end up spending at least 125% of the previous pastor's salary between decreased giving and expenses related to the entire transition process from beginning to end. The expenses include things like farewell expenses related to the exiting pastor, interim pastor, 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 and giving.
- 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 with multiple staff members who experience a pastoral transition will also experience expenses related to additional staff turnover both before and after the placement of a new pastor. This second wave of change is normal and part of the process.
- 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 also 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 launching capital/building 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.¹⁵⁴ 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.¹⁵⁵ The takeaway seems to be three things:

- **Commitment.** The committee must be willing to invest the time to do a pastoral transition right.
- **Initiative.** The church board and search committee must be willing to take the initiative in removing apparent obstacles before the new pastor arrives.
- **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.”¹⁵⁶

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. Your team should spend time looking over the Microsoft Excel worksheet template to help you estimate and budget transition expenses for your church. When doing so, I would suggest basing it off 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 the use of the *Rise Up* family of resources can empower you to shave off time and 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.** On the template, 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 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.

A customizable Excel template of the transition budget can be downloaded from a hyperlink in the “Digital Resources” section in the PDF version of this manual.

C. Transition fund. As stated, your 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 church bank account. A similar account/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 contribute. If you are a board member and just getting started, I would suggest you ask 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 and community 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.

Although the Network will put this information on our open church list, the search committee may want to consider making this information available through a web page, blog, or shared folder. A sample and short video tour of how Highpoint did this can be viewed at [this link](#).

Whether you use a document, shared folder, or website, your profile should contain up-to-date and accurate information about your church and community. 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. It should also give service times and statistical averages for total constituents and attendance as well as the annual income, missions giving, current debt/mortgage, and mortgage payment. Include photos of your facilities and floor plans along with square footage as well as any future expansion options (blueprint, visual renderings of a future building or pictures 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.



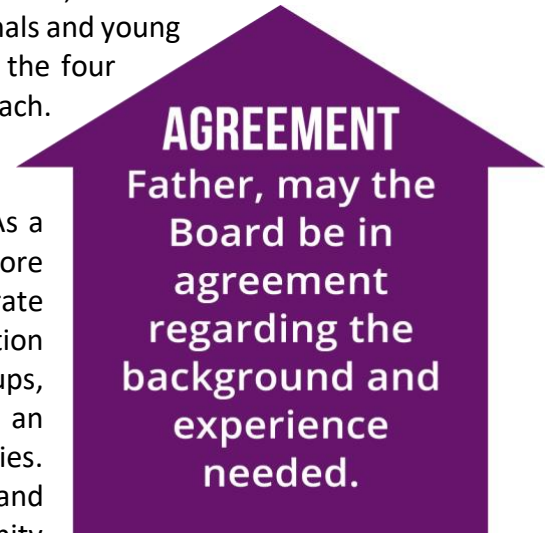
LEADERSHIP

Father, guide
leaders on both
sides of this
transition. Give
them faith, trust,
and discernment.

Knowing it is easier to improve something than create it from nothing, I have provided an example of a fictional church profile below. You can also download a customizable Microsoft Word version from the “Digital Resources” section in the PDF version of this manual. Seeing them will 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 website, shared internet folder or document link here](#)).

1. Governance model: Self-governing and autonomous hybrid congregational/presbyterian form of governance.
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)

C. History. Visa 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, 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.
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 Egghead 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. Statistical averages.

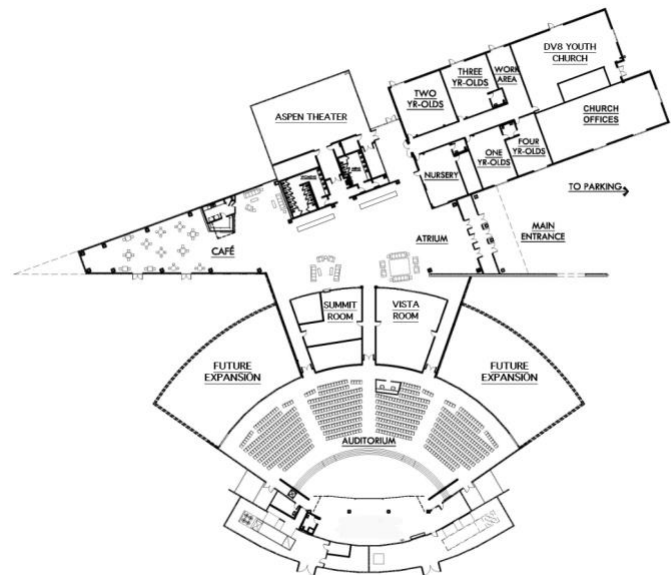
1. Constituents who call Vista their home church: 400
2. Sunday total attendance: 350
3. Service times: 9 and 10:30 a.m.
4. Small group participation: 150
5. Total number of members: 182

G. Church budget.

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

H. 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](#)).

I. Staff.

Full-time staff: Lead pastor, associate pastor, and children’s pastor.

Part-time staff: Receptionist, bookkeeper, and lead pastor’s administrative assistant.

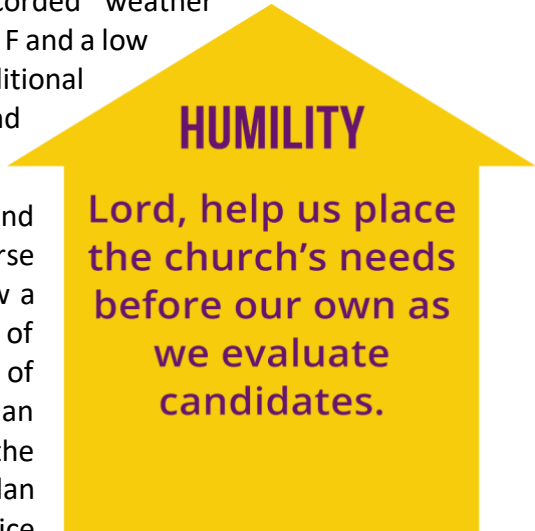
Contract services: Janitorial, exterior grounds, maintenance, and snow removal.

J. 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.

K. 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 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.

L. 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.

M. 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 can make consensus difficult at first. Author Chris Brauns calls out the true but uncomfortable fact that many search committees are so busy talking about what they want in a pastor that they never spend time as a group reading the scriptures that outline the Biblical qualifications for this spiritual role. “Let’s consider what the Bible says about what a pastor should be and do so that your church can be sure that God is building your house when you call your next pastor,” says Brauns.¹⁵⁷ It is inconsistent to want a Word-centered pastor without a Word-centered process. Keeping our expectations grounded in scripture is not a new challenge. Over 1600 years ago church father John Chrysostom complained that one of the early church’s greatest problems was that, “No one will look for the best qualified man.”¹⁵⁸

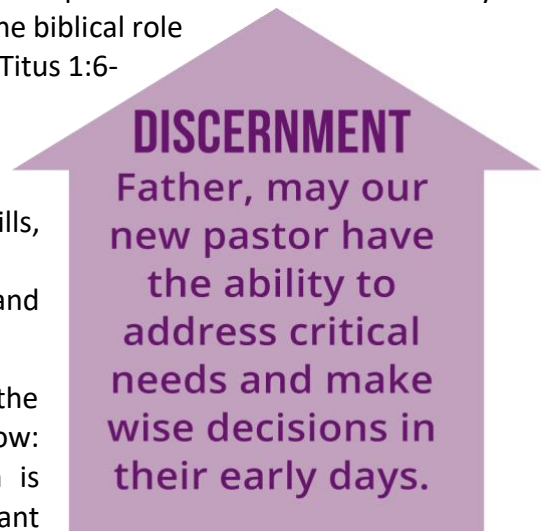
At first, your list of desired qualities will probably be long and unreasonable; but as time goes by, the committee relearns something they already knew: There is no perfect candidate; and every minister has different strengths, weaknesses, and leadership abilities.

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

1. **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).
2. **Preferred qualities** are those you want a candidate to have but do not demand. These qualities may even be developed or learned after a pastor is elected (skills, education, or giftings).
3. **Innate qualities** are those a person is born with and cannot be taught. A person either has them or not.

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

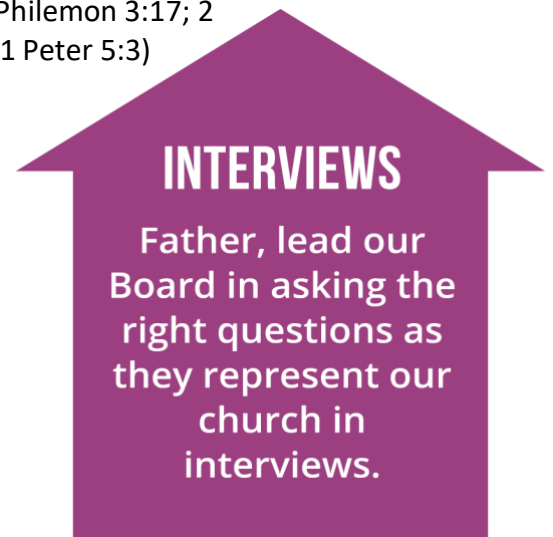
- What level of ministerial credential and education is desired? When selecting a candidate, your team will want to know what level of ministerial credential is needed to pastor your church, what level of credential your candidate has, and what plan they may have to advance in ministerial training. The chapter on the importance of an Assemblies of God credential explains each of the three levels and the educational preparation associated with each. You will also want to check your bylaws to see if they prescribe a specific level of credential your lead pastor will be required to have.
- 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 already demonstrated these skills in the past?
- What expectations could be suspended considering 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. Your team can identify ones that are critical at this time in your church's journey.

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)



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

PASTORAL SKILLS

- ___ Pastoral counseling
- ___ Visiting the sick
- ___ Availability to talk
- ___ Likeable and personable
- ___ Compassionate and empathetic
- ___ Initiates relational connections

CULTURAL RELEVANCE

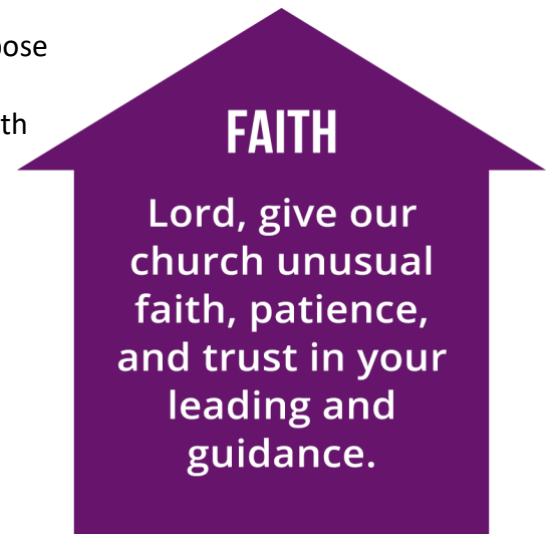
- ___ Relevant to the culture of the city
- ___ Relevant to the culture of the immediate community or zip code
- ___ Relevant to the culture of the church
- ___ Respected by outsiders and recognized as a community leader
- ___ Builds relationships with the community, other leaders, and other organizations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

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 to 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

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

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

BOARD CHAIRMANSHIP

- 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
- Facilitates group discussion of issues

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

- 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

It is also important to consider compatibility and fit. Author Tom Brennan reminds search committees, "A potential candidate may have a wonderful family, be a fabulous preacher, mostly share in the church's doctrine and practices, and yet ruin the church anyway if they do not fit."¹⁵⁹ Sam Hamstra in his book, *Questions to Ask Before Searching for Your Next Pastor*, refers to this compatibility as "important intangibles."¹⁶⁰

Group interaction exercise. One exercise that may help your team discover how united they are concerning desirable qualities and priorities is to play the "lay your cards on the table" game. Give each member of the committee nine (9) index cards with one of the bold and capitalized headings from the list above written across the top. Then ask them to write on the cards to clarify their personal expectations in each category. Then have them privately rearrange the cards into prioritized order with their highest priority on the top and their lowest on the bottom. Conclude by asking them to "lay your cards on the table." The exercise will help you better understand the diversity of your group and their general agreement regarding what kind of pastor your church needs. It may also reveal a need to revisit the scriptural qualifications of a pastor as listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4.

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 establish 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 short 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.¹⁶¹

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. Leader/overseer of the church.** As the overseer of the church the lead pastor 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. In addition, 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.
- B. Preaching and teaching.** The lead pastor is the primary preacher/teacher on 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. Administration and accountability.** 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.
- E. Pastoral care.** The lead pastor mobilizes people, platforms, and volunteers to provide care, counseling, weddings, funerals, baptisms, baby dedications, and other needed ministries.

JUDGMENT

Father, give our Board clarity as they interview, eliminate, and move forward in the search process.

Obviously, no one person can do all 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. Nor should your board try to micro-manage your pastor. Shorter job descriptions are best. Following are some questions William Vanderbloemen suggests boards ask themselves after drafting a job description:¹⁶²

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

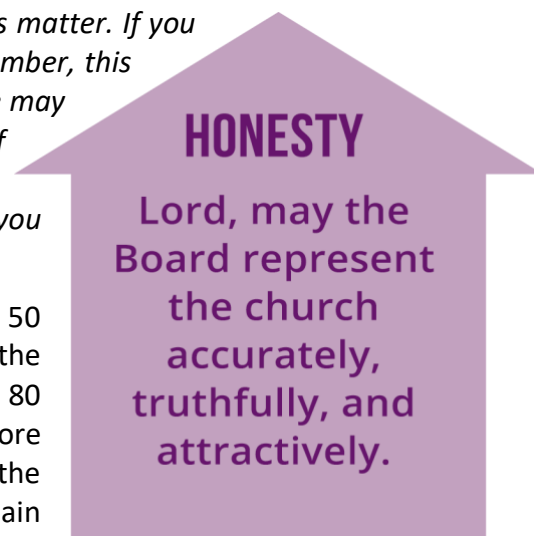
A sample job description in the form of a Microsoft Word file can be downloaded from the [Digital Resources](#) section of the PDF version of this resource. It can then be customized to fit your unique situation.

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 in the group 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.¹⁶³

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 leave pastoral ministry before retirement.¹⁶⁴ Another authoritative study found that the average tenure of a pastor in America is six years.¹⁶⁵ 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:¹⁶⁶

- 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, preparedness, and level of ministerial credential.** What minimal level of educational experience and ministerial credential do you require of a candidate? The chapter on the importance of an Assemblies of God credential explains each of the three levels and the educational preparation associated with each. You will also want to check your bylaws to see if they prescribe a specific level of credential your lead pastor will require.
- 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.** Each minister is unique and has a different set of spiritual gifts, temperament and talents. The expression of that blend 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 the candidate well enough to know whether they can adjust. For example, the Network I currently lead consists of the following six ministry contexts.

- **Rural.** A rural area or countryside in a geographic area that is located outside of larger towns and cities. Typical rural areas have a low population density and small settlements.
- **Sub-rural.** Geographic areas with larger populations that exist in-between metropolitan areas and rural communities. They feel sort-of country but are not officially considered country.
- **Suburban.** Areas that are usually smaller cities that exist outside, but immediately adjacent to, a larger metropolitan city. They generally consist of residential districts with single-family dwellings, have a lower population density, their own governing municipalities and community services.
- **Urban.** Communities that exist within the boundaries of a large city, are highly congested and often contain redeveloped high-rises and pricy real estate.
- **Inner city.** An area near the center of a city, especially when associated with social and economic problems. These areas have a higher density of buildings, lack open spaces, have gridiron street patterns, as well as low-cost and poor quality of housing.
- **Tourist.** Once thriving, mining, logging, trading, or geographically unique towns that are tourist, gaming, or outdoor enthusiast destinations. These towns tend to have a small population whose work is connected with the particular tourist economy that may exist there.

Not every applicant will feel comfortable in all of these unique cultures. Identifying those who do will help. 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 promising 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 my research over the years 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. Your pastoral profile can be listed by desired qualities in prioritized order or by categories as exemplified below.

1. Organized by desired qualities. Following is a sample lead pastor profile that was used for a church of about 150 people in Windsor, Colorado. The ideal profile for this church consisted 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
- Creative
- Able to resolve conflict
- 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 categories like the following sample.¹⁶⁷

Position Summary:

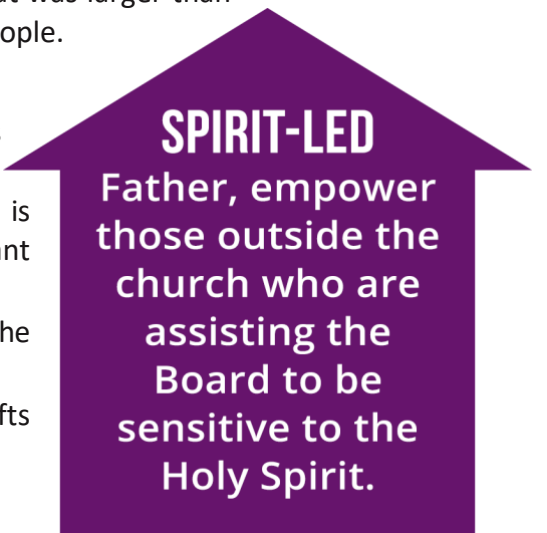
The lead pastor of CPC is responsible for the overall spiritual and executive leadership of CPC's congregation and staff, the fulfillment of CPC's purpose and mission, the alignment of CPC's values, and the realization of CPC's goals. Position is accountable to the CPC Leadership Team (Board).

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:

- Can 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.
- Can 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:

- Can develop a management leadership team to lead and execute CPC's global activities, ensuring that all required skills are developed.
- Can 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:

- Can 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 can deploy people in their areas of strengths and keep them accountable to the vision and goals of CPC.
- Can 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.

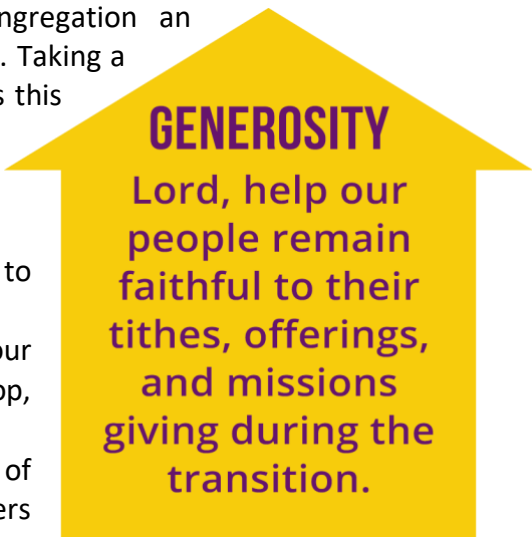
I. CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY ([back to table](#))

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.¹⁶⁸ Some search committees and boards make the mistake of thinking their history with the church automatically ensures that they know what the church wants and needs. Others may pridefully assume their own opinions represent those of the entire church. Joseph Umidi's research found that 12 percent of new pastors claim the search committee misrepresented the most pressing needs in their church.¹⁶⁹

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 best ways this can be done. This can be easily accomplished by creating an online survey and asking congregants to participate by answering questions and giving feedback.

I think an online platform like Survey Monkey is the best way to accomplish this for the following reasons:

- **Convenience.** It allows you to send an internet link to your people so they could take the survey from their desktop, laptop or smart phone.
- **Privacy.** Online surveys can be taken from the privacy of one's own home, are not turned in or handled by others and offers the purest form of confidentiality.
- **Participation.** More people will participate because the link can be emailed to them as opposed to passing out paper copies and having to explain it in church when some will not be there.
- **Data entry.** Having people type their own responses into the system will enable you to have the data in a digital format that can be stored, shared, and configured in different reports.
- **Evaluation.** Using an electronic format allows you to sort and filter data by different criteria (age, tenure in church, common responses, and prioritized preferences). With a click of a button, it will allow you to identify trends, patterns, and relationships in responses.
- **Cost savings.** Using the electronic format saves paper, photocopy expenses, time, and payroll costs by not having to input data or create, print and distribute reports.
- **Team briefing.** Because Survey Monkey automatically compiles results in the form of charts, graphs and online summaries, all members of the pastoral search committee can read the same data and responses to open-ended questions.



GENEROSITY
Lord, help our
people remain
faithful to their
tithes, offerings,
and missions
giving during the
transition.

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

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 _____

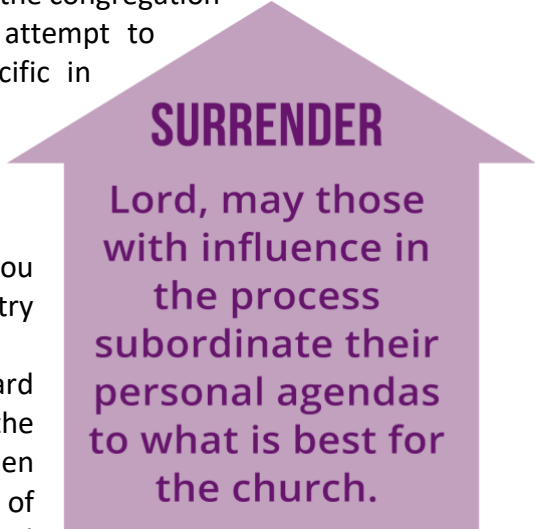
Age Group: 15-20 _____ 21-35 _____ 36-50 _____ 51-64 _____ 65+ _____

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. Church health and interim priorities.** To help your board better understand the congregation's assessment of the church's health, a special segment of questions has been added to the online survey. The section reflects some of the thinking behind Ken Moberg's intentionality grid and covers the following categories.¹⁷⁰

- Relationship between leadership
- Pastor's departure
- Length of pastor's tenure
- Location of former pastor
- Unity within the church
- Maturity of leadership
- Nature of leadership
- Leadership meetings
- Clarity of vision

- Annual business meetings
- Growth history
- Effective evangelism
- Priority of vision
- Willingness to change
- Multi-generational
- Intentional discipleship
- History and vision relationship
- Inward and outward focus

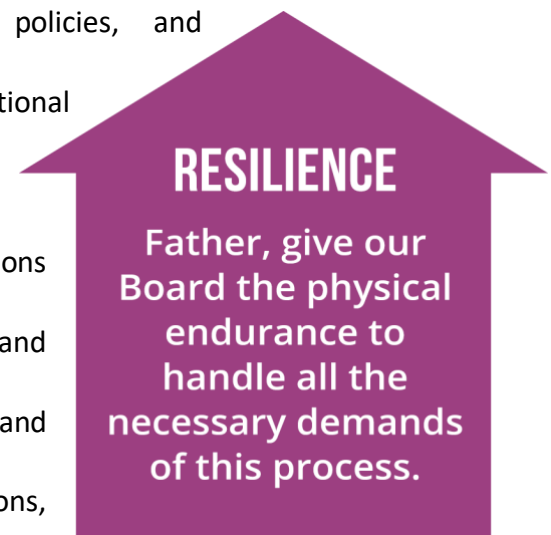


The responses are scored in a way that will help your team determine if an interim pastor is needed, what issues may need to be addressed, and your congregation's general assessment of the church's health.

- 7. Pastoral priorities.** Pastoring has never been more difficult, and ministers are often expected to do much more than their time will permit. Consequently, they often must choose between

competing priorities. In this process, it is helpful for them to know what their congregation views as the most important priorities. This question lists the most time-consuming pastoral duties and asks your congregants to prioritize them as either a low, moderate, or high priority.

- **Preaching and teaching** (study, preparation, and sermons)
- **Pastoral care** (hospital, emergencies, and in-home visitations)
- **Officiating** (weddings, baptisms, baby dedications, and funerals)
- **Counseling** (One-on-one pastoral care)
- **Volunteer development** (recruiting, motivating, and training volunteers)
- **Service planning** (planning all-church worship and social meetings)
- **World missions** (missions awareness, speakers and fundraising)
- **Outreach** (community outreach and evangelism efforts)
- **Discipleship** (classes, curriculum, and small groups)
- **Leading** (staff, board, committees, and ministry leaders)
- **Church administration** (finances, facilities, policies, and structures)
- **AG networking** (participation in denominational meetings, events, and gatherings)
- **Conflict resolution** (intervention, confrontation, and resolution)
- **Fundraising** (developing tithes, offerings and missions giving)
- **Pastoral development** (training, seminars, books, and conferences)
- **Crisis management** (unexpected emergencies and developments)
- **Exterior meetings** (outside requests for donations, support, partnerships, or volunteer sharing)



8. **Female pastors.** Would you be willing to consider a woman as your lead pastor? Please explain your reason for either yes or no.
9. **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.
10. **Divorce.** Would you be willing to consider a minister who has been divorced? Please explain your reason for either yes or no.
11. **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.
12. **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. Free online version. The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network has paid two qualified statisticians to design a template for an online version of a congregational survey. It can be customized with your church name, logo, and color scheme and made live within minutes. We can run that off our subscription at no charge and send you a link to real-time reports, or you can transfer the template to your own paid surveymonkey.com account.

C. Invitation to participate. Remember, you only want current church members and not those who left the church or are from outside the church taking the survey. So, be careful not to advertise it too widely outside the church as that will only skew the authenticity of the feedback. Customize the text below and use it to send an invitation to your congregants to participate in the congregational survey. It can be used in the following ways:

- 1. Electronic messages.** Copied and pasted to an email, e-zine, website, private Facebook group or any other application.
- 2. Paper publications.** Copy and paste the link in the Sunday bulletin, mailing or letter.
- 3. Sunday announcements.** If the Network provided you with a QR code to the survey's URL, you could even put the code on the screen while announcing it on a Sunday morning. That way, members can simply use the camera app on their smartphone and scan the code by pointing their camera at the screen. This will automatically take them to the survey.

***NOTICE: Do not use the QR code below. It is only an example and will take your people to the wrong survey.**

THE PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM WANTS YOUR FEEDBACK

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



<<<< insert your customized hyperlink here >>>>
<<<< also insert your QR code here >>>>

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

The Pastoral Search Committee
Insert your church name here

A customizable Microsoft Word template with text inviting your church family to take the survey can be downloaded and customized from the "[Digital Resources](#)" section of the PDF version of this manual.

D. Sample of generic version. You can view an example and even take the survey at the link below. Please DO NOT share the link below with your church. It is only a sample survey.

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

E. Sharable template option. The RMMN can send a copy of this survey design to your own Survey Monkey account if you already have a paid account with www.surveymonkey.com. Everything from the Design Survey section is copied to your own paid account in seconds and will appear in your dashboard. This includes the survey questions and pages, options, logical sequence, 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 associated with your own paid Survey Monkey account.

Congregational surveys are the best, fastest and most confidential way to involve your people in the feedback loop.

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:

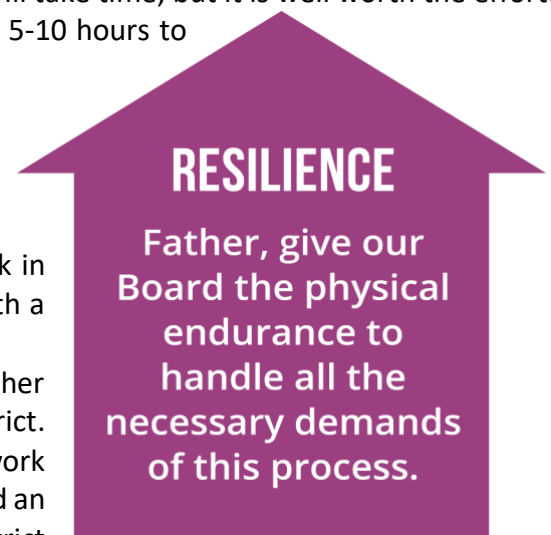
A. Church search site. Create a Google blog to use as the committee’s primary communication platform with potential candidates. If you turn the comments off, a new discussion thread can be used for each important category listed at the end of the chapter entitled “[Communication](#)” (Potential Candidate Information Page). More information can be found at <https://www.blogger.com>. You can also watch a short video tour of this kind of blog application to advertise the opening and help educate potential candidates at [this link](#).

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 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 three to four 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 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.

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 lead 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.

E. District’s open church list. Most district offices have a list of open churches within their network on their website. If you are part of the Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, we will advertise your opening by listing your church on our website’s open church list, provided you submit the following items to the District Superintendent’s office.

1. Pictures of the interior and exterior of your facility that are clear and attractive.
2. Church profile with an email address where applicants can send a résumé.
3. Community profile
4. Pastor profile
5. Constitution and bylaws

We then put a picture of your church and a short summary paragraph with a hyperlink to a shared internet folder. The shared internet folder contains the items listed above. This helps in several ways.

1. **Potential candidates.** It enables potential candidates to get a better feel for your church and answers to the most common questions.
2. **Increase efficiency.** It helps you save time by not having to respond to several emails from potential candidates asking the same questions. Because your profile communicates your desired qualifications, it allows your team to move faster by weeding out incompatible or unqualified candidates.
3. **Exposure.** It helps you gain maximum publicity by leveraging the Network’s exposure in other states, districts, and social media outlets.

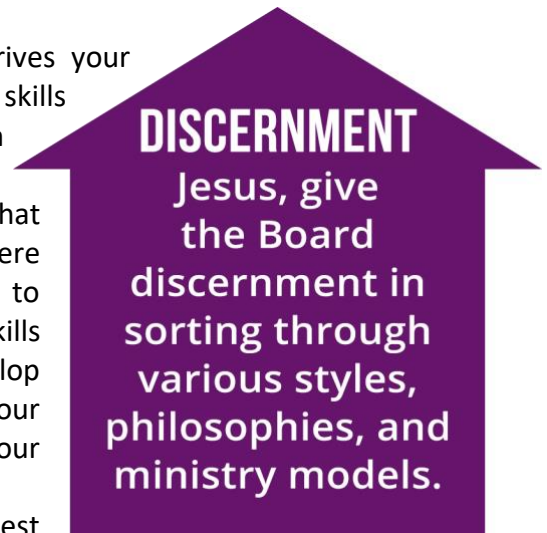
You can see samples of listings on our open church list at [this link](#).

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

You can't limit your pool of candidates to unsolicited résumés you receive from interested individuals. Due diligence will require you to also recruit candidates. Allow me to answer a few questions about this important subject.

A. Should we hire a professional search firm to find a pastor? Some churches consider hiring a search firm or “headhunters” to find candidates. While paying someone else to do this may seem inviting and beneficial, allow me to present a few advantages to leading the search yourself and using advisors to help you along the way.

- 1. Organizational learning.** Hiring a search team deprives your church of the opportunity to develop organizational skills you will need in the future. The average church experiences a pastoral transition once every 7-10 years. That means there will be a time in the future that your church will need these core competencies. There may even be a time you need them and are unable to afford the high cost of search firms. Developing the skills needed to navigate these waters now will develop leaders, increase faith, mature commitment, and set your church up to face future challenges. It will also give your people more confidence in the process.
- 2. Increased resiliency.** The easy way is not always the best way and shortcuts can be overrated. As a matter of fact, God led the children of Israel the long way to the Promised Land to give them time to develop skills that the future would require. The scriptures tell us, *“When Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them on the road through the Philistine country, though that was shorter. For God said, ‘If they face war, they might change their minds and return to Egypt.’ So God led the people around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. The Israelites went up out of Egypt armed for battle.”* (Exodus 13:17-18)
- 3. Unbiased process.** Many search firms gain income from two sources. Churches needing a pastor and pastors needing career consulting. There is, in some cases, a conflict of interest that needs to be addressed because search firms often recommend to client churches people who they are also consulting or who they have met in prior cases. Another reality is that search firms usually work on a commission basis, which means the higher the salary offered the higher their cost to you and income to them. This could potentially lead to a conflict of interest whereby they are not necessarily communicating what is best for the church but what would benefit them. It is also possible that their potential income from you is not enough to ensure your search is a high priority for them.
- 4. Maximized access.** Hiring a search firm places another person between you and prospective candidates. Because search firms mediate compatibility, there is always one person guiding, screening, vetting, interacting, speaking on your behalf, negotiating salaries and filtering information.
- 5. Decreased expenses.** Search firms are expensive and usually charge a church 35-40% of the church's total remuneration package for the lead pastor. For example, if your salary, health benefits, housing, and other benefits for the lead pastor total \$70,000, they will charge your church between \$26,250 and \$28,000 for their services. Others charge a monthly fee that is usually between \$4,000 - \$6,000 a month for the duration of the search. In addition to this hefty



fee, you will still pay all the other normal expenses associated with the transition such as interviewing, travel, candidating, and relocating a pastor.

- 6. Focused faith.** Author Richard Blackaby cautions churches considering a search firm against transferring their faith in God to faith in man saying, "Take time to examine your approach. Is it biblical? Is it God honoring? Does it force you to rely on God or a consultant?"¹⁷¹ The Old Testament records several instances where God warned His people about developing an unhealthy dependence on treaties, wealth, war horses, kings, and other inferior places to deposit one's trust. Blackaby's warning is warranted.

Some of the most popular search firms are...

- Vanderbloem Search Group, <https://www.vanderbloemen.com>
- Slingshot Group, <https://slingshotgroup.org>
- Agora Search Group, <https://www.agorasearchgroup.com>
- The Shepherd's Staff, <https://theshepherdsstaff.com>
- Expand Consulting Partners, www.expandconsultingpartners.com

- B. How should we recruit pastors?** 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 respectful of their privacy. The Rocky Mountain Ministry Network 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.¹⁷²



AFFECTED MINISTRY
Father, give the
ministry our future
pastor will be
leaving faith,
wisdom, and divine
leading.

Following are some helpful tips to accomplish this:

- 1. Call on the phone first unless a potential candidate initiated an email.** Because some pastors manage their many emails through administrative assistants, it is not wise for your first contact

to 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?

- 2. 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 “leave their church.” That is too 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.

- 3. 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” as well as a download in the [“Digital Resources”](#) section.

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

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

Your Church Name Pastoral Candidate Response Request

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 under your leadership.
9. Please tell us about the primary demographic of the community your current ministry is in.
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, discipleship, service, outreach, and international missions?
14. 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

PATIENCE

Lord, give us the ability to trust you, others, and the resources provided to help our pastoral search.

scale and an aggressive revival model being on the high end, where (what number) would you find yourself most comfortable?

15. What do you feel are the core responsibilities of a lead pastor?
16. How do you preach (e.g., expository, topical, doctrinal)?
17. How have you led your church to reach nonbelievers in your community?
18. How have you intentionally discovered the unique needs, characteristics, and emerging trends within your community?

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

If you feel overwhelmed by résumés, a candidate cover sheet may help you keep track of the progress of each candidate. This can be an electronic document kept in candidate folders or a paper version placed in three-ring binder with dividers labeled, A, B and C. Following is a sample that can be modified or even downloaded in the section entitled, "[Digital Resources.](#)"

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. _____ Internet links 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:

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

If the lead pastor is to be the primary communicator of your 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 imbedded as hyperlinks right 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, audio, or video files from previous ministry positions or speaking engagements. Be sure to check their church and personal social media pages as well.

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

C. Suggested criteria. As members of the search committee, report back to the committee with your prevailing impression regarding the following questions:

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



A sermon evaluation form can be downloaded from the "[Digital Resources](#)" section in the PDF version of this manual. Printing it out and recording your impressions of the message will help your team remember this candidate's communication style should you need to reference it later.

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 their own ministry setting. Before planning your trip be sure to call the church and 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 and to 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. You will also want more than one person from the committee to do this as we all have different preferences and tastes.

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

If networking, advertising, and recruiting is done properly, the search committee should expect to receive several résumés. Out of the résumés' received, small churches can expect to connect with at least three worthy candidates. Medium sized churches can expect to get between 15-20, and larger churches will receive between 25-50 résumés from worthy candidates.

For the sake of managing expectations, it is worth repeating that the following dynamics have converged to create a national shortage of lead pastors.

- **Boomer retirement.** The present and future wave of baby boomer ministers retiring.¹⁷³
- **Covid burnout.** The exodus of younger and near-retirement age ministers in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis.
- **Skyrocketing cost of education.** The cost of Bible college has skyrocketed in the last four decades. Superintendent Phil Schneider of the Illinois Assemblies of God notes that, "A college education, adjusted for inflation from 1980 should cost \$45,000, instead of the \$160,000 it costs today."¹⁷⁴ A minister's salary just can't service student loan payments for a debt that high.
- **Neglect of local churches.** Most local churches no longer preach, teach, or invite people to explore the call of God as a vocation.

That means you will need to do three things. First, you should manage expectations regarding the number of résumés you receive. Second, you must be prepared to act swiftly when engaging promising candidates. Third, you should remember you're probably not the only one talking to an outstanding candidate. So be prepared, don't waste time, and make a good first impression.

You will also need to be prepared for the evolution of the résumé'. Résumés are no longer confined to paper or electronic documents. Some candidates may have created a splash 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 candidates in categories of A, B, and C.

A = Strong candidate worthy of contact and exploration. These are candidates the search committee feels have great 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 Request](#)" which is explained in the appendix of the same title. It is also available as a document download in the "[Digital Resources](#)" section.

There should never be more than three (3) candidates in your "A" category. If you already have three "A list" candidates and want to add a fourth person, the committee must come to agreement on one person who will be downgraded to the "B list."

EXPECTATIONS

Father, help us maintain fair and reasonable expectations of our new pastor.

B = Possible candidate to be considered later. These are candidates the search committee feels have merit or that the committee does not have consensus 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. Your “B” category should also never be more than three people.

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, experience required or culture of your church and community. They may 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](#)” as well as in the “[Digital Resources](#)” section.

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](#).” These are also available as downloads in the “[Digital Resources](#)” section.

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 below.¹⁷⁵

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 spiritual insight/wisdom? _____
2. How would you evaluate the candidate’s character/integrity? _____
3. How well does the candidate 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 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: _____

P. CHECKING REFERENCES ([back to table](#))

One of the most important but overlooked tasks of the search committee is doing thorough reference checks on candidates they are seriously considering. Neglecting or glossing over the reference process has the potential to sabotage the entire search. I remember one instance where a candidate from another state applied for every open church in our Network. In addition to receiving positive references, three of the churches asked me to contact the candidate's District Superintendent to confirm that the success reflected in the résumé and references were accurate. In each case, I learned the candidate had a track record of negligent leadership and declining churches. The churches that double-checked ended up dodging a bullet that another church would have been wise to duplicate. But one did not. Instead of calling my office to get a reference, they scheduled the minister to candidate and then informed me after he had already been elected. My heart sank when I read their email informing me of the name of their new pastor. I wish the story had a happy ending, but it did not. The candidate resigned after two months and plunged the church right back into the pastoral search process.

Author and search specialist Robert Dingman suggests the following reasons why search committees neglect due process.¹⁷⁶

- **Naivety.** Christians are inclined to believe the best about people, and search committees assume the information ministers give is accurate.
- **Pretentiousness.** The search committee and candidates put their best foot forward and conceal their flaws and limitations.
- **Laziness.** Good reference checking takes time, courage, and skill. Some just don't want to do it.
- **Pride.** Search committees have members who have hiring experience and overestimate their intuition and ability to "read people."
- **Weariness.** Some search committees get tired of looking and want the search to be over.
- **Ostrich effect.** The committee becomes too vested in a candidate to risk hearing anything that might disqualify them and cause the search process to go longer.



SPIRIT-DRIVEN

Father, may our
Board and future
pastor be led by
and walk in the
Spirit.

To avoid these tendencies, it would do your team well to appoint someone from your committee who has the courage and time to ask probing questions and follow up on all references.

It is very important that the committee call 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 positive recommendations. That is why you must take the time to dig 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 relational or 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 of 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.¹⁷⁷



**DEPARTING
MINISTRY**
Lord, bless the
ministry our future
pastor will be
leaving with a
healthy transition

When choosing those who will contact references, pick one or two team members 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 lead 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. Describe the candidate's leadership style.
7. What are the candidate's primary passions or core values in ministry?
8. How does the candidate cast vision?
9. How does the candidate build a team?
10. Is the candidate more collaborative or independent?
11. How would you describe the candidate's marriage?
12. Does the candidate normally do _____ (fill in some of the church's greatest expectations of a pastor's role)?
13. 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. Have you seen them bring new health and growth to the church they lead?
6. What adjectives or descriptive phrases come to your mind when you think of this individual?
7. What style of leadership does this individual have?
8. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the candidate's effectiveness in their present pastorate?

9. 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. That's why it is important to 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 be an indirect warning sign. On the other hand, if a reference is upbeat and positive, it is a good sign.
3. **Hypothetical 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.** 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 reference 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 at the same church 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.

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 negative review 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:



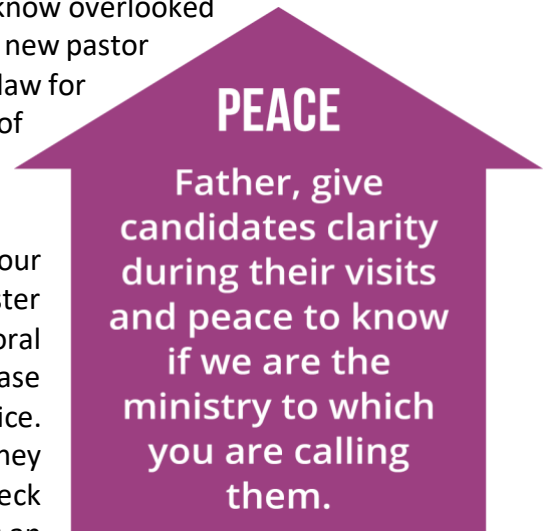
TEAM CHEMISTRY

Lord, give our new pastor leaders and volunteers who support their values, philosophy, and initiatives.

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. TikTok: www.tiktok.com
7. Snapchat: www.snapchat.com
8. QZone: www.qzone.qq.com
9. Sina Weibo: www.weibo.com
10. Reddit: www.reddit.com
11. Pinterest: www.pinterest.com
12. Ask.fm: www.ask.fm
13. Tumblr: www.tumblr.com
14. Flickr: www.flickr.com
15. LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com
16. 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 I know 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 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:



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 Birthdate _____

Current address going back 5 years

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 Birthdate _____

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.¹⁷⁸ 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 update candidates or 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 it's 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



In addition to the sample correspondence below, each letter is also available as a customizable download through hyperlinks as a Microsoft Word document in the “Digital Resources” section. They can then be customized for your own needs.

A. Paid pastoral and support staff. It is common for pastoral and support staff to experience anxiety during a pastoral transition. The search committee can head this off quickly by sending them a letter similar to the one below.¹⁷⁹ 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 during this season of change.

Of course, the new pastor will have the prerogative of selecting his or her 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 will give your team time and margin to consider and select an interim pastor. Guest speakers should have a good rapport with your church and will need guidelines if they are to be productive. Following is an example of a confirmation letter that can help you do that.

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, 2024	name
Sunday, June 9, 2024	name
Sunday, June 16, 2024	name
Sunday, June 23, 2024	name
Sunday, June 30, 2024	name
Sunday, July 7, 2024	name
Sunday, July 14, 2024	name
Sunday, July 21, 2024	name
Sunday, July 28, 2024	name
Sunday, August 4, 2024	name
Sunday, August 11, 2024	name
Sunday, August 18, 2024	name
Sunday, August 25, 2024	name

- 2. SERVICE TIMES.** Our services are at 9 and 10:30 a.m. Please report to the media team at the sound booth 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.** We will provide a **(insert amount)** check for each Sunday you minister.
- 5. LUNCH.** **(insert name)**, our 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.
- 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 inspire 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 be interpreted as speaking on behalf of the (insert your church name here) board. If asked for updates by anyone, it would be better to reply 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.”
- 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 coordinator’s name here) at (insert their email address here).

AFFECTED FAMILIES
 Lord, bless the
 ministry staff and
 family members on
 both sides of this
 transition as they
 adjust to a new
 ministry.

I cannot thank you enough for your help and am thrilled the board decided to include you in the transition plan.

(insert your name here)

Chairperson, Pastoral Search Committee

- 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 the committee will consider your suggestion.

We have developed a pastoral profile that we believe will help us evaluate 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 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.

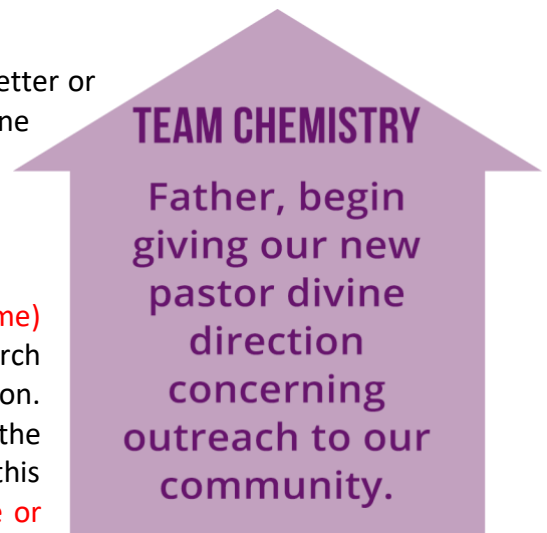
Sincerely,
(Insert name here)
Chair, Pastoral Search Committee
(Insert church name)

- 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 and the Pastoral Search Committee has begun the process of a pastoral selection. We have developed a pastoral profile that describes the type of leadership we believe our church needs at this point in our journey. You can review it at **(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 promising 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 spontaneous 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 Request](#)" 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 be thorough 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 our team has 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.

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 several 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 selected one candidate to be voted upon by the membership and the candidate has signed off on the remuneration package and agreed to be voted upon, they should send a letter to the church informing them that they have identified a candidate. 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:

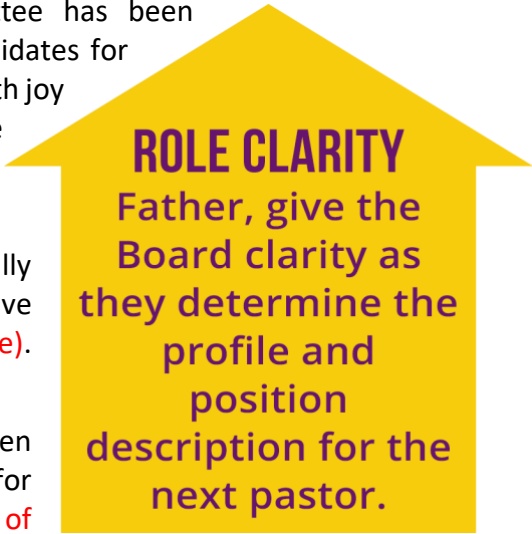
For some time now, the Pastoral Search Committee has been reviewing résumés and interviewing prospective candidates for the lead pastor position at (insert church name). It is with joy and anticipation that we announce to you that we have invited (name of candidate) to visit our church and speak on Sunday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

- Background information about (his/her) ministry experience, personal background, and family.



ROLE CLARITY
Father, give the Board clarity as they determine the profile and position description for the next pastor.

- Our official nomination in the form of a resolution.
- 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 motion of recommendation by the board.** Below is an example of a motion that should be customized and included with your letter informing the church of the special business meeting to elect a pastor. A link to a Microsoft Word version that you can customize for your own setting is found in the Appendix entitled, "[Electing the Pastor.](#)"

INSERT YOUR CHURCH NAME HERE
MOTION OF RECOMMENDATION

Whereas, The church bylaws have charged the pastoral search committee with the duty of identifying the most qualified, available, willing, and divinely called candidate to serve as our lead pastor, and

Whereas, The pastoral search committee has for the past **INSERT NUMBER HERE** months sought the advisement and counsel of our church bylaws, congregation, denominational officials, and many other resources related to this task, and

Whereas, Our church has been in a prolonged season of prayer seeking God’s will, leading, and direction regarding the person to serve as our lead pastor, and

Whereas, The pastoral search committee believes to have identified that person, and has carefully reviewed and confirmed that the candidate meets the minimum qualifications prescribed by our church, Network and General Council bylaws, be it therefore

Resolved, That the members of **INSERT YOUR CHURCH NAME HERE**, vote this day to invite and call **INSERT CANDIDATE’S FULL NAME HERE** to serve as the lead pastor and fulfill the duties of that office as outlined in our bylaws, and be it further

Resolved, That the official board make the necessary arrangements to transition our new pastor into their new role as soon as practically possible.

Recommended by the Pastoral Search Committee

Note: If the vote of the pastoral search committee was unanimous, amend the sponsorship line to read, “By unanimous recommendation of the Pastoral Search Committee.”

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: It is important that the board and search committee follow 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. **Qualifying credential.** If your bylaws require a specific level of ministerial credential with the Assemblies of God (certified, licensed or ordained), be sure to confirm the candidate qualifies.
3. **Term of office.** Be sure to inform the candidate and church membership beforehand of any reference the bylaws may give concerning the term of office (length or indefinite) the pastor is elected to serve.
4. **Form of voting.** To protect the rights and privacy of all present, be sure the vote is taken by secret ballot.
5. **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 (others voting on behalf of another member) and absentee balloting (turning in a ballot without being in attendance) shall not be allowed in the conduct of business unless the bylaws specifically allow and prescribe how they are received, collected, and counted.
6. **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. Subjects or motions outside of the stated purpose of the meeting are not in order.
7. **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 it is distributed (mail or verbal announcement) comply with the requirements of your bylaws.
8. **Agenda restrictions.** No business other than that mentioned in the call to meeting shall be in order or permissible during that same meeting.
9. **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. 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 confirm your election as 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 as agreed is attached.

Note: See details regarding this matter in the Appendix entitled "[Presenting a Remuneration Agreement.](#)"

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 reach 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
6295 Lehman Drive, Suite 202
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

Again, each one of these letters can be downloaded from links in the [“Digital Resources”](#) section from the PDF version of this manual.



R. THE LAST FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW ([back to table](#))

After your phone and Zoom interviews, your committee should narrow down their list of potential candidates to one person 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.

This should not be confused with the final visit where the candidate will be voted upon by your members. Some churches try to save money by combining the last face-to-face interview with the official candidacy. Believe me when I say this is a mistake. Should the interview convince you or the candidate that this is not God's will, you will have set your church up to be disappointed and to question your team's discernment and effectiveness. The last face-to-face interview should be just that, an interview and not a try out.

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 interview 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 provide an opportunity to speak with the candidate and their spouse in person to address any outstanding issues or clarify past discussions. In most cases this would include any questions the candidate may have, estimated start date if elected, finalizing agreement on written remuneration package, remaining questions, and any other outstanding issues.
- 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. They may even explore housing options and try to experience the vibe of your community.
- C. An opportunity for the search committee and the candidate couple 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 search committee/board with 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 spouse 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 as well as others.*¹⁸⁰

This is a critical stage because it will most likely confirm future direction and 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 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 of possible questions the search committee might ask in this chapter as well as ones they should be prepared to answer in the next.¹⁸¹ 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 coaching podcast 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 can be 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 compensate for and even use.** 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 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 both sides 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 should customize your selection to match both the candidate and time you have allotted for the interview.
- **You need a plan BEFORE the interview.** It is imperative that the search committee 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 or request 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.¹⁸²
- **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 8-12 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 spontaneous responses. See the Appendix labeled "[Sample Letters](#)" for an example of a letter requesting a written response to a list of questions. You can also download the letter from the hyperlink in the "[Digital Resources](#)" section in the PDF version of this manual.

PROTECTION

Father, protect us from those who have their own agenda and allow the Spirit to lovingly correct them.

- **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.
- **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 a 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 agree and have approved a written remuneration agreement *before* 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.

SENSITIVITY

Lord, give our Board direction, clarity, and peace concerning who should be interviewed.

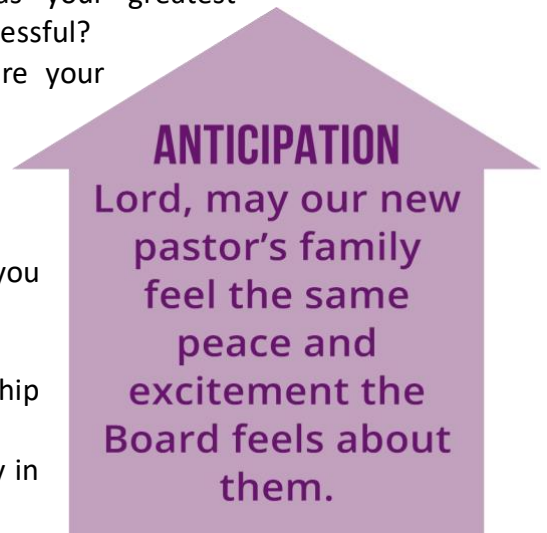
A. Interview #1: Phone interview. The interview should focus on getting to know the candidate and the candidate's family, ministry experience, preferred work environment, personal convictions, and spirituality as well as identifying possible disqualifiers.

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 ministry 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?
- What are three things you do to find balance and rhythm between family and ministry?
- What are ways your spouse has been involved in ministry over the last two years?
- How have you dealt with the pressures of the ministry and the high expectations of church people?
- What are a few ways you maintain a quality relationship with your spouse?
- How do your spouse and family feel about the possibility of a ministry change?
- What are ways the Lord and past experiences have prepared you for ministry in our context?
- 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(s) do you speak?

2. Ministry preparation and experience.

- Describe how you came into a personal relationship with Christ?
- Describe your call and what motivates you to stay in ministry.
- What kind of formal education do you have for ministry?
- Before you were a lead pastor, in what areas of ministry were you involved as an associate or assistant pastor?
- What is the status of your current credential with the Assemblies of God? Are you certified, licensed, or ordained?
- Have you ever been under any kind of discipline with the Assemblies of God? If so, for what and what was the result?
- What experience do you have in leading other full-time staff?
- How many paid full-time and part-time staff do you presently supervise?
- What primary methods or ministry models have you used to provide worship services?
- What primary methods or ministry models have you used to disciple believers?
- What primary methods have you used to recruit, develop, and place people in serving opportunities?
- What primary methods have you used to achieve local outreach?



- What primary methods have you used to involve the church in foreign outreach and missionary partnerships?
- Have you ever been a part of a church merger, closing or consolidation that involved selling church assets or property of church? If so, can you explain the details of that development to us?

3. Work environment.

- What kind of computer skills do you have, and what software programs or computers do you use?
- 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 normally 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 or disagree with?
- Tell us about your view of the baptism and infilling of the Holy Spirit?
- What are your theological 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 have you reconnected with Jesus when you feel drained?
- Which of the spiritual disciplines come naturally for you and which ones are more difficult?
- Tell us how you seek and find God's direction.

6. Personal goals.

- Do you have any educational goals in the next 5 years?
- What are your personal goals in the next 5 years?
- What are your marriage and family goals in the next 5 years?
- What are your ministry goals in the next 5 years?
- Do you have any questions for us? Would you like to submit a list of questions you may have for us to respond to as a group?

B. Interview #2: Phone or Zoom 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 an important 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 to embrace? Why?

- What do you believe your primary calling is as a minister of the Gospel?
 - What do you perceive the prime directive of the church to be? What do you see as your role in that prime directive? What have you done to prevent mission creep from that directive in the past?
 - What are your views on the relationship between the staff and the board/deacons?
 - What are your views about how the following ministries contribute to growth: children, youth, single adult, senior adult, missions, small groups, outreach, worship?
 - What do you see as the primary purpose for the Sunday morning services (evangelism, equipping, worship, etc.)? How do you prioritize resources and staff in these areas?
 - How have you handled disagreements with the board as well as individuals on the board?
 - How would you like the board and individuals on the board to handle disagreements they may have with you? How would you prefer they express disagreement or concerns?
 - What has been your predominant style of leadership (hands-on, laid-back, fast-paced, facilitator, CEO)? Give us an example of how that has played out in the past.
 - What expectations do you have of the board in this type of church?
 - What expectations do you have of the church concerning your family?
- 3. Ministry passions.**
- What would you identify as your three greatest passions in ministry?
 - What is the most enjoyable part of your current ministry position?
 - Describe your spiritual gifts and how the Lord employs them in ministry.
 - In what areas of ministry do you feel most experienced and competent?
 - In what areas of ministry do you feel most inexperienced or unskilled?
- 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 personally define “discipleship?”
Tell us how you have intentionally ushered people through different levels of spiritual growth.
 - Do you see small groups fulfilling a specific role in the church? If so, how?
 - What experiences have you had with small groups?
 - 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 are three different ways you have recruited volunteers in the past?
 - How have you helped people identify their spiritual gifts, ministry passions and talents?
 - How have you trained and empowered people 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? How have you led the church to meet those needs?
- What role do you see evangelism playing in a believer's life?
- How would you go about learning the unique culture of our city, community, and church?
- Do you have any questions for us? 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. Another helped the committee see how much a candidate relied upon their spouse to answer difficult questions. A résumé and unaccompanied phone interview never would have surfaced these traits.



STRENGTH
 Father, may our
 future pastor have
 strength to
 endure the
 transition,
 selling/buying a
 home, and
 moving.

1. Reflective learning.

- What are ways 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 most valuable accomplishments and failures in ministry?
- Tell us about a time when you tried to do something and failed. How did that affect your leadership style?
- 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/board?
- What is your preferred model 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/or 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 have you identified the need for change in past ministries?
- Tell us the steps you followed when developing a new area of ministry?
- What steps do you take when implementing change?
- Tell us about the last time you tried to implement significant change in your church. What strategy did you use? How did it turn out?

4. Ministry preferences.

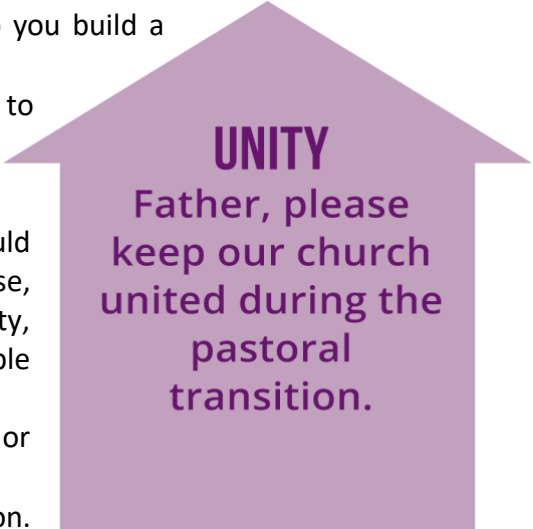
- With what personality type do you work best, and with what type do you struggle?
- What type of staff structure and environment do you function in most effectively?
- Is your preaching primarily expositional, topical, or doctrinal?
- What are your thoughts and methods as it pertains to worship on Sundays?
- What was the most exciting board meeting of your career and why was it so exciting?

5. Leadership.

- What would the first ninety days look like in this new 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 more difficult?
- What steps would you take in addressing an unexpected budget shortfall?
- What is your philosophy of missions, and what might that look like in our church?
- How would you personally prioritize the following list of pastoral duties:
 - ___ 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 must make an important decision, what are the first five things you do?
- How do you recruit new workers?
- 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?
- Do you have any questions for us? 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 before deciding if they will be a candidate.

- Is practicing church discipline important to you? Why or why not?
- 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?



UNITY
Father, please
keep our church
united during the
pastoral
transition.

- Based on your current knowledge of our church and community, how would you describe it to someone who has never been here?
- What is your plan for personal growth and development?
- How do you feel about our church's current situation? 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?
- By now you have seen the written remuneration package. How do you feel about that?
- What kind of things do you feel are important for the pastor and board to work together on?
- Would there be any unique challenges you would need to overcome in relocating that we would need to know about? Examples would be spouses' job, selling house, children's education, and others.
- If you were selected as the candidate, what day would you be able to start as the lead pastor? Would your family relocate at the same time?
- Would you choose to live in the same community that the church is located?
- 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 type of due diligence, disclosure, and transparency that search teams want from them. 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, accessing references, talking with staff, and confirming the current involvement and commitment level of board members. 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 practices the spiritual disciplines of tithing/stewardship, commitment, and active involvement in the church's ministries.
- A list of community leaders and ministers 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 a healthy development as it requires both sides to meet halfway on the journey of transparency, honesty, and disclosure. In an 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."¹⁸³

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 team request a list of questions from candidates and appoint a small team to draft answers. They should then submit them to the full committee for amendment and approval. That will allow them to be readily available as talking points or copied and pasted to emails if needed. You may also want to consider impressing candidates by providing your answers to some of these questions 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 are your expectations of the pastor's spouse and family?
3. When should the pastor be expected to seek the board's counsel regarding day-to-day operations, repairs, purchases, or expenses related to situational and creative ministry applications?
4. Does the church have a written pastor profile or position description outlining ministry expectations for the lead pastor?
5. What are the three most important things you want from your pastor?
6. Has the church ever given their pastor a sabbatical? If so, what kind (working, study, or full) and how long?

7. What would be the two biggest challenges your next pastor will face?
8. What were the outstanding strengths of your previous pastor?
9. 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?

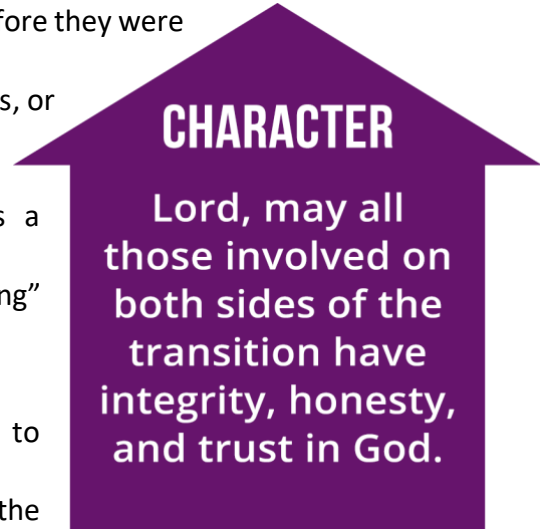
C. Questions concerning the church board.

1. Has the board received board training? If so, what kind?
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. 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?
5. Is the entire board committed to faithful church attendance and participating in "all-church" events?
6. How many hours a week (outside of church service times and board meetings) has each member of the board volunteered in the church four months before they were without a pastor?
7. 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?
8. What made you interested in talking with me as a candidate? What is your biggest concern about me?
9. 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, what kind and how often?
2. How long has each major ministry leader been in the church, and how long have they led their respective department/ministry?
3. Do any members of the board have family members who have applied or expressed interest in being the next pastor?
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, ministry leader or 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 your financial statement for the last quarter, 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 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, bonds, or balloon payments 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 annual 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. 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 over the last three months?
9. How many tithing units does the church currently 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 an official office?

12. How open is the church to change and growth as well as community, national, and foreign outreach?
13. Has anything ever occurred that has negatively impacted the church's reputation in the community?
14. If a call to the church were accepted, would it be for an a term or an indefinite period of time?
15. What is the church's theological position on the following subjects: divorce, LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual), marijuana, and abortion?
16. How is the church different from the others in your city?
17. How are ministry, staff, and financial decisions made?
18. Does the church work with other organizations in the community? Please give examples.
19. How are newcomers assimilated into the church family?
20. What are the best things the church has done in the last five years?
21. What are the three areas you feel must be changed in the church? What are three areas that should not be changed?
22. What new ministry initiatives has the church launched in the last five years? What existing ministries have been closed in the last five years?
23. What are the statistics on church attendance for the last five years?

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 think may occur as a result of this transition?

H. Questions regarding salary and remuneration.

1. What salary is offered?
2. What benefits are paid by the church (medical, health, dental, car, gas, other)?
3. How many work days 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 A REMUNERATION AGREEMENT ([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. A candidate **must not** be invited to be voted upon until there is a mutually agreed total remuneration package that has been approved by the entire board through a motion and signed by the candidate. *You will save yourself a lot of disappointment, regret, and embarrassment by having the candidate sign off on the remuneration package before they leave their hometown to be voted upon by your members.*

Transition specialist Jason Lowe encourages boards to err on the side of generosity, reminding them of the biblical admonition, "In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14 NIV).¹⁸⁴

Art Rainer seems to support Lowe's advice noting that most ministers are underpaid with 80 percent surveyed saying they minister under personal financial burdens.¹⁸⁵

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.¹⁸⁶ Following are some things to consider while determining pastoral remuneration:¹⁸⁷

1. Gross income of the church
2. Your community's cost of living, and housing expenses
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
 - Preferences for retirement planning (Social Security/MBA/CEP)¹⁸⁸
6. The current inflationary spiral
7. Appropriate housing allowance to live in the same community as the church
8. Travel allowance for Network and General Council meetings
9. A minimum of 62.5 cents per work-related mile should be considered if the church does not provide a vehicle.¹⁸⁹ Since this is a business-associated expense, it should not be computed in the net income of the pastor.
10. Educational and book allowance to improve ministry skills
11. Financial and numerical growth of the church
12. 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

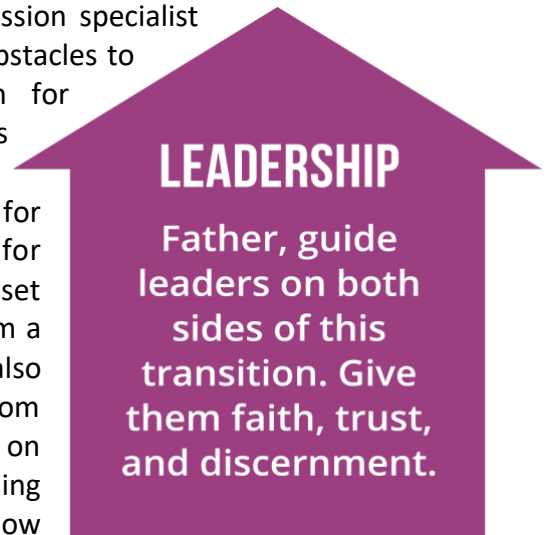


DISCERNMENT
Lord, direct our
Board and future
pastor to ask the
right questions
and discern
between better
and best.

relocate to the community, rental deposits in expensive communities, and other unique needs. Talking about these needs and expectations before the election will usually lead to a resolution that is acceptable to all parties.

- B. Contents of a remuneration agreement.** A good remuneration agreement contains 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 and housing
 4. Policy for reviewing the pastor's salary
 5. Participation in Social Security (paid by church or paid by individual)
 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 at church
 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 provided annually)
 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 certified 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. This kind of thinking makes future transitions easier on everyone.



- C. Document total cost to church and not just salary.** A remuneration agreement should outline all benefits, not just "take home pay," because they more accurately portray the lead pastor's total cost to the church. Use the template below to create a remuneration agreement. You can also download it as a customizable Microsoft Excel file from the "[Digital Resources](#)" section of the PDF version of this manual.

[INSERT YOUR CHURCH NAME HERE] Remuneration Package for Lead Pastor Approved by the Board by motion on (insert date)	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)			

Again, do not set a date to vote on your candidate until the entire board has agreed upon a remuneration agreement and it has been signed by the candidate. A customizable Microsoft Excel file of this remuneration agreement is available through a hyperlink in the “[Digital Resources](#)” section of the PDF version of this manual.

- D. Avoiding snags in salary negotiations.** In some rare cases salary negotiations can end up sabotaging the process. Following are three suggestions given by William Vanderbloemen to consider if this becomes a risk:¹⁹⁰
- 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 one-time 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 and grow the income.
 - 2. Spend a little more because restarting the search process is expensive.** One of the most regretful 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. John R. Cionca and Fred Prinzing wisely advise churches to “*compensate the pastoral task, not the clergy’s lifestyle.*”¹⁹¹

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.

- E. Remember your spiritual obligation to care for your shepherd.** God has entrusted you with the care of His shepherd. It is important to remember that financial burdens will only exacerbate the pressure your pastor is already feeling. God has charged the church and the church has delegated to the board the Biblical duty of caring for the gift given to them in the form of the pastor (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 9:14). In a survey of 100 pastors, not one of them had ever asked for a raise. According to Art Rainer, there are five reasons pastors choose to trust their boards to care for them in setting a salary rather than requesting a raise.¹⁹²

- 1. Negative association.** They fear being associated with the few high-profile charlatans that have made the headlines.
- 2. Bifurcation.** Many ministers view money as an earthly matter outside the parameters of their spiritual obligations.
- 3. Aversion to criticism.** They fear requesting a raise will give their critics fodder to further divide the church.
- 4. Guilt.** They feel guilty asking for a raise when they are aware of so many in the congregation who are suffering.
- 5. Loss of confidence.** Church members can perceive a minister’s concern over personal finances as a lack of faith.

This means your board must initiate and own the biblical responsibility of reviewing your pastor’s salary on an annual basis. If you do not, it will never happen.

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>.

- F. Collaborate with the candidate to determine a plan for how a potential election will be announced.** Once your candidate arrives to be voted upon, things will move very fast, and you will have little time to plan out the steps and process for making the announcement of a potential election. Now, while you are agreeing upon the salary, is the best time to do this. Remember, this is a Kingdom development that will impact three ministries. It will impact your church, the church your future pastor is leaving, and the ministry your departing pastor will transition into. Being intentionally sensitive in this matter is so important and it justifies a separate Zoom call to collaborate and determine a plan. Several different announcement options are presented in the appendix entitled, “[Electing a Pastor.](#)”

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.¹⁹³ 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:
 - 7:00-7:05 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. This makes the meet and greet portion of your meeting more prone to interaction.
 - 7:25-8:00 p.m. Open meet and greet
 - 8:00-9:00 p.m. Q&A with questions prescreened by the search committee
 - 9:00-9:15 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 leader 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:
 - 9:00-10:15 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
 - 4:00-5:00 p.m. Business meeting and election

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 and future.¹⁹⁴
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.



AGREEMENT
Father, may the
Board be in
agreement
regarding the
background and
experience
needed.

- 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 an earlier edition of this manual told me how much she would have appreciated 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 a bit deflating," she said.
- 5. Provide leadership in the services the candidate is to preach.** The morning service should be led by the chair of the board or pastoral search committee. 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 to 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 their questions 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 [\(back to table\)](#)

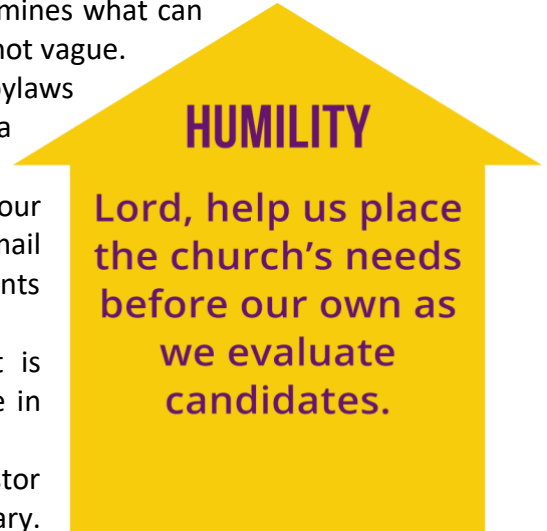
IMPORTANT INFORMATION: It is important that the board and search committee follow all bylaw requirements concerning the election of a new lead pastor. Please double check your bylaws regarding the following topics:

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. **Qualifying credential.** If your bylaws require a specific level of ministerial credential with the Assemblies of God (certified, licensed or ordained), be sure to confirm the candidate qualifies.
3. **Term of office.** Be sure to inform the candidate and church membership beforehand of any reference the bylaws may give concerning the term of office (length or indefinite) the pastor is elected to serve.
4. **Form of voting.** To protect the rights and privacy of all present, be sure the vote is taken by secret ballot.
5. **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 (others voting on behalf of another member) and absentee balloting (turning in a ballot without being in attendance) shall not be allowed in the conduct of business unless the bylaws specifically allow and prescribe how they are received, collected, and counted.
6. **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.
7. **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 are distributed (mail or verbal announcement) comply with the requirements of your bylaws.
8. **Agenda restrictions.** No business other than that mentioned in the call to meeting shall be in order or permissible during that same meeting.
9. **Minutes.** A special business meeting to elect a pastor requires official minutes by the corporate secretary. These minutes should record the meeting 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 it occurs (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.



Please see the chapter entitled, "[Sample Letters](#)" for an example of a letter to the church, resolution of nomination, and call-to-meeting. All these resources and more are also available as downloads from the "[Digital Resources](#)" section of the PDF version of this manual.

B. Why do most bylaws require one candidate instead of voting on multiple candidates? 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 who favor a specific candidate.
3. The board/search committee has had more exposure to all the candidates' experience, track records, references, and philosophies of ministry than the membership as a whole. Their exposure and access 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.

Author Tom Brennan warns against this approach calling it a "beauty pageant" that turns the pastoral search into a popularity contest, divides the church into cliques, lengthens the search process and turns the entire church into a pulpit committee of the whole.¹⁹⁵

- 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 the latest edition 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't members who are unable to be present 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).

- 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 clearly prescribed in the church's bylaws.

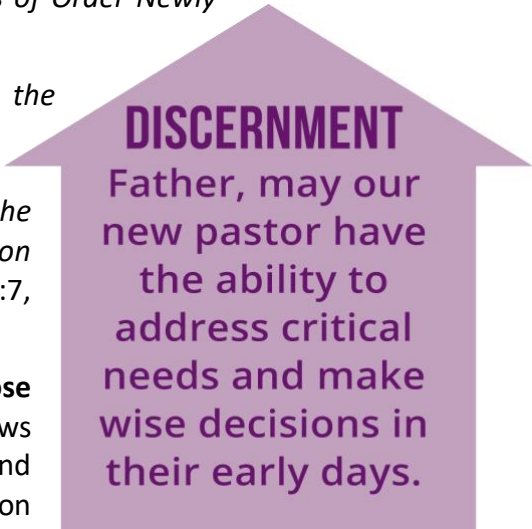
The Bylaws "cannot be suspended (with the exception of clauses that provide for their own suspension under specified conditions" (Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition, 2:8, p. 11).

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 one?** If your bylaws are silent on the type of vote needed (majority or two-thirds), 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



DISCERNMENT
Father, may our
new pastor have
the ability to
address critical
needs and make
wise decisions in
their early days.

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?** According to *Robert's Rules of Order*, 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).*

INTERVIEWS

Father, lead our Board in asking the right questions as they represent our church in interviews.

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 of either a rushed process 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:

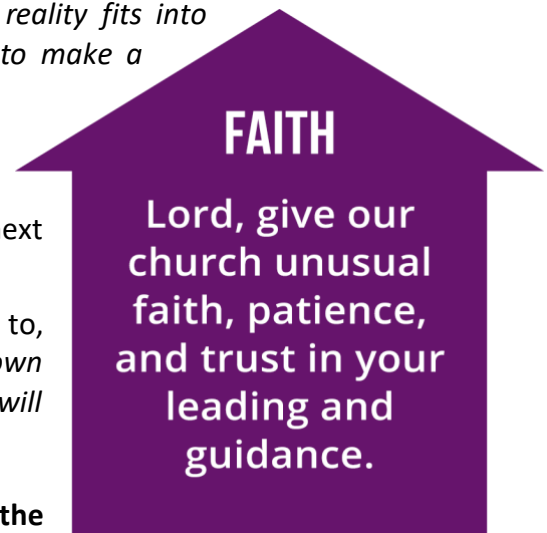
Unfortunately, our pastoral candidate has not received the votes required for an election. I would imagine we all feel a sense of vulnerability and disappointment. Although we may not understand how this reality fits into God's will, we must trust that God is too wise to make a mistake; and the committee 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.

No matter what the outcome may be, the church will need to, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV).



- K. **Are there resources to help an acting chairman chair the business meeting?** Yes, Superintendent Roncone has prepared a sample motion of recommendation, chairman's script, roster report and teller report specifically designed for the election of a pastor. The chairman's notes also suggest scripted responses to possible outcomes of the election. They are available to download and customize at the links below.

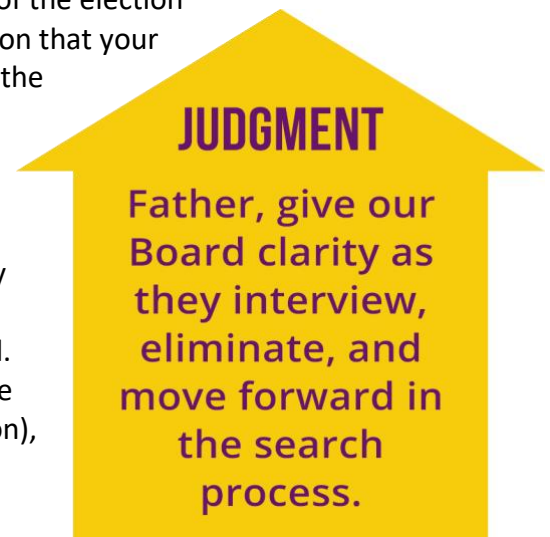
- **Motion of recommendation:** http://www.agspe.org/RU_motion.docx
- **Chairman's script:** http://www.agspe.org/RU_chairnotes.docx
- **Roster report:** http://www.agspe.org/RU_rosterreport.docx
- **Teller report:** http://www.agspe.org/RU_tellerreport.docx

- **Business meeting minutes template:** http://www.agspe.org/RU_MeetingMinutes.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.

J. How can we announce the results of the vote in a way that is sensitive to both churches on each side of the transition? Social media now enables news to travel at the speed of light. It is important to be sensitive to both churches involved in this transition. Remember, your announcement will throw your candidate's previous church into the sea of change. A healthy transition will require that they hear about the transition from their own pastor instead of on social media. Here are a few options.¹⁹⁶

- 1. Simultaneous announcement.** Use video announcements to plan a simultaneous release on both sides of the transition.
- 2. Delayed announcement.** Do not announce the result of the election the same day it occurs. Instead, inform the congregation that your church is giving the candidate a few days to pray over the matter. Announcing the result and the candidate's decision a week later gives their church time to mobilize and plan accordingly.
- 3. Sequenced announcement.** Interested parties are categorized into four groups and notified within a very tight sequential order. The announcement is scripted, and the order and timing are agreed upon beforehand. Group categories in prioritized order are: 1) immediate family, 2) church boards (on both sides of the transition), 3) congregations, and 4) the general population. The time between each release is under five minutes. For example, announcing the election ten minutes after the departing pastor's service ends gives them the opportunity to tell their congregation themselves firsthand.
- 4. Limited announcement.** When making the announcement of a potential candidate coming to try out, only give the first name with generic information about their ministry that would not enable listeners or readers to know their location. Then prior to when the vote is taken, the board publicly requests the church's cooperation in allowing the new pastor to tell his own story to their family and church by: 1) not posting or contacting the new pastor on social media, 2) not sharing the name to others who were not in the meeting, 3) announce that, "Next Sunday, at the end of service, we will take a few minutes to share our new pastor's social media platforms so you can connect with him/her at that time. Please wait to connect with them at that time." 4) Suggest to the pastor that they de-activate their social media platforms for the week before and the week after they are elected. They should turn them back on immediately after their announcement.
- 5. Transparent disclosure.** Rich Guerra, Superintendent of the SoCal Network, wisely said, "We live in a day when we cannot guard against social media. Even if a pastor is prayerfully



considering making a change, once they show up on the property of an open church, they open themselves up to social media, regardless of if they are a candidate or not.” Rich recommends that ministers who are prayerfully considering going to a new ministry, confidentially inform their leadership just in case something should get out on social media.

- 6. Invited cooperation.** Another option is to make the announcement and ask the congregation for their cooperation by not posting any news on social media or discuss the result with anyone beyond those present for one entire week.

Whatever model or hybrid version you decide to use it is important to ask anyone involved for a commitment to abide by the agreement and to take into consideration the impact of different time zones when planning the announcement. It’s impossible to compete with the speed of social media. But you can use timing to give both sides of the transition time to lovingly inform their respective communities.

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 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 and their family's arrival. Following are some practical ways listed by chronological importance to help the new pastor hit the ground running.¹⁹⁷

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. Be sure to check with your new pastor to confirm they are comfortable with the timing of that announcement.

2. Notify the district superintendent/network pastor. Notify the district superintendent/network pastor of the results of the election within one day. See the appendix entitled, "[Sample Letters](#)" and the "[Digital Resources](#)" section for an example of a district notification letter.

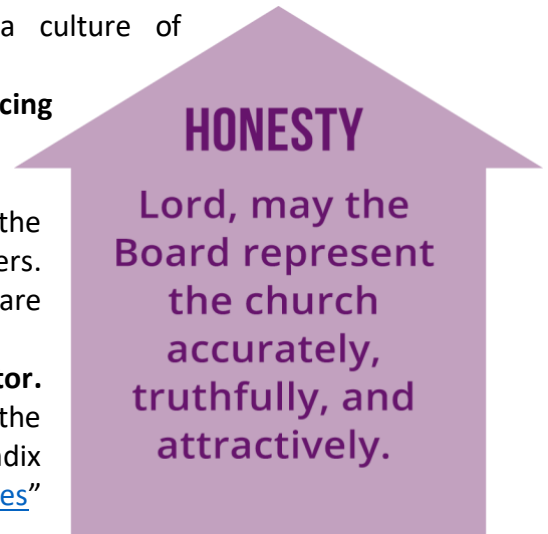
3. Keep the church informed regarding the pastor and their family's arrival. Build anticipation by updating them on the pastor's relocation efforts and sharing bios about family members, hobbies, interests, and passions. This will help them connect with others who share similar interests.

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 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, office supplies, 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 being met by your preparedness on



their first day in the office. When I arrived at Highpoint, I had a 5,000-volume library that would not fit in the pastor's office. A few 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 tape, consider appointing a special transition team of dependable people (non-board 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:¹⁹⁸

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 if people know not to stay too long after delivering them. 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, and cell phone providers). However, 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.



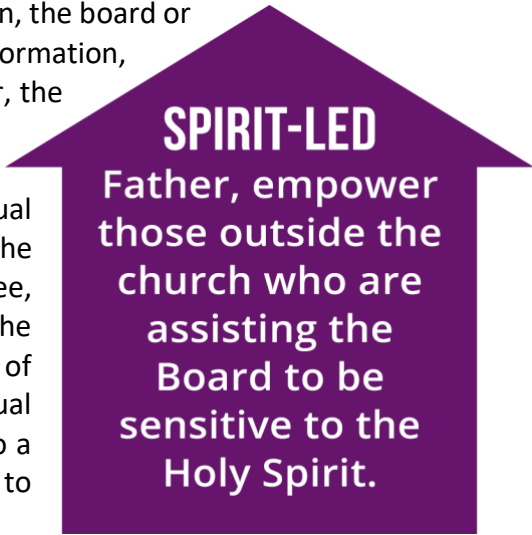
DELEGATION

Lord, give our new pastor the ability to quickly find, appoint, and delegate tasks to the right people.

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. This will require both emotional and practical preparation. Allow me to comment on both.

1. Emotional preparation. During your pastoral transition, the board or search committee will have had more influence, information, and authority than in normal circumstances. However, the moment your new pastor is elected, a spiritual, legal, and organizational change takes place. After their election, they instantaneously become the spiritual overseer of the church, the chair of the board, and the president of the nonprofit corporation. As a committee, you must prepare yourself to willingly transition the influence your team has had back to the biblical office of pastor. Thinking through the mental and spiritual challenges of that handoff will help you contribute to a smooth transition. There are four areas you will need to be prepared to transition.



- **Decisions.** As a member of the board or search committee, you have been one of the primary decision makers while your church has been without a pastor. During that time, you may have been allowed to see some of your personal preferences become a reality. However, the newly elected pastor will now begin to make decisions as the spiritual overseer of the church. You may or may not be given the opportunity to have the same influence you enjoyed in this temporary season. Be preemptive and decide now that you are going to have a humble attitude about this transfer of authority.
- **Information.** As a member of the board or search committee, you have been on the front end of the information cycle. Some of that information was confidential, and some was logistical. Some was exciting, and at other times disappointing. As you step back into your normal role, you will need to understand that, in most cases, you will be receiving information later than you did during this transition. Prepare now for any adjustments this may require on your part.
- **Influence.** During the pastoral transition, you have probably had more influence than at any other time. In normal circumstances, the Bible entrusts that level of influence to a credentialed minister who oversees and directs the affairs of the church (1 Timothy 5:17). It is important that you do not see this as a spiritual demotion because it is not. You have been faithful and served well. Much like John the Baptist, you have paved the way for God's new leader and set your new pastor up to win. Now your role will be to help support the new pastor achieve the vision God will give for your church.
- **Exposure.** As a member of the board or pastoral search team, you have been front and center during the transition. You were probably assigned a specific area to oversee and have been part of making announcements and updating the church on the search process. Your name has been on the bottom of letters, and people probably became more interested in you and the information you shared. As your new pastor gets settled, it will be important for your

church to see one leader at the helm setting direction, speaking on behalf of the church, and making executive decisions. That does not mean you will not be part of those decisions or that there will be less accountability. However, it does mean that you and your team will not be in the spotlight as much as you were during the transition.

These four transitions are part of effective servanthood. That is the kind of Christlike humility Paul was talking about when he said:

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness (Philippians 2:5-7 NIV).

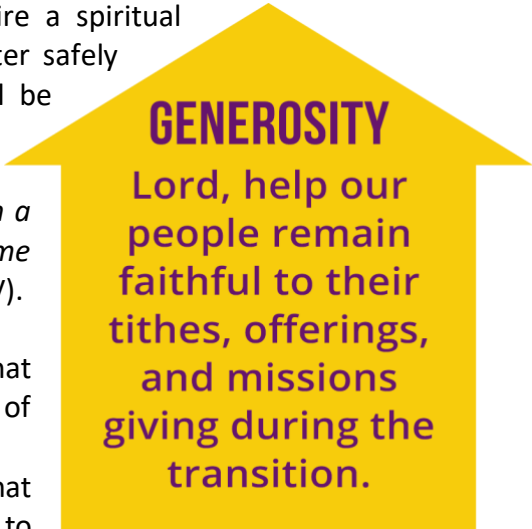
Several years ago, I watched a documentary on the valuable work of a “harbor pilot.” A harbor pilot helps large cruise and cargo ships through the narrow and treacherous waterways of their local harbor. The harbor pilot knows the harbor’s width, depth, and challenges better than anyone because they live there. They ride out on a boat, board the larger ship, and take command until it is safely in or out of the harbor.

A protocol called “repeat to confirm” is used when command of the ship is turned back over to the captain. When yielding back control of the helm, the harbor pilot will say “your ship” to the captain, letting the captain know he is going to step out from behind the helm. The captain will then say “my ship” to confirm that he has control of the helm. The harbor pilot will then confirm this transition by repeating again, “your ship.”

That same kind of transition of authority will require a spiritual protocol like “repeat to confirm” in your church. After safely guiding your church through the transition, you will be required to transfer authority to your new pastor. Then one day each of you will hear Jesus say, *Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!* (Mathew 25:23 NIV).

2. Practical preparation. Here are a few important tasks that will need to take place for the orderly transition of authority.

- **Take care of outstanding business.** It is important that your new pastor have a “honeymoon” period 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?”
- **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



GENEROSITY
Lord, help our people remain faithful to their tithes, offerings, and missions giving during the transition.

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.

- **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.
- **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.

SURRENDER

Lord, may those
with influence in
the process
subordinate their
personal agendas
to what is best for
the church.

E. Facilitate relational feedback loops. A new pastor is a lot like a missionary. They must learn the culture, history, and leadership of the church. They also must sort through the many ideas and suggestions received from 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*.¹⁹⁹ This approach is a nonthreatening feedback process called “Appreciative Inquiry” which assumes every organization has strengths and things that have worked well.²⁰⁰ 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:

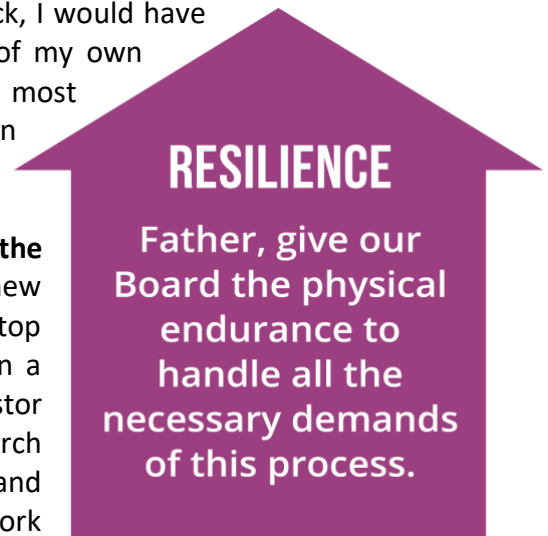
1. **Purpose.** The purpose of the night is not to provide a way for people to ask questions of the pastor but for the pastor to gain information from the congregation.
2. **Setting.** The new pastor and the pastor's spouse tour every small group in the church (if you have them) with the ideal size being 10-15 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. Those in attendance should be reminded that this is not the time to ask the new pastor questions, but a time for the their new leader to get to know the church.
4. **Introductions.** Participants introduce themselves and briefly describe how they became part of the church (but not their life story). 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 30-45 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 get 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 thanked for their hospitality and the guests for coming. End in prayer for the new pastor and their family.

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 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 one of my previous pastorates, 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. You can find a page with creative ideas on the Network’s website at www.rmdc.org/appreciation.
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. God is more than able to compensate for the limitations of all leaders involved.



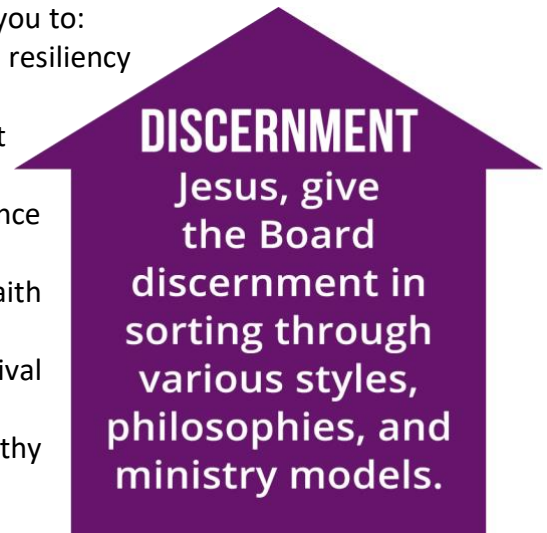
The best way to accomplish the above is to delegate the items to different members of the board who can report back on the progress to the entire board.

Y. CHURCHWIDE SMALL GROUP STUDY ([back to table](#))

For churches choosing to do a sustainability initiative, we have provided a four-week small group Bible study and companion paperback book that can be used as a stand-alone resource or even with the three-week preaching series Superintendent Roncone offers. The *Defying Gravity* small group study has four 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.



B. What are the topics of each week's lesson? Superintendent Roncone has written a four-week small group Bible study that combines teaching and group discussion questions about what the Bible has to say about pastoral transitions. It is also supported by a paperback book entitled, *Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition*.

- **Part 1: How to Grow in Pastoral Transitions.** This lesson gives practical teaching from biblical examples of leadership transitions and explains why God moves leaders in and out of our lives. It gives the people practical ways they can thrive and grow in a pastoral transition. Participants should read pages 1-26 of the book, *Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition* before the meeting.
- **Part 2: What the New Pastor Needs.** This lesson highlights the Biblical essential every new pastor needs to be successful. Participants should read pages 27-41 of the book, *Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition* before the meeting.
- **Part 3: Embracing God's New Thing.** The third lesson focuses on the good things that come from God's "new thing" and the commitment required to experience them. The series ends by inviting the people to make a commitment to remain faithful in attendance, giving, and volunteerism throughout the transition. Participants should read pages 42-55 of the book, *Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition* before the meeting.
- **Part 4: Defying Gravity.** The last session focuses on three characteristics of churches that do not experience decline in pastoral transitions. It calls your members to use a 40-day prayer guide, generously support your church's transition fund, and remain committed through the entire transition. Participants should read pages 56-68 of the book, *Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition* before the meeting.


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 *Defying Gravity* book distribution or the three-week sermon series, Superintendent Roncone, or his designee, 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, distribute copies of the book, *Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition* and use the small group Bible study in all your discipleship applications for four 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 four weeks.** Arrange for all your Sunday school classes, small group Bible studies, and other groups to use the *Defying Gravity* Bible study. 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 group 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 with the *Defying Gravity* leader guide, 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.
4. **Order enough copies of the book, *Defying Gravity*.** You should plan to give one copy to each person in your church.



AFFECTED MINISTRY
Father, give the
ministry our future
pastor will be
leaving faith,
wisdom, and divine
leading.

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>.

3. **Defying Gravity book distribution.** You can learn more about ordering the books in small or large quantities at <https://generoncone.org/dg>.
- 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 photocopy 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.²⁰¹

Stage 1: Pre-search Preparation

- Set a date for a two-day board retreat. Retreat to be planned even if all cannot attend.
- Listen to podcast entitled, “Common Mistakes Pastoral Search Committees Make” at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
- Secure a venue that is at a nearby hotel or bed and breakfast.
- Board officers will determine the retreat schedule.
- Board officers should meet the day before the retreat to plan the agenda and game-plan through a premeeting huddle.
- Make enough copies of the transition resource and require the board members to read the numbered chapters in the *Rise Up* resource before the retreat. (Include other resources such as the church’s constitution and bylaws.)
- Determine what kind of vote is desired for different decisions. See chapter 12 entitled, “The Pastoral Search Committee.”
- Board will determine individual roles for pastoral search committee such as team lead (chair), secretary, communications lead, prayer lead, networking lead, and hospitality lead.
- Write a church profile, community profile and pastoral profile. See the appendix entitled, “[Church, Neighborhood, and Community Profile](#)” and “Pastor Profile.”
- Review of biblical qualifications and characteristics form and discuss common denominators the board shares regarding your future pastor. See the appendix entitled, “[Desirable Qualities](#).”
- Determine a search budget and transition fund for the pastoral search process See the appendix entitled, “[Transition Budget](#).”
- Group reviews, explains, and signs the “Member Commitment” See chapter 14), confidentiality agreement and the consequences of a breach of confidentiality.
- Group to determine meeting frequency, location, and time. See chapter 15 entitled, “Committee Meetings.”
- The board should share their completed profiles with the district superintendent/network pastor and seek their advice.
- Consider securing the services of an interim pastor for the duration of the pastoral search process. See the chapter entitled, “[Do We Need an Interim Pastor?](#)”)
- Activate the 40-day prayer initiative and call the church to prayer.
- 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.
- Determine if you will do a sustainability initiative and if so, order the *Defying Gravity* books, download curriculum, and mobilize church. See “[Appendix A. SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE](#)” and “[Appendix Y CHURCHWIDE SMALL GROUP STUDY](#)” for details.

Stage 2: Advertising the Opening

- Board to complete the church biography/profile by **APPOINTING** a team to write the church profile describing your church, the neighborhood, and the city.
- Attach this profile for each candidate to review online or through an email.

- Visit <http://www.agspe.org/rutour.mp4> for a sample and short video tour of how Highpoint Church in Aurora, Colorado did this.
- 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.
- Use online ministry job sites to advertise the pastoral opening for at least five months and cancel the ad when no longer needed. See the appendix entitled, "[Advertising the Ministry Opening.](#)"
- Consider hiring a research assistant to gather data needed for advertising.
- The acting chairperson for the search committee should email the district superintendent/network pastor periodically to update them on your progress and receive help with references.

Stage 3: Seek Counsel

- Board should compile a list of questions to ask the district superintendent/network pastor throughout the process.
- Invite the district superintendent/network pastor to attend a church board meeting, offer resources, and answer questions the board may have.
- 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](#)" for a sample list of questions to be emailed to leaders.
- Use our existing congregational "self-study" template for Survey Monkey, create your own through www.surveymonkey.com, use the District's template, 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.](#)"

Stage 4: Targeting Potential Candidates

- Board will need to be proactive and recruit possible candidates and inquiries of interest. (See appendix entitled, "[Sample Letters.](#)")
- Prioritize a list of possible candidates and those interested initially.
- Contact possible candidates through a phone call unless they emailed you first. See the appendix entitled, "[Recruiting Candidates](#)".
- Board to keep current paid pastoral and support staff up to date with the process by sending them a letter. See the appendix entitled, "[Sample Letters.](#)"

Stage 5: Receiving Résumés

- A letter or email should be sent within three days to all candidates who have submitted their names and résumés.
- 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 later.
 - "C" = Unqualified or undesirable candidate to be notified immediately.
- Each category decision to be made by an official vote of the board.
- 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.
- 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 the appendix entitled, "[Candidate Response Request.](#)"

- Include the background of the history of the church for candidates in the “A” category through a letter or email.
- Every committee member should be given a copy of every résumé for evaluation.
- Confirm receipt of résumés and notifications to those no longer of interest. See the appendix entitled, “[Sample Letters](#).”
- “B” category candidates can be considered later. Place “on hold” until the board feels they merit reconsideration. 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.
- “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.

Stage 6: Ministry Exposure and References

- Assign a committee member to check the potential candidates’ church or personal social media outlets. Also, Google the candidates’ names to try to find any valuable information on them. See the appendix entitled, “[Checking References](#).”
- Board/committee will listen to and/or watch the candidates’ sermons and report back impressions to the entire pastoral search committee. See the appendix entitled, “[Exposure to Speaking Ministry](#).”
- If possible, a board member or team of at least three should make anonymous visits to “A” list pastoral candidates’ current churches.
- Background checks should be done on the final three candidates before the final candidate is chosen. Secure written consent from candidate(s) before performing a background check. See the appendix entitled, “[Checking References](#).” Choose one to three committee members with good people skills and disarming demeanors to make contacts for reference calls.
- Request your District Superintendent to contact the primary candidate’s district superintendent/network pastor to get a verbal reference over the phone. See the appendix entitled, “[Checking References](#)” for questions.

Stage 7: Preliminary Phone (Audio Only) Interview

- Board to send a letter to request a preliminary phone conversation with pastoral candidate. See the appendix entitled, “[Sample Letters](#) and “Requesting Phone Contact.”
- Listen to the podcast entitled, “Five Keys to a Successful Pastoral Candidate Interview” at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>. Maintain a positive attitude within the board and committee during every interview.
- Consider providing current financials and a signed statement by the board officers verifying their truthfulness and accuracy. In addition, include a bio on each board member, their level of current ministry involvement, education, and history with the church.
- Board should be prepared to answer questions from the candidate. See the appendix entitled, “[Interview Questions for Board](#).”
- Board should create a list of questions they want to ask the pastoral candidate as a group See appendix entitled “[Interview Questions for Candidates](#).” They should also discuss and have a plan BEFORE an interview takes place. Assign different members of the board to ask questions at an appropriate time and place in the interview.
- Suspend judgments until interview is completed.

- Consider asking the candidate to respond in writing to a list of questions (do not include every question) prior to another interview. See the appendix entitled, "[Interview Questions for Candidates.](#)"
- Debrief for about 20 minutes as a group upon conclusion of the interview.

Stage 8: Video Interview with the Entire Committee

- Video interview should be the third interview and use video conferencing software to help identify the candidate's ministry focus, leadership style, and overarching ministry focus. It should include questions concerning reflective learning, roles and governance, change, ministry preferences, and leadership.
- Board/committee should narrow down a list of questions for the candidate before the video interview meeting. See the appendix entitled, "[Interview Questions for Candidates.](#)"
- Interviews are a two-way street. A sharp candidate will also want to interview the committee. Accommodate time for this.
- Use an online meeting application such as gotomeeting.com, apple facetime (iPhone or iMac), zoom.com, or google hangout. See the appendix entitled, "[Stages of the Process.](#) Stage 8."
- Test video equipment well before the video interview to make sure it is working.
- Plan BEFORE the interview. Select questions as a group, in the order they will be asked, and by whom.
- List of interview questions. See the appendix entitled, "[Interview Questions for Candidates.](#) Interview #3: Video Interview.
- 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 the appendix entitled, "[Sample Letters.](#) Request for written response to questionnaire."
- Plan time to debrief as a group after each interview for about 15-20 minutes. Then take time to pray and reflect upon the interview before making a final decision about the candidate.

Stage 9: Contextual Visit

- Board/committee to review preaching and teaching of ministry candidates.
- 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. The goal of the anonymous visit is to see, hear, and get a feeling for the candidate in their local ministry setting.
- No contact should be made with the candidate, nor should they receive prior notice.
- View the outside of the facility after hours. How does the landscaping and exterior of the building look?
- Allow more than one board member to listen to the candidate's message since everyone has different tastes and opinions.
- Be sure to confirm the candidate is preaching on the date you plan to visit.

Stage 10: Personal Interviews

- Choose two to three potential candidates along with the candidates' spouse and family to interview at the church's expense.
- 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.
- 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.
- Plan a loose itinerary that will accomplish goals.
- Face-to-face interview includes board/committee, the candidate, and the candidate's spouse to discuss significant issues not previously discussed.

- Give candidate/candidate's family an opportunity of margin to explore the city, pray together, and reflect upon their visit.
- Plan an informal Q&A with deacons and their spouses.
- Board to complete any background, credit, criminal, and educational reference checks before moving forward.
- Do not commit to an individual until all critical information has been collected, reviewed, and prayed about.
- Board should be prepared and expect candidates to interview them and the church as well. They may request a copy of the church's current financials and a signed statement by the board officers verifying their truthfulness and accuracy.
- 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. See the appendix entitled, "[Interview Questions for Boards.](#)"

Stage 11: Return Trip

- Invite the final candidate and the candidate's spouse and children to return to meet with the board and staff.
- Provide a written remuneration agreement BEFORE the candidate arrives so they can consider that among other issues. Make sure the remuneration package has been approved by the board in the form of a motion and signed by its officers. See appendix entitled, "[Presenting a Remuneration Agreement.](#)"
- Set up hotel if needed and expense accommodations for the final candidate and the candidate's spouse and family.
- 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.
- See the appendix entitled, "[Interview Questions](#)" for suggested questions at this stage.

Stage 12: Official Candidacy

- Set up a schedule for candidate to be voted on and make travel arrangements for the candidate and the candidate's spouse and family. If out of state, purchase airline tickets for candidate and the candidate's spouse and family.
- Schedule and promote a dessert social at 7 p.m. at the church for members to interact with the candidate and the candidate's spouse and family. Questions should be submitted and screened before the Q&A session and index cards provided to the candidate.
- On Sunday, schedule enough time for the candidate to preach a full message and give them an adequate introduction before speaking.
- Provide any needed childcare for candidate's children during interviews and services.

Stage 13: Preparation

- Provide an official letter confirming remuneration package for temporary housing for family.
- Appoint a transition team of non-board members to help with logistical needs for the pastor's relocation.
- Schedule a welcome day and be sure their office is ready beforehand.
- Provide the needed technology, like a computer, that is set up with needed programs and access, cell phone, keys, email, office orientation, password list and an onboarding meeting to help them adjust and answer any questions.
- Write a press release and post to all social media outlets and the church's website and notify local press. Include relocation efforts, bio about their family members, hobbies, interests, and passions.

- Notify the district superintendent/network pastor within one day of election process. See appendix entitled, "[Sample Letters](#)" and "Notification to district/network."
- 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.
- 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.
- Create a welcome team to help the family move in, assemble beds, organize furniture, and get settled their first week.
- Welcome basket to include disposable cups, plates, plasticware, paper towels, etc., to help with their first few days in a new home.
- Prepare a referral list of service providers such as realtors, doctors, contractors, mechanics, schools, hairdressers, clubs, sports programs, and utility providers.
- Do not set appointments or speak on behalf of the pastor/pastor's family regarding service providers. Let them make their own choices.
- 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.
- Begin transfer of church leadership authority and responsibilities from the board to the new pastor.
- 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.
- Begin to prepare and support the pastor's preference for an installation service. The new pastor (not the board or church) should select a date and order of service for their installation service.
- 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.

III. DIGITAL RESOURCES ([back to table](#))

The following is a list of digital resources categorized by the following types.

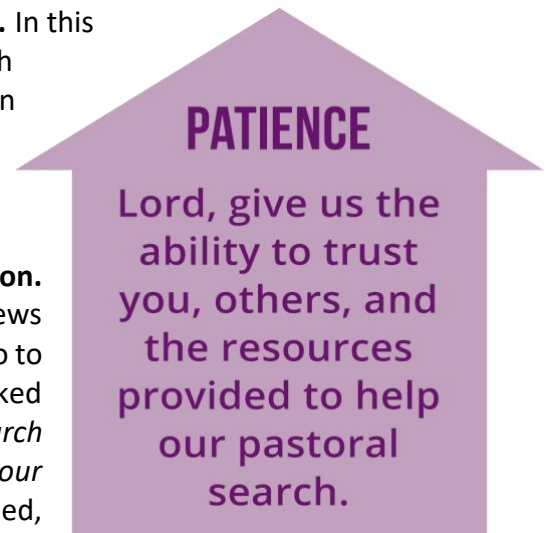
- **Coaching podcasts.** Hyperlinks to audio training specifically for the pastoral search team.
- **Form letters.** Hyperlinks to digital letters in Microsoft Word format that can be downloaded and customized to suit your own needs.
- **Resource templates.** Hyperlinks to templates and forms in Microsoft Word and Excel format that can be downloaded and customized to suit your own needs.
- **Congregational resources.** Hyperlinks to resources to help your congregants be better informed and helpful to your church while in transition.

They can be accessed by using the PDF version of this manual. Depending on the web browser you use, some resources will be automatically downloaded to your download folder when you click them. If you don't see anything on the screen after clicking the hyperlink, be sure to check your download folder. You can also access the latest updates and testimonials on the *Rise Up* webpage at www.generationone.org/riseup.

A. Coaching Podcasts. Following is a list of audio resources concerning topics related to pastoral transitions. Additional topics will be added as this resource is updated annually. They can be accessed through any electronic device on the network's podcast channel at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup> or by hovering your smart phone camera over the QR code to the right and then clicking the link that appears on your screen.



1. **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. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
2. **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 committees make. Find out what they are and how to avoid them. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
3. **Six Ways You Can Help Your Church in Pastoral Transition.** In this eye-opening podcast, Gene Roncone interviews Jason Lowe about what normal church attenders can do to help their church during a pastoral transition. Gene asked Jason to unpack six things from his new book, *The Church During the Search: Honoring Christ While You Wait for Your Next Pastor*. You will learn how to be prepared, informed, humble, prayerful, patient, and productive during this critical season. This podcast will also help you better understand the pastoral search process, know how you can help make the transition more productive and how to express faith in a way that makes your church stronger. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.



4. **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. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
5. **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. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
6. **Defying Gravity Small Group Leader Coaching.** In this episode, Superintendent Gene Roncone, the author of the *Defying Gravity* 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.
7. **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. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
8. **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. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.
9. **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 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. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.



10. 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 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. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

11. 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. Listen at <https://soundcloud.com/rmmnriseup>.

More podcasts are added in between the *Rise Up* manual revision cycles, so be sure to check the audio channel periodically.

B. Form Letters. The following letters are also available to download and customize as either a Microsoft Word or Excel document. If you have the PDF version of this manual click the hyperlinks below to download them.

1. [Departing pastor's resignation letter](#)
2. [Board letter to paid staff and volunteers after the pastor's resignation](#)
3. [Board letter to the congregation](#)
4. [Community leaders asking for insight into community needs](#)
5. [Invitation for congregants to take the online survey](#)
6. [Guest speakers, confirming dates and important information.](#)
7. [Request for recommended candidates](#)
8. [Person who has recommended a candidate](#)
9. [Confirmation that a résumé has been received](#)
10. [Requesting phone contact with a potential candidate](#)
11. [Response to impressive résumé](#)
12. [Contacting a recruited candidate](#)
13. [Concluding consideration of a candidate](#)
14. [Dismissing a candidate after an interview](#)
15. [Notification of an official candidate to the membership](#)
16. [Formal resolution of nomination by the board to the membership](#)
17. [Pastor-elect confirmation of election and official invitation to candidate](#)
18. [Notification to district/network Superintendent of election](#)

C. Resource Templates. The following templates are also available to download and customize as either a Microsoft Word or Excel document. If you have the PDF version of this manual click the hyperlinks below to download them.

1. [RISE UP website with latest testimonials and recent updates.](#)
2. [Departing pastor's pledge](#)
3. [Exit interview with departing pastor](#)
4. [Employee check-out with departing pastor](#)
5. [Sunday morning blessing service outline](#)

6. [Invitation for congregants to take the online survey](#)
7. [Search committee planning retreat agenda](#)
8. [Church profile \(outstanding example\)](#)
9. [Search committee suggested purpose statement](#)
10. [Board and Search Committee Commitment template](#)
11. [Agenda template for Pastoral Search Committee meetings](#)
12. [Transition budget worksheet in a customizable Excel template](#)
13. [Church Member Commitment template](#)
14. [Video tour of sample web/splash page for interested candidates](#)
15. [Sermon evaluation tool](#)
16. [Background check release form](#)
17. [Job description, basic template](#)
18. [Remuneration agreement template](#)
19. [Board motion recommending candidate to membership](#)
20. [Chairman notes to chair special electoral business meeting](#)
21. [Special business meeting roster report form](#)
22. [Special business meeting teller report form](#)
23. [Special business meeting minutes](#)

D. Congregational Resources. Click the links below to access the desired resources designed specifically to help educate and empower congregants during the transition.

1. [Invitation for congregants to take the online survey](#)
2. [Sustainability initiative testimonials from pastoral search committees](#)
3. [Sustainability initiative Defying Gravity four-week small group curriculum](#)
4. [Sustainability initiative Defying Gravity small group leader coaching podcast](#)
5. [Sustainability initiative book, Defying Gravity, How to Thrive in a Pastoral Transition](#)
6. [Sustainability initiative Member Commitment Template](#)
7. [Audio for congregants on six ways to support your church while in transition](#)

Use this paragraph in your email, Sunday bulletin or letter.

“Change is not always easy, especially when it involves a pastoral transition. To help our people at [**insert church name**] better understand this process and how to help, the board has provided an audio interview that addresses six positive things church members and attendees can do to grow through a pastoral transition. Use this link to listen: www.agspe.org/RUready.mp3.”

8. [Graphic showing all 13 stages of the Rise Up transition plan](#)
9. [Congregational summary of the 13-stage process in a Q&A PDF format](#)
10. [Congregational survey sample](#) (example only as yours will be customized)
11. [Graphic image depicting the three types of church governance.](#)
12. [Video explaining the difference between three types of church governance](#)
13. [PDF document explaining the difference between three types of church governance](#)
14. [Prayer guide for all-church prayer initiative](#)
15. [AG District Superintendent’s collaborative paper on female lead pastors](#)

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V. ENDNOTES ([back to table](#))

¹ Jeff 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.

² Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 10.

³ Aristotle, *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.

⁴ Jone Johnson Lewis, "Jackie Joyner-Kersey Quotes," About Women's History, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/quotes/a/joyner_kersey.htm, accessed March 30, 2018.

⁵ This 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.

⁶ The 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).

⁷ Email from Gary Larson, June 25, 2018.

⁸ Bob Russell and Bryan Bucher, *Transition Plan: 7 Secrets Every Leader Needs to Know*, Ministers Label Publishing, Louisville, KY, 2010, p. 18.

⁹ William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2014, p. 57.

¹⁰ Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, pp. 50-51.

¹¹ Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. xix.

¹² Chris Brauns, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search, Practical Principles & Practices to Guide Your Search*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, Illinois, 2011. p. 60.

¹³ Ryan Austie, *Search Team Best Practices, & Things Pastoral Search Teams Can Start Doing Today*, M3M Matched by Mission Publication, Kindle Edition, 2019, p. 7.

¹⁴ Jim Ozier and Jim Griffith, *The Changeover Zone: Successful Pastoral Transitions*, Abington Press, Nashville, TN, 2016, p. 5.

¹⁵ William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 2.

¹⁶ Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastors*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, MD, 2012, p. 21.

¹⁷ Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 40.

¹⁸ Congregational survey adapted from several outstanding resources.

¹⁹ Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 10.; Expand Consulting Partners, *Tsunami, Open Secrets to Pastoral Succession & Transition*, Expand Publishing, 2022, pp 15-16; Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. xix.

²⁰ August 28, 2022, email from Superintendent Phil Schneider of the Illinois Assembly of God in response to a discussion thread on the AG District Superintendents private Facebook group.

²¹ Tom Brennan, *Next, A Manual for Pastoral Transitions*, Xulon Press, Maitland, FL, 2021, p. 98.

²² William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 59.

²³ Cam Taylor and Alan Simpson, *Between Pastors: Seizing the Opportunity*, Outreach Canada Ministries, 2014, p. 29.

²⁴ IN 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 the outgoing pastor's 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.

²⁵ Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 2015, p. 137.

²⁶ 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. 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.

²⁷ IN 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.

²⁸ “General Council Affiliated Church Governance Minimums,” 2019, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed December 19, 2019.

²⁹ The 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).

³⁰ *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 2:18, p. 15.

³¹ *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 2:8, p. 11.

³² *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 25:7, p. 248.

³³ *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 25:7, p. 248.

³⁴ “General Council Affiliated Church Governance Minimums,” 2019, <https://ag.org/About/About-the-AG/Constitution-and-Bylaws>, accessed December 19, 2019.

³⁵ “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.

³⁶ “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.

³⁷ “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.

³⁸ Information regarding online options to meet the educational requirements for a credential can be obtained at <http://www.agspe.org/Preparation.pdf>

³⁹ Information 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.

⁴⁰ This 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.

⁴¹ “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.

⁴² “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.

⁴³ “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.

⁴⁴ “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.

⁴⁵ IN 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.

⁴⁶ Carolyn 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.

⁴⁷ The 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.

⁴⁸ *A Guide to Healthy Senior/Lead Pastor Transitions*, Oregon Ministry Network, Keizer, OR, 2019, p. 7.

⁴⁹ Recommended 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>.

⁵⁰ Gary Smith, *Pastoral Transitions, A Seamless Handoff of Leadership*, EnGedi Publishing, Corpus Christi, TX, p. 44

⁵¹ Jason Lowe, *Searching For Ways To Search For A Pastor, An Examination of the Best & Worst Practices in the Pastor Search Process*, <https://jasonalowe.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/pastor-search-survey-results-report.pdf>, June 4, 2018

⁵² Jason Lowe, *The Church During The Search, Honoring Christ While You Wait for Your Next Pastor*, Aneko Press, Abbotsford, WI, 2020, p.75-98. Chapter 4 on prayer is outstanding. The initial 2018 Rise Up transition manual also included a forty-day prayer guide with a specific theme for each day.

⁵³ Chris Brauns, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search, Practical Principles & Practices to Guide Your Search*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, Illinois, 2011. p. 25.

⁵⁴ This prayer list was compiled by Pastor Gene Roncone from different resources over many years. Unfortunately, it would be impossible to recall their original sources.

⁵⁵ David 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.

⁵⁶ Justin Tull, *Interim Ministry: Positive Change in Times of Transition*, Published by Justin Tull, 2012, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015, p.4.

⁵⁸ Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 2.

⁵⁹ Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, 2015, Nashville, TN, p. 6.

⁶⁰ May 1, 2019, email from Bob Cook.

⁶¹ *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 2:8, p. 11.

⁶² *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th Edition, 25:7, p. 248.

⁶³ Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 3.

⁶⁴ 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.

⁶⁵ William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 37.

⁶⁶ William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, pp. 38-45.

⁶⁷ Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Richard Blackaby, *Your Next Pastor, A God-Centered Guide for Pastor Search Committees*, Blackaby Ministries International, Jonesboro, GA 30237, 2022, p. 17.

⁶⁹ David 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.

⁷⁰ IN 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 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.

⁷¹ Thom 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.

⁷² IN 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.

⁷³ IN 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.

⁷⁴ IN 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. Rhonda and I struggled with this during one of our transitions where the church took six weeks to reimburse us for travel costs.

⁷⁵ John Cionca and Fred W. Prinzing, *Search Counsel, A Devotional Coaching Guide for Call Committees*, Ministry Transitions, St. Paul, MN, 2005, pp. 108, 111.

⁷⁶ Ryan Austie, *Search Team Best Practices, & Things Pastoral Search Teams Can Start Doing Today*, M3M Matched by Mission Publication, Kindle Edition, 2019, p. 7.

⁷⁷ "Interim/Transitional Ministry," Presbyterian Church (USA), <https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/ministers/interim-pastors>, accessed January 10, 2018.

⁷⁸ This 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.

⁷⁹ David 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.

⁸⁰ Michael 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.

⁸¹ Justin Tull, *Interim Ministry: Positive Change in Times of Transition*, Published by Justin Tull, 2012, p. 47.

⁸² Lee Kricher, *Seamless Pastoral Transitions, 3 Imperatives – 6 Pitfalls*, Xulon Press, Maitland, FL, 2022, p. xi.

⁸³ Three-hour interview with Wally Weber, January 22, 2018.

⁸⁴ Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, pp. 31-32.

⁸⁵ Cam Taylor and Alan Simpson, *Between Pastors: Seizing the Opportunity*, Outreach Canada Ministries, 2014.

⁸⁶ David 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.

⁸⁷ Some 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>.

⁸⁸ Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 30.

⁸⁹ Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 42.

⁹⁰ James C. Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*, Harper Business, New York, 2001, p. 32.

⁹¹ William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2014, p. 136.

⁹² William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2014, p. 29.

⁹³ Joseph Umidi, *Matching Pastoral Candidates and Churches, A Guide for Search Committees and Candidates*, Kregel Publication, Grand Rapids, MI, 2020, p. 9.

⁹⁴ This 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.

⁹⁵ The 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.

⁹⁶ William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 57.

⁹⁷ In addition to resource contributors, 23 district/network superintendents and 6 secretary/treasurers representing 67% of AG districts collaborated to produce this resource. The survey was conducted using Survey Monkey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/female-lead> and included 29 total respondents, a completion rate of 71 percent, and an average response time of 36m:28s. The contributors and their names are listed in alphabetical order: Brett Allen (Superintendent, Northern California and Nevada District), Tim Barker (Superintendent, South Texas District), Glenn Beaver (Superintendent, West Texas District), Ivan De la Torre (Superintendent, Puerto Rico District), Don Detrick (Secretary/Treasurer, Northwest Ministry Network), David Dillon (Superintendent, Appalachian Ministry Network), Ken Draughon (Superintendent, Alabama Ministry Network), Jim Filbeck (Secretary/Treasurer, Minnesota District), Jesse Galindo (Superintendent, Central Pacific Ministry Network), Hilario Garza (Superintendent, Northwest Hispanic District), Don Gifford (Superintendent, Indiana District), Rich Guerra (Superintendent, SOCAL Network of the AG), Nicole Heidt (Secretary/Treasurer, Wyoming Ministry Network), Aaron Hlavin (Superintendent,

Michigan District), Den Hussey (Secretary/Treasurer, Louisiana District), Rich Lemberg (District Secretary, Wisconsin-Northern Michigan District), Brooks McElhenny (Secretary/Treasurer, Michigan District), Sergio Navarrete, (Superintendent, Southern Pacific District), Daniel Olivarez (Superintendent, Central District), Gene Roncone (Superintendent, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network), Rick Ross (Superintendent, North Carolina AG Network), Robert W. Sandler (Superintendent, South Carolina District), Alan Schaberg (Superintendent, Wyoming Ministry Network), Toby Schnechloth (Superintendent, Nebraska District), Phil Schneider (Superintendent, Illinois District), Winston Titus (Superintendent, North Dakota Ministry Network), Bill Welch (Superintendent, Alaska Ministry Network), Joel Wendland (Superintendent, Southern Idaho District), and Darryl Wooten (Superintendent, Oklahoma District).

⁹⁸ Statistics provided by Sherri Doty, Statistics Supervisor, Office of the General Secretary at the Assemblies of God National Office (personal email communication between August 30, 2021, and September 2, 2021).

⁹⁹ Gene Roncone, *Explore the Call, Is Ministry God's Will for Your Life*, Monroe, IL, 2021, portions of Chapters 15 and 16.

¹⁰⁰ Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, 2nd Edition, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, Kindle Edition, 2018, p. 231.

¹⁰¹ Eldon Jay Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 2005, and Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2009, pp. 214–217.

¹⁰² Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet*, 2nd Edition, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, Kindle Edition, 2018, p. 234.

¹⁰³ Debbie Lamm Bray, "Ministry Without Walls," *Influence Magazine*, August 18, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Andy Smith's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹⁰⁵ Nicole Heidt's response⁴ on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹⁰⁶ Don Detrick's response on Gene Roncone's, Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹⁰⁷ Allan J. Clark, "The Full Gospel in Zion: A History of Pentecostalism in Utah," PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2019, pp. 171-193.

¹⁰⁸ Tim Barker's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹⁰⁹ Bret Allen's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹¹⁰ Alice H. Eagly and Linda L. Carlie, "The Female Leadership Advantage: An Evaluation of the Evidence," *The Leadership Quarterly*, 14, Pergamon Publishing, 2003, pp. 807-844.

¹¹¹ Phil Schneider's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹¹² Toby Schneckloth's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹¹³ Aaron Hlavin's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹¹⁴ Rick Ross's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹¹⁵ Hilario Garza's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹¹⁶ Bill Welch's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹¹⁷ Don Detrick's response on Gene Roncone's Superintendent's Survey (Survey of Assemblies of God District Superintendents concerning why pastoral search committees should consider female candidates), 2021.

¹¹⁸ The following four Assemblies of God districts/networks participated in the survey and reported the most female lead pastors: Northern California and Nevada District (25 female lead pastors), Southern Pacific District (18 female lead pastors), SOCAL Network of the AG (16 female lead pastors), and the Michigan District (15 female lead pastors).

¹¹⁹ Andrew Flowers, *Leading Through Succession: Why Pastoral Leadership Is Key to a Healthy Transition*, Published by Andrew Flowers, 2017, pp. 6, 8.

¹²⁰ Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NJ, 2004, p. 179.

¹²¹ Gary L. Johnson, *Leader Shift: One Becomes Less While Another Becomes More*, 2013, Published by Gary L. Johnson, Foreword.

¹²² Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015, p.7.

¹²³ Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 17.

¹²⁴ Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015, pp. 27-36.

¹²⁵ Wolf, Glen, (2020). *A Strategic Plan to Assist Pastors In The Succession Between A Mentoring Lead Pastor And His Or Her Mentee*, [Doctor of Ministry, DMin], Southwestern University, pp 1-4.

¹²⁶ Bryant Wright, *Succession, Preparing Your Ministry for the Next Leader*, B&H Publishing Group, Nashville, Tennessee, 2022, p. 22

- ¹²⁷ Wolf, Glen, (2020). *A Strategic Plan to Assist Pastors In The Succession Between A Mentoring Lead Pastor And His Or Her Mentee*, [Doctor of Ministry, DMin], Southwestern University, p 63.
- ¹²⁸ Bishop Walter Harvey, *Alley-Oop, Keys to Pastoral Succession*, Walter Harvey Ministries, 2021.
- ¹²⁹ Will Heath, *Embracing Succession, Helping Ministry Leaders Confront the Personal Side of Transition*, CrossLink Publishing, Rapid City, South Dakota, 2020, pp. 64-65.
- ¹³⁰ William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird, *Next: Pastoral Succession That Works*, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 2020, p. 31.
- ¹³¹ Frank Damazio, *The Vanguard Leader: A New Breed of Leader to Encounter the Future*, Bible Temple Publishing, Portland, OR, 1994, p. 309.
- ¹³² Jeff Harlow, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading a Healthy Church Transition*, Epiphany Publishing, Indianapolis, IN, 2017, p. 68.
- ¹³³ Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 24.
- ¹³⁴ Gary Smith, *Pastoral Transitions, A Seamless Handoff of Leadership*, EnGedi Publishing, Corpus Christi, TX, pp. 17-23.
- ¹³⁵ Lee Kricher, *Seamless Pastoral Transitions, 3 Imperatives – 6 Pitfalls*, Xulon Press, Maitland, FL, 2022, pp. 49-55 and 73-82
- ¹³⁶ Gary Smith, *Pastoral Transitions, A Seamless Handoff of Leadership*, EnGedi Publishing, Corpus Christi, TX., 2020.
- ¹³⁷ Wolf, Glen, (2020). *A Strategic Plan to Assist Pastors In The Succession Between A Mentoring Lead Pastor And His Or Her Mentee*, [Doctor of Ministry, DMin], Southwestern University.
- ¹³⁸ Tom 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.
- ¹³⁹ Jeff Harlow, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading A Healthy Church Transition*, Epiphany Publishing, Indianapolis, IN, 2017.
- ¹⁴⁰ Terry Roberts, *Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition*, Published by Terry Roberts, 2015.
- ¹⁴¹ Gary L. Johnson, *Leader Shift: One Become Less While Another Becomes More*, Published by Gary L. Johnson, 2013.
- ¹⁴² Bob Russell, *Transition Plan: 7 Secrets Every Leader Needs to Know*, Ministers Label Publishing; 1st edition, 2010.
- ¹⁴³ Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, pp. 95-101.
- ¹⁴⁴ Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019.

- ¹⁴⁵ Expand Consulting Partners, *Tsunami, Open Secrets to Pastoral Succession & Transition*, Expand Publishing, 2022.
- ¹⁴⁶ Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NY, 2004, p. 26.
- ¹⁴⁷ Gary Smith, *Pastoral Transitions, A Seamless Handoff of Leadership*, EnGedi Publishing, Corpus Christi, TX, 2022, p. 41.
- ¹⁴⁸ Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. 6.
- ¹⁴⁹ Carolyn 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.
- ¹⁵⁰ Alaska Ministry Network, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Year, p. 12.
- ¹⁵¹ 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. 41; and Robert Kaylor, *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*, Seedbed Publishing, Wilmore, KY, 2013, p. 71.
- ¹⁵² Joseph Umidi, *Matching Pastoral Candidates and Churches, A Guide for Search Committees and Candidates*, Kregel Publication, Grand Rapids, MI, 2020, p. 18.
- ¹⁵³ Carolyn 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.
- ¹⁵⁴ Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, Hoboken, NJ, 2004, p. 31.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ira M. Levin, *New Leader Assimilation Process: Accelerating New Role-Related Transitions*, Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research 62.1, 2010, p. 61.
- ¹⁵⁶ Jeff Harlow, *Dancing with Cinderella: Leading A Healthy Church Transition*, Epiphany Publishing, Indianapolis, IN, 2017, p. viv.
- ¹⁵⁷ Chris Brauns, *When the Word Leads Your Pastoral Search, Practical Principles & Practices to Guide Your Search*, Moody Publishers, Chicago, Illinois, 2011. p. 15.
- ¹⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996, p. 79.
- ¹⁵⁹ Tom Brennan, *Next, A Manual for Pastoral Transitions*, Xulon Press, Maitland, FL, 2021, p. 110.
- ¹⁶⁰ Sam Hamstra, *Questions to Ask Before Searching for Your Next Pastor*, Vervante Publishing, Springville, UT 84663, 2022, p. 41.
- ¹⁶¹ 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. 20.
- ¹⁶² William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 94.
- ¹⁶³ 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. 19.

¹⁶⁴ 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. 30.

¹⁶⁵ Thom 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/>.

¹⁶⁶ Don 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.

¹⁶⁷ 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. 71.

¹⁶⁸ Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 24.

¹⁶⁹ Joseph Umidi, *Matching Pastoral Candidates and Churches, A Guide for Search Committees and Candidates*, Kregel Publication, Grand Rapids, MI, 2020, p. 33.

¹⁷⁰ Ken Moberg, *Help, We Just Lost Our Pastor* 3rd Edition, EFCA Publications, Minneapolis, MN, 2021. p. 116

¹⁷¹ Richard Blackaby, *Your Next Pastor, A God-Centered Guide for Pastor Search Committees*, Blackaby Ministries International, Jonesboro, GA 30237, 2022, p. 7.

¹⁷² Don Steiger, *Guidelines for Selecting a Pastor*, Rocky Mountain Ministry Network, 2017, p. 4.

¹⁷³ Barna Group, *Leadership Transitions: How Churches Navigate Pastoral Change and Stay Healthy*, Barna Group, PDF, 2019, p. 10.; Expand Consulting Partners, *Tsunami, Open Secrets to Pastoral Succession & Transition*, Expand Publishing, 2022, pp 15-16; Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. xix.

¹⁷⁴ August 28, 2022, email from Superintendent Phil Schneider of the Illinois Assembly of God in response to a discussion thread on the AG District Superintendents private Facebook group.

¹⁷⁵ Mike Harper, *Passing the Baton: Transition in Leadership*, North Texas District, p. 62.

¹⁷⁶ Robert W. Dingman, *In Search of a Leader: The Complete Search Committee Guidebook*, Lakeside Books, Benton Harbor, MI, 1994, p. 154.

¹⁷⁷ Henry A. Virkler, *Choosing a New Pastor: The Complete Handbook*, Wipf & Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR, 2006, p. 117.

¹⁷⁸ Jerry David, *Honorable Design: The Art and Order of Generational Transition*, Brookstone Publishing Group, 2019, p. 36.

¹⁷⁹ Warren D. Bullock, *Your Next Pastor: Guidelines for Finding God's Person for Your Church*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO, 2013, p. 135.

¹⁸⁰ Tom Mullins, *Passing the Leadership Baton: A Winning Transition Plan for Your Ministry*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 2015, pp. 78-79.

¹⁸¹ During 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.

¹⁸² *A Pastor Selection Process Model*, Ministerial Enrichment Office of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, PDF, p. 11.

¹⁸³ Email correspondence with Maggie Richter, Marketing Assistant, Vanderbloemen Search Group, January 2, 2018.

¹⁸⁴ Jason Lowe, *The Church During The Search, Honoring Christ While You Wait for Your Next Pastor*, Aneko Press, Abbotsford, WI, 2020, p. 22.

¹⁸⁵ Art Rainer, *“The Minister’s Salary and Other Challenges in Ministry Finance*, Kindle Edition, Rainer Publishing, 2015, p. 47

¹⁸⁶ IN 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.

¹⁸⁷ *A Pastor Selection Process Model*, Ministerial Enrichment Office of The General Council of the Assemblies of God, PDF, p. 14-15.

¹⁸⁸ In addition to Social Security and other personal plans, credentialed ministers in the Assemblies of God have access to outstanding retirement plan options with Church Extension Plan (www.cepnet.com) and Ministers Benefit Association (www.agfinancial.org), who are both affiliated with the Assemblies of God.

¹⁸⁹ Website for the Internal Revenue Service at <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/irs-increases-mileage-rate-for-remainder-of-2022>.

¹⁹⁰ William Vanderbloemen, *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, B&H Books, Nashville, 2016, p. 116.

¹⁹¹ John Cionca and Fred W. Prinzing, *Search Counsel, A Devotional Coaching Guide for Call Committees*, Ministry Transitions, St. Paul, MN, 2005, p. 162.

¹⁹² Art Rainer, *“The Minister’s Salary and Other Challenges in Ministry Finance*, Kindle Edition, Rainer Publishing, 2015, p. 47

¹⁹³ Phone interview with Jim Braddy, retired district superintendent, Northern California and Nevada, concerning how to host a candidate for election, January 3, 2018.

¹⁹⁴ IN 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.

¹⁹⁵ Tom Brennan, *Next, A Manual for Pastoral Transitions*, Xulon Press, Maitland, FL, 2021, p. 125.

¹⁹⁶ These election announcement options were the result of a collaborative email discussion between Doug Clay, Donna Barrett, Rich Guerra, John Musgrave, Gene Roncone, Phil Schneider, Darryl Wootton, and John Wootton.

¹⁹⁷ This list was initially created by my wife, Rhonda Roncone, and then expanded upon by input from pastor friends who recently experienced a relocation.

¹⁹⁸ The 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.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Kaylor, *Your Best Move: Effective Leadership Transition for the Local Church*, Seedbed Publishing, Wilmore, KY, 2013, pp. 24-32.

²⁰⁰ Mark Lau Branson, *Memories, Hopes, and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change*, Alban Institute, 2004, p. 58.

²⁰¹ This 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.