

A
Better
Way...**FOR A**
GREATER
DAY

MANUAL OF SUGGESTIONS FOR PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEES

Written by Vaughn D. Manning
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PREFACE

The woman left the church agitated to the point of exasperation. As she went through the foyer door she was heard to say, “*There has to be a better way.*” Her husband, a candidate for a pastoral position, had just completed a sermon as a pulpit guest so a “*pulpit committee*” could hear him preach. That is a nerve wracking experience for any minister regardless of his years of service.

I do not know if that was the beginning of my interest in search committee work or if it was a few years earlier when a search committee came to my study after a morning service and the chairman announced, “*We are out to hire a preacher.*” (That took care of any immediate interest in that church.)

My interest and involvement in the process continued to grow. A year later I entered denominational service, and as Sundays were free from pastoral responsibilities, I began to be involved in interim ministry work. Since that beginning over 25 years ago, I have tried to help churches during the interim periods when they were without a shepherd, met with too many “*pulpit*” committees to number, acted as “*referee*” in a great number of heated church discussions, and studied in-depth the interpersonal dynamics which go on between pastor/staff and people in this organism we call church. The lady was right, “*There has to be a better way*” for search committees to deal with pastoral candidates, and this book is an attempt to help in some of those issues.

Two of my favorite quips are:

“God cannot bless ignorance no matter how it is consecrated”
and

“You can tell Baptists a little but not much.”

I am grateful to God that He has given to us the process we call the “*intentional interim.*” It gives us great hope for those churches where the spirit seems to be forever dark. They seem to wait hopelessly for a “*prince charming*” to come and deliver them from endless wrangling and dissension. The issues behind such behavior are often “*swept under the rug*” each time a new pastor is called because the church knows nothing else to do. But these will soon resurface to the dismay and discomfort of the new pastor and the congregation. The Intentional Interim Ministry is a wonderful tool to deal constructively with that kind of pain and restore a warm and loving fellowship among the people of God. It is hoped that this book will help whatever barriers that may be reflected in my second quip, “*You can tell Baptists a little, but not too much.*” Perhaps through the study of some of the principles outlined in this book and by listening to the Holy Spirit, a “*better way...for a greater day*” will be found.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ORDER AND CONTENT	PAGE
Preliminary Statement	4
Some Observations About Key Issues.....	5
The Importance of the Interim Period	6-7
The Selection of the Pastor Search Committee.....	7
The Pastor Search Committee Beginning Its Responsibilities	8-9
The Search Committee Beginning the Actual Process	9-10
Suggested Steps in the Search Process	10-12
Completing Preparations to Issue a Call	13
Extending the Call to a Pastor	14
Important Issues Related to Adequate Compensation for Ministries	15
Follow-up	16
Supplementary Materials	17-27

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

This booklet was written primarily to assist small and middle-size churches, although the basic principles in the search process fit churches of any size and certainly can be used by larger churches.

On occasion, church leaders will be tempted to set aside some of the principles set forth in this book based on the feeling, *“We are different.”* All churches differ in some degree. As human beings have differing personalities, so do churches. However, these principles come from years of observation, research, and conversations with many persons.

The conclusion is that search committees should give prayerful consideration to each principle before deciding, *“This does not apply to us.”* This material is intended only as a guide and should be used by each church according to individual need and as the Holy Spirit directs.

SOME OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT KEY ISSUES

Someone has observed, “Most churches are looking for a pastor to come and tell them who they are.” If the church is not clear about identity, mission and direction, its relationship with a new pastor could be disastrous. If this is not clearly stated, it will take a long time for the new minister to find out where the church is and what its mission ought to be. The mismatching of pastoral leadership and the needs of a particular church is one of the major reasons for church stress. Unrealized or unstated expectations are often at the core of minister/church disharmony.

There is a better way. The church needs to be able to tell a prospective pastor who it is and where it believes it needs to go. The prospective pastor needs to understand his own gifts, be able to share the dreams he has for his own ministry, and be candid about his expectations and abilities. Then, together they can look objectively at the church’s needs/goals and his skills/desires and determine if he is the one to lead the church. All the issues involved must be honestly and objectively evaluated, and throughout the process the direction of the Holy Spirit must be sought and followed. When this is done, the chances of a long and productive relationship between pastor and people are greatly enhanced.

Another issue is the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It is the most important factor in the search process, but the Spirit does not work in a vacuum. He works primarily according to the needs and issues faced by a particular church. In seeking to be “spiritual,” some search committees so strongly emphasize the subjective leadership

of the Holy Spirit that the plain and practical are counted of little or no value. Reservations may be “spiritualized” away and obvious deficiencies or weaknesses ignored. This is true for the church and the prospective pastor.

The leadership of the Holy Spirit is key in the search process, but sometimes it seems that the Spirit’s leadership is misused, abused, or manipulated as evidenced in the results. Surely the Holy Spirit does not lead ministers or churches into disastrous relationships, and yet some ministers and churches seem to be poorly matched. It would appear that personal desires may become confused with the Holy Spirit’s leadership. It is true that God does not make mistakes, but sometimes we humans err in determining the will of God.

The church needs to be able to tell a prospective pastor who it is and where it believes it needs to go. The prospective pastor needs to understand his own gifts, be able to share the dreams he has for his own ministry, and be candid about his expectations and abilities.

Prayer must be the central element in this process. *The Lord Jesus said, “Ask (and keep asking), seek (and keep seeking), and knock (and keep knocking)”* (Matthew 7:7-11,

Luke 11: 9-13). Then, Matthew records “*The Father will grant what is needed.*” And Jesus, in Luke’s gospel, enlarges on this by saying, “*How much more will the Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.*”

This can be applied in a number of ways. The church needs to “ask” many questions of itself related to its mission; it needs to “seek” much information about itself and its ministry; and it needs to “knock” until the constituency has a clear understanding of the mission and the needs of the church.

The Search Committee should follow the same scriptural pattern of “asking, seeking, knocking” in the development of information and candidate profiles. Then it must use that pattern in the search for the minister who will be called to lead the church in accomplishing its mission and ministry.

At the very earliest possible time, the director of missions for the local association should be sought for counsel and invited to meet with the church leadership. As soon as the pastor is gone, or at an opportune time before he leaves, the director of missions should be invited to speak, show the video produced by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, “*When the Pastor Leaves,*” and interpret it for the congregation.

The director of missions is an excellent resource in the process undertaken by the church in the interim period between pastors, and at the proper time should be invited to train the Pastor Search Committee. Later he can lend assistance related to references and other information upon the committee’s request.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INTERIM PERIOD

In the past, little thought was given to the interim between pastors other than, “*We need to hold our own and get a pastor as soon as we can.*” That might have been valid when times were more stable. But today, a vastly different approach is required. The average pastorate in a Texas Baptist church lasts three years and eight months. The average “*interim*” between pastors is eight months. Thus, in any given 13-year period, a church could spend 15 percent of its life — two years — in an interim mode.

Interim periods are very critical in the life of the church. Although churches may not recognize it, transition is a constant factor. It is during and immediately following the interim periods that critical transitions occur. Each time a church changes pastors, it is a time of definite transition and that period ought to be planned to be as productive as possible.

Information from the Center for Congregational Health, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, points out: “*Significant studies of hundreds of interim congregations over the past 20 years are now showing that the interim time between pastors can be an important time in congregational life. Congregations that fail to make wise use of their interim time tend to repeat their history with a new minister. This can lead to pain and confusion for the minister and prevent the congregation from meeting its goals of spiritual growth for its members and ministry to its community.*”

Neil Chafin, an experienced consultant to congregations, says: “*The way a congregation chooses to use its interim time will shape congregational growth, identity, and health for years to come. We also know that what is done in the interim time really determines whether the new*

minister and congregation will form a solid ministry team.”

It is suggested that churches consider forming a “*transition team*” to lead in this interim period. Such a team would be chosen by the church at large and can help develop direction, and in leading the church in a self-study before the actual search process starts. Five “*developmental tasks*” have been identified for a church seeking a better understanding of itself and assisting in the establishing of future direction. The transition team can use these tasks in the early part of the interim time to lead the church in more clearly defining her mission and setting some directions for future ministry.

“The way a congregation chooses to use its interim time will shape congregational growth, identity, and health for years to come.”

A step-by-step event line of the interim time entitled “*Stages and Tasks of Interim Ministry*,” along with an overview of the five developmental tasks and a brief word about each one, are listed in the Supplementary Materials section of this booklet.

The church may also need time to deal with unresolved issues, to release anger, or to process grief before moving into the search process.

To aid in this process, an in-depth approach is being adopted by many Texas Baptist churches. It is known as the “*Intentional Interim Ministry*.” The word “*intention*” relates to the intention of the church to use the interim period as

an opportunity to improve its spiritual health. This approach is highly in order if a church has:

- (1) experienced a disruption when the former minister left;
- (2) there are strong undercurrents of discontent; or
- (3) the last pastor’s tenure was a long one.

Any one of these three indicate a need for the “*intentional interim*” process. This usually involves a slightly longer interim period so that issues may be dealt with and the coming transition of a new pastor may be approached in a positive manner.

Interim specialists across the state are being trained by the Baptist General Convention of Texas to serve the churches. These men can assist the church by either serving as interim pastors or interim consultants. The director of missions for the local association or the Minister/Church Relations office in the Baptist Building can provide more information about this process. A list of ministers who have been trained to lead a church through the interim period is also available from these offices.

If the Intentional Interim Ministry is adopted by the congregation, the person selected to serve as interim pastor should be one who possesses the skills to lead the church through this process. When the intentional interim approach is used, the transition team should not be elected until the interim pastor is on the field so he can give guidance in the beginning and continuity of the process.

Many church constitutions or guidelines call for a Search

Committee to be formed immediately upon the resignation of a pastor. This committee is often charged with providing interim leadership, so there is an urgency in their being formed. Perhaps this part of the interim procedure should be reviewed.

The selection of the Search Committee ought to be a prayerful, spiritual process conducted without pressure to form the

committee. Many churches elect the Search Committee before the former pastor leaves. This is too important a step to be taken so quickly. Some churches are finding a better procedure is to elect or appoint a temporary interim guidance committee rather than rushing into the election of a Pastor Search Committee, and having this special group responsible for the interim leadership.

In the event the search committee has already been elected and the decision is made to use the "intentional interim" or the transition team approach, it is wise for the search committee to wait until the transition team has completed a major part of the developmental tasks before beginning its actual work.

SELECTION OF A PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE

A number of approaches are used in selecting a Search Committee. Many churches have the method they want to use already in the church constitution or operating manual.

The most satisfactory way is for the entire congregation to select the committee, with an announcement in advance that the selection will be made on a certain Sunday morning using secret ballots.

Some churches ask each member of the congregation to submit a certain number of names of persons they feel are best suited to serve. If, for example, the committee is to have five members, each person would list up to five names and the five appearing most often would be asked to serve. If the balance of men and women is an issue, that ratio should be decided in advance.

Some churches ask members to provide the names of persons they believe would make good candidates. This list is published and the people are requested to choose the number desired from those names.

These systems work well because the church usually selects the persons in whom they have the most confidence. Some churches make up the Search Committee from various organizations. This does not usually work as well as congregational selection because special interest may be injected as a key issue.

The most satisfactory way is for the entire congregation to select the committee, with an announcement in advance that the selection will be made on a certain Sunday morning using secret ballots.

Alternates are sometimes chosen to serve when a member cannot be present. There are favorable and unfavorable aspects of this arrangement. It is favorable to have substitutes for members who may not be able to be present at every meeting. It is unfavorable if an alternate who has not been involved in the deliberations of the committee is called to participate at

the last moment in making a key decision. This can affect committee dynamics. The unfavorable seems to outweigh the favorable in the matter of alternates.

Sometimes, the suggestion is made that couples be used or that the spouses of Search Committee members go with the committee when they hear prospective pastors for the church. This is usually not a satisfactory procedure as it may take too many people out of the congregation at one time. Also, resentments can arise if the congregation perceives that decisions are in the hands of a few families rather than the individuals in whom the church has expressed confidence. Unless the church chooses to elect both husband and wife, people may think persons other than those elected are having too much influence within the committee.

THE PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE BEGINNING ITS RESPONSIBILITIES

As the Search Committee begins its task, the following steps may be considered as a partial guide in its work.

Each step should be approached with prayer and study of the biblical implications of each phase.

1. ORGANIZING.

Committees usually organize with at least a chairperson and a secretary. Larger committees may desire additional officers. Sometimes the person who received the most votes or nominations is named chair. In other cases the chairperson is elected by the committee. Such an election should be by secret ballot to ensure that the chairperson has the confidence of the committee.

2. PREPARING SPIRITUALLY.

Serving on this committee is one of the highest honors that a church can bestow upon a person. It also calls for the deepest spiritual commitment in a person's life. It is important that the committee not only pray intently at each meeting but that they also study the biblical principles related to the entire process. A brief devotional is not sufficient.

If there have been wounds or divisions in the church, the spiritual condition of committee members will be affected as well as that of the entire church. These feelings must be released or they will negatively affect the calling process. If the church's trust of ministers has been lowered or destroyed through a minister's

inappropriate action, it needs to be recognized that this can negatively impact the committee. This situation needs to be addressed in a positive and healing manner. When negative feelings are still intense, it is difficult for the committee to be open to the leadership of the Holy Spirit and deal honestly with a prospective pastor.

It also is important that the committee recognize the "servant principle." It is easy to develop spiritual pride serving on the Search Committee. Members must learn to think of themselves as servants of the Lord and the church.

It also is important that the committee recognize the "servant principle." It is easy to develop spiritual pride serving on the Search Committee. Members must learn to think of themselves as servants of the Lord and the church. Many committees become blocked in finding a minister until the servant principle becomes a reality.

Another hazard to be avoided is confusing personal desires with the will of God. This can prevent the proper person being called.

3. MAKING DECISIONS CONCERNING THE INTERIM PERIOD.

The interim period can be a time of "holding our own," a time of stress, or it can be a time of encouraging progress. This will depend mainly on church attitudes. Steady and mature pulpit leadership during the interim period is a strong contributor. This leadership is more important than most churches realize.

It is wise for a church to use some type of interim pastor arrangement rather than various supply preachers Sunday by Sunday. There are several reasons for this:

- 1) It provides for continuity in the pulpit which contributes to stability.
- 2) It can provide a time of healing if the pastor's leaving has resulted in stress.
- 3) It can be a time to relieve grief.
- 4) It can provide experienced leadership in settling some controversial issues or accepting changes before a new shepherd comes.
- 5) It allows the Search Committee to give unhurried concentration to the task assigned to them.

Some words of caution are in order related to pulpit supply and interim ministers.

Usually, it is not wise to invite a minister to preach who is known to be actively searching for a church,

entirely upon the minister and his “availability” to this particular church. Often, someone will suggest having such a person supply “just to see how we would feel about him,” without realizing that this can cause disharmony if several in the congregation are impressed with him and the committee is not.

Neither is it wise to invite several prospective interim ministers to “see which one we like best.” The selecting of the interim pastor requires as much integrity as the calling of a regular pastor. If several are being considered, they should be dealt with one at a time and the selection based on the leadership of the Spirit, the needs of the church at this particular time, the gifts of the minister, and the time he can give in meeting those needs. The “best” preacher available is not always the “best” interim minister.

When a prospective interim pastor is approached, the committee and the minister need to agree that he will not be a candidate for the position of pastor. Sometimes, in spite of those agreements, a mutual interest will develop. It must be remembered that the position of an installed pastor is quite different from that of an interim minister and this situation needs to be approached with extreme caution, especially if the congregation has been informed that the interim minister will not be considered for call as pastor. Should such interest develop, the interim pastor should resign so that the committee can do a complete investigation and make the decision without the pressure of his presence.

4. CHOOSING AN INTERIM MINISTER.

Several types of interim ministers can be considered:

- 1) A retired pastor who may give time for all services, some visitation and possibly some administration.
- 2) A minister who will lead the services on Sunday and conduct the Wednesday night service.
- 3) A minister who will fill the pulpit only on Sunday and minister as best he can in a limited weekend timeframe.
- 4) An interim specialist. Churches with special needs such as healing grief, relieving anger, resolving divisive undercurrents, or having a pastor for a long tenure, may benefit by using an interim specialist. A number of ministers are trained in this specialty.

Ezekiel 22:30:

“I looked for a man among them to build up the wall and to stand in the gap.”

THE COMMITTEE BEGINNING THE ACTUAL SEARCH PROCESS

Throughout this will depend the first task of the Search Committee is to determine the needs and desires of the church. There are almost as many ways of attempting to fulfill this part of the task as there are churches. A very common way is to survey the membership. A proper survey will indicate not only the desires of the congregation but also their needs. Desires and needs often are not the same. Some suggested survey models are in the Supplementary Materials section of this booklet.

Surveys alone may not provide enough information. Listening sessions in Sunday School

assemblies and perhaps a “town hall meeting” on a Sunday evening, are highly in order. People need to be assured that they are being heard.

Two notes of caution are needed about listening sessions. These need be kept on a positive note and focus on needs. Some who are unhappy may be tempted to turn listening sessions into gripe sessions. This can be avoided if the moderator exercises firm control and uses an agenda or format that keeps the sessions on track.

The other caution relates to evaluating special interests. For example, a person who is involved with youth programs may want to

be sure a pastor is called who can relate to youth (sometimes being interpreted as being youthful himself). The committee should keep in mind the needs of the entire congregation.

An additional value of listening sessions is that they can be very helpful in clarifying expectations. The committee needs to be informed as fully as possible about the expectations of the church, and these expectations must be clearly enunciated to prospective pastors. In turn, the expectations of the prospective pastor need to be clearly enunciated to the committee. Friction can occur in a church if pastoral leadership does

not respond to the church's needs or if the response of the church is not as expected by the leader. Unstated or unclear expectations are often at the center of church controversy with ministers.

When the committee has received enough information from the congregation and has studied the needs of the church, the next step is to build a profile of a prospective

pastor. In the profile, the committee may want to set some general parameters such as education, experience, past ministries, and special training. Age may be a factor, but should not be the determining one.

The profile will help in matching the gifts of prospective ministers to the needs of the congregation. It can also provide a framework for

studying resumes and checking references.

A set of guidelines with clear steps to be followed in each phase can greatly enhance and simplify the work of the committee.

When these steps are completed, the committee is ready to begin another phase of its work.

SUGGESTED STEPS IN THE SEARCH PROCESS

1. SECURING NAMES OF PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES.

Names of prospective pastors are received in several ways:

- 1) Suggestions from members of the congregation.
- 2) Recommendations from persons outside the congregation such as pastors, friends, etc.
- 3) When it becomes widely known that a church is seeking a pastor, recommendations will generally come from several sources. A notice in the Baptist Standard that a pastor has resigned will usually result in such communication.
- 4) Respected individuals such as other pastors in whom the committee has confidence are a reliable source of recommendations. Directors of missions, university and seminary leaders, and denominational representatives also may assist upon request. The Church Services Division of BGCT Executive Board has a limited list of

ministers who have indicated they may be open to relocation. Upon request, several resumes will be provided.

2. MAKING SURE RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESUMES ARE HELPFUL.

- 1) The committee should require that all recommendations be in writing and include addresses, phone numbers, and a resume if possible. A recommendation provided by a member of the congregation should contain reasons why the person feels the one being recommended would be a good pastor of the church. A form for this purpose should be made up and be readily available for members use.
- 2) Resumes should include references with phone numbers and addresses. It is highly recommended to ask references for names of other persons who may know the prospective minister well. This is particularly pertinent when most references are fellow

ministers. Ministers may know their colleagues well in context of ministry, but it is helpful to talk to others who know them from a lay person's point of view.

It is desirable that those being recommended know about it, and those recommending them have their permission to do so. If a resume is not provided, one should be requested directly from the nominee. In doing so, the committee may gain some insight into his possible interest. However, a lack of response from a request for a resume should not be taken as lack of interest. Some ministers are sensitive about the procedure the Holy Spirit uses in changing their location of service and do not want their names to be shared indiscriminately.

- 3) A variation on the above procedure is for the committee secretary to write persons being recommended to let them know their names have been given, requesting

resumes if not provided, and asking if they are open to consideration at this time. This saves some time if the committee decides to consider only those who respond positively. However, it needs to be remembered that a negative response at this time does not mean that person is not God's man for the church. Should the Holy Spirit convince the committee that further consideration be given, a time of praying and waiting, and then making further contact may be the proper course of action.

3. SELECTING FINAL CANDIDATES.

After securing an adequate number of names, the committee should try to determine several most likely persons to fill the position of pastor. Although a profile will be used and the agreed upon guidelines followed, the leadership of the Holy Spirit is essential in this process. Prayers for wisdom and guidance are essential before decisions are made.

Many committees use a screening and ranking-of-interest process. The committee seeks the impression of the Holy Spirit toward the possibility of several persons, perhaps five to 10. These are listed for consideration first. Some committees rank them to determine the order in which they will be approached.

4. CONTACTING THE CANDIDATES.

It is best to ascertain whether a person is open to another place of service and will prayerfully consider such an opportunity. If a candidate is uncertain at the time contact is made, then a date should be established for later

contact.

If a candidate is interested, some pertinent information about the church should be provided. This should include some statistical information, honest observations about the spirit of the church, the needs that have been identified, and the opportunities for ministry. If the church is having difficulties, or there is a need for healing this also should be shared. The point is that there should be honest, open communication from the very beginning.

No commitments should be made during the committee's first contact with the candidate. The committee may request video and audio tapes, realizing that some tapes are poorly made and may detract from the real abilities of the candidate.

Most pastors have the integrity to preach what the Lord has given them for that day regardless of who is present, and the congregation will surely know if he is trying to impress a committee!

If the person being considered is interested in exploring the possibility, it is proper at this point to check references. This can be done by phone or by mail; it is probably best to use both methods.

Questionnaires sent to references should be kept relatively simple. Some are too lengthy and demanding and give the impression that the person involved will not be considered unless all information asked for is provided. Long documents that require detailed

responses can become a burden to the writer.

Also, many persons are hesitant to put sensitive personal information in writing. It is best to glean such information from a phone call or in personal conversation. This also can be a time to clarify unclear or unanswered points that are important to the committee.

If the references are checked by phone, the caller should use a prepared list of questions with space to write some comments under each question. Each committee member who calls references should use the same question sheet and also ask for additional personal comments. Requests for additional references are very important and a place should be provided on the form for listing additional names with their phone numbers and addresses.

5. HEARING CANDIDATES AND PERSONAL INTERVIEWS.

When the previous steps are completed, the committee should be ready to begin going out to hear prospective pastors. It is best to call and inform the prospective pastor of your intention to visit a service on a certain date and make sure he will be in the pulpit.

Some committees have tried various ways of disguising their presence, although it is rather useless. The committee might sit separately so as to cause the least disturbance, but most can be spotted even when spread out in a large crowd. Most pastors have the integrity to preach what the Lord has given them for that day regardless of who is present, and the congregation will surely know if he is trying to impress a committee!

it is wise to determine if a personal visit is possible, perhaps at lunch or in the afternoon. It is important to spend time with a prospective pastor before deciding whether the group is interested in him. In addition to his pulpit ability, the ability to “wear well” with people is equally desirable. The committee will be able to observe his openness and determine how well his style of interpersonal relations would suit the character of the church.

The committee should make no commitments at this time. If, after discussion, it decides the man will not be considered further, the group should do him the courtesy of writing or calling to express appreciation for his ministry, and to let him know that the committee is continuing its search. If the committee is uncertain at this point, they can come back to that person later. The committee may need time to develop clarity about its direction.

It usually is best to hear and consider one person at a time. However, on occasion, committees may need several experiences before they are comfortable enough with the process to objectively look and hear. If uncertainty exists, moving on to the next candidate may be the best course. It usually is unwise to arbitrarily decide to hear the top five and “pick out the best one.” This

strategy often causes confusion in the committee and results in wasted time. Once the committee members are comfortable with the process and feel they are listening to the Holy Spirit, then the prospective pastors should be considered one at a time. Candidates should not be compared favorably or unfavorably to one another. God has given different gifts to different men to complete the Kingdom’s work. The only consideration should be, “*Is this the man God wants for our church at this particular time?*”

It is of absolute importance for the Search Committee to clearly and accurately verbalize the mission and vision of the congregation relative to its ministry to the community.

It also is wise to hear only one man on any given Sunday. Sometimes it is tempting to hear two ministers when the committee must travel quite a distance or when there is an opportunity to hear someone who is “supplying” close to where they are going. However, one or the other usually will not get a

good hearing when this is done.

The committee should resist making a commitment to hear a certain minister before a decision is made on a candidate to recommend to the church. Sometimes a friend or relative will ask the committee to at least hear a certain person before making a decision. This can place undue pressure on the committee and may interfere with making a decision at a key time. And, unless the committee is truly attempting to determine its interest, it is unfair to the person who has been suggested. When such requests are made, the committee should explain that it is attempting to follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and if hearing that person is so indicated, that step will be taken in the same manner as any other candidate.

It is of absolute importance for the Search Committee to clearly and accurately verbalize the mission and vision of the congregation relative to its ministry to the community. Too often it is the dreams of the committee rather than the realities of the congregation’s commitment to ministry that are verbalized. Assistance in developing these concepts is found in the Overview of the Developmental Tasks in the Supplementary Materials section under *Developing A New Identity*. It is equally vital that the gifts and ministry focus of the prospective pastor fit with the dreams and the direction of the church body.

COMPLETING PREPARATIONS TO ISSUE A CALL

When the prospective pastor and the committee agree they are mutually interested in carrying the process further, an opportunity should be provided for the prospective minister to visit the church field, view the community and church facilities and talk with the church staff. This visit should include an extended time with the committee and frank and open discussion of in-depth issues. Additional statistical information should be shared, such as church policies, committee structure, how the church operates, and budget and income patterns.

There should be a discussion of issues such as compensation, moving expenses, temporary

housing, vacation time, conference and convention amenities, etc.

It is most important that the church study what constitutes adequate compensation instead of just using what has been placed in the budget for the year. The term, "*compensation package*," is used rather loosely. It often is set more by what may look generous on paper than what is really just and adequate. Compensation of ministers is such a vital issue, particularly in small to middle-size churches, that it is addressed more fully in the Supplemental Materials section. The committee should study that section and address compensation in a very open

manner. Some ministers have financial problems because of inadequate salaries. Often committees and ministers think it borders on the unspiritual to discuss financial needs in depth. This can lead to a very unhappy and unhealthy relationship.

The candidate's visit is also the time to clearly spell out expectations on the part of each party. These should be in writing, shared with the congregation at the proper time, and should be inserted in the church minutes by the church clerk when the candidate is called.

When the prospective pastor and the committee (unanimously) are in agreement that it is the will of God for him to be recommended to the church, it is time for the final step.

EXTENDING THE CALL TO A PASTOR

TWhen calling ahead, it is the extending of the call should be publicized well in advance, in writing, to the entire congregation. This should include pictures, information about the pastor's family, his previous service, etc.

A very satisfactory way of introduction is to have a congregational fellowship dinner on Saturday night, with the minister sharing his pilgrimage and his dream of ministry. This gives the people the chance to meet him and his family and to get acquainted before seeing him in the pulpit the next day. A question and answer time gives people the opportunity to surface concerns, have vital questions answered, and builds anticipation for the next day.

It may be helpful in some instances for the prospective pastor to have dialogue with deacons, personnel committee, or other leadership, but care must be taken not to tire him and his family before the heavy schedule of the next day. Most of this dialogue except that with the personnel committee can take place in the context of the question and answer time of the general meeting.

Churches vary as to when a vote will be taken to extend a call. If the proper communication and introduction have been carried out, it appears to be best to vote immediately following the morning service. The vote should be at a time when as many people as possible will be involved in the decision.

The vote should be by secret ballot and specify that a certain percentage must be met to constitute a call. It is suggested that it be no less than 80 percent. Some churches do not have a set policy and are at risk issuing a call based on a low percentage because this can lead to dissension.

The pastor may be ready at this point to respond to the invitation or he may need some additional time to pray about the decision.

IMPORTANT ISSUES RELATED TO ADEQUATE COMPENSATION FOR MINISTERS

Many churches, through either the finance committee or the search committee, put together a “*compensation package*” which usually is presented to the church for approval at the time of extending a call.

The package often appears very generous because it reflects the “*cost*” to the church to have a minister. But many times it may be inadequate and somewhat misleading if it includes what in industry terms are labeled “*fringe benefits*.” Industry and public service costs to employ persons include 21 to 25 percent for fringe benefits which are not a part of the employee’s compensation or “*take-home*” pay. These include insurance, retirement, automobile expenses and FICA taxes.

Insurance is a cost to the church. However, it is not “*compensation*” but a “*fringe benefit*.” It is best for the church and for the minister for this to be paid directly by the church and not placed in his compensation category. In some cases, disaster has overtaken a minister or his family and then it was discovered that he did not have insurance, or what he had was inadequate.

Retirement also is an employer cost, not compensation. The greatest harm done to ministers is probably in the area of adequate retirement provision. When the church develops a “*compensation package*” but then gives the option to the minister to “*break out the various items any way you want,*” it is not meeting its stewardship responsibility. Many ministers so struggle with the expense of growing families that, given the

choice, they opt for more salary in the place of retirement, and decide that retirement considerations will have to “*come later.*” An adequate retirement takes a long time to build. The church, through a misapplication of its responsibility has sometimes contributed to that deficiency. Many churches have not upgraded retirement to meet present needs. The excellent plan by the Annuity Board for church contributions and a matching challenge to the minister will more nearly provide for that need.

Industry and public service costs to employ persons include 21 to 25 percent for fringe benefits which are not a part of the employee’s compensation or “take-home” pay. These include insurance, retirement, automobile expenses and FICA taxes.

Housing is another issue in the compensation package. Often churches add the monthly rental value of church-owned housing and count it in the compensation package to make the income appear larger, therefore more adequate. Church-owned housing is often a necessity in small communities and rural areas in order for there to be a place for the minister to live and as such is provided for the

convenience of the church. This provision is the option of the church and should be treated as such. Most ministers who serve in this type of arrangement seldom have the opportunity to acquire an equity in a home and when compensation is lowered because a house is furnished, they are, in effect, paying for the church-owned house. If housing is counted in the compensation package, then a cash allowance should be paid to the minister to compensate for that loss.

An automobile allowance is not properly part of the compensation package. Automobile mileage traveled in ministry is for the benefit of the congregation, not the minister, and should not be included in the salary category.

Since ministers are classified as self-employed, they must pay the full assessment for Social Security taxes whereas other church employees pay half and the church pays half. Many churches now pay one-half of the minister’s social security taxes as an expression of fairness and equality. This should be a cost to the church and not a part of the minister’s salary, just as it is for any other employee.

A minister’s compensation should be examined in light of how business employees are compensated. The various compensation items should not be commingled so that a more accurate determination of true compensation can be made. The committee is urged to be sure that adequate compensation is provided. The Bible tells us, “*The workman is worthy of his hire.*”

FOLLOW-UP

It is suggested that the Search Committee continue serving in some way for up to a year to assist in the transition. Occasionally, search committees make agreements with pastors that are

not clearly communicated to other entities in the church. Other committees and bodies in the church may have different agendas than the Search Committee has laid out. Occasionally very unexpected

things are forced upon a new pastor. The Search Committee can help resolve misunderstandings, ensure communication and avoid conflict or embarrassment.

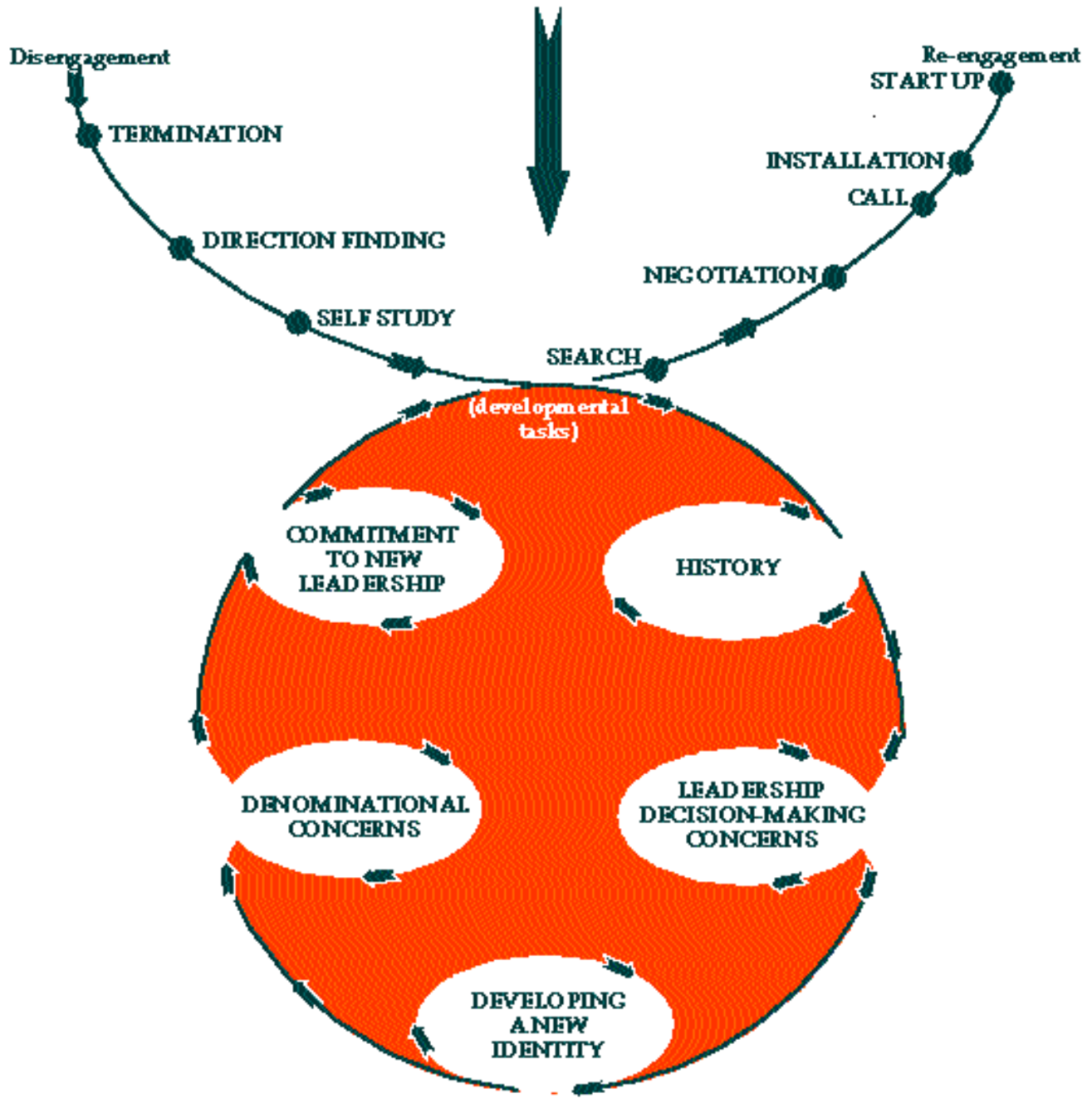
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ORDER AND CONTENT	PAGE
The Stages and Tasks of Interim Ministry	18
Overview of Developmental Tasks	19
<i>“Financial Issues Pertaining to the Call of a New Minister”</i> by Frank G. Schwall, Senior Vice President, Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention	20-21
Developing a Profile for a Prospective Pastor	22
*Form for Use by Search Committee in Building a Pastoral Profile	23
*Form for Prioritizing Information in Pastoral Profile	24
*Suggested Form for Information From References	25-27

*The suggested forms are offered as guidelines.
They should be adjusted to fit the particular needs of each church.

THE STAGES AND TASKS OF INTERIM MINISTRY



Adapted from Stages and Tasks of Intentional Interim Ministry
Interim Ministry Network

OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

I. HISTORY

Valuable insights about the strengths and weaknesses of a church can be gained by tracing its history. The focus will be on reflection and celebration.

1. A healthy perspective will be developed concerning the service, leadership, and personality of former ministers.
2. There will be openness in exploring the total history of the congregation, with celebrations that bring positive feelings about past ministries.
3. Insight will be gained from previous “watershed” events,—both highs and lows—in the life of the congregation.
4. Decisions will be made about what is worth carrying into the future and what is excess baggage to be left behind.
5. Unresolved issues may surface at this stage. If so, they need to be acknowledged so as to be done with them. And, if necessary, some may need to be addressed.

The three most common that surface are:

- 1) Grief that has not been resolved.
- 2) Anger that has not been processed.
- 3) Disappointment that has left bitter feelings.

II. LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING CONCERNS

1. Lay leadership within the congregation will often shift with a change in pastors. Some will choose this time to take a lesser role. It is very important to keep past leaders engaged even in lesser roles.
2. Some leaders who have relied heavily upon the pastor and some whom the pastor has heavily relied upon may now be moved into lesser roles as the vacuum created by his leaving is being filled by other leadership.
3. If the base of leadership has not been expanded as the church has grown, this needs to be examined, failure to do so hold the church back.
4. The development and involvement of younger leaders will be a key issue in healthy pastoral change.

5. Exploring history often reveals the need to upgrade and clarify decision-making concerns. As a church grows, its decision-making process must be adjusted. This is a time to examine constitutions, policies, committee structures, and operation. Often, communication needs to be improved to enhance decision-making satisfaction.

III. DEVELOPING A NEW IDENTITY

The interim period is an ideal time for a church to take an in-depth look at itself, decide what its mission is to be, and then make plans for achieving it.

The new identity involves clarifying the congregation’s image of itself through surveys, interviews, and analysis. It also involves developing a new vision through a new or updated mission statement, developing priorities, and setting goals. (Action plans for achieving this will be developed with input from the new pastor.)

After this is done, the Search Committee will be able to share such information with a prospective pastor. Together, they can determine if his skills, gifts and vision match the needs of the church.

IV. CLARIFYING DENOMINATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

With many new members coming from non-Baptist backgrounds, there is a need for a better understanding of who Baptists are, how the churches cooperate and relate to each other, and how mission work is carried out. The director of missions of the local association can explain how the association, the state convention, and the national convention operate. He also can explain what denominational resources are available to the church.

V. COMMITMENT TO NEW LEADERSHIP

When the first four tasks are completed, the church is then ready to search for a leader who can help the church achieve its desired image. It is at this juncture that the Pastor-Search Committee is elected and begins its work. As the Search Committee approaches the completion of its assignment, the church is being prepared to commit to new leadership and new direction.

FINANCIAL ISSUES PERTAINING TO THE CALL OF A NEW MINISTER

The call of a new minister is sacred. No less spiritual are the financial issues involved in calling a minister. The Bible clearly teaches that ministers should be supported financially. Jesus said, *“The laborer is worthy of his wages.”* Paul taught that *“those who preach the gospel should be supported by those who receive the gospel.”* So, the Minister Search Committee should place financial support on the agenda when discussing a call with a minister.

A mistake many search committees make is to offer a lump sum or *“pay package”* to the new minister and to instruct him to divide it whatever way he wants. This inflates the minister’s pay in the perception of church members. Rather than identifying true cash pay, the *“package”* suggests a much higher level of support. This largely is due to the inclusion of *“business”* expenses which are never included in a lay person’s pay. Additionally, the inclusion of fringe benefits inflates the figure unfairly. The cost of insurance and retirement plans generally is not included in a lay person’s pay.

When a *“package”* or lump sum amount is offered a minister with instructions to *“Divide it the way you want”* many ministers will choose cash over a comprehensive protection program including insurance and retirement plans. Then when a need arises, the church may inherit tremendous financial liability. Protection coverages for the minister protect the church as well as the minister and his family.

It is highly important for churches to move away from the *“package”* approach. Financial support should be separated into appropriate categories. Cash pay

(including a housing allowance) should stand alone. This identifies true personal income. This is the figure to be compared with other people’s pay. Church ministry-related expenses and protection coverages should be identified separately.

***Paul taught that
“those who preach the
gospel should be
supported by those who
receive the gospel.”***

A recommended model for discussing financial issues with a minister in view of a call follows.

The committee should sit down with the minister and discuss each question except number 9. Expectations of the church for ministry should be discussed. The minister should share his objectives. Facts pertaining to logistics, etc. should be noted. Appropriate information should be obtained from the Annuity Board. Honest, open discussion will be helpful. Then the committee will be prepared to make intelligent decisions on the items in each category of financial support, including an appropriate amount for personal income.

CHURCH MINISTRY-RELATED REIMBURSEMENT FUNDS

1. Based on the expectations of the church and the plans of the minister for ministry, what do you estimate will be needed for car expenses annually? (Consider travel distances from the church to

the homes of members and prospects as well as to medical facilities used by members and other locations such as camps and places of ministry. The current allowable mileage rate is 31 cents per mile.)

2. What will be needed annually for participation in denominational conventions and ministry-related conferences? (Calculate the cost of travel, lodging and food.)
3. Considering plans and goals for the first year, how much does the minister anticipate spending on books, periodicals and tapes for the preparation of sermons, Bible studies and other presentations in the course of ministry to the church?
4. Considering the need to sharpen ministry skills and increase the ability to minister effectively, what do you anticipate spending for continuing education over the next 12 months?
5. What will it cost to provide hospitality for church groups and host visiting evangelists, other ministers and guests of the church in the minister’s home or restaurants over the next year?
6. Based on the minister’s age, family, location and compensation, what will the monthly rate be for term life, personal accident, disability and medical coverage? (The Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention will provide a specific

proposal. Call 1-800-262-0511.)

7. On the basis of conversations with the Annuity Board, what is an appropriate monthly contribution to the Church Annuity Plan? (Generally, 10 percent to 15 percent of pay plus housing, within the limits of the law, is recommended.)
8. On the basis of the minister's tax liability, what would an appropriate amount be for a Social Security equivalent? (This helps equalize the difference a minister pays for self-employment tax under SECA and the lesser amount withheld from non-ordained church employees under FICA.)

PERSONAL INCOME

9. Considering the characteristics of the church and the background of the minister, what is an appropriate amount for cash pay?
10. How much does the minister need to provide a home (housing, utilities, household furnishings, etc.)? (The minister should be allowed to determine the amount of cash pay the church designates as a housing allowance.)

Special resources are available to assist the Minister Search Committee with this process. The Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention publishes a financial support planning guide to assist churches with their budget planning each year. Additionally, the Annuity Board offers a free video, *Financial Insights: Financial Support for Ministers and Church Employees*.

(Frank G. Schwall, Jr. is Senior Vice-President of The Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.)

DEVELOPING A PROFILE FOR A PROSPECTIVE PASTOR

The pastoral profile should reflect the needs of the church at this time. Some profiles have been built from surveys of what the congregation wants, but it is important to distinguish between the expressed wants and the very real needs.

Help in building the profile can come from several sources:

1. information gleaned from working through the Developmental Tasks;
2. listening sessions in Sunday School departments in which people can discuss what the church needs at this time;
3. personal interviews; and
4. information gained from the congregation by using the forms on the following pages. The second form was developed by the Search Committee, of First Baptist Church, Bryan, Texas. It was used by the committee to clarify their thinking and compare it with that of the membership so that priorities could be developed.

FORM FOR USE BY THE SEARCH COMMITTEE IN BUILDING A PASTORAL PROFILE

We are interested in knowing your feeling about our church.
Please share these with us in the following manner.

OUR STRENGTHS _____

OUR WEAKNESSES _____

WHAT DO WE DO WELL? _____

WHAT COULD WE DO BETTER? _____

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER OUR GREATEST NEEDS AT THIS TIME?

DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL CONCERNS ABOUT THE QUALITIES WE NEED IN A MINISTER AT THIS TIME? (PLEASE LIST)

ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS _____

FORM FOR PRIORITIZING INFORMATION IN THE PASTORAL PROFILE

(Developed by Search Committee, First Baptist Church, Bryan, Texas)

HOW DO YOU SENSE GOD IS LEADING OUR CHURCH IN OUR SEARCH FOR A PASTOR?

This exercise is designed to identify areas that affect a pastor's life and ministry, how he relates to the body of Christ, the Church, and then to rank the areas according to how you sense God is leading our church to such a man.

- ♦ Read through the entire list.
- ♦ Place a 5 in the blank by the priority you sense is the most important.
- ♦ Next, place a 1 by the priority you sense is the least important.
- ♦ Next, place a 4 by the three priorities you sense are the next most important.
- ♦ Next, place a 2 by the three priorities you sense are the next least important.
- ♦ Finally, place a 3 in **all remaining blanks**.

PRIORITIES

PERSONAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT – continuing education, personal study of God's word	_____
FAMILY PROVIDER – spending time with his own family	_____
ADMINISTRATOR –organizer, challenge people to be involved in ministry	_____
TEACHER – helping to learn, understand, and apply God's Word	_____
LEADER – having a vision for the church with the ability to motivate people to follow	_____
PROCLAIMER – preaching, proclaiming the Word of God	_____
COUNSELOR – meeting the needs of people	_____
ENABLER – helping others develop	_____
EVANGELIZER – personal soul winner, outreach outside of church	_____
VISITOR – visiting of church membership, hospital, shut-in, etc.	_____
COMMUNITY SUPPORTER – civic and community involvement	_____
DENOMINATIONAL SUPPORTER – denominational involvement, committees, boards, etc.	_____

SUGGESTED FORM FOR INFORMATION FROM REFERENCES

Church Name _____

Person Requesting Information _____

Address _____

Telephone (_____) _____

Confidential Reference On _____ Date _____

It is our desire to know the strengths and weaknesses of the above person. Please be straightforward.

1. The Approximate Dates And Circumstances You Were Closely Associated With Him _____

2. Give Any Background Information About His Home/family Life That You Feel Is Pertinent _____

3. How Do You Rate His Personal Financial Abilities As A Money Manager?

Inept Average Above Average Excellent

4. Listed below are some tendencies which, if present, may reduce the effectiveness of a pastor's work and witness. Please circle any of the traits listed below that may characterize this person.

Impatient intolerant argumentative domineering sullen "cocky"

Easily embarrassed, offended, discouraged, depressed, irritable

Frequently worried, anxious, nervous, tense, critical

Prejudiced toward groups, races, nationalities

Given to exclusive and absorbing friendships, i.e., "*cliques*"

Lacking in humor or ability to take a joke,

If he seems relatively free from such tendencies, check here .

5. Which best describes his preaching style (one or more)

Fervent evangelistic Lecture Conversational.

Sermon development (one or more)

expository textual today's events thoroughly Biblical.

6. Please select one of the following that best describes his ability as an administrator.

- delegates forms committees dominates does work himself.

7. Select one of the following that best describes his ability as a counselor.

- enjoys dislikes average exceptional ability.

8. Please select one of the following that best describes his personal visitation.

- visits a lot faithful visitor seldom

9. Please rate the man with respect to each of the characteristics listed below. Check the items under each heading that most nearly represents your evaluation. Do not check items about which you are uncertain or have not had opportunity to observe.

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

- _____ Growing
_____ Healthy
_____ Contagious
_____ Profound
_____ Superficial

DENOMINATIONAL RELATIONSHIP

- _____ Understands Southern Baptists
_____ Cooperates in denominational events
_____ Has limited knowledge of S. B.
_____ Participates to some extent
_____ Has been uninvolved

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

- _____ Limited knowledge
_____ Mediocre
_____ Rather sound, could be deeper
_____ Very sound doctrinally

LEADERSHIP

- _____ Makes no effort to lead
_____ Tries but lacks ability
_____ Shows some leadership promise
_____ Good leadership ability
_____ Unusual ability to lead

MINISTERIAL DISCRETION

- _____ Repeats confidences
_____ Discusses other members
_____ Violates confidences only on
inconsequential matters
_____ Confidences never revealed

ACHIEVEMENT

- _____ Lacks initiative
_____ Doesn't accomplish much
_____ Meets average expectations
_____ Accomplishes a great deal
_____ Has keen intuitiveness

COMPASSION

- _____ Slow to sense how others feel
- _____ Reasonably responsive
- _____ Understanding and thoughtful
- _____ Responds with unusual insight

RELATIONSHIP TO YOUNG PEOPLE

- _____ Has difficulty working with them
- _____ Prefers to work with adults
- _____ Understands and is understood by young people
- _____ Enjoys working with young people

SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY

- _____ Avoided by other people
- _____ Liked by some people
- _____ Sought out by others
- _____ Tolerated by others
- _____ Well liked by most people

TEAMWORK

- _____ Frequently causes friction
- _____ Prefers to work alone
- _____ Seeks to dominate
- _____ Effective in teamwork

PHYSICAL CONDITION

- _____ Poor health
- _____ Fair health
- _____ Good health
- _____ Rugged and vigorous

PERSONAL APPEARANCE

- _____ Unkempt
- _____ Neat
- _____ Exhibits poor taste in dress
- _____ Exhibits good taste in dress
- _____ Attractive

10. If you were on the Search Committee, would you consider this person?

- Yes No

11. On the back please state frankly your opinion about anything else that would be of value to the committee.

THANK YOU.