

## PASTOR SEARCH PROCESS

- I. Select Pulpit Nominating Committee
  - A. BCO 20-2
  - B. The Committee
    1. Size and make-up
    2. Qualifications
  - C. Members commit to making meetings a priority
  
- II. Organize Committee
  - A. Solicit prayer support from congregation
  - B. Elect Officers—Chairman, Vice-chairman and Secretary. Have a Session member serve as Convener to elect the Chairman.
  - C. Establish quorum and voting rules
  - D. Review search steps process and “rules”
  - E. Establish calendar of meetings
  - F. Complete Church Profile Form (CPF)
  
- III. Develop a Church Profile and Information Packet
  - A. Information Sections should include:
    1. Congregation profile of ages, singles, children, school mix and sources of membership growth and/or loss
    2. Brief church history
    3. Community profile
    4. Goals (long-term and current) and/or Purpose Statement
    5. Worship services
    6. Major church programs and committees
    7. Session and Diaconate profiles
    8. Current budget, budgets of previous three years, and latest financial report
    9. Explanation of current pulpit vacancy
    10. List Pulpit Nominating Committee members showing current responsibilities and areas represented
  - B. Other sections of possible interest to a potential candidate are:
    1. Pastor’s job description
    2. List of staff – titles, responsibilities and length of service
    3. WIC programs and the role of women in the church
  
- IV. Gather Prospects
  - A. Obtain leads and names
    1. Request from PCA AC/SC (Office of the Stated Clerk)
    2. Advertise in denominational publications, or other appropriate publications
    3. Solicit input from congregation
    4. Ask PCA leaders
  - B. Contact Prospects
    1. Vice-chairman calls each prospect to ask for the Ministerial Data Form (MDF) and a sermon tape or video tape.
    2. Maintain log of every name received, when contacted, response, and when MDF/tapes received (including routing to Committee members).
  
- V. Screen Prospects
  - A. Chart profile of congregational priorities (CPF Part III) and compare with Part B of the Pastoral Activities from the MDF.
  - B. Compare other areas of qualifications, e.g., age range, years in pastorate, church size, sermon preparation time, time in daily devotions.

- C. Review tapes of those who score highest with committee in A and B above.
- D. Select two to four potential candidates for telephone interview by a rating/ranking process.
- E. Schedule a conference call telephone interview (or use speaker phone) by which all committee members can participate. Allow a minimum of one hour for this interview.
  - 1. Send a copy of the church profile package, including Sections III and IV of the CPF before the interview.
  - 2. Provide committee with suggested questions for each area of interest, so all can participate.
  - 3. Allow time for "Potential Candidate" to question the committee.
  - 4. Tape the interview to share with missing members, or for review, if necessary. \*Be sure to inform all parties of the taping for legal reasons.
  - 5. Ask permission to contact references.
- F. Determine Committee's choice of which potential candidate(s) to visit (either in his or a neutral pulpit) to hear preaching and observe a worship service.
- G. Send out reference check letters.
  - 1. Include self-addressed stamped envelope to encourage a response.
  - 2. State a date by which responses are needed (not less than 10 days, nor more than two weeks, from date of request).
  - 3. Follow up with phone calls to clarify statements or responses, where necessary, or to obtain additional information.
  - 4. Call those who don't respond to see if they had reasons for not responding. Ask same questions as in the letter.
- H. Visit Potential Candidate's Church
  - 1. Select 2 to 5 committee members to visit the church.
  - 2. If possible, arrive Saturday afternoon to take potential candidate to dinner and interview later in person. Tape the interview to share with rest of Committee upon returning.
  - 3. In most cases, such a schedule will allow Potential Candidate to invite the Pulpit Committee to dinner after church – which provides an opportunity for observing and evaluating the whole family in more relaxed circumstances.
  - 4. The Committee should not enter the church together, nor sit together, making every effort to remain anonymous.
  - 5. Take notes so that a full report can be made to the rest of the Committee, along with sharing the tapes of the interview and sermon.
- I. Selection of Candidate
  - 1. The Committee should vote to select a Candidate.
    - a. This meeting should include every member. If any cannot be at the meeting, have them participate by telephone or reschedule the meeting.
    - b. An approval of no less than ¾ of the Committee is strongly recommended.
    - c. Call the Candidate to inform of decision and request possible dates available for candidating.
  - 2. Notify the Session and request suggestions for dates for candidating and holding a congregation meeting.
  - 3. Develop schedule for Candidate's visit
    - a. The church should pay all expenses for the trip.
    - b. The family should be included.
    - c. Three or four days should be allowed, to include time for:
      - (1) Meeting with all officers and spouses (possibly a dinner at church)
      - (2) Meeting with the Session
      - (3) The candidate's wife meeting with the women
      - (4) The candidate and family meeting the whole congregation at a family dinner or picnic
      - (5) Candidate and family looking at housing, schools, etc.

- d. Send the Candidate a packet of materials that includes:
  - (1) A church directory
  - (2) Area maps
  - (3) Information on public and private schools
  - (4) Housing information
  - (5) Church bulletins
- J. Inform the Congregation
  - 1. Sunday morning oral report by Chairman of Committee
  - 2. Letter to whole congregation with attachments: biographical sketch on candidate, family information, and the schedule of events.
- K. Review and follow carefully the steps defined in Chapter 20 of the *Book of Church Order (BCO)*.

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## **PULPIT NOMINATING COMMITTEE OFFICER DUTIES**

### **Chairman:**

- Chairs all meetings
- Provides leadership and direction
- Makes assignments of specific tasks
- Keeps process moving
- Makes progress reports to the congregation
- Insures prospects are advised of their status in a timely way

### **Vice Chairman:**

- Chairs meetings in Chairman's absence
- Maintains records of all names submitted to the Committee
- Contacts prospects to determine interest and request MDF and sermon tape

### **Secretary:**

- Keeps minutes of all meetings
- Provides Committee members with copies of minutes
- Types correspondence for Chairman and Vice Chairman, as required

## TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

**Applicant:** One who submits his MDF to the Search Committee before they contact him.

**Candidate:** The individual whom the Committee selected out of all names received and processed to present to the congregation for a vote and a possible call.

**CPF:** Church Profile Form – a form used by Search Committees to determine the profile of a congregation. This form should be used in screening; in particular the Part III Congregational Priorities should be compared with Part III Pastoral Activities of the MDF.

**MDF:** Ministerial Data Form – the standard form used by the PCA to provide basic information about a Teaching Elder to churches seeking to fill a vacant pulpit or other position requiring an ordained man.

**Potential Candidate:** Someone who has passed through the screening process to a predetermined level. This level would normally be reached after a telephone interview, when the Committee decides to send a group to visit to the man's church or invite him to a neutral pulpit to observe a worship service and interview him and his family in person. This group should be about two or three in number, and not more than five.

**Prospect:** A name obtained by the Committee that has not yet been eliminated in the screening process.

**SAMPLE STATUS LETTER**  
**“NOT A MATCH”**

Dear Rev. Prospect:

Thank you for allowing the Pulpit Nominating Committee of Vacant Presbyterian Church to consider you for the position of Senior Pastor.

After careful and prayerful consideration of your qualifications and Pastoral Activities profile, we have concluded that there is not the match we desire to find. (Add a reason or two which will point to specific shortcomings which will not necessarily be negative, such as: “We are looking for someone older with more experience and interest in ministering to the elderly and shut-ins,” or “We are looking for a man with a closer match on Part III, the Pastoral Activities profile,” or “We are looking for someone with considerably more experience than two years in the pastorate to lead our congregation of 750 members.”)

We trust and pray that God will lead you, as clearly as we feel He is leading us, to that place of service where He wants you at this time.

In His service,

John Henry, Chairman  
Pulpit Nominating Committee

Insert Pastor Search Pulpit Prospects Excel file

## Suggested Questions for Telephone Interviews

NOTE: These questions are not presented in any particular order; they should be tailored to your particular values and concerns. Items that are marked with an asterisk are probing questions. They should be asked as follow-ups to numbered questions, only if they are not answered in the main question.

1. What do you consider to be your most important accomplishments in your current (most recent) pastorate?
2. What frustrations have you experienced?  
\*How have you handled these frustrations?
3. (For candidates with current church assignments) Why are you considering a change?  
\*Are you a prospective candidate with other churches at this time?  
\*Does your congregation know you are considering a change?
4. What aspects of the pastor's job do you like most? Least?
5. Tell us about your family.  
\*What are some difficult issues your family faces?  
\*What is your wife's role in the church?
6. What do you believe the role of women in the church should be?
7. What are the most effective programs in your church (or most recent church)?  
\*What do you believe is the basis for this effectiveness?
8. What is the record of growth in this church (or other churches you have led)?
9. What would you like for us to know about you that the Ministerial Data Form doesn't tell?
10. What are your greatest strengths?
11. What do you consider to be the primary areas for your own personal growth?
12. Describe your current church (or most recent church) demographically. Spiritually.
13. What kind of church are you looking for?  
\*Do you believe we're the kind of church God is leading you to serve in?  
\*Why?
14. Describe your relationships with the officers in your church.  
\*What about relationships with them outside church functions?
15. Tell us about your current financial situation.  
\*Do you have significant debts?  
\*What are your financial needs?
16. Have you thought about what goals you will have in a new calling?
17. We'd like to hear your personal testimony!
18. Are your children in public or Christian schools, or are you home schooling?

19. (Diaconate questions)
20. (Christian Education in the church questions)
21. (WIC questions)
22. (Session questions)  
\*What do you do for leadership training?  
\*How do you work with the Session?
23. (Missions questions)
24. (Ministry to Seniors questions)
25. (Ministry to Young Adults and Singles questions)

## Reference Check

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Your name was given as a reference by \_\_\_\_\_, who is being considered as a possible candidate for senior pastor of our church.

You can help us by taking a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. Your responses will be seen only by the Pulpit Nominating Committee and will be kept in strictest confidence.

Thank you for your assistance as we seek God's leading in our search for a senior pastor.

Sincerely in Christ,

Chairman  
Pulpit Nominating Committee

P.S. A stamped return envelope addressed to my attention is enclosed for your convenience. Please return the questionnaire by \_\_\_\_\_.

## REFERENCE QUESTIONNAIRE

Potential Candidate: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reference: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How long have you known him? \_\_\_\_\_

2. In what relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is his greatest strength? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What are his weaknesses? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. If he served as your pastor, would you want him back? Why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. How would you rate his performance as a pastor?

Excellent  Good  Acceptable  Poor  Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. Briefly describe his work style/habits \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Is he an aggressive person? \_\_\_\_\_ Assertive? \_\_\_\_\_ Passive? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Is he innovative? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please give an example. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. How would you characterize his leadership style? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Describe his family relationships. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

12. How would you describe the conduct of his children? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

13. How does he respond under stressful situations? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Please comment on how he handles conflict. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

15. Does he usually complete the projects he starts? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Is he supportive of his officers? \_\_\_\_\_
17. Describe his preaching style. \_\_\_\_\_
18. How would you describe the impact of his sermons on the congregations? \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
19. Rate his sermons for Scriptural faithfulness and doctrinal soundness. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Have you personally considered his messages challenging? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
21. Is he burdened for the lost? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, how is this demonstrated? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
22. Would you characterize his services as exciting, solemn, worshipful? \_\_\_\_\_  
Please explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_
23. To which church program has he given the most attention and leadership? \_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
24. Other. Please add any information that you believe will be valuable in our efforts to know this man as a potential pastor for our congregation.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Insert Pastoral Strengths document here.

## Candidate Announcement

Dear Member:

You probably know by now that your Pulpit Nominating Committee has voted unanimously to invite Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ to candidate on Sunday, \_\_\_\_\_. There will be a congregational meeting immediately following the morning service for the purpose of voting either to extend a call to him to be our senior pastor, or not to extend a call to him.

Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ and his wife, \_\_\_\_\_, will be here on Saturday evening also, to attend a church picnic. Every member is urged to attend the picnic and use that opportunity to meet and talk with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Please mark that day and time on your calendar now!

Feel free to ask any Committee member for information about Rev. \_\_\_\_\_. We want to provide all the information you feel is necessary for your decision and are therefore ready to share whatever we know about him and his family. For that purpose also, an information sheet is enclosed with this letter.

The Pulpit Nominating Committee has experienced the power of your prayers for us. Now the most important thing you can do is pray for the Holy Spirit to guide each member in his or her decision on \_\_\_\_\_ (date), that God's will be made clear to our congregation and to Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ as well.

In His service,

Chairman  
Pulpit Nominating Committee

P.S. Selection of a pastor is one of the most important decisions a congregation makes. This privilege and responsibility of membership should be a high priority for you and should be exercised prayerfully.

Pulpit Nominating Committee  
(List Names)

# Information Sheet

Candidate Name \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_

Hometown \_\_\_\_\_

College and seminary degrees (where received and when) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Wife's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Hometown \_\_\_\_\_

When married and where \_\_\_\_\_

Children's Name(s) and ages \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Brief history of service to each church \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

List of pastoral strengths as discerned by the Committee \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Schedule for Candidate Visit

Dear Member:

This coming weekend is a very important time in the life of our church. Therefore, your participation in the scheduled activities should be a high priority for you.

The Pulpit Nominating `Committee has tried to provide a schedule for our candidate for senior pastor that allows him and you full opportunity to get important questions answered before our congregational meeting next Sunday. That schedule is as follows:

|          |            |  |
|----------|------------|--|
| Friday   | 6:30 p.m.  | Rev. and Mrs. _____ have dinner at the church with the Search Committee, Session, Deacons and their spouses  |
| Saturday | 8:00 a.m.  | Rev. _____ has breakfast with the men of the church  |
|          | 9:00 a.m.  | Mrs. _____ has coffee with the women in the church   |
|          | 10:00 a.m. | Rev. _____ meets with the Session  |
|          | 11:30 a.m. | Rev. and Mrs. _____ tour residential areas   |
|          | 4:30 p.m.  | Picnic at the church for everyone, including Q&A time with Rev. and Mrs. _____   |
| Sunday   | 9:45 a.m.  | Sunday School  |
|          | 11:00 a.m. | Morning Worship (Rev. _____ preaching)   |
|          | 12:15 p.m. | Congregational meeting to consider a call to Rev. _____  |
|          | 6:00 p.m.  | Evening Service (Rev. _____ will preach if the congregation approved his call at the 12:15 p.m. meeting. Rev. _____ most likely will not have answered the call by this time.) |
|          | 7:00 p.m.  | Reception for Rev. and Mrs. _____ (if the congregation has approved his call). The entire congregation is invited.   |

Remember that, while proclamation of the Word is the most important of the gifts we are looking for in a senior pastor, there are several other abilities and gifts that are important. The Pulpit Nominating Committee has considered these in our decision to recommend Rev. \_\_\_\_\_ to you.

Now we invite you to prayerfully make your own evaluation as the schedule allows on Friday, Saturday and Sunday morning. We suggest you consider such areas as: spiritual development of members, worship leadership, evangelism, encouraging the ministry of the laity, administrative leadership, outreach and mercy ministry, discipling and teaching.

In His Service,

Chairman,  
Pulpit Nominating Committee