

DISCERNING GOD'S DIRECTION VIA CYBERSPACE

The Reality of the InterNet Age and Ministry Placement

An Introduction

Many years ago Gary Friesen wrote the classic book, *“Decision Making and the Will of God.”* Though quite long, it is still popular resource and recently was revised and republished. Not everyone embraces all of the book's theology. Some see discovering the will of God as more mystical...others believe it is an exact science. While technology has provided an abundance of additional tools and resources to help in the discovery of one's path to vocational Christian ministry, they are just that... tools.

The following material elaborates on one of those tools...the InterNet. It has changed everything ~ both good and not so good.

The Growth of the Internet

The InterNet has become a valuable resource for those considering a new or first-time ministry position. And while its convenience has significantly “ramped up” the number of resumes a church or ministry receives, it can also make the candidate feel like a “small fish in a very large pond.” Some churches who “Post on the InterNet” have received as many as 700+ resumes for one position. As you can imagine this kind of Tsunami of Resumes elongates and complicates the Process of a Healthy Search.

On the positive side, the InterNet has greatly increased awareness of the number of ministry positions available for those who are trying to discern God's direction for their life and ministry calling. It can be likened to the reality of InterNet dating connections that lead to marriage.

Also on the positive side, the number of ministries who post positions online continues to increase. Church and ministry WebSites have become a useful source of background information for the potential candidates themselves, in terms of learning about the vision, values, history, staff, etc. of the church or ministry they are considering.

It is highly recommended every candidate browse through the WebSites of these organizations thoroughly before contacting anyone about a possible position.

A Few Things to Keep in Mind

A growing number of churches and ministries now allow, and sometimes require, the potential candidate to submit a resume, cover letter, and sometimes even a personal information intake/application via e-mail or over the InterNet. Many do that as an initial “grid” by which to sort or prioritize the applicants.

The only caveat here is to remember that due to the volume of material received, many organizations will not necessarily send a follow-up EMail to indicate they have

successfully downloaded your documents. That's why it's always a good idea to let the church or ministry know (*in your EMail*) the format in which you are sending these materials as well as specifically ask them if they would notify you that they received your EMail and were able to download what you sent. The PDF Format or Word.doc is almost always the best.

If you don't hear from them, write again...or call to confirm (*unless phone calls are prohibited*).

And by all means send a "snail mail" copy of your materials as well to their postal address. Documents do not always translate over EMail as nicely or completely as they appear on your computer. It depends a lot on who is downloading them, what their computer capabilities are, and whether the formatting has changed in the process.

A few of the better ministries and churches may actually acknowledge your application. The best ones may even give you a time frame for their decision-making process. But remember...they are a very small minority.

At any rate, how they choose to respond to you...or even IF they choose to respond to you...will tell you a little something about the church or ministry itself. If you're applying to be the Administrator or Executive Pastor...maybe that's why they need you!

It's unfortunate that many organizations can leave the potential candidate in limbo for weeks, or even months, since the candidating/application process (*especially in churches*) is typically quite tedious. Gathering resumes, convening Search Team members, bringing church leadership up to speed regarding the process...all of this often takes a *very* long time. Unfortunately, you, the potential candidate, are trying to make an important life decision NOW. Patience is the keyword.

If you do decide to submit a resume or application electronically, and you receive a response, make sure you follow up quickly with a note of appreciation. You can always ask what the next step is in the process...or if they have a timeline for filling the position, if that hasn't already been expressed.

The Variety of Web-Related Resources Available

There are literally dozens of ministry position websites currently in existence. The quality of what they offer, in terms of information and accessibility, varies greatly. Most are basically good, and contain certain elemental information that is often helpful. Unfortunately, in some cases you will not always see these WebSites updated regularly. Others, however, are excellent, widely used, and keep their WebSites very current.

For those ministry position ads that do contain the WebSite address of the church or ministry organization...don't fail to go to that website and learn as much as you can. Some ads have direct "links"...others just list the WebSite address itself. But a thorough search of their material will go a long way toward telling you whether you want

to proceed further, whether you feel you are even qualified for the job, or if you may be a “good fit” for the church or ministry’s particular culture.

Even if a church or ministry doesn’t list a WebSite in an advertisement for a position, they may still have one. Always do a Google search to see if they do. Many churches are quite poor at knowing how to get their website to pop up at the beginning of search results...even when you type in their exact name! So you may have to look through a number of pages to actually find them. Persevere. While it would be nice to think that quality ministries have quality websites...that may still be on their “things to do” list.

A “First Word” On Denominational Placement Systems and WebSites

Most Evangelical Denominations have a focused Minister Placement System. These range from mandatory and required to strongly advised. For instance, the developer of this ReSource is EFCAWest, a Regional Arm of the Evangelical Free Church of America. The EFCA Placement System is <http://www.MinisterConnection.net> Take a tour! It is very helpful and instructive.

A Few of the More Frequently Accessed WebSites

A few WebSites regularly add new positions and also enable you to view them in the chronological order of their posting, saving you the time it takes to review all the previous positions posted. Most of these are extremely user friendly.

These WebSites include:

1. www.churchstaffing.com **Church Staffing** (*one of the strongest and most extensive*) This site includes an extensive resume posting and “resume tune up” service as well. Click on “Search Job Openings.” Once you have already visited the site you can select “Click here to see jobs listed most recently.”

There is a wealth of additional information on salary surveys, compensation packages, job descriptions, volunteer screening, etc. [An exhaustive resource.](#)

Church Staffing also has a partnership with **Leadership Network** that exclusively posts positions in larger churches at www.leadnetchurchstaffing.com However, those positions are posted on the main Church Staffing site as well. Also linked to www.ministrymatch.com.

2. <http://www.ministrysearch.com> **Ministry Search** Easy to navigate, regularly updated, and chronologically listed. Unfortunately, doesn’t allow for a “geographic” search.
3. <http://www.christiancareercenter.com> **Christian Career Center**...click on “Job Bank”...and then “list all jobs.” Formerly under www.gospelcom.net. Also listed

under www.churchjobsonline.com. Run by a husband/wife team of career counselors. For some reason, clicking on “list all jobs” does take a longer time to come up...but it will eventually.

4. <http://www.pastors.com> **Pastors.com** (*Saddleback Church*) Positions less formally posted as this is a forum and the site allows for feedback. You’ll have to sign up for an account if you don’t have one, but there is no cost. Click on “Pastors Forum”...and when that window comes up, click on “Jobs-Help Wanted.” Allows for dialogue with the organization via the forum. Just be aware you need to go to the www.pastors.com home page to log out.
5. <http://www.willowcreek.com/exchange> **Willow Creek Exchange** ~ Excellent site. Don’t hesitate to look under all potentially relevant categories as different churches may post the same position under different categories (e.g. “*Other Pastoral*” and “*Teaching Pastor*”). Unfortunately, they don’t have a way to list all positions at one time by date.
6. <http://www.pastorfinder.com> This site is run by **Sermon Central** and is similar in formatting to Church Staffing. Several options are given for sorting positions.
7. <http://www.findingourplace.com> This is a sizeable Compilation of WebSites of varying denominations and doctrinal viewpoints.

Christian Colleges and Seminaries

A fair number of Christian colleges and seminaries have good to excellent WebSites that allow those other than alumni to search their ministry position database. Bravos to those that do! It’s a wonderful service to the Christian community. These are typically ministry opportunities around the country, not just near the school, though some are because of their close connection. A few of those WebSites are listed below. You can find other school websites as well with a simple Google search of the school’s name and location.

http://www.bethel.edu/seminary_academics/gensem/placement/index.htm

Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, MN. Lists positions by locations in California, Minnesota, and Outside CA and MN, by ministry area.

Bethel Seminary, San Diego has its own Placement Ministry that is typically West Coast Focused.

<http://www.denverseminary.edu/church> **Denver Seminary** (*User name: jobseeker, Password: 4jobs*)

<http://www.fuller.edu/career> **Fuller Seminary**, Pasadena, CA (*excellent and easy to use site*)

<http://www.ministrylist.com> **Gordon-Conwell Seminary** (also very good and regularly updated. Click on "view the ministry list"...and then click in the next window on "Search")

<http://www.grace.edu> **Grace College & Seminary**, Winona Lake, IN. Now linked to www.monstertrak.monster.com

<http://www.westernseminary.edu/placementwebsite/index.asp> **Western Seminary**, Portland, Oregon. Another good WebSite.

<http://www.cccu.org/career/career.asp> **Council for Christian Colleges & Universities**. For those wanting to explore faculty and/or staff positions at Christian colleges and graduate schools nationwide. You can view faculty or administrative positions by date of submission of the position.

Other General Ministry Position Sites

<http://www.christianchaplains.com/jobopportunities.htm> **International Association of Christian Chaplains** (includes links to other chaplain-related sites)

<http://www.acsi.org/web2003/default.aspx?ID=1924> **Association of Christian Schools International**...job listings for member schools.

http://www.billygraham.org/BGEA_Employment.asp **Billy Graham Evangelistic Association**. A very substantial site put together by the Billy Graham organization that includes employment opportunities for the new Charlotte, NC headquarters, Canada offices, The Billy Graham Training Center at the Cove in Asheville, NC, Blue Ridge Broadcasting in NC, and Samaritan's Purse in Boone, NC.

<http://www.crista.org/employment/default.asp> **Christa Ministries**. Variety of positions posted, some of which require raising support.

<http://www.christianemployment.com> **Christian Employment Resource**.

www.christianjobs.com **Christian Jobs** (a multitude of broad categories to choose from, both inside and outside of the church. Another Salem Communications WebSite. Go to categories "Church/Ministry" or "Missions." Has a few other links and a "Salary Wizard" for comparing geographical areas)

www.cmaonline.org **Christian Management Association** (click on button on the left marked "Job Market"...then "Job Openings"...View the current positions available")

<http://www.christianet.com/christianjobs/index.htm> **ChristiaNet** (limited website)

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/career> **Christianity Today** (not as many postings these days, but several categories under which you can look)

<http://www.churchjobs.net> **Church Jobs** (click on top, "Candidates - Find Church Jobs")

<http://www.churchstaffsearch.com> **Church Staff Search** Posted by latest listings, or area categories on left column.

<http://www.naccc.org/DFM/PastoratesAndPulpits.htm> **National Association of Congregational Christian Churches** Denominational WebSite.

<http://www.kamr.org/kamo> **Korean-American Ministry Resources**

<http://www.kingdomcareers.com> **Kingdom Careers** (a variety of types of positions)

<http://www.ministersearch.com> **Minister Search** (a specialized search company in Texas, usually recruiting staff for larger churches...click on "search jobs" in the middle towards the top of the screen)

<http://www.ministrycareers.com> **Ministry Careers** (jobs and resume listing service)

<http://ministryemployment.com> **Ministry Employment** (sponsored by Christianity Today. Look for "job search tools"...lower right hand corner...click on "current job openings")

<http://www.ministryjobs.com> **Ministry Jobs** (fairly simplistic site, website notes "new" postings, which is helpful)

<http://www.pastorsearch.net> **Pastor Search** (simple, bulletin "board" type posts)

<http://www.praise.net/careers> **Worship Resource Center** (music and worship positions available. Click on "Search"...then "View All Jobs")

<http://www.quicktopic.com/9/H/bPXikPT3bgQFE> **Christian Stewardship Association** (forum more like a "bulletin board" and most positions are "development/fundraising" related)

<http://www.sbc.net/jobs/default.asp> **Southern Baptist Convention** (by state...or job type...or just a general search for all positions in the U.S.)

<http://www.youthpastor.com/Jobs> **Youth Pastor** (Youth pastor positions...Intern, Part time, Seasonal, Full time. Lots of youth ministry resources as well)

<http://www.youthspecialties.com/jobs> **Youth Specialties** (job bank, resume posting...and solid list of youth job-related articles under "resources")

Camping and Conference Ministries

<http://cci.gospelcom.net/ccihome/stafflink/oppsearch.asp?s=n>

Christian Camping International (for those interested in camping or conference related ministry you can go to “Job White Board”)

Or you can go to the ministry/conference centers websites themselves...

<http://www.foresthome.org> **Forest Home Christian Conference Center** (*Forest Falls, CA...go under the “Navigation” pull down menu and select “employment”*)

http://www.humelake.org/content/in_employment.php **Hume Lake Christian Camps** (*Hume, CA...large camp and conference center in the Sequoia National Forest*)

<http://www.mounthermon.org/employment> **Mount Hermon Christian Conference Center** (*Mt. Hermon, CA...another large camp and conference center*)

<http://www.navigators.org/us/serve/jobs> **The Navigators** (*outside of Colorado Springs, CO...click on “Jobs/Volunteers”*)

<http://www.sandycove.org/docs/jobops.html> **Sandy Cove Ministries and Conference Center** (*Large youth and adult conference center and hotel in Sandy Cove, MD on the shores of the Chesapeake Bay*)

This list is limited only by your discovery of the number of Christian Camps and Conference Centers around the country, almost all of which have some kind of WebSite that typically posts employment opportunities.

Miscellaneous Research Websites

- While **Dallas Theological Seminary** limits their job searches to alumni, they do have a considerable number of downloadable articles regarding searching for a ministry position. These can be found in PDF files at: <http://www.dts.edu/alumni/placement/graduates>
- **Cost of living Calculator:** <http://www.homefair.com/homefair/calc/salcalc.html> or http://swz.salary.com/CostOfLivingWizard/layoutscripts/coll_start.asp
- **Homes For Sale** by city or zip: <http://www.homes.com> or <http://www.realtor.com> or <http://www.homegain.com>

- **Domania**...where you can check out recent sales prices (*usually a few months old*) of homes in a particular neighborhood or street: <http://www.domania.com>
- **Maps:** <http://www.mapblast.com> or <http://www.mapquest.com> or <http://www.randmncally.com> or <http://maps.google.com> (*where you can often zoom in on a satellite photo and even see the surrounding area of a home or church. Google is great to navigate because you can manipulate the map in any direction*)
- **Newspapers** (*a great source for local info*). Do a Google search or go to: <http://www.thepaperboy.com/welcome.html>
- **Money Magazine's** "Best Places to Live," where you can check out the complete demographics on many U.S. cities: <http://money.cnn.com/best/bplive>
- Looking for **Airport Codes**? Try: <http://www.bestfares.com/travel/desks/story.asp?id=1805>
- **Chamber of Commerce** directory: <http://clickcity.com/index2.htm>
- State and County *Quick Facts* from the **Census Bureau**: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>
- **Census Bureau main page:** <http://www.census.gov>
- Salary comparisons: www.salaryexpert.com or **U.S. Department of Labor** statistics: www.bls.gov

Just in case you aren't sure you're really up to another ministry position... Pastor/Missionary Retreat & Renewal Centers

<http://www.charisfoundation.com> **Charis Foundation** (*two week retreat/counseling sessions...significant cost involved*)

<http://www.fairhaven1.com/index.html> **Fairhaven Ministries** (*Roan Mountain, TN. Beautiful cabins and facilities. No phone or TV. Low cost. Counseling available at a reasonable cost*)

<http://www.linkcare.org> **Link Care Center** (*Fresno, CA...counseling and counseling training services for those in ministry*)

<http://www.marbleretreat.org> **Marble Retreat** (*Colorado, Founded by Dr. & Mrs. Louis McBurney...serving Christian ministers in crisis or needing renewal coaching.*)

<http://www.pastorsretreatnetwork.org> **Pastor's Retreat Network** (*three beautiful no-cost retreat centers in Texas, Wisconsin and Ohio*)

An extensive listing of these and other resources can be found at **The Parsonage**
<http://www.family.org/pastor/resources/pcd/ministries/a0011078.cfm>

<http://www.sonscape.com/> **SonScape Retreats** (*a small group spiritual retreat with personalized pastoral counseling for pastors, missionaries and their spouses. A week-long experience in a place of rest, renewal, and life change in the beauty of the Rocky Mountains. Costs are reasonable because of major subsidies.*)

www.pastor-care.com **Mountain Learning Center** (a mountain retreat in June Lake, CA for pastors and their spouses for a physically enjoyable, emotionally gratifying & spiritually invigorating experience to revitalize their relationship with God, self and others.)

For Vocational Counseling related to Ministry, check the Ministry Development Council is the national network of Centers. <http://www.ministrydevelopment.org> . The Center for Ministry in Northern California is a good example. <http://www.centerforministry.org>

Conclusion:

While the world of CyberSpace has opened up a tremendous resource for Christian “job hunting,” keep in mind that the best source for assessing your future is still the Father Himself and an honest assessment of your own heart. His timetable for change is typically much slower than ours. If not careful, one can almost become obsessed with searching these WebSites on a regular basis out of frustration or despair.

Resist the temptation to send out your resume haphazardly. If you don't, it unnecessarily overloads an already overburdened Search Team at another church or ministry and it only diminishes your focus on what you do best and the ministry for which God has gifted you. Make sure you can clearly state several areas that are your strengths...with corresponding accomplishments to back those up...and the clear confirmation of others where you have served.

A few good books to consider reading during this process include:

- Dave Hansen, *“The Art of Pastoring: Ministry Without All the Answers”*
- John Cionca, *“Before You Move: A Guide to Making Transitions in Ministry”*
www.ministrytransitions.org }
- Gary Friesen, *“Decision Making and the Will of God”* by Multnomah
- Richard Nelson Bolles, *“What Color is Your Parachute,”* Ten Speed Press

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