

## **IDENTIFYING THE PEOPLE: SELECTING THE RIGHT PASTORAL SEARCH TEAM**

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"Our Pastoral Search Team would have traveled far more comfortably if we would have had a good road map for the journey!" This statement reflects accurately the negative experience of an uninformed Team. This document is intended to provide a "user-friendly" set of guidelines to assist you in your search process.

To launch the best possible start, there are a number of items for you, as church leaders, to consider. The long-term ministry effectiveness of the church and your next pastor is closely related to the work of the Pastoral Search Team. Christian businessman, Robert W. Dingman, a professional executive search consultant, offers excellent perspective when he states:

To create a search committee that is full of promise and has a high probability of success requires some thought and planning. No event is likely to be as crucial to the next ten years of your church . . . as the shaping of this committee, so it warrants the best possible thinking--and that kind of thinking seldom comes in an instant.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, you are advised to move at a timely, though unhurried, pace in these early days of pastoral transition.

When a pastor informs us of his intent to resign from his church, he is urged to convene a gathering of the church leaders to meet with EFCA West Leadership in order to inform the Church Board of his decision. It is the mandate of most Evangelical Denominations to work interdependently as a coalition of independent, self-governing churches. The leadership of the Denominational Association always seeks the highest good for the local church body in order that its ministry might become still more effective in the ministry of the Word of God, touching a lost world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

To assist you in this season of transition, we offer special services which can lessen the extra stress for those in active church leadership. It is our commitment to serve you in any way possible. You are in our prayers daily for God's blessing and a Spirit-directed sensitivity to your local church.

After you have reviewed the guidelines in this document and have selected the Pastoral Search Team, please notify us via e-mail ([info@efcawest.org](mailto:info@efcawest.org)) with the following information:

- Church Name/Address and Date of Pastor's Final Sunday
- Name and contact information (e-mail/daytime tel./cell-phone) of the Church Chairman
- Names and contact information of the Search Team Members. Please identify the Search Team Chairperson.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert W. Dingman, The Complete Search Committee Guidebook (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1989), 39.

### ***Your Church Constitution and the Selection of the Pastoral Search Team***

Your church constitution and by-laws are your legal guide during this time of transition. Therefore, you need to consult these documents and determine the proper steps to take. If your constitutional directives are vague or do not pre-select the Pastoral Search Team, it may be necessary to call a special congregational business meeting for the explicit purpose of selecting the Pastoral Search Team. The method of nomination, the size of the team, and the required vote should be defined before specific names are brought to the floor of the meeting. Experience has shown that the team should be elected and established before your resigning pastor leaves for his new ministry assignment. There are important issues to be addressed, and your former pastor's input to the team will be enlightening and informative.

If your constitution and by-laws do not dictate the size of the team, 7-9 members are "just about right." In our fast-paced society, matching the schedules of a team of even this size will be a challenge.

### ***The Kind of Pastoral Search Team Members Needed***

As you work through the following descriptions and questions, you will be more adequately equipped for building an effective team.

- Each person should be an active member of your church and respected by the congregation – a person known for spiritual maturity and being in touch with the Lord. This is especially important if your church is in significant conflict.
- Each person should have available time and energy to complete the task. This is a major commitment.
- Because of the great diversity in churches, the Pastoral Search Team should represent the full spectrum of the congregation.
- At least one person needs to be skilled in empowering, delegating, and administering the other persons so that they get things done in a timely manner.
- It is helpful to have at least one person who is very computer literate {each person on the Search Team needs to use Email with skill} because the kind of work that needs to be done will demand correspondence and the preparing of significant documents, such as a pastoral Profile and a Chart Profile/Prospectus. (Samples are available upon request.)
- Every team needs at least two "people of insight" – "seers" – "wisdom people" who are almost never wrong in their evaluations of people.
- You need at least two women on the team.
- You will want at least two persons who are very good on the telephone, because contacts with potential candidates and their references are made best by telephone. Remember, "You never have a second chance to make a good first impression."
- If your church is multi-cultural in its complexion, this needs to be represented on the Team.
- It is unwise to have persons on the team (especially the Chairperson) who are in the midst of a mid-life crisis or major life transition, such as a job loss, starting a new business, or working two jobs.
- You should have at least one person who is theologically and biblically astute, another with interviewing and assessment skills, and someone with an understanding of financial matters.

In putting together this balance of spiritually-gifted and appropriately-skilled people who will play a variety of roles in the search process, there are personal qualities that each team member should possess, if possible:

- An eagerness to serve in this capacity.

- Strong enough to speak up, but not a dominating personality who will inhibit others.
- A positive, can-do attitude.
- A proven, effective team player.
- The ability to maintain confidentiality.
- A person who shares honestly, openly, wisely and appropriately.
- A person known for commitment to excellence because the Lord deserves it.
- A person with no hidden or private agendas. Nothing “kills or derails” a Search Process more!!
- A person who is able to look at the facts wisely, logically and objectively.
- A profound willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit in the selection process.
- A compassion and attitude of concern for people.

### ***Cautions to Consider and Dangers to Avoid***

The Pastoral Search Team will delve deeply into each others’ lives, as well as the lives of potential pastoral candidates. This is very disconcerting and destructive for immature or spiritually unhealthy people. The Pastoral Search Team is for mature, seasoned servants of the Lord, who have demonstrated a capacity to walk closely with Christ without the plastic artificiality of “super spirituality.” Those who seek to serve from impure motives will severely hinder the process. Thus, it is very important that this selection process be entered into prayerfully, carefully and with wise choices. Do not reward dysfunctional people by placing them on the Search Team.

Dr. Leith Anderson, author of [Dying for Change](#), boldly declared that the first step is dependence on God. He wrote:

We depend on God to direct us to the leader of His choosing and we work hard to find that leader ...Every member of the search committee must faithfully ask for God’s help. The relationships of those in the search process must reflect biblical principles of fellowship, integrity and love. It may be necessary for the search committee members to spend months building into their own spiritual lives and interpersonal relationships before they can productively move on to the actual search. Dependence on God means faithfulness to biblical standards of leadership. The characteristics of leaders listed in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1 cannot be ignored...<sup>2</sup>

### ***Receive Names for the Pastoral Search Team***

It may be appropriate and wise, in accordance with your constitution and by-laws, to solicit input and involvement by receiving nominations for the Pastoral Search Team from the total church body. First, present the traits and necessary qualifications. Next, request the congregation’s participation by asking for suggestions of individuals they believe would make excellent Pastoral Search Team members. Then, give those names to the proper church board, ministry team or committee to be processed according to your specific church policy.

### ***Schedule a “First Meeting” of the Pastoral Search Team***

Set the first meeting of the Pastoral Search Team as soon as it is elected/selected. Each member should be ready and willing to sign a Covenant (see page 4 below). Invite a member of the EFCA West leadership to your first or second meeting for an equipping seminar to train the team. This is crucial to fully comprehend the dynamic nature of the search process and the organizational tools involved in this great work of calling a pastor.

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<sup>2</sup> Leith Anderson, “Search Committees: A Strategy for Success,” [Christianity Today](#) (18 April, 1980): 34

# Covenant for the Pastoral Search Team

WHEREAS, members of the Pastoral Search Team of \_\_\_\_\_ Church have been selected to this position of highest trust and responsibility;

WHEREAS, members of the Team recognize the potential effect of **our** deliberations and recommendations to the church upon its future mission and ministry in Christ's Church, the spiritual health and fitness of its fellowship, the teaching of its children and the maturing of its membership in relationships characterized by grace and love; and

WHEREAS, it is acknowledged and confessed that the discovery of God's will and direction in the calling of a pastor can be confused and complicated by human and supernatural factors not easily understood,

**We solemnly enter the following Covenant together before the Lord.**

## A COVENANT OF PRAYER

We will uphold one another in prayer and seek, **both** separately and together, the clear leadership of the Holy Spirit.

## A COVENANT OF HONEST COMMUNICATION

We will speak openly and honestly with one another without taking offense. We realize that we need the opportunity to 'think aloud' in order to help sort out impressions and responses as we study our church's needs and evaluate potential candidates.

## A COVENANT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

We will treat, with confidentiality, Team discussions and evaluations regarding specific potential candidates. We will deal responsibly with privileged information. We will agree in Team on appropriate process and progress reports to the Board of Elders and church. We will not publicly criticize the perspectives or decisions of any other members of our Team.

## A COVENANT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

We will proceed with ethical sensitivity and thoroughness in all investigative and evaluative procedures in the consideration of any pastoral candidate. If a potential candidate has been engaged in conversation and is later dropped from consideration, we will notify him tactfully in writing. We recognize our accountability to our church and to God for our decisions.

## A COVENANT OF UNITY

We will present to the church for its consideration only such recommendations as we can fully support as a Team. Where there are honest differences of opinion, we covenant to work these out before making a recommendation to the church.

THEREFORE, we enter into this Covenant with our Lord, being led by the Spirit, in order to faithfully discern his will in the calling and selection of a pastor to our church.

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