



Pastor Search Team Training

Ideas To Help Your Church Prepare For
and Find A New Pastor

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1. Who is going to preach while we search for a pastor?

- Contact the Association Missional Strategist (AMS) and the Baptist State Convention for a list of people who are available for pulpit supply or interim pastor in your area.
- Do you have a staff member or two who could preach – could you have two staff alternate every other week on Sunday?
- There are many successful churches who provide live music but watch a sermon from another church on a large screen – it could be a church in Orlando, Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles or any city you choose.

2. What kind of church do you want to become?

- If a young adult asked you “What kind of job should I look for?” , you would say “What kind of career are you interested in? Where are you headed long-term, down-the-road?”
- The kind of pastor you look for depends on what kind of church you want to become. Do you want to be stronger in worship, evangelism, discipleship, missions, starting small groups in homes, or reaching young adults? Decide your #1 and #2 priorities and look for someone with experience to help you reach those goals.

3. Be ready for the process to take up to 12 months

- There is training to do, discussions to have, information to gather, resumes to acquire, interviews to do, sermons to listen to, and so forth.
- Be patient and realize it will take months.
- I am not saying be laid back or lazy. I encourage you to work hard, be aggressive and intentional, but don't try to make a quick decision that you may regret later.

4. Major on church health. Be the kind of church that attracts both a pastor and new members

While you search for a pastor for the next year, your church must do the things that help a church be healthy.

- Excellence in your worship service
- Small groups that engage people and help them participate in discussion, train new leaders, reach out to new people, serve and make deeper fellowship a priority.
- Train staff, deacons, teachers and greeters.
- Serve your community.
- Keep your communication effective – web site, Facebook, texting, emails, phone calls.

5. Keep the church informed

It's wise to keep your church informed on the Search Team progress. Use the church newsletter, bulletin, email and worship service to give a brief update on how the search is going at least once a month.

- “we updated the job description”
- “we posted on 5 job sites”
- “we have received 50 resumes so far”
- “next month, we will begin interviews”

6. Forming the search team

The priority in asking members to be on the Search Team ought to be –

- Who has the maturity to understand what our church needs to become?
- Who has the maturity to ask good questions?
- Who has the maturity to look beyond their own personal preferences and look for a pastor that will help the church move into the future?

You may want to invite a staff member to be a non-voting member of the Search Team.

7. How often should we meet?

- At least for the first two months or so, it is important to get off to a good start and get the ball rolling.
- I don't think it is unreasonable to meet for one hour every week for at least 2 months. Then you can evaluate your progress and see if meeting every other week would be okay.
- You don't have to meet an additional day or night of the week. You could meet Sunday or Wednesday right before or after a service.

8. Search Team Training and Coaching

- The local Baptist Association would be my first suggestion for training your Search Team. The Association Strategist will have many pages of materials to give you.
- It is impossible to cover everything in an hour or two. Instead of only one meeting with your AMS, I highly suggest inviting him to sit in on your group once a month for several months, or for the Search Team Leader to meet with the AMS separately once a month to talk about your progress.

9. Gathering Resumes

- Jobs.SBC.net – this is a way to post your pastor opening nationwide and get resumes from men who haven't graduated yet from seminary
- Get resumes from SBC seminaries – Southwestern, Southeastern, Southern, New Orleans, etc.
- Contact any of the State Conventions to ask that resumes be sent to you.
- Contact any of the dozens of Associations in your state or the 100s in other states around you
- Call pastors of large churches to ask for suggestions of people they might know

10. Gather the Information You Will Need

- When you have narrowed down all the resumes to the top 10, you will probably start having meetings with potential candidates. You will have questions about them and they will have questions about your church as well.
- You should gather some information that you can email to someone you are going to interview so they can know a little about your church before you talk with them. Here is a list of things a pastor might want to know:

10. Gather the Information You Will Need

1. Church calendar for the coming year and maybe for last year as well.
2. The bylaws
3. The budget (it doesn't have to show individual salaries)
4. Is there a list of your goals for this year?
5. Is there a picture of the whole church gathered together (either in the sanctuary or maybe posing outside on the lawn)?
6. A list or picture directory of your deacons, SS teachers and other committees/teams
7. A job description for the pastor position

11. How Many Ways Can We Communicate and Interview?

- You can email them
- You can call them
- You can video chat – Facetime, Skype, Google, Facebook video, Zoom, etc.
- You can visit them in person
- They can visit you in person
- You can watch a video of them preaching
- You can ask them to send or post a video of them introducing themselves
- You could look at their Facebook or LinkedIn page or their personal website
- You could search for their name on Google

12. Narrowing Down the Resumes

- Some churches may receive over 1,000 resumes. But even for a small church, I suggest you try to get at least 50 or 100 resumes and then begin to narrow them down to the ones you want to call or email for more information.
- I suggest you be flexible about age
- I suggest you be flexible about whether they have attended seminary or not. It isn't as important now as it used to be.
- Be careful about denominational background. If they aren't Southern Baptist, they may have a different Biblical worldview.

12. Narrowing Down the Resumes

- I suggest you be flexible about whether they have experience as a senior pastor. They may have business experience, they may have been a staff member, a teacher or a deacon for many years.
- I suggest you be flexible about whether they are full-time or bi-vocational. If they already have a business or secular job, they may be more comfortable having both jobs. If the pastor is part-time, that may allow you to hire additional paid staff members to help you grow.

13. The Interview Process

- Plan your questions ahead of time. Gather good questions from the internet, from other pastors, from LifeWay and your Association. Make a list of maybe 30 questions total.
- Send 5 questions to everyone who sends you a resume and read their responses.
- Send 10 questions to each of the top 10
- Then, when you have narrowed it down to your top three candidates, you might have an additional 15 new questions that go a little deeper and are more personal.

13. The Interview Process

Decide on your process, whatever that might be. It could be something like:

- Receive resume
- Send email with 5 questions to everyone
- To the top 10 candidates, send 10 additional questions.
- To the top 5, make a phone call or a video chat to set up an interview with the whole Search Team
- Interview each of the top 5 for an hour either in person or on a video chat. Watch them preach on the internet or at their present church.
- Do a 2nd personal interview with the top choice
- Listen to several more of their sermons.
- Invite them to a meeting with your deacons & staff
- Do background check. Check references.
- Invite them to preach and meet the church.
- Decide when you will have the church vote.

14. Checking References

- Call the references on their resume
- Call staff members they worked with at previous churches where they served (maybe not their present church unless you have their permission first)
- Call the Assoc. Missional Strategist in the city where they serve now and the city where they previously served.
- Use a reference survey form and ask each reference to fill it out and return it to you. These types of forms usually ask about strengths and weaknesses, character and personality.

15. Background checks

- This is only for your top candidate, before you hire them or officially call or vote
- Credit check – you can do this for free. Ask them to use annualcreditreport.com to download their current report and email it to you as a pdf or mail it to you. Do they have excessive debt? Do they pay on time?
- Use a company that will do criminal background checks for the states the candidate has lived in.

16. Helping Your New Pastor Get Settled In

What kinds of things would help a new pastor to be successful, to get comfortable and settled in?

- Names and pictures of every church member. Enlist some volunteers to take pictures and make a homemade directory.
- Names and pictures of all staff and spouses, deacons and spouses, teachers and spouses.
- A list of all committees and teams with names
- Calendar, 10-year budget history, bylaws, job descriptions for the pastor and staff members
- Personnel policies
- Set up a couple lunches each week to get to know various church members for two months
- Invite the pastor and his family to your home for a meal

16. Helping Your New Pastor Get Settled In

Brainstorming

- Ask the pastor when he would like to get a group together to talk about the upcoming events for this year and brainstorm. (Things like Easter, Christmas, Homecoming, Camp, Mission Trip, VBS, etc.) What worked and what didn't work in the past?

Evaluation

- Ask the pastor if he would like to form a group that could help give feedback after a church event and talk about possible improvements for next time.