

PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE GUIDELINES AND PROCESS

Florida Disciples Regional Church



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Welcome to one of the most important tasks in the congregation - serving on the search committee.

A. SUGGESTED PRINCIPLES FOR THE COMMITTEE

1. Through prayer and reflection, be open to the **leading of the Holy Spirit**. This is sacred and holy work.
2. The Regional Minister will review the search process in an **orientation meeting** with the search committee and is available to answer questions or offer support throughout the process. The chair of the search committee should not hesitate to contact the Regional Minister at any point deemed helpful.
3. Keep asking three important questions:
 - **What is the mission of our congregation? (Who are you?)**
 - **Who is God calling us to be?**
 - **What kind of leader do we need to help us fulfill our mission?**
4. Look beyond your own desires/preferences. You are looking for a minister who will **serve the whole congregation**.
5. Work together as a **team**. Commit from the beginning to speaking honestly and listening deeply to each other.
6. Your work is **confidential**. Do not disclose the names of candidates or the content of discussions. Keep in mind that most candidates that you consider have not announced to their current congregation their desire to relocate.
7. Take plenty of **time** so as not to be hurried but handle each step in a timely manner. With God's leading a wise decision will be reached before extending a call.
8. **Work with the Region in locating candidates**. If approached by a minister outside of the normal search process, refer him/her to the Regional Minister for vetting.
9. Always make decisions as a committee in a **group meeting**.
10. Keep the **congregation informed** about the stages of the search process. Always report to the congregation concerning what state the committee is working. Never disclose the names of candidates being considered.
11. Keep the **Regional Minister** updated on your progress and the final list of candidates being interviewed. Copy the Regional Minister on meeting minutes and updates.
12. **Follow these recommended procedures. They have been tested over time.**

B. GETTING STARTED

- ✓ Form Committee
- ✓ Assign roles
- ✓ Meet with the Regional Minister
- ✓ Identify the “work” of the interim time
- ✓ Select an Interim Candidate
- ✓ Complete the Interim Covenant

1. Consult your bylaws for the formation of the Search Committee. If not specified, ensure that the committee is representative of the congregation in terms of age, gender, tenure in the congregation, etc. Members should be willing and able to commit significant time to the search process, maintain confidentiality, speak honestly, listen well, and work well as part of a team.
2. Assign roles. These may include:
 - Chairperson - Convenes the meeting and is the primary contact with the Regional Minister.
 - Secretary - Keeps minutes of the meeting during the process.
 - Spiritual Guide - Monitors the emotional and spiritual health of the process. Opens and closes the meeting with prayer and is aware of the moments when prayer or silence or celebration is appropriate.
3. Meet with the Regional Minister. At this meeting she or he will orient the committee to the search process. The Regional Minister may also bring names of potential Interim Ministers for consideration, or a second meeting will be scheduled to consider interim candidates. Note: the availability of interim ministers varies greatly at any given time. The Regional Minister will have contacted potential interims that have both the skills and the availability to serve.
4. Identify the work of the interim time: Normally at the Orientation meeting, the Regional Minister will help engage the committee in a brainstorming exercise about the “work” for the congregation during the interim time. This is different than a conversation about skills needed in the interim minister. The following questions may help identify the work the congregation needs to do during the interim to be at its healthiest place to welcome a new settled pastor.
 - Do we have grief to work through?
 - Is there conflict present in the congregation that must be addressed?
 - Do we have a clear and shared vision for our future ministry?

- Do we have a clear understanding of our current resources and challenges?
5. **Selecting an Interim Candidate:** Secure a package amount you can offer the Interim from your church Board or Council. Gain clarity on the benefits you can offer. Follow the general outline for considering candidates described in Section D. Be clear among yourselves, the congregation, and the candidates whether the Interim can be a candidate for the settled position. The general rule is that the Interim should not be a candidate for the settled position. The interim time requires particular gifts and skills that may not match the needs of the congregation long-term. Further, the Interim Minister may not be able to fully engage in the work of the interim time if he/she is also seeking the settled role. Additionally, allowing the Interim to also be a candidate can, and often does, create conflict within the congregation, particularly if the decision is made mid-stream during the interim time. Your Regional Minister can be helpful in deciding and communicating this decision.
 6. **Completing the Interim Covenant:** After selecting the Interim and confirming the decision through board and/or congregational action, complete the Interim Covenant (See Resource section). Include starting date, compensation offered, benefits provided, and general job expectations. This is particularly helpful if the Interim is part-time. Be clear about whether the Interim can be a candidate for the settled position. After the Pastor and Board have signed the Covenant, send a copy to the Regional Office, and keep a copy in the church office.

C. INFORMATION GATHERING AND DISCERNMENT

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Budget✓ Congregational Evaluation✓ Discern leadership needs✓ Salary and Benefits✓ Congregational Profile✓ Congregational Snapshot✓ Website and Online Presence✓ Completed documents to Regional Minister |
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1. If not already done, develop a budget for the search process and have it approved by the board or council. Include resources for contacting candidates and bringing candidates for visits.
2. Congregational Evaluation - Using surveys, small group gatherings, congregational events or other tools, assess the current realities of the congregation and the shared future vision. The Interim Minister can often be helpful in designing these processes. One option is to invite the Regional Minister to lead a “World Café” style conversation. This would normally take place on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon and would invite the congregation to talk together in small table groups to identify priorities and challenges of the congregation and gifts and skills needed in the next pastor. This is one way to gain a great deal of information in a short amount of time. Talk with the Regional Minister if interested in scheduling this event.
3. Discern Leadership Needs - After identifying the mission and vision of the congregation and its current realities, identify the characteristics needed in the next pastor. Focus on gifts and skills rather than age, gender, or family situation.
4. Salary and Benefits - Guidelines for the salary and benefits for a new minister need to be established by the group within the congregation that normally deals with salary and benefits matters. Refer to the sample Letter of Call (Reference section). Some items to consider:
 - Cash salary (the minister determines the amount to be designated as housing allowance if a parsonage is not provided)
 - Contributions to Pension Plan (Normally 14% of Salary + Housing)
 - Contribution to Health Insurance for pastor (and family)
 - Day(s) off per week
 - Vacation time
 - Annual retreat time for spiritual renewal and reflection
 - Mileage reimbursement for travel related to pastoral work
 - Allowance for expenses to attend Regional and General Assemblies
 - Continuing Education (both \$ allowance and time off available)
 - Sabbatical policy
 - Family Leave
5. Complete the Congregational Profile. Much of the information you have gathered above will be helpful in completing it. A blank form and instructions for completing the profile are in the Reference Section. You also have the option of completing an online form that allows for multiple

people to work on and review the profile. The Regional Minister can provide training and instructions for this option.

6. Create a Congregational Snapshot. Prepare a 2–3-page narrative document (or a short video) that describes your congregation and setting to potential candidates. This should include a brief history, description of future vision, needed qualities in the next pastor, and highlights of the local area. Consider this your sales pitch for why a pastor would want to join you in ministry. Make it high quality, honest and engaging.
7. Review your website and online presence. This will often be the first place a potential candidate will meet you, even before you speak directly.
8. Send your completed profile and snapshot to the Regional Minister and schedule a meeting with him/her to review the next steps.

D. CONSIDERING CANDIDATES

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Candidates✓ Profiles✓ Clearance Calls✓ Evaluating Profiles✓ Telephone/Skype Interview✓ Additional Information |
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1. Candidates - Upon receipt of the Congregational Profile and Snapshot the Regional Minister will develop a list of possible candidates who are in the relocation system. If the Search Committee has names of other suggested candidates, contact the Regional Minister who will seek permission from the person to be a candidate and will request the candidate's profile. If you are contacted directly by a person who wants to be considered, please refer the person to the Regional Minister for follow up.
2. Ministerial Profiles - The committee will receive a profile as well as evaluations from four references for each candidate provided by the Regional Minister. A disclosure form and background check will also be included.
3. Clearance Calls - Generally, the Regional Minister will have shared the Congregational Profile and Snapshot with candidates, and the candidates will have agreed to have their profiles shared, prior to forwarding profiles

to the Search Committee. It is still helpful practice to contact each candidate to verify that they are still seeking relocation. Tell the candidate who you are and what congregation you represent. Only ask if they are still seeking relocation and if they would like to have their profile reviewed. No additional information needs to be given to the person at this point. Inform the Regional Minister of any candidates who are no longer seeking relocation.

4. Evaluating Profiles - As a committee, review each profile and set of references. Divide into three piles: Yes, Maybe, and No. Inform any candidates that are no longer being considered that you are pursuing other candidates.
5. Telephone/video Interviews - Set up dates and times for the committee to interview the “Yes” candidates (and potentially some of the “Maybe” candidates if deemed worthwhile). In advance of the interview, determine questions and who will ask them (Samples provided in Resource Section). Include time for:
 - a. The candidate to talk about him/herself and gifts for ministry
 - b. Respond to questions from the committee
 - c. Ask for and respond to questions from the candidate

Invest in high quality equipment so that all can hear and be heard. Be clear with the candidate that this is an initial interview and other candidates are also under consideration.

6. Additional Information - After the initial interview, compile additional information on the most promising candidate(s)
 - a. Telephone each reference. Ask specific questions as a follow-up to the written materials they provided.
 - b. Telephone the Regional Minister of the region where the candidate is serving. If the candidate has recently moved, contact the Regional Minister in the previous region as well.
 - c. Request a CD, DVD or online link of a candidate-led worship service including the sermon.
 - d. If you are still considering multiple candidates, consider a second telephone/video interview to narrow the field to the top two.
 - e. Notify any candidates that are no longer under consideration that you are pursuing other candidates. Keep in touch with candidates under consideration so they know they are still being considered.

- ✓ On Site Interviews
- ✓ Neutral Pulpit
- ✓ Select a candidate
- ✓ Visit to the candidate
- ✓ Presentation to the Board/Council
- ✓ Recommended Candidate Visit
- ✓ Solid Consensus

7. On Site Interviews - If finances allow, it is recommended you bring the top two candidates to town for an in-person interview with the Search Committee. During this meeting the candidate would not meet the congregation but would have an opportunity to meet with the Search Committee, see the church building and explore the community. This is the opportunity for the candidate to see you and your community at your best so be gracious hosts. It is the congregation's responsibility to pay for travel, meals, and other expenses for the candidate. Include the spouse/family if possible. At every stage all candidates should be kept aware that they are among others being considered.
8. Neutral Pulpit - Consider asking the candidate(s) to lead a brief devotion or worship service for the committee. Alternatively, you may ask the Regional Minister to arrange for a "neutral pulpit" opportunity. In this case, the candidate(s) would be scheduled to preach on a Sunday morning in a neighboring congregation and the Search Committee would attend as visitors. Care must be taken not to broadcast that this is a visit of a potential candidate. Confidentiality should be maintained.
9. Select a Candidate - Following the on-site interviews with the candidate(s), the committee needs to decide whether to proceed with one candidate and begin negotiations or start over with another list of candidates. Seek 100% consensus from the committee before committing to a particular candidate. If there is consensus, contact the candidate and mutually agree to proceed with negotiating the details of the call including the financial package (A Letter of Call is included in the Resource Section). At this point, be clear that your committee agrees to consider no other candidate, and the candidate agrees to consider no other employment opportunities until the negotiation process either results in a call or is formally broken off by either party.
10. Visit to the Candidate - It is not generally recommended or necessary to make an in-person visit to the candidate's current congregation. In many congregations a group of 5-6 visitors on a Sunday morning is a clear signal that a Search Committee is present.

11. Presentation to the Board - After negotiations have been finalized, the Search Committee will present the name of the candidate to the Board or Council. The presentation should include a brief history of the search process, characteristics sought in the next pastor, and how this candidate manifests those qualities. Present the terms of the negotiated Salary Package as well. As with the Search Committee, seek 100% approval from the board before referring the call to the congregation.
12. Recommended Candidate Visit - Plan a second visit for the candidate and family to your church. At this visit the candidate will meet the congregation. This can be scheduled over a weekend with the candidate meeting the congregation informally for a potluck or social event on Saturday and joining in worship on Sunday morning. The candidate may or may not be asked to preach during this visit. The final vote to call the candidate may happen during this visit, or more generally, will be scheduled for the Sunday after this visit.
13. Solid Consensus - As mentioned, build a solid consensus in favor of extending the call. First develop a consensus with the Search committee; then with the church board; and finally with the total congregation. Aim for at least 80-85% approval in the congregational vote. If divided before a call, you are certain to be divided after the call.
14. The Call - Be sure that all terms and provisions of the call (financial and otherwise) are clearly understood by both the minister and the congregation before a call is consummated. Complete and sign the Letter of Call by all parties and send a copy to the Regional Office.

E. CONCLUDING ITEMS

1. After the call is extended, and after the minister has announced his/her resignation, publicly celebrate the call, contact the Regional Minister to schedule a service of installation, and plan for a welcome reception.
2. When the new minister arrives, appoint a Pastoral Relations Committee. It may be helpful to have the Search Committee serve as the PRC for the first year.
3. Pray for your minister every day. Work and cooperate with him/her for the health of the church and the mission of the church in the world.

RESOURCES INCLUDED IN THIS PACKET:

*Indicates an electronic version can be found online at
<http://disciples.org/gcom/resources/>

Electronic versions not marked with an * may be requested from the Regional Minister at sandy@fldisciples.org

* Best Practices Hints and Etiquette for Search Committees

* Closing a Pastoral Ministry

Interim Pastor: Specific Skills Desired

Leadership Skills Needed for Interim Ministry

Sample Interim Ministry Covenant

Determining the Minister's Compensation

Congregational Survey Questions

* Congregational Profile

* Instructions for Completing the Congregational Profile

*Ethical Guidelines for Congregational Conduct

Sample Ministerial Profile

Sample Disclosure Form

*How to Read Background Check

Possible Interview Questions

Interview Ideas for Congregations

*Initial Letter of Call

Note: Our thanks to the Christian Church in Kentucky for the original from which this manual was adapted.