

MISSION
POSSIBLE!

The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook

**A handbook
to assist "Search Committees"
in discerning and welcoming
ministerial leadership for their church**

**Congregational Ministries Team
Jeannette Flynn, Team Leader
Church of God Ministries
Anderson, Indiana
2004**

Deepest Appreciation and THANKS
go to the following individuals
for work in writing and producing this manual.

John Boedeker
Ryan Chapman
Sam Dunbar
Jeannette Flynn
Jeff Jenness
Judy Mishler
Robert Moss
Rebecca New-Edson
David I. Shroul
Susan Tatarka
Oral Withrow

Arthur Kelly, editor

Published by Congregational Ministries
Church of God Ministries, Inc.

Jeannette R. Flynn, Team Director

Copyright 2004

Church of God Ministries, Inc.
Congregational Ministries
PO Box 2420
Anderson, Indiana 46018-2420

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
1. Selecting the Pastoral Search Committee	5
2. The Spiritual Dimension of the Pastoral Search	11
3. The Interim Pastor	15
4. Assessment	22
5. Issues a Search Committee May Face	24
6. The Selection Process	29
7. The Benefits and Compensation Package	37
8. Pastor and Family Assimilation	42
9. A Good Start	48
Appendix	50
Advice from a Pastor's Spouse	51
Caring for Your New Pastor—a check list	52
Congregational Résumé	54
Covenants for Interim Pastors	
1. Formal Understanding	57
2. Informal Understanding	59
Congregational Profile, a model	61
Pastoral Resignation—What do we do now?	68
Pastoral Installation Models	70
Pastoral Charges and Covenants	78

INTRODUCTION

John Maxwell states, “Everything rises and falls on leadership!” Whether it is in the classroom, the corporate office, or a local congregation that truth is affirmed over and over.

You might assume that when I am talking about leadership, I mean clergy leadership. To a degree, of course, that is right. This manual, however, is directed to the leadership that is selecting a new pastor or staff member. **That is YOU!**

Since most lay leaders are neither experts in the search process nor in interviewing candidates, this manual is designed to help guide you through one of the most important processes a congregation can engage. It provides information and knowledge that will assist you in being a good, strong leader of that search and selection process.

This manual has been prepared by area administrators, senior pastors of large and small congregations, lay leaders, and North American leaders. While we have worked to keep the pages as few as possible, we need to give you the information you need for the process that is ahead of you.

In the Church of God, each congregation enjoys and operates with both autonomy and accountability in the selection of ministerial leaders.

- **Autonomy**—In the Church of God reformation movement, no state, province, or national office simply sends a person to you with a sign that says, Your New Leader! The responsibility, selection, and decision rests with the prayerful, thoughtful, and thorough processes of local leaders.

- **Accountability**—Each congregation has a heritage, a history, and a connection with other Church of God congregations in their region, the nation, and around the world. Each congregation is recognized and credentialed by the assembly in its region. There should be interaction and cooperation of ministry and support. Though the selection of ministerial leadership is yours to make, partnership and dialogue with your area administrator or Church of God Ministries in making that decision is of the greatest importance.

Mission Impossible always started with a person holding a packet and listening to a voice saying, “YOUR mission, should you choose to accept it,....” Well, here you are, holding this packet and the voice I pray you hear is that of the Holy Spirit saying, “YOU have been chosen for this mission; it is a mission possible, because I will guide you, never forsake you, and show you whom I have selected for this congregation.”

The *Mission Impossible* voice ends with, “Good Luck.” I’m glad to tell you that as Christians we don’t depend on “luck.” The pages of this manual are meant to guide you in sound and practical steps from the moment your current minister resigns through the celebration of the new leader God has brought to you. The Holy Spirit will guide you in knowing the will of the Father. So, instead of luck, receive the blessing that comes with serving in this capacity and being God’s partner for this critical Mission Possible!

Jeannette Flynn
Anderson, Indiana
2004

CHURCH OF GOD MINISTRY CONNECTOR

Instructions for getting your church online when seeking a Staff Person.

Go Online to www.chogministryconnector.com.

At the bottom of the page click on Churches...Post Open Positions

Click on Create a New Account

Follow instructions.

There you will create a Login and a password that will enable you to add to or update your profile.

Your State Pastor will be asked to approve your church's listing.

Then your churches profile will be available to all persons seeking ministry position in the Church of God who are on the Ministry Connector.

You will receive e-mail notices of all persons who are interested.

We recommend your committee not look at each resume as you receive notice but allow the list of interested ministers to grow over about a month; then look at them together with other resumes you have collected from the State Pastor, or other sources. It will be much less time consuming and confusing. Follow the "Steps in Process"...Folder Tab "Selection Process" as you continue from this point.

Search Committee Reading Resources Price List

<u>It Only Hurts on Monday</u>	McIntosh, Edmondson	\$10.00
<u>Healing the Heart of Your Church</u>	Quick	\$12.00
<u>Confirming the Pastoral Call</u>	Umidi	\$ 8.00

SELECTING THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

by Sam Dunbar

Since choosing a pastor is one of the most important decisions a church will ever make, the selection of the pastoral search committee that provides leadership for calling a pastor is also a crucial matter. It is essential that the search committee be selected in a thoughtful, prayerful process that is clearly communicated to the entire congregation.

Committee Formation

In many instances the church's bylaws will specify how the pastoral search committee is to be chosen. It should be noted here that the search committee might be referred to as a pulpit committee in some bylaws, especially if not recently revised. The church's bylaws should be carefully consulted and followed regarding their description of the process.

Some bylaws will call for the pastoral search committee to be made up of several persons who will serve by virtue of offices they already hold in the church leadership structure. For example, the committee may be designed to be made up of such persons as the chair of the church council, the chair of the board of trustees, the president of the women's fellowship, and so forth. Churches that operate with a board of elders may designate certain elders to serve. Many church bylaws, however, are less specific. They may simply state that the church council, trustees, or elders shall appoint or provide for the election of a search committee. Some church bylaws may provide for a pastor-parish relations committee that is assigned the search task. Whatever the bylaws prescribe should be carefully adhered to in the process.

Generally speaking, however, in assigning the pastoral search to a church leadership group with other responsibilities for the general operation of the church is highly inadvisable. Since church leaders are almost exclusively volunteers, and often people with many responsibilities,

even the most dedicated may be tempted to neglect the pastoral search in the face of many other pressing duties—or vice versa. Even if they make the pastoral search a priority, the search process can end up crowded onto other agendas. The risk is an almost inevitable degeneration of church life while a pastoral search languishes. It is in the best interests of the church's health to have a committee exclusively assigned to the pastoral search, even if some busy leaders also serve on the pastoral search committee. A pastoral search committee with the singular assignment of seeking new permanent, pastoral leadership best serves the church's needs.

If the bylaws do not specify the exact number of persons to serve on the search committee, it is recommended that the number be no fewer than five persons and usually no more than nine. Even in the smallest of churches the most representative group possible should pursue the pastoral search, and it is difficult to provide good representation with fewer than five members. Groups larger than nine tend to become unwieldy, find difficulty in achieving quorums, and often struggle to come to consensus. For the church that is concerned about combining adequate representation with a good functional committee size, an ideal number may be seven.

Some church bylaws will call for the search committee to be appointed by the appropriately designated leadership group within the church—council, trustees, elders, and so forth. Other bylaws specify that the search committee membership be taken to the congregation at large for an election or ratification vote. Whatever is specified in the bylaws, it is always advisable to seek the church's endorsement of the pastoral search committee by vote. Even if the bylaws do not specifically require it, how could an additional gesture of approval be considered anything less than appropriate and desirable? The more that can be done to bolster the church's confidence in an open process is commendable and considerate of the whole body of believers. It will cover the entire search process with an atmosphere of trust and confidence.

Primary Responsibilities

What sort of persons should be appointed to a search committee? While many different desirable qualities could be listed, of greatest importance is a deep and abiding faith in Christ and a demonstration of "thoroughly Christian attitudes and values."¹ If the early church chose persons "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 8:3), to take up daily administrative detail "who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom,"² how could we do any less than choose persons to guide the church in the selection and call of a pastor? The church may be tempted to turn to persons with various kinds of expertise in secular personnel matters or psycho-social understandings, whose Christian commitment may be less than clear. In the final analysis, it is the genuine follower after the life of Christ who is most qualified to help find true spiritual leaders. Persons with knowledge in other areas whose spiritual ardor is less certain may be consulted for a certain type of input, but above all else, search committee members must be deeply committed and genuinely sincere Christians.

Beyond this most basic, spiritual test the members of the search committee should be persons with keen insight, proven commitment to the local church, a prayerful lifestyle, trustworthy conduct, and proven ability to maintain confidences. As Keith Huttenlocker wrote, they "should be persons of influence within the congregation."³

Diversity, Representation, and Membership

It is wise for the church to seek balance in the pastoral search committee by choosing committee members who are appropriately representative of the church body itself. By this we mean that the makeup of the committee should reflect the ages, genders, spiritual giftedness and variant personalities of the congregation. While every particular variation of persons in the church may not be represented, the goal should be to assemble a committee that generally reflects a good cross section of the church body.

Once the search committee has been selected, another act toward strengthening the support of the committee by the entire church would be to conduct a dedication or commissioning of the search committee during the church's primary worship service. Here the search committee can be formally introduced, given a "charge" outlining its duties, and prayed over with appropriate laying on of hands. At this same time, prayer support from the congregation for the committee should be solicited and perhaps a carefully read statement of instruction about how the membership of the church can most appropriately communicate their concerns, interests, and suggestions to the committee could be offered. The committee might also indicate to the church how it plans to provide regular reports of its progress during the search.

Getting Organized

Once the pastoral search committee is formed, its earliest task should be to determine how it will be structured and to clarify its duties. In some instances, church bylaws or the appointive body may have already determined who will serve the committee as chair. In most cases, the committee will elect its own chair.

As with many deliberative bodies, it is recommended that the pastoral search committee elect a chair, vice-chair, and secretary. The chair should be a person with good leadership skills who can diplomatically and skillfully keep the committee sessions on task while guaranteeing that all members have adequate opportunity to give input and "be heard." The chair should also be someone who "has the respect of virtually all members of the congregation, is a good process person, and is able to make an effective public presentation."⁴

The vice-chair would serve in the chair's occasional absence or perhaps take on the role of providing for certain committee functions, such as setting up conference calls when it comes time for interviews or making travel arrangements for out-of-town guests.

The secretary would keep an adequate, well-preserved, and confidential record of the committee proceedings and, perhaps, handle some correspondence for the committee—though this latter duty is sometimes assigned to other personnel.

Once the search committee has selected its officers, its first order of business should be to obtain proper training for the task that lies ahead. All the members should immediately commit themselves to faithful attendance at meetings as well as regular and steadfast prayer over their assignment. Beyond that, the committee should contact their state or district office of the Church of God or the credentials chair for their area to request consultation and training. They can also contact the Congregational Ministries Office of Church of God Ministries in

Anderson, Indiana, for assistance.⁵ They should request that an advising or counseling minister be designated to meet with their committee on a regular basis. If no adequate state or district structure is in place to designate an advising pastor, in consultation with the other duly elected leaders of the congregation, the search committee should seek an advisor from among the most respected and highly regarded Church of God ministers in their area. This person will be able to answer questions that arise, clarify how the overall process works, and offer other sound counsel to guide them throughout the pastoral search.

The Committee and the Interim Pastor

A clarification that will need to be obtained very early on in the process relates to the committee's duties regarding the current pastoral and pulpit vacancy versus the actual search process. When a pastor resigns and vacates the pulpit, in addition to seeking a regular, permanent pastor for the church, there is a need to have the church's pulpit filled each Sunday before a new regular pastor arrives. The search committee needs to know the answer to the question: whose responsibility is it to make certain that the pulpit is filled? In many churches this has been a responsibility assigned to the search committee, though it is highly recommended that this duty be assigned elsewhere.

The pastoral search committee, in order to focus clearly on its greatest assignment—the obtaining of a new regular pastor for the church—should make every effort to assure that interim pastoral care and preaching is assigned to some other leadership structure in the church. If the pastoral search committee is assigned to provide for interim pastoral care and preaching duties, it may create a regular and often hindering distraction to its primary function. This is only one of the reasons that it is almost always in the best interest of the church to secure an interim pastor to serve the church until a regular, permanent pastor is called. As in the matter of obtaining an advisory or counseling minister, the search committee should consult its state or district office or the Congregational Ministries Office in Anderson for direction and advice about obtaining a qualified interim pastor. (See chapter 3, on *The Interim Pastor*.)

Team Building

The final stage of readying the committee for the adventure may be referred to as “team building.” The pastoral search committee will have already initiated this process by electing officers and taking the other first steps of getting organized. Beyond these initial functional activities, the committee needs to spend some time praying together for and with each other as well as sharing their hopes, vision, even prejudices and fears about the pastoral search process.

It is beneficial for the pastoral search committee to spend some time—at least one meeting session—getting better acquainted with one another. Even if they assume that they are already familiar with each other's lives, they need to be updated about those interests and concerns that they will carry with them to the meetings that will occur throughout their time together in the search process. This kind of sharing will help the committee to guard against interfering issues such as conflicts of interest or distractions that could prevent a member from giving her or his best service to the committee. There have been occasions where it becomes necessary for a committee member to resign before the search process is completed, due to ill health or other matters of grave concern. Such a departure is always eased and facilitated when the

committee members have bonded well enough that they can be supportive of, or even gently confrontational in helping to facilitate such a departure. Any search committee member who determines that he or she cannot continue to serve should only resign following consultation with the full committee membership.

Confidentiality

Together, the committee needs to establish a covenant of confidentiality, including the commitment to confront lovingly but definitely those who breach their mutual confidence. The pastoral search committee needs to understand that when they discuss possible career changes and relocation with prospective pastors, they are engaging in discussion about life changes that profoundly impact not only pastors and their families, but also the lives, dreams, and emotional investments of brothers and sisters who make up the churches they currently pastor. A lack of sensitivity about confidential communications related to these issues can be damaging and even devastating to both individuals and congregations.

The pastoral search committee needs to understand the difference between secrecy and confidentiality. Further, the committee needs to communicate that difference many times to the congregation it serves. The maintenance of confidentiality in the pastoral search context has to do with gathering, evaluating, and guarding information until such time is as it becomes appropriate to communicate pertinent aspects of that information to the church's consideration of a pastoral candidate.

Secrecy, on the other hand, suggests gathering information that it never intends to share or portends some sinister use. As part of the process the search committee may learn much information that will never be appropriate to share in a public context, for instance information about prospective candidates that have been considered but will not be presented to the church. If any member of the search committee has a question about anything that is or is not appropriate to communicate, that matter in question is an item that should be discussed and decided upon by the entire search committee. In this regard, and many others, each member of the search committee needs to commit to be bound by the decision of the entire committee.

Consultants and Advisors

Part of team building is deciding exactly what role the advising minister will play in the process. He or she will give you some guidance about this, but the committee should also be prepared to negotiate the advisor's role to some extent. Some committees call for an advisor to be present only occasionally for their meetings—bringing résumés, reporting on reference calls, and consulting about certain obstacles or difficult decisions. Some committees choose to treat the advising minister as a fully involved and participating member of their committee. In that case, the advisor would be notified and expected to attend each meeting, participate fully in discussions, and be completely involved in referencing and investigations—but not voting on the decision to recommend a final candidate for consideration by the congregation.

Keeping the Church in the Loop

During the period of team building the search committee should plan for a regular process of communicating with the church about its work and progress. Notes in each issue of the church

newsletter or bulletin are advisable. In addition to these, the committee may want to designate various members to provide brief, verbal reports to the congregation on a consistent basis. These should not be detailed reports but provide a summation of where the committee is in the process. Reporters might say something like: "We have received and are reviewing résumés and especially solicit your prayers for God's guidance as we begin evaluating just who it is God is calling to serve as our pastor."

Deciding

Whenever possible, the pastoral search committee should be unanimous or virtually unanimous in recommending a candidate to the church for consideration as pastor. This will not always happen, of course, but it has a much better chance of occurring if the search committee has spent quality time together, earnestly sharing, praying, and deliberating over its task. Time spent building itself into a mutually supportive team will benefit God's church for years to come.

-
1. Keith Huttenlocker, *A Handbook for Pulpit Committees* (Anderson, Ind: Warner Press, 1991), 8.
 2. New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publishers, 1978).
 3. Huttenlocker, 8.
 4. Ibid, 9.
 5. Church of God Ministries, P. O. Box 2420, Anderson, Indiana 46018-2420. Telephone: (800) 848-2464. *Yearbook of the Church of God* (Anderson, Ind: Church of God Ministries, 2003), 37.