**Pastor Search Process Example**

1. Check the Church Constitution and By Laws for direction regarding the election of the Pastor Search Team. Which leaders, group, committee are deemed responsible for providing ongoing pulpit supply and an interim pastor?

*2.* Once the Pastor Search Team is in place, the members of the team need to elect a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Prayer Coordinator for the search process. The team will decide on the roles for each of these officers (see document 1).

3. Make a commitment to confidentiality. Due to the sensitive nature of the search process, at the end of each meeting the team will decide what can be shared with the church. The Pastor Search Team will be considering candidates who are still on another church staff. It is not ethical to allow the names of the candidates to be public until the final stage. The team may find out personal data about a candidate that needs to stay private so be extremely careful with all information and keep this information within the team. It is always best to allow one person to speak for the team. The church needs to be informed of progress of the search team’s work, however there are some things that need not be shared until the end of the process.

4. Assign needed tasks to team members based on skills, interests and passions. Some needed tasks include the following: making copies of resumes, setting up a special email account to receive resumes, tabulating the Congregational Survey, making inquiries for advertising the position, sending out letters to the individuals who have sent resumes, returning phone calls, checking references and getting background check information.

5. At the earliest time possible make sure there are no unresolved issues that need to be dealt with before a new pastor comes. There may be policies, procedures or practices that need to be addressed at this point.

6. Survey the congregation. This will involve the membership in the process by obtaining their input regarding their preferences in the next pastor (age, education, family, ministry experience, etc.) and names of potential candidates they wish to share (see document 2). The Search Team may want to complete a search team survey to begin open discussion regarding each team members’ perspective regarding the selection of the next pastor (see document 3).

7. Begin the resume gathering process.

1. Note the various places to acquire resumes (see document 4).
2. Designate a place for resumes be sent. Options include: To the church address; To a special P.O. Box; To an address of one of the search team members; To a special email address.
3. Determine an ending date for receiving resumes. A time frame needs to be set for accepting resumes, in most cases a six to eight week window.
4. Determine if and where the team will advertise or post their position. Western Recorder? With Southern Seminary placement?

8. Develop a Job Description (see document 5) and Benefit Package Range that will be embraced by the church.

9. Develop a Church and Community Profile to be used as a tool for top candidates. This tool will be the first introduction to your church and community

*10.* After the final date of collection for resumes, begin opening the resumes (it is recommended not to review resumes as they come in). Only after the ending date is past does a team begin the narrowing process. This allows each resume to have the same opportunity to be viewed. Send candidates an initial letter upon receiving their resume *(see document 9).*

*11.* Provide a copy of each resume for every person on the search team.

12. Pray over the resumes asking each member to choose their top 10 (not in any order). This will allow for a more manageable number of prospective candidates

13. Mail the team’s top ten candidates a questionnaire with a date to get them back to the team. This step provides two things: first it allows you get to know the candidate better; secondly it shows the person’s punctuality in meeting a deadline (your team may want to date the questionnaire upon its return from a potential candidate (see document 12).

14. In the next meeting bring in your top 5 out of the 10. In this meeting the team will put them in order from 1 to 5. As a team you must come to agreement on the order.

15. Select your top 3 resumes in order

* 1. Pray fervently
  2. Check References from Resumes. Also check second tier references (those not on the resume but those close enough to give good objective information about the potential candidate). This is the one thing that search teams do not devote the needed time and work to and later they regret not doing this(see document 15).
  3. Mail a release form that will allow your team to do a Criminal and Financial Background check.
  4. Conduct background checks
  5. Interview the candidates
  6. Hear them preach.

16. Focus on one top candidate at a time. If your number one candidate is no longer available or he has closed the door on discussion, move to your number two candidate.

17. Set a time for the candidate to come in view of a call. Make this a time for the congregation to meet the prospective pastor and his family. Set up meetings with various groups, one for the deacons, one for other leadership, and an open one for membership. Schedule for the candidate to preach a trial sermon. At this point develop some type of informational packet for the congregation that tells about the potential pastor candidate. It may still be wise to withhold the name of your candidate publically until just a few days before the visit, especially if the candidate is currently in close proximity of your church.

18. Vote on the Pastoral Candidate as stated in Constitution and By-laws. Will the members vote by ballot? Voice vote? Or show of hands? Will there be absentee balloting?

19. On the new pastor’s first Sunday conduct a special service. Ask your Pastor Search Team to be involved in the service. You may want to invite your Director of Missions to be part of the service to lead in a charge to the church or responsive reading of commitment.

20. Over the next year The Pastor Search Team needs to make sure the pastor and his family feel connected to the church family. The team should be an advocate for the new pastor to help him establish strong relationships with the congregation. It is also a good practice to help the church celebrate the Pastor’s anniversaries, birthday, and significant issues in the life of his family.

OPTION 2

Once the short list has been developed, each person on the short list will be contacted by phone. The phone conversation should include:

1. Introduction to the church
2. Invitation to the individual to become a candidate in the search process
3. Response to the individual’s initial questions
4. Permission to check references[[1]](#footnote-1)
5. Permission to secure a company to conduct a full background check[[2]](#footnote-2)
   1. Credit report
   2. Criminal report

1. Request a website link or CD of sermons for review
2. Notification of follow-up letter,[[3]](#footnote-3) including forms[[4]](#footnote-4) for signature granting permission to proceed with the comprehensive background investigation.

If the individual agrees to become a candidate, he will then receive the follow-up letter (see # 7 above).

Sufficient time should be allowed for the individuals on the short list to be contacted, for the follow-up letters to be sent, the CD or weblink information received and permission forms returned.

## Step One – Profiles.

Formulate the three profiles recommended in the previous section of this handbook. Once the profiles are completed, you are ready to begin receiving resumes. You may have already received some resumes without advertising the position. These resumes must be stored safely where they can be evaluated at the appropriate time. Resist the urge to begin evaluating resumes or looking up candidates before the committee is of one mind concerning the three profiles.

## Step Two – Receiving Resumes.

Create an email account or online cloud location specifically for the reception of resumes. Every resume should be emailed to this address or dropped into this online storage space. Here, you will have all resumes in one place, available to every committee member as needed.

Decide how long resumes will be received. Usually, thirty to forty-five days is plenty of time. If the committee does not nail down a cut-off date to receiving resumes, they will constantly fight the idea that a “better” resume may come in soon. Pray for the Lord to help you define the process. Define that process. Pray for the Lord to work through that process. Work the process in faith that He will. Announce to the congregation you are receiving resumes and clearly communicate the cutoff date. Any resumes received after the cutoff date will be stored in a separate folder.



*“Pray for the Lord to help you define the process. Define that process.*

*Pray for the Lord to work through that process. Work the process in faith that He will.”*

Recommendations and referrals from trusted sources are preferable to resumes received from unknown sources. However, a committee should never receive a recommendation without also receiving, at some point, a resume of the man being recommended. If a recommendation is to be considered, a committee member must contact the candidate and request a resume. The resume expresses interest in the position. Without it, the committee cannot be sure of a candidate’s interest or willingness to be considered.

For specific recommendations, ask your State Convention office, associational office, seminaries, colleges, church members or other pastors whom you respect. Be sure to clearly communicate the cutoff date for reception of resumes. Some of these entities will have online platforms for posting the job. Others will directly send you resumes based on the profiles you have developed. Some may request a physical flyer or written announcement to be displayed in a common place on their campus. Resumes may also be obtained through job boards and position postings at SBC entities. The Southern Baptists of Texas Convention hosts a very popular jobposting site: NextStep Connections Church Job Board (http://nextstep.sbtexas.com). If you require assistance with posting a position on our job board, please contact the Pastor|Church Relations department. They will be glad to serve you.

After the cutoff date, copies of all resumes should be made for each committee member, whether digitally or in print, as is preferred by committee members. Keep in mind that resumes received after the cut-off date can be considered, but only if petitioned and agreed upon by all committee members. The point is not to work for the system, but to make the system work for you. Give grace in every moment, to every committee member, and take every action together or not at all.



*“Give grace in every moment, to every committee member, and take every action together or not at all.”*

Letters to Prospective Pastors. Every candidate who submits a resume should receive Letter One (See APPENDIX VIII, “Letter One”) or one like it acknowledging the receipt of the resume and announcing the anticipated time frame for further communication. Email communication is sufficient for this notification.

## Step Three – Narrowing the Candidate Field.

Committee members should keep the three profiles in front of them, to be referenced throughout the narrowing process. Narrowing the field of candidates to be considered can be a daunting task, but following the suggested procedure can help alleviate anxiety and eliminate human error.

From the hundreds to the tens.

If more than thirty resumes were submitted, utilize the Resume Screening Tool provided in APPENDIX IX. Divide the resumes up evenly among committee members. Every candidate’s resume will be evaluated using this tool. The Resume Screening Tool may seem cold and impersonal at first, but it is designed to keep committee members from disregarding candidates on the basis of one or two particular points of interest. For example: if a particular candidate is strong in education and experience, but a little outside of your expected age range, this will keep him from being immediately disqualified simply because of his age. Especially when hundreds of resumes are received, there must be a process to narrow from hundreds to tens. This tool is designed for that purpose. Determine the “point” system on this tool according to your own pastor profile findings.

After two weeks of prayer and evaluation, every committee member should bring their top six or seven resumes to the next meeting. Consider allowing every committee member to have one or two “saves” (if a resume does not score well, but the committee member feels the Lord impressing on him or her that he should be considered, allow it). At this point, the committee should have narrowed the field from hundreds of candidates to about thirty or thirty-five. From now on, every committee member is looking at every resume.

*At each stage of narrowing, candidates no longer being considered should receive Letter Two (See APPENDIX X, “Letter Two”) or one like it, informing the candidate that he is no longer being considered. Email communication is sufficient for this notification.*

From the tens to the few.

For the next two weeks, committee members prayerfully work through each of the remaining resumes (thirty to thirty-five of them, at this point). They will come back to the next committee meeting with their top five candidates. This is where the prayerful unity of the committee can begin to take clear shape. As it does, be sure to pause and give God thanksgiving and praise for leading your team together in unity.



*“As the prayerful unity of the committee begins to take clear shape, pause to give God thanksgiving and praise.”*

The chairman of the committee should ask around the room for the names of each committee member’s top five candidates. He should write the names of the candidates on a whiteboard as they are called out, adding tally marks beside each repeated name. After all committee members’ top names have been called out, one to three candidates should have risen to the top of the count.

Spend the rest of this meeting talking about the top three to five candidates, and any other candidates committee members may want to reconsider. Dismiss the meeting with the expectation that after a week of prayer, the committee will reconvene to solidify the top three candidates.

Keep in mind that just because a candidate rises to the top quickly does not necessarily mean he is God’s man for your church. God can use even our misdirection and our misunderstanding to work His ultimate plan through the committee. Perhaps the Lord is working within you through the journey, as much as He will work in your new pastor through his eventual leadership.

Be flexible. Give grace. Move forward together at every step of the process, or not at all. If your top candidate is not the top candidate chosen, make your voice known on the committee and ask for reconsideration. Then, submit to the unity of the team. This is not about finding your candidate. This is about finding God’s man. You should now have agreed upon a list of your top three to five candidates for consideration. You are ready to make first contact.



*“This is not about finding your candidate. This is about finding God’s man.”*

## Step Four - First Contact.

Begin by calling the candidates to make sure they are willing to be considered for the position. You may find that one or more have already accepted a position elsewhere. If so, agree as a committee to send the questionnaire to the top three/five that have agreed to be considered. Be sure to send Letter Two to all candidates who will no longer be considered at this point.

Email the top three/five candidates a questionnaire, along with a cover letter by the chairman requesting mutual confidentiality and explaining that the candidate is under consideration. As a committee, agree on five to ten questions to ask in the questionnaire. We recommend asking no more than ten questions. For suggested questions, see APPENDIX XI. Give the candidates a cut-off date to return the questionnaire.

In this same communication, ask (1) permission to contact references, (2) permission to run background checks and (3) for video or audio links to a few sermons. Determine which background check organization the church will use, and include the required permission form for the candidate to complete. (For a sample Background Check Authorization Form, see APPENDIX XII.) The SBTC can provide information on background check services. Assure the candidate that background checks will only be run for final candidates. When the cutoff date for reception of the forms and questionnaires has passed, drop the names of those that did not return the questionnaire or the authorization form for background checks.

## Step Five – Getting Serious.

Run Background Checks. Do not assume anything. Run every background check possible including city, state, and national criminal and sex offender records. The SBTC frequently uses Ministry Safe (www.ministrysafe.com), but there are many quality websites available for this purpose. Also, run a credit report. Discuss any findings with the committee.



*“Do not assume anything. Run every background check possible.”*

Check References. Only check references for up to three candidates. Each candidate should have provided at least three professional references and one personal reference (if they have not yet done so, ask for references). Determine three specific questions to ask, and divide the call assignments by committee member. Consider asking questions such as these: (1) How do you know the candidate, and for how long have you known him? (2) What can you tell me about his character and his leadership style? (3) Do you have any concerns about this candidate’s ability or willingness to serve our church as the senior pastor? (4) Is there any matter you feel we should consider if we are to pursue him further?

At the end of the reference call, ask for a secondary reference. This may provide the listed reference the opportunity to direct you to someone who can say something he or she cannot say. Be sure to get a phone number.

Do not to contact the candidate’s current church, or anyone at the church, without written permission. Careful stewardship of every candidate’s confidentiality is the responsibility of every committee member. Contacting someone’s church before he is ready can disrupt his ability to lead them well, and can end very negatively for both the candidate and for your committee.

Evaluate the Questionnaires and References. Every committee member should carefully read through each questionnaire answer from every candidate. Make notes of concerning answers or positive impressions. Discuss these insights, along with the references reports at your next meeting, or next two meetings, as needed.

Listen to sermons. Remember, sermon delivery is not the only point of evaluation. The best preacher you consider may not be the best candidate for your church. Evaluate sermons for doctrinal fidelity, gospel clarity and relational ability. For assistance, utilize the Sermon Evaluation Form in APPENDIX XIII.



*“Remember, sermon delivery is not the only point of evaluation.*

*The best preacher you consider may not be the best candidate for your church.”* Decide on one candidate to pursue. As all of this is being discussed in your committee meetings, one or two candidates will rise to the top. Pray, together, that God will bring clarity and conviction to the team as a whole. Double down on your prayers for unity in these final decisions. When the committee has decided on one candidate on whom to focus, you are ready to set up an interview and to begin to pursue him uniquely.

Keep in mind that committing to pursue one candidate uniquely does not necessarily mean that he is God’s man for your church. This is a commitment to dig in—to dive deeply—into one man at a time. Such a commitment must be bathed in prayer. It must be pursued with the greatest diligence and care.

Resist the urge to interview more than one candidate at a time. The only reason for doing this would be to compare one candidate against another. But remember, this is not about trying to find the best of your many options; this is about seeking God’s man in God’s time, with no exceptions. Instead, compare one candidate at a time against the biblical and pastoral profiles you have developed. Do the hard work of prayer and discussion such that your committee will agree on one candidate to pursue at a time.

Send an email to the few who will no longer be considered. This letter will be different from the previous ones, because it will leave the door open for future communication if needed. (See APPENDIX XIV, “Letter Three.”)

## Step Six – Pursuing One Candidate Uniquely.

The committee should only deal seriously with one candidate at a time. This reinforces to the church the need to be dependent on the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It helps the committee in comparing a candidate against the biblical and pastoral profiles instead of comparing candidates to one another. The point is not to determine which of the top candidates is the best choice. Rather, the point is to determine if the top candidate is God’s man. If he is not, there must be great humility in recognizing and admitting this, then moving on to another candidate.



*“The committee should only deal seriously with one candidate at a time.”*

If at any point in the final stages of this process, the committee comes to the understanding that the top candidate is not God’s man for the church, they must communicate this to the candidate, then ask the second candidate if he is willing to be reengaged. Such a communication warrants a personal phone call from the chairman, not an email or written letter. In this conversation, the chairman should notify the second candidate (or third, as may be the case) that the committee was wrong in its initial consideration of another candidate: “The committee has been searching for God’s man in God’s time, and we have come to the understanding that the previous man we engaged uniquely was not this man. If you are willing, we would like to engage you uniquely to see if you may be God’s man for our church.”

Once the committee has decided on one candidate to pursue, call and notify the candidate. Use this script (or something like it) to gauge his level of commitment to you: “At this point we have decided to pursue only you as a candidate for pastor. We will not be pursuing anyone else at this time. That is our level of commitment to you. What is your level of commitment to us?” He may reply that he is in serious discussions with another church. If the candidate would like time to pray about this, allow him a week.

If he has not yet received it, send the church’s information to the one candidate. Include all three profiles and any other information the candidate requests. Items to include will likely be the church budget, attendance statistics, bylaws and constitution, personnel manual, etc. Remember that at this point, the candidate is just as interested in evaluating the church, as you are interested in evaluating him.



*“Remember that at this point, the candidate is just as interested in evaluating the church, as you are interested in evaluating him.”*

While dealing uniquely with one candidate, expect that he may have certain requests you have not yet considered. After all, you are searching for a leader. Leaders lead. Any such request should be discussed with the whole committee before fulfilled. If the committee has any concerns about a request from a candidate, feel free to call the SBTC Pastor|Church Relations team for help.

Visiting the Candidate’s Church. Most of the time it is good for committee members to personally visit the candidate’s church, when possible. The point is not to evaluate sermon delivery—you have already done that through video and/or audio recordings. Rather, you want to see how the pastor interacts with his people and how his people interact with him. You want to get a feel for the environment and culture of the church, that the pastor has developed and facilitated during his tenure there.

If the candidate will not agree to allow members of the committee to visit his church, this is not a deal breaker. But it is helpful if an arrangement can be made. Should the site visit be a possibility, here are a few points to carefully consider:

* Do not show up at a candidate’s church unannounced. Contact him to be sure he will be in the pulpit, and that the day you plan to visit will be a good day.
* Ask the pastor if he has any specific instructions for you. Abide by them as much as possible, out of respect for him and his ministry.
* Do not send the whole team. When seven visitors show up together unannounced, the church body knows something is up and it can potentially disrupt the pastor’s ministry at his church. Instead, consider sending 2-3 members of the search committee who will take notes and report back to the committee.
* Do not take the pastor out to lunch, and try not to engage him directly if you can help it. It is best to slip in and slip out, unless it is obviously customary for guests to greet the pastor in some way before or after the service. If so, do so generically and discretely. The pastor knows who you are and why you are there. No one else has to know, unless he wants them to know.

## Step Seven – Interviewing the Candidate.

Face-to-Face interviews are necessary to get a feel for the candidate’s personality and personal life. We recommend two interviews.

The First Interview. First, interview the candidate by himself, at a neutral location such as a restaurant or church conference room in a town away from both your church and his. This will allow the whole committee to ask important questions without worrying about who sees them together or listens to the candidate’s answers. If an inperson meeting cannot be worked out, consider using an online videoconference platform.



*“If an in-person meeting cannot be worked out, consider using an online videoconference platform.”*

In this first interview, ask questions about the candidate’s leadership style, denominational involvement, and personal spiritual disciplines. See APPENDIX XVIII for a list of possible questions for the first and second interviews. Since he has received and reviewed the three profiles, ask if he has any questions for the committee about the church or the community. Allow all committee members to ask questions, by both assigning questions ahead of time and opening the floor in the moment. This interview should go no longer than two hours.

After the interview, allow the committee one week to think and pray through the interview. At the next committee meeting, discuss the interview and decide whether or not to pursue the candidate for a second interview, along with his wife (if married).

The Second Interview. This interview should be conducted on your church’s campus, at a time and location where he has the least potential to interact with other church members. Perhaps a Friday evening or Saturday afternoon would be best. Work with the candidate to schedule a meeting date and time that will work for him and the committee members.

If at all possible, the candidate should bring his wife along to this interview (if he is married). Assure him that his wife will not be interrogated, and she is not being officially interviewed. Rather, the committee just wants to get to know her and ask if she has any questions for them.

Consider offering to drive the couple around the community for an hour or two before the meeting. Allow them to get a feel for the community. Show them major areas of commerce and recreation. If they have children in the home, show them neighborhoods and schools that may be of interest. You want the couple to sense whether God might call them to minister to the whole community. You want them to be able to see themselves there, if this is indeed God’s will. Show them the church property, and answer any questions they may have about it.

At the designated time, gather in the meeting room on the church campus for the second interview. This interview will focus on two things: (1) the candidate’s marriage and family, and (2) his thoughts about the community and church. Ask the wife to share her salvation testimony. Allow the women on the committee to ask her a couple of simple questions, such as: “Tell us a little about yourself – your salvation testimony, what you enjoy doing, and about your family,” or “What is the most important thing to you about the church your husband pastors?” Ask if she has any questions for the committee. Assure her that the committee understands that the church would be hiring the husband, and that you would only hope to be a support system for her as she undergirds his ministry there.

Ask the candidate about family worship, about his prayer life with his wife, and about how they view the calling to ministry as a family. After driving around the community and touring the church facilities, ask if he has any questions or any thoughts.

If there are any lingering concerns or questions on any committee member’s mind, now is the time to ask. After this interview, the committee will hope to discern whether or not this candidate will be presented to the church for a vote.

## Step Eight – Confirming God’s Leadership

The committee should be enthusiastically unanimous about the one candidate they wish to consider. You have been through quite a journey to this point! Every member of the committee must be able to stand behind the decision with confidence. A candidate must be presented to the church either unanimously, or not at all.



*“The committee should be enthusiastically unanimous about the one candidate they wish to consider…* *A candidate must be presented to the church either unanimously, or not at all.”*

If there are one or more committee members who refuse to support the decision of the group to such a degree that the committee cannot move forward together, the disagreeing committee member(s) should voluntarily resign the position to the elected alternate(s). If division continues and no agreement can be made moving forward with a single candidate, the committee may need to dissolve and allow the church to reelect a different committee to begin the process all over again. The chairman can make this recommendation to the church body in a business meeting. In such a drastic situation, no member of the current committee should be allowed to serve on the new committee.



*“If there are one or more committee members who refuse to support the decision of the group to such a degree that the committee cannot move*

*forward together, the disagreeing committee member(s) should voluntarily resign the position to the elected alternate(s).”*

When the committee is unanimous in its decision, now is the time to inform the candidate of the salary package and compensation, including any relocating expenses or other conveniences offered. This communication must also include details concerning vacation time and ministry leave, and appropriate information about personnel policies and other expectations. The candidate needs to receive all of this, clearly communicated, in written form.

If the candidate has any concerns or would like to discuss amendments to the salary, compensation, or personnel agreements, hear him out and take those requests to the appropriate committee(s). It is possible that he would prefer one less week of vacation and an allowance to spend one day per week going to seminary. Or, he may desire more compensation in health insurance and less in housing allowance. Etc. Work with him on this.

Set a time for the candidate to come in view of a call. This needs to be a weekend that works with his calendar needs and yours. Allow him to have input into this process. The in view of a call weekend may include several days of activities, depending on the needs and size of the church.

Designate someone on the committee to be responsible for hospitality (meals, housing, childcare, etc.). Be gracious hosts, putting a basket of treats in their hotel room, and leaving thoughtful cards for each member of the family. The church should pay/reimburse all related expenses for meals, travel and accommodations. All in view of a call weekend activities, and candidate’s information, should be communicated to the church body two weeks in advance of the vote. In most cases, the candidate will desire the church to wait until the Sunday morning or Wednesday night before to release his biographical information. But the vote and activity schedule for the weekend should be announced two weeks in advance.

On Friday night, the candidate and his family may want to meet with the committee one last time over dinner. On Saturday sometime, he may desire to meet with the existing church staff and/or deacons. Saturday evening, consider having a coffee and ice cream social, where the candidate will share some personal words about himself and his family. Allow plenty of time for socialization and personal interactions. At the church wide social event, the committee chairman should do the introductions and set the pace for the evening, but committee members should not dominate the candidate’s conversation.

Each committee member should either write or video their support of the candidate. This written or video affirmation should be made available or played during the Sunday morning worship time. Where appropriate, coordinate with the church’s media or communications team to accomplish this with excellence. It will be important that the church sees the unanimity with which the candidate is being recommended to them.



*“*It will be important that the church sees the unanimity with which the candidate is being recommended to them*.”*

Create a biographical sketch of the candidate and his family and make it available for the church. Some items to include are a family picture, resume, information about his family, testimony, doctrinal statement, covenant agreement between prospective pastor and the church, etc. In some church contexts, a short video introduction of the candidate can take the place of these written pieces of information.

On Sunday morning, in view of a call, the pastor and his wife may desire to visit several small groups as possibility allows. Be sure to gather as a committee to pray with the candidate and the worship leader before the service starts. Pray for a fresh anointing from the Holy Spirit, and for clarity in the proclamation of the Word. Pray also for an overwhelming display of unity in the church body as they vote.

The candidate must preach in all morning worship services. At the beginning of the worship service(s), the chairman of the search committee should introduce the candidate and his family. He should clarify that at the end of the service(s) a secret ballot vote will be taken on whether or not to call him as the church’s senior pastor. Follow the bylaws carefully as they pertain to when the vote is taken, how it is counted, and when it is announced. Usually, votes are counted and the announcement is made either before church members leave the worship service, or early that afternoon via social media or a church-wide email.

Be sure to ask the candidate privately if he will accept the call, before revealing the results to the church. Even if the church votes affirmatively, the candidate must choose to accept.

What if the Candidate Is Not Confirmed? If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again. An announcement to the church must be made as soon as possible, should the pastor either decline or not receive enough votes to confirm the call. The committee may return to any point in the process. One possibility is to go back to the second candidate and consider him. However, you may want to start the process over at some other point, such as reevaluating the top five candidates, or even the first thirty. Perhaps it would be appropriate at this point to discuss the resumes received after the initial cut-off date.

Should the recommendation be overwhelmingly rejected by the church, the committee may need to willingly dissolve and allow the church to elect another search committee. This recommendation can be made by the committee chairman at a church business meeting.



*“*Should the recommendation be overwhelmingly rejected by the church, the committee may need to willingly dissolve and allow the church to elect another search committee*.”*

## Step Nine – Assimilating the Pastor and His Family

When the pastor accepts the call of the church, there is much cause for rejoicing! Although once the call is extended and received, the Pastor Search Committee is officially disbanded, there is still some work to be done toward healthy assimilation for the pastor and his family.

Send a letter or email to the church membership from the new pastor, and/or have the new pastor record a short video, addressed to the church family, that you can share on the church’s website and social media accounts. Notify the church when the new pastor will be moving to the area. Arrange for help with unloading a moving truck at the house or office if needed. Consider holding a special reception for the pastor and his family the first or second week he is on the field.

Work with appropriate committees to ensure that the pastor’s office is cleaned and furnished appropriately. If the church has a parsonage for the incoming pastor, do the same for it. If the pastor and his family will be buying or renting a home, offer to get them connected with real estate agents if they so desire, or to answer any questions they may have about neighborhoods or area schools.

Ensure that salary payments and benefits are being set up with the church. Offer to be of any assistance in this process if needed. Communicate with the appropriate committees or teams regarding arrangements for moving expense payouts. Once the pastor is called, the people he knows best in the church and community are those members of the Pastor Search Committee. For the next year, the committee should act as a liaison between the pastor and church by helping him get acquainted in the community as well as the local association and state convention. The committee should continue with intentional encouragement and relational bridge building over this period of time.

Step One – Profiles.

* Community Profile.
* Church Profile.
* Pastor Profile.

Step Two – Receiving Resumes.

* Create email/cloud account.
* Set open and close dates for resume reception.
* Seek referrals.
* Post the position to job boards.

Step Three – Narrowing the Candidate Field.

* From the hundreds to the tens.
* From the tens to the few.

Step Four – First Contact.

* Call top 3-5 candidates to verify interest.
* Send questionnaire.
* Ask permission to run background checks.
* Ask permission to contact references.
* Ask for links to sermon video or audio.

Step Five – Getting Serious.

* Run all possible background checks.
* Check all references & secondary references.
* Evaluate responses to questionnaire.
* Watch/listen to sermons.

Step Six – Pursuing One Candidate Uniquely.

* Decide, unanimously, on one candidate to pursue.
* Send relevant church info to the candidate.
* Arrange a Sunday morning site visit.

Step Seven – Interviewing the Candidate.

* First interview at neutral location.
* Second interview on church property, with spouse.

Step Eight – Confirming God’s Leadership.

* Set date for in view of a call weekend.
* Plan activities for the weekend.
* Announce date and schedule of activities.
* Church votes to approve the candidate.

Step Nine – Assimilation of the Pastor and His Family.

* Notify the congregation.
* Help with the move.
* Build relationship bridges.

1. See Appendix 7. An alternative approach might be to wait about checking references until after you have reviewed all the candidate’s sermons. You could then rank the resumes in order of your number 1 candidate, number 2, etc., and then check references beginning with your number 1 candidate. The same could apply also to the full background check. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Tennessee Baptist Mission Board has negotiated with the **Clear Star Background Checks**, to provide cooperating Baptist churches and associations access at a group rate. Go to Sales@ClearStar.net or call 1-888-982-4648. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Appendix 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Check References Form and Release Form for Background Check 21 See Appendix 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)