

**A Handbook
for
Pastor Selection
Committees**



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To the late
Rev. Earl L. Pounds, D. D.,
My pastor, mentor and friend.

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Section 1

The Church of Jesus Christ is a living organism. It *has* organization, but it *is* an organism. Because Christ died and arose again, the Church -- His Body and His Bride-- possess His life.

There is no more critical time in the life of any church than when she is without pastoral leadership. In small congregations where the pastor edits and prints the Sunday bulletins, his absence is immediately felt throughout the congregation. In larger churches where such actions are expedited by volunteers or by staff, the pastor's absence is less immediately noticeable to the average member of the congregation. The pastors of both size congregations, of course, are missed on Sundays.

Ironically, when the pastor is most needed to help the church toward formulation of a pastor search committee, he is absent. When he was there, there was no need for the committee. Now that he is gone, what is the church to do?

Paul the apostle saw the importance of pastoral leadership and urged both Timothy and Titus to establish pastors in local churches touched by their ministries. It is no less important today that local congregations be humanly guided by one

whom God has led to be their first officer. The purpose of this Handbook is to aid and assist both congregations and Pastor Selection Committees in the absence of a pastor. Hopefully, it will assist the committee in the “how to” of pursuance and selection of a spiritual leader. Nowhere is this booklet intended to establish *the* pattern for any committee. Rather, it is submitted as a sane and logical guide that we feel will be profitable to all concerned.

Selection of the Committee

Immediately upon learning of the vacancy of the pulpit, the church should move to select a committee for securing another pastor. Timing should be flexible, depending upon the nature occasioning the vacancy. If the pastor has resigned in order to accept another pastorate or to enter another phase of Christian ministry, the movement to select a committee should be forthright. If, however, the vacancy has occurred due to death, moving too quickly in this regard could be considered to be in bad taste.

The church, of course, should formally select her Pastor Selection Committee. The selection should be accomplished *very prayerfully*. If the Lord be the Head of the Church --*and He is*-- it is unthinkable that any congregation purporting to be His would embark upon the selection of a pastor without spending considerable time consulting with

Him and seeking His will. This kind of prayerfulness is accomplished only in connection with serious Bible study. The Bible is the revelation of God to man, and through it the Lord manifests Himself and His will. Prayer without a serious study of God's Word can degenerate into human subjectivism, causing the well-meaning believer to mistake his "feelings" to be the will of God. The study of the Word prevents this, holding the believer "on track." Prayer and Bible study should be both public and private. The congregation should come together for special prayer and Bible study. Members should at this time be particularly encouraged to pray privately and as families. The focus of the prayer should be specifically toward the selection of the proper Pastor Selection Committee --*the one the Lord wants!*

Selection of the committee should also be approached *thoughtfully*. The Lord will never lead His people to do a wrong thing. Observably, however, He does allow it. There is no substitute at this juncture for adequate leadership of the congregation. At the same time, such leadership is theoretically less needful if the congregation possesses the mind-set to do *His* will and not her own.

Pastor Selection Committee members should be mature Christians, sound in the faith, and able to serve. The more popular personalities within the local church are not always the more mature.

Maturity demonstrates itself through forthright speech when necessary, through silence when silence is wisdom, through the exhibition of sensitivity to attitudes, and through skill in rightly “reading between the lines.” Maturity comes by having traveled some distance in the experiences of life. This does not always mean that older persons are the more mature. But, it does suggest that younger persons who might serve on the committee should have previously demonstrated mature judgment.

It ought not to be left unsaid that Pastor Selection Committee members must be sound in the faith, grounded in doctrine, active in witnessing, prayerful and generally Biblically knowledgeable. Remember, committee members will not only be brought into contact with pastoral candidates who possess such knowledge, but they are representing their congregation to the candidate. His impression of the church will be formed from the lives and words of the committee.

Why on Earth would a church select a committee member who could not reasonably serve? It happens often. It may be that the most mature, most doctrinally sound person in the church is the local physician. At the same time, he may be (I do not say that he *is*) the least likely individual for practical service. *Beeped* out of the committee meetings, pressed into emergency medical service, unable to travel to hear a prospective candidate does

not reasonably enable one to fulfill the responsibility of service.

The elderly, saintly deacon, whose spiritual maturity and stability has led the church through similar dilemmas in the past, *may not* be the best choice this time. His physical condition may not render him able to serve with peak efficiency. The church should be aware of these conditions and not elect anyone with the thought that if they be usable, they themselves can decline to serve for “personal reasons.” Extreme conscientiousness on one’s part may press him to serve against his better judgment. Such debilitation, however dedicated, does not best serve the committee, the church or the individual. Under proper conditions, such men may be consulted for their judgment in matters under committee consideration. It is probable, however, that their best service is in prayer and in the maintenance of stability within the church while the committee searches for the Lord’s man.

Pastor Selection Committee members should be selected *representatively*. They should be able to adequately represent to a prospective pastor the various areas of church life. At the same time, they should be prepared to respond intelligently to the candidate’s questions related to those areas. It ought not be necessary to have a large committee simply to be representative of church life.

Normally, a committee of five should be sufficient. It is best, too, that this committee be specially selected by the church for his primary task, and that such a task not be left to the active deacons who have continuing responsibilities of their own within the church.

Stewardship of the Committee

Paul reminded the Corinthians that it was required of a steward that he be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). No facet of stewardship confronts a Pastor Selection Committee so starkly as that of *prayer*. “Without divine revelation, people become lawless” (Proverbs 29:18, Hebrew trans.). The committee and the congregation need immense guidance from the Lord in a pastorless time. Pastor Selection Committee meetings should be more than opened and closed with prayer. Considerable time--perhaps most of the time--ought to be spent seeking the Lord's direction. How many hours, how many miles, how many interviews would never have been wasted, had the committee spent a fraction of its total time in prayer!

Stewardship in this context also requires that the committee establish some *principles* for operation. These “ground rules” need not be as rigid as the Law of the Medes and the Persians, but they

should be sufficiently inflexible as to serve the committee well.

Perhaps the first necessity at this point in time is to ponder the church's needs. One good method for determining a congregation's needs is to reflect upon where former pastors have sought to lead the church. What a church *wants* is often different from what it *needs*.

Careful perusal of the past can be profitable. It may be that the past several pastors have indicated that their leaving was prompted by the unwillingness of members to really *learn* the Word of God. The committee ought to recall such notations by former pastors and seek to determine whether in fact the pastors might have been right! Or, it may be that pastors have left because of the unwillingness of the people to shoulder their Christian responsibilities. Like a friend of mine said, "Eleven o'clock Sunday morning is when the congregation gathers to see the staff do their thing."

Churches experience change like individuals. It may serve the committee well to issue a questionnaire to the congregation in the effort to determine the group's present thinking. The committee should recognize that rarely is such a questionnaire free from personal prejudices, and they should feel quite at liberty to "think through" the tabulated results. However it is accomplished,

the committee must certainly come to grips with the church's genuine needs.

Next on the committee's agenda should be the formulation of a *pastoral profile*. Based solely upon their assessment of the type of man needed to lead the church, the committee should spell out the details: approximate age, educational background, type of ministry, and such like. Once again, the profile should *guide*, not *control*, the committee. It should serve as an outline to aid the committee in its search. Certainly, doctrinal beliefs must be rigidly inflexible; but the committee should never refuse a man solely because his age is two years above an arbitrary maximum.

Pastoral Selection Committees should establish a *procedural pattern*. Doubtlessly, both committees and candidates are best served when the committee policy is to consider only one man at a time. It was the procedure of another day to line up a group of men in a "horse race" and choose the one who preached the best. This placed the men in a state of competition that often produced jealousies and bad feelings. Neither was the church well served, because splits often occurred due to some wanting this man and some wanting that man. Nor does it seem even tacitly spiritual to *enny-meeny-miney-moe* over potential pastoral leadership.

There are no traditional "rules" governing Pastoral Selection Committees. Each committee

formulates its own pattern. So, a committee's allowance of a "second look" at a man previously passed over is entirely the committee's business. It may be that having interviewed several candidates for the pastoral office, the committee will want to discuss a previous man or even re-visit him. Nothing forbids this; however, the committee should continue to be extremely prayerful in all its deliberations. Foreseeing such circumstances, it might do well for the committee to bind itself by a two-third majority vote.

One suggestion worthy of a positive push is that the Pastor Selection Committee should make *periodic reports to the church*. Churches get restless when they are without pastoral leadership. They also tend to get restless when they are without information. It is true that the average church member (or the average Pastor Selection Committee) has not the foggiest notion of the multiple duties of the Pastor Selection Committee. Thus, after two or three weeks have elapsed, and no pastoral candidate has been brought before the church, the church commences to wonder if the committee it elected is doing anything. *Shades of Moses on Sinai!* In fact, the church begins to recollect that most of the members of the Pastor Selection Committee have been in services regularly. "Why aren't they out finding us a pastor?" If they only knew!

Still, the committee can off-set some of this mass anxiety (to say nothing of avoiding criticism of itself) by making positive, periodic reports to the church. Never should these reports name names. Never should the reporter reveal any of the confidentiality agreements agreed upon in formal committee sessions. Rather, he should instruct and inform the church-at-large that the committee is working, is receiving suggestions from the congregation and other trusted spiritual leaders, is studying the avalanche of recommendations being brought to it, and is continuing to pray for the Lord's guidance in the entire situation.

Often the committee may be reluctant to report to the church, feeling honestly that they have nothing to report. My suggestion is that the committee report anyway. The report will enable the church to feel that it is being kept abreast of committee happenings. Indeed they are. To fail to say anything will lead the church to feel that the committee either is doing nothing or has adopted the attitude that "it's none of the church's business what we're doing." Misunderstandings like this are extremely difficult to overcome, and often result in committee resignations or the church's recall of the whole committee. While justification of resignation and recall is sometimes valid, such actions usually retard the church considerably in its overall quest of securing a pastor. Periodic reports can maintain the church's confidence in the committee's ongoing work.

The supreme virtue for any congregation during a pastorless era is *patience*. Patience with the Pastor Selection Committee primarily, but patience with themselves, and with visiting preachers or the interim pastor. The worst things a congregation can do in such a time is to commence to become impatient, become slovenly, hop around from church-to-church, let up on financial giving, and subscribe to the when-the-cat's-away-the-mice-will-play attitude. Remember this: any man who is sufficiently intelligent and spiritual as to be considered by the Pastor Selection Committee for the responsibility of pastoral leadership of the local church will be intelligently and spiritually sensitive to inquire regarding how the church has been faring in her days without a pastor. Under God, the committee cannot lie! And what might have become a singularly successful situation is instantly reduced to nothing. Keep pace with patience.

Search by the Committee

With prayerfulness undergirding all and with her principles established as to pattern, where does a Pastoral Search Committee look to find a pastor? The learned and spiritual R. A. Torrey once said,

Every conversion in the book of Acts was accomplished by human instrumentation.

Dr. Torrey knew, and we know, that God in His sovereignty does all the saving of lost mankind. But, his point is well-taken: God uses people in His processes.

Not many committees suffer the luxury of having to “hunt for” pastoral candidates. Most of the committees known to me over the years have been flooded with recommendations --most with the supreme knowledge that *their* man is *God’s* man for their particular church. Some such “supreme knowledge” emerges from the petitioning preachers themselves! But, when it becomes necessary for a committee to really *search* (and that is often the better thing the committee can do!), it would do well to look toward someone who has been used of the Lord to accomplish in another church what the committee deems needful to its own congregation. Fixation upon a person currently pastoring a church has been viewed by some as “stealing.” Such an attitude, however, presupposes the pastor’s personal and spiritual inability to assess for himself the committee’s approach.

The Pastoral Selection Committee and both churches involved must have sufficient confidence in any man to determine God’s will for his own life and ministry. Nor will harm come to any, provided the committee approach is prayerful and spiritual and confidential.

Some committees doubtlessly would do well to look to colleges and theological schools for prospective candidates. In many instances Biblical students will have held student pastorates, whereby they have familiarized themselves with the conduct of pastors and churches. Where this is not the case, committee knowledge of a trusted and spiritual faculty member may prove helpful in determining the probable value of any student-candidate for the church's pulpit.

Occasionally, some pastors will have resigned their churches without having received a call to another congregation. It is unfortunate that such "unemployed" men are sometimes viewed as undesirable. The oft repeated adage, "Get the man who's doing the job," should never lead anyone to conclude that because a man is not currently pastoring, he has no value for committee consideration.

It is my observation that godly, spiritually-minded men who have been called of God to His ministry, have often resigned because their work was completed with that congregation. Sometimes men resign because of doctrinal differences; and whether we would agree with their theology or with that of the congregation they have left behind, we must laud the earnest conviction that led them to terminate association where they could not in good conscience continue to serve. Such may not always be acceptable to a Pastoral Selection Committee or

to its church, but such men should by no means be scratched from the list without a hearing --or at least a consideration!

Where does the committee turn when it stands in need of counsel? It ought not to be trite to the reader that our first suggestion is *to the Lord*. The Psalmist wrote, "My help comes from the Lord" (Psalm 121:2). It is still true for us today.

God is our refuge and strength, a
very present help in trouble (Psalm
46:1).

Following Torrey's thought on "human instrumentation," the committee may want to seek the assistance of local pastors, whose assessment of the committee's church needs may be surprisingly accurate! Denominational leaders should not be overlooked with regard to their helpfulness. They often have a wide knowledge of available men, and are only too glad to be of assistance to Pastoral Selection Committees. By virtue of their positions, however, their help must be requested by the committee. Few will ever venture to intrude into committee functions.

Trusted laymen, too, are often helpful. Imagine the traveling salesman, who through his conversation with a Christian customer in a distant town, learns that the customer's pastor has mentioned quite casually to him that he feels his

work in that church may be nearing completion. Voicing his love for his pastor, and his earnest desire that the Lord's will might be done in the pastor's life, he never dreams that the salesman standing before him will become the courier of interesting news leading our Pastoral Selection Committee to approach the customer's pastor.

All approaches for assistance, however, whether to pastors, denominational leaders or trusted laymen, ought to be made on a prayerful and spiritual basis. The spiritual tone established by the committee will be the tone carried forth by the committee's unofficial representative.

What does the committee look for when it evaluates a preacher? First and foremost, the committee should listen carefully to the candidate in order to evaluate his doctrine. Men can be dynamic, personable, warm, humorous and possess all the personal characteristics thought necessary in a preacher. But if his doctrine be shallow or in error, the committee would do well to look elsewhere. Few sermons will encompass all of the doctrines of the Bible, but sufficiency of doctrine should be present in any message to enable the committee to ascertain whether the preacher is of strong doctrinal convictions.

The committee should evaluate the type of preaching the minister utilizes. Basically, sermons

may be categorized in three ways: *topical*, *doctrinal* and *expository*.

In the *topical* sermon, the preacher selects a text that fits his subject and proceeds to address the audience on a specific topic. This type of message has its place, but the pastor must be careful not to inject too many of his own ideas at the expense of what the Bible says on the subject under consideration.

The *doctrinal* type message may appear topical in form, but it focuses upon various texts that support its overall thesis. Less and less of the preacher's own thoughts appear (as compared with the topical); yet what the preacher believes will be borne out in the doctrine under discussion.

The *expository* sermon seeks to extract from the Word of God what God Himself has said within the verses under consideration. Although it need not be, this type of sermon is often a verse-by-verse, word-by-word method. It is my judgment that the extent to which a man employs exposition in his preaching denotes his view of the value of Holy Scripture.

It is difficult to discuss preaching styles and mannerisms, except to say that the committee should evaluate whether the style is forceful and sincere and whether the preacher preaches with liberty and with authority. If there are unacceptable

mannerisms either in his gestures or in his voice, the committee will doubtlessly be aware of them. If there are none, no one should microscopically search to find them.

Appearance should be noted, as a casual or even sloppy appearance may denote an undisciplined person. Men who are careless in their hygiene and dress can hardly be thought to be careful in anything else.

Finally, how does the committee behave when hearing and approaching a preacher who is a prospective pastor? It is candidly suggested that the committee arrange to arrive at the church separately, if at all possible. Furthermore, wisdom would dictate that they "scatter," seating themselves throughout the auditorium. Nothing is so obvious as five, stark, strange faces seated on the same row with their eyes glued to the preacher through the entirety of the service! They might as well enter wearing sandwich boards that read, *We're a Pastor Search Committee from First Pastorless Church!*

There is no suggestion of deception in asking the committee to sit separately. The pastor should know that the committee is there; the congregation should not. If it be the habit of the church to introduce visitors personally in the service, there is no embarrassment when the committee members are seated in separate locations. Nor is there deception involved if, after a

particularly stirring message, a member of the committee can genuinely remark to one of those seated nearby, "My that was a vibrant message! You all are greatly blessed to have that kind of preaching." If the message was *normal*, the committee member will know; if not, he will know that, too. A leading question or two will produce response sufficient to indicate whether the pastor followed his natural pattern or dug back for that "sugar stick."

Physically approaching the preacher is often difficult with his congregation standing around him. It is therefore suggested that one member of the committee indicate *his* desire to speak privately with the pastor. When alone, the chairman (or his designate) can explain who he is and whether the committee wishes to speak in conference with the pastor at that time. All details should be worked out in advance. Details that specifically concern the pastor ought to be included in a letter that precedes the committee's visit.

The pastor should have been previously informed that members of the committee will be in the service to hear him on a designated date. The committee should also indicate that members may want to speak with him afterwards, or they may elect to pray over the situation and ask the pastor to meet with them at a subsequent time. Distance

from the committee's home to the pastor's church and/or the pastor's schedule may dictate this action.

While the chairman is asking the pastor for a private audience, the committee members should not "blow their cover" by huddling together at the back of the church or outside near their single common conveyance. Rather, they should mingle as much as possible with the membership picking up what they can about the members' attitudes toward their pastor and the general state of the church. Difficulty is sure to arise if a committee member finds himself on the defensive, answering questions rather than asking them. For this reason, he should be armed with a sufficiency of gab, enabling him to skillfully avoid being or causing embarrassment.

Scrutiny of the Candidate

Probably at no time are both candidate and committee so tensious and alert as when they are in face-to-face discussion. Attitudes will play a vital role at this point. The committee should be friendly, serious and relaxed. The relaxedness will put the candidate at ease and enable him to express himself more adequately. The seriousness will show him that the committee is earnest about both its mission and its church. Friendliness is simply a Christian grace. Should some member of the committee be possessed of a wry sense of humor, it should not be thought out of place that he inject it appropriately

within the discussions. Such will tend to both relieve the tensions of the group and allow the committee to assess the candidate's appreciation of down-to-earthness.

The committee should offer some clear and honest acknowledgments to their prospective pastor. No doubt, his first and foremost question will revolve around the condition of the church. The committee should, without mentioning personalities or being critical of any former pastor, be openly candid with the candidate. After all, if he be worthy of consideration thus far in the committee's process, the candidate is entitled to know the whole truth. Committees that mislead pastoral candidates do disservice to the Lord and to the churches they represent.

The committee should talk freely, although not at undue length, about the financial package. It should not seek to "bargain" with the candidate, but it should be flexible and generous. Stinginess is never a commendable trait. Neither the committee nor the church should seek to penalize an incoming pastor for what it believes the outgoing pastor misused. One church refused to allow the inclusion of funds for a pastoral book allowance on the basis that the former pastor had "abused the privilege." Churches and Pastor Selection Committees that seek for the "cheapest" man may indeed find what they seek!

One of the most important facets of any pastoral financial package today regards housing. If the church owns a home and provides it for the pastor and his family, would they be willing to rent or sell and allow the pastor to purchase his own home, should that be the pastor's desire? Pastors are people, too; and some of them prefer to build up an equity in their own property in order to insure something toward the retirement years. The church that insists it is best serving its pastor by providing him a house, may not be seeing the full picture in today's economy. One pastor already owned a home elsewhere. He would eventually return there; therefore, he preferred to live in a church-owned house. It goes both ways. The committee simply should be sufficiently flexible to work either way. After all, is it *this man* the committee feels the Lord wants in the church, or is the committee looking for *any man* who will meet the living conditions provided by the church?

Prospective pastors will want to know about the church staff and lay personnel. No rule of thumb can enforce staff attitudes, but it would serve everyone well if the staff were to *tenure* resignations to the incoming pastor. No newly-elected pastor, of course, serves even himself well if he immediately terminates all members of the staff. Yet, the Lord only knows whether the directions of the staff will "fit" with the direction of a new pastor. Teamwork must exist, or the church membership becomes confused and divided. Pastor Selection

Committees should level with pastoral candidates at the discussion stage regarding the value, performance and *permanence* of the church staff. Pastoral candidates would do well simply to listen without comment.

When the Pastor Selection Committee comes to the discussion stage with the candidate, it should be alerted to more than the content response a man gives. Committees can learn much by listening to the type of questions a pastor asks. A retired missionary was once asked if she could tell any difference between the kind of missionaries that came to the field in her day and the kind coming to the field today. Her reply was candidly enlightening.

Yes. Those who came in my day were concerned about how to reach the lost who are here. Many of those today are more concerned about where their children will go to school and whether their houses will be air-conditioned.

Without looking as if the committee were to be a psychoanalytic group, one should say that the committee's assessment of attitudes displayed by the candidate at various points in the discussion should offer some further understanding of his personality and thinking. The committee should be open to impressions, but careful not to manufacture impressions that really are not there.

The committee is best served to request that the pastoral candidate provide them *in writing* his doctrinal statement. Requiring the preacher to write it down requires him to think it through. All too often committees have flagged doctrines in the face of prospective pastors, only to find later on that the man was not as *sound* as he first appeared.

Hand-in-hand with doctrine is Christian ethics. What are the candidate's ethics? Does he engage in such things as would bring shame and embarrassment upon the church? Dangerous as it is to formulate a list of "rights" and "wrongs," the conservative church had better determine whether it is securing a conservative pastor! Once again, the committee should toss the ball to the candidate to reveal his ethical standards. Good conservative men will doubtlessly hold to a close ethic, yet reserve for others their right to determine how the Lord instructs that they should behave.

The committee would do well to inquire whether the pastor's wife and family share his commitments and doctrines. Pulpit pronouncements notwithstanding, the demeanor of the pastor's family will affect the church family; and it is the committee's responsibility to inquire into it.

When after considerable and complete discussion, the committee unanimously approves inviting the candidate to come before the church, it should undertake to arrange his transportation,

housing and meals. It is customary for the committee to show hospitality to the pastoral candidate on the day he comes before the church. This hospitality usually includes dinner, and should include a tour of the church facilities and the pastor's house, when such is provided.

Except where absolutely prohibitive, the pastor's wife should be clearly included in the invitation with her husband. Never take for granted that the pastor's wife will assume that she is included. Remember that she, too, is a personality. She needs to know that she is wanted and recognized as a vital part of the pastoral team. How the committee and the church treat the prospective pastor's wife may have definite influence upon the pastor's final decision.

While touring the pastoral home, committee members should be alerted to the reactions of the pastor and his wife. And for goodness sakes, *have the house presentable!* One genuinely fine man and his wife reported that the house they were shown was still dirty, showing much rubbish left by the former pastoral family! *Grief!*

The competent pastor's wife will never speak disparagingly regarding even the most distasteful aspects of the house, its arrangement or furnishings. One pastor's wife remarked, "Well, those drapes will certainly have to go! They're

terrible!" That pastor was not issued a call. How much better to hear, "Well, it's not as roomy as what we now have, but we could make it work!"

No committee, however, should take advantage of the pastor or his family under such circumstances. No committee should think, *Well, if he's a Godly man, and if the Lord wants him here, he will take what we have to offer. If he doesn't, he is just not God's man for us.* Once again, let us ponder: Is it *God's* man we seek, or just *any* man who will fit in the house? Churches usually get what they deserve.

One final note relative to the committee's discussion of the candidate. While it has been the custom of some areas to publicly question the prospective pastor, it remains best that the committee question him as thoroughly as possible and practicable and report with equal thoroughness to the church. Some pastoral candidates have been known to relish such public inquisitions. Still, the risk is always there that some well-intentioned brother (and some not-so-well intentioned!) will rise with a query that electrifies the entire audience. It may be argued that such is a prime opportunity for the candidate to "show his stuff" through an astute reply. Yet, it must be realized that not all first-rate ministers of the Gospel are adept at shooting from the hip. Nor indeed is this either their calling or their supreme test of worthiness.

No church or Pastor Selection Committee should overlook that the candidate and his wife will doubtlessly have traveled some distance that day or the day before, and will have spent a full and “freedomless” day under the stress of contemplation, and will have ministered twice from the pulpit (the equivalency of 16 hours at manual labor), and will have for some days borne the weight of spiritual assessment regarding the Lord’s will for their lives --all the while standing beneath the load of responsibility in their current ministry. It’s just too much to ask a man to face a public inquisition, too.

Sustenance of the Committee

From the moment of initial contact with a pastoral candidate, the committee should establish some definite lines of commitment. First, the pastor will need to know when the committee intends to appear at his church and listen to him preach. Common courtesy dictates that the committee acknowledge its presence to the pastor and if, after hearing him preach, has any intention of contacting him with positive concern toward their church situation, he should be told that the committee will “be in touch” within something like a week or ten days. Faithfulness to such a commitment is the committee’s Christian responsibility.

If, after having heard the preacher, the committee determines to proceed further with him, another definite commitment should be made. This time the committee should through written correspondence indicate that it does wish to proceed with a conference with the candidate. If, on the other hand, after having heard the preacher, the committee decides not to proceed with his candidacy, it should kindly and commendatorily indicate that the committee has “simply not received the liberty of the Lord” to proceed with discussions at this time. *At this time* is important because it indicates that the door is still potentially open. Yet, it effectively closes the door, taking both the preacher and the committee “off the hook” in the situation.

Under no circumstances should the committee denigrate a pastoral candidate simply because it deems him “not right” for the church. Men can be great men when they are where the Lord wants them. But, the greatest of men becomes virtually valueless when he is out of place in the Lord’s will. Every man should be left feeling that he has supremely honored because this committee even contacted and/or heard him. Some men don’t need to move; they only need to know that God has not forgotten them. Pastor Selection Committees render service to the Lord in ways only revealable in eternity.

Some Conclusive Thoughts

One question often raised within Pastoral Selection Committees is this: How much input ought the outgoing pastor to have in the overall selection of a successor? First and foremost, no committee should lock in on a “we will hear nothing” or “we will do everything” in regard to the former pastor’s wishes. If the pastor be a truly Godly man, leaving under the warmest of circumstances, the committee should recognize that he surely means no ill to the committee or the church. Thus, they should give ear to his suggestions. If his tenure has been of several years, he will doubtlessly be interested in preserving what he feels has been accomplished under his leadership. Thus, his suggestions, even of the names of possible successors, should not be by-passed.

If, on the other hand, the outgoing pastor leaves under regrettable circumstances, he will probably not demonstrate as much interest in the workings of the committee as he will in his own new situation. Should he undertake, however, to guide the committee’s thinking, the committee should listen respectfully, remembering that he had previously demonstrated himself sufficiently worthy as to have received a call from the church some years previous.

In other words, bitterness and forthright rejection of any suggestions from the outgoing pastor will serve the committee no good. If the Lord is to bless the work the Pastor Selection Committee has organized to do, the committee must show its purity before the Lord. Under no circumstances whatsoever should any member of the committee show “fangs” to an outgoing pastor. His suggestions may seem nose-y and meddlesome, but the committee will do well to keep quiet, be gracious, and remember that nothing lasts forever.

One additional factor that arises within a pastorless situation is whether to call an interim or *intentional interim* pastor. The chief purpose of an interim pastor is to guarantee stability to the pulpit week-by-week and to offer basic guidance to the spiritual and administrative affairs of the church until a permanent pastor is called.

The church would do well to have a clear understanding with the interim pastor. His responsibilities should be clearly defined at the outset. He should be made aware of whether he is expected to baptize converts, conduct the Lord’s Supper, moderate the business sessions of the church, conduct weddings and funerals as any permanent pastor would, and whether the Pastor Selection Committee will be soliciting his counsel.

It should be clearly defined whether under any circumstances or under no circumstances the

interim pastor himself might be considered for the permanent position of pastor. Some interim pastors undertake the temporary role only to aspire to the permanent situation. If an interim pastor knows beforehand that his role is only temporary, inside maneuvers will be eliminated.

An interim pastor who doesn't like preaching will doubtlessly be of little pulpit value to the church. On the other hand, one who likes preaching too much might not willingly relinquish the pulpit to a prospective pastor. The Pastor Selection Committee needs to be fair with the interim pastor, giving him adequate knowledge of when (not *whom*) it intends to bring forth as a candidate. He needs to know, however, that the pulpit is not permanently his, and he needs to be congenial in stepping aside for the good of the church and to off-set any possible embarrassment to a pastoral candidate.

Appendix # 1

Christian ethics may be defined as how Christians ought to behave under given circumstances. The following brief list under the heading of Committee Ethics will assist the committee throughout its deliberations and contacts with prospective pastoral candidates.

1. Pastors should be notified that the committee intends to visit with the view to hearing him preach. Under no circumstance can any “sneak attack” be viewed as anything but unethical.
2. Pastor Selection Committees ought never to knowingly be unsettling to any church. Churches who love their pastors want to keep them --sometimes ignoring that the pastor's ministry is completed in that place. Harsh moves by a thoughtless committee may spark difficulty and division within an otherwise peaceful church.
3. Pastor Selection Committees should be absolutely confidential concerning any and all matters,

especially those matters discussed and/or learned regarding prospective pastoral candidates. Many negative things turn out to be untrue, and the committee member who “leaks” the news to anyone may damage a minister’s reputation for life. This is not something upon which the Lord would look with any favor.

4. Candidates should be absolutely confidential concerning things learned about churches during the course of pastoral discussions with committees. Pastor Selection Committees have both the right to request and the right to expect absolute confidentiality by the candidate relative to all their discussions.

Appendix # 2

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

The plenary verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures;

The trinity of the Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, eternally coexistent personalities of the same essence;

The deity and virgin birth of Jesus Christ, His vicarious, substitutionary, atoning death, His literal, physical, bodily resurrection from the dead, His present high priestly ministry and mediatorship, and His personal, visible, premillennial return;

The personality of the Holy Spirit, and His ministry of convicting and regenerating sinners, and indwelling, anointing, and empowering believers;

The fall of man from the state of innocency in which he was created to one of total depravity in which he is devoid of spiritual life, and incapable, apart from divine grace, of pleasing God;

The justification of the sinner by grace through faith plus nothing;

The election of the believer "unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ," and the eternal and indestructible character of his salvation in Christ Jesus;

The universality of the church as the spiritual body of Christ, uniting all believers in one organism, whose destiny it is to be caught up to be with Christ, the glorified head of "the church which is His body";

The independence of the local church as an autonomous company of baptized believers, and as the divinely created agency through which the church universal is to function in keeping the ordinances, enjoying fellowship, and evangelizing the lost;

The reality and personality of Satan, of fallen angels, and of demon spirits;

The bodily resurrection of the saved in immortality, and the conscious, eternal suffering of the lost, who are forever separated from Christ.

Appendix # 3/A

Committee Letters to the Pastoral Candidate

Visitation Letter

Dear Brother _____:

As you may be aware, our church is currently without a pastor. As chairman (or secretary) of the elected Pastor Selection Committee for the church, I have been asked to notify you that the committee, after considerable prayer and deliberation, would welcome the opportunity to be in your services on (date & time)_____.

Our purpose, of course, is toward consideration of you as the pastoral candidate for (name of church)____. If, for nay reason, you are not intending to be preaching in your pulpit on the date of our proposed visit, we would appreciate hearing from you.

God bless you in your present ministry. We will be grateful for your prayers for us as we earnestly seek God's man to lead us.

Sincerely in Christ,

____ (name)____
(title)
(committee address)
(committee phone, if desirable)____

Appendix # 3/B

Committee Letters to the Pastoral Candidate

Discussion Letter

Dear Brother _____ :

On behalf of the Pastor Selection Committee from _____ (name of church)____, I am writing to express our delight to have visited with you last Sunday. Your message from God's Word was a blessing to all of our hearts.

It is the policy of our committee to spend time in prayer and discussion subsequent to the visit and to inform the pastoral candidate whether we feel liberty from the Lord to pursue discussions.

The committee has asked me to inform you that it would like to pursue discussions with you relative to the possibility of your coming to (name of church) as the pastor.

Would (date, time & place) be convenient for you for our meeting? If not, would you kindly nominate a time that appears convenient to your schedule?

Please continue to pray for us. "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."

Sincerely in Christ,

(name)

(title)

_____ (committee address & phone, if desirable)____

Appendix # 3/C

Committee Letters to the Pastoral Candidate

No-Discussion Letter

Dear Brother _____:

On behalf of the Pastor Selection Committee from (name of church), I am writing to express our delight to have visited with you last Sunday. Your message from God's Word was a blessing to all of our hearts.

It is the policy of our committee to spend time in prayer and discussion subsequent to the visit and to inform the pastoral candidate whether we feel liberty from the Lord to pursue discussions.

The committee has aksed me to inform you that it has not received liberty toward pursuing discussions at this time. We do, however, pray the Lord's richest blessings upon you as you continue to hold forth the Word of Life.

Please continue to pray for us. "God does nothing but in answer to prayer."

Sincerely in Christ,

(name)

(title)

_____ (committee address)_____

(committee phone, if desirable)

Appendix # 3/D

Committee Letters to the Pastoral Candidate

Invitation Letter

Dear Brother _____:

It is my delightful pleasure to inform you that the Pastor Selection Committee of (name of church, town / state)_ by unanimous vote extends to you the invitation to come before the church on _(time & date)_ for the purpose of determining the call of the church to you as its pastor.

You would be expected to preach in (one or both services / time). You and your wife and family will, of course, be our guests for the time you are with us. We have arranged hospitality for you at (a *GOOD* hotel/motel), and will underwrite your travel expenses. It would be helpful to us to know your exact time and manner of arrival.

We are greatly excited about your coming! The committee wishes to do its utmost to provide that your stay with us will be both comfortable and enjoyable.

Sincerely in Christ,

(name)_____

(title)

(committee address)

_____ (committee phone)_____

Appendix # 3/E

Committee Letters to the Pastoral Candidate

Inform "Yes" Letter

Dear Brother _____ :

Relative to the church's decision, it is my delight to inform you that by a vote of ____ to ____ you have been called to the pastorate of (name of church).

In the light of the day in which we live, the committee believes that a ____ percent favorable vote is most encouraging.

We fully recognize that you will now need to prayerfully weigh this matter in the light of our previous discussions. Needless to say, the committee and the church heartily anticipate your affirmative reply.

May God abundantly bless you in your earnest deliberations.

Sincerely in Christ,

(name)
_____(title)_____
(committee address)
(committee phone)

Appendix # 3/F

Committee Letters to the Pastoral Candidate

Inform "No" Letter

Dear Brother _____:

Relative to the church's decision regarding the matter before us, it is my duty to inform you that an insubstantial number of favorable votes were cast, resulting in the church's failure to extend you a call.

The committee genuinely regrets this action, as we sincerely believed that you were the Lord's man for our church. The church overall, however, voices the Lord's will in these matters, and we are honor-bound to serve those who elected us to this responsibility.

The committee wishes you to know that the church's failure to extend to you a call in no way reflects adversely upon either your personal or pulpit ministry. The committee prays that the Lord's blessings will continue to be yours in your current ministry. We have all been richer for the contact with you.

Sincerely in Christ,

(name)

_____ (title)_____

(committee address)

Appendix # 4/A

Example of a TOPICAL SERMON

THE CONDITION and CURE of MAN

= Romans 6:23 =

Introduction

I. Man Is Lost.

1. He is Lost from the Fall (Genesis 3).
2. He is Lost in Sin (Romans 3:23).

II. Man Needs Salvation (Luke 13:3).

1. He Needs Salvation from Sin.
2. He Needs Salvation from Self.

III. Jesus Saves Lost Mankind (Luke 19:10).

1. He Is the Only Savior (John 14:6; I Timothy 2:5).
2. He Is the Sufficient Savior (Hebrews).

Conclusion

Appendix # 4/B

Example of a TEXTUAL SERMON

THE KEY to NATIONAL REVIVAL

= II Chronicles 7:14 =

Introduction

I. We Are Related To God (7:14a).

1. We Are Claimed By Him ("My people").
2. We Are Called By His Name.

II. We Are Required By God (7:14b).

1. The Lord Requires Humility.
2. The Lord Requires Prayer.
3. The Lord Requires Consecration.
4. The Lord Requires Repentance.

III. We Are Recipients Of God (7:14c).

1. We Receive His Hearing.
2. We Receive His Forgiveness.
3. We Receive His Healing.

Conclusion

Appendix # 4/C

Example of a EXPOSITORY SERMON

CHRIST'S CERTAIN RELATIONSHIPS

= Colossians 1:15-18 =

Introduction

I. Christ Is Related To The Father (1:15).

1. He Is The Quintessence Of The Father.
2. He Is The Prototype Of All Creation.

II. Christ Is Related To The Universe (1:16).

1. He Is The Creator Of The Universe (John 1:1; Genesis 1:1).
 - (1) Look at the margin of creation.
 - (2) Look at the mode of creation.
2. He Is The Recipient Of His Own Creation.
 - (1) Creation occurred for Christ's sake (Proverbs 16:4).
 - (2) Salvation occurred for Christ's sake (Isaiah 43:21; Ephesians 1:12).

III. Christ Is Related To Eternity (1:17).

1. He Is The First Among All (John 1:1).
2. He Is The Fusion Of All.

IV. Christ Is Related To The Church (1:18).

1. He Is Her Principal.
2. He Himself Is Preeminent.

Conclusion

Note: This is Coprighted material; however, any or all matter contained herewithin may be copied and used by any Pastoral Selection Committee, so long as there is *no reference to the author*. May our LORD lead and guide you in a competent search for His leader for your congregation.