

Potential Questions for Pastoral Candidate Interview

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of questions nor necessarily used in its entirety; simply a guide to assist in your interviews. You may choose to edit out or add questions as your committee sees fit.

Prior Ministry Experience

*Briefly tell us about each of the pastoral positions you have held (congregation size, setting, number of staff, missions, reason for leaving)

*In your most recent/current position:

Describe a typical week.

What takes up most of your time?

How much time do you spend in the office?

Where do you spend your time when you are not in the office?

How do you begin your day?

How does your work unfold over the week?

When do you typically write your sermons?

*What has taken up more of your time than you would have liked?

*What has not received as much time as you would have liked?

*What common bonds have united you with your current/most recent congregation?

*What about your current/most recent congregation has made you a better pastor?

*Describe the attendance and financial trend in your current/most recent congregation and what you believe accounts for those trends.

*Describe an example of a ministry experience that has occurred recently that you truly enjoyed.

*Now describe a challenging experience.

*Describe an incident that has occurred recently that illustrates what you believe ministry is all about.

*Describe a ministry experience with the congregation you now serve/most recently served that captures your greatest strengths.

*Describe a grievance you have had with any of the churches you have served and how it was resolved.

Have you had experience with:

A Church Building Program?

Capital Campaign?

Financial Drives?

Program Growth Operations?

Education and Training

*Tell us about your education.

*What special training or professional certifications have you obtained?

*What types/how much Continuing Education do you complete each year? In what ways do you expect your church to support you in this?

*What special skills do you possess and how do you apply these to your work? How did you obtain these skills?

*Do you have plans regarding further education?

Ministry Goals and Philosophy

*Describe the mission of the congregation you now/last served.

In what ways has your ministry influenced the church's mission?

In what ways has the church's mission influenced your ministry?

*Describe your personal approach to ministry.

How has your vision changed over the past 5/10 years?

Describe ways you have communicated your vision to others.

*Describe your three most important ministry goals

*Describe your leadership style

To what extent would you like to be self-directed in your ministry responsibilities?

Give an example of how you relied on someone to give you direction.

How do you respond to direction?

How do you respond to criticism?

*What attracts you to this church?

*How does this ministry position fit within your career plan? How long would you anticipate staying at this church?

Personal and Spiritual

*Why are you a minister?

*Do you identify yourself with any particular school of theological thought?

*Describe a personal experience that has significantly shaped your own theology.

*What motivates you as a minister?

*What spiritual disciplines/ethical principles guide your life? Your work?

*A study conducted by a leading seminary indicated that above all else, churches desire a pastor who manifests personal integrity. What does that mean to you?

*When you face a personal problem, who do YOU turn to for support and counsel?

*How do you cope with stress?
Do you take regular vacations?

Sermons

*What was the last sermon you preached about?
How did you prepare for that particular sermon?
What resources did you use?
How long did the sermon last?

*How do you select your sermon topics?

*Describe your routine in preparing sermons. How much time each week is dedicated to sermon preparation? How does it compare to the amount of time spent in other pastoral duties?

*Describe a sermon that you have given that you believe met a special need within the life of the church.

*Are there any topics you feel uncomfortable preaching about?

Worship

- *Describe a typical worship service which you plan and lead.
- *How do you plan the worship service? What resources do you use? Do you follow a regular order of worship? Why/Why not?
Do you follow the lectionary or church calendar?
- *Describe what role music has in your worship services.
- *What individuals (if any), besides yourself, would you incorporate in your leading the worship service?
- *What is your role within the worship service of your current congregation?
- *How do you connect worship to the other aspects of church life?
- *How do you address special worship needs of:
 - Shut-ins or ill members?
 - Those who work on Sundays?
 - Different age groups?
- *Some people believe a church can become too big; others feel that a church should become as large as possible. What are your views on this?
- *What theological issues do you believe face the church today? How do you incorporate these issues into worship?
- *What are the most challenging ethical issues facing the church today?
- *What are the most challenging ethical issues facing ministers today? How are YOU responding to these?

Pastoral Counseling and Care

- *Describe what role pastoral counseling you have in your current position.
Describe a typical week of counseling or care.
- *How do you fit pastoral care into your overall priorities? What duties are more important than pastoral care?
- *What type of counseling do you typically perform?
- *What issues in your current/most recent congregation get most of your time?

*In recent years sexual misconduct within the church has become a visible issue. What boundaries have you established in providing pastoral care that are designed to protect you and your congregation from such misconduct?

Do these boundaries affect who you will meet with?

Do your counseling sessions differ if it is with someone of opposite sex?

Do they affect your meeting places? Will you meet with someone in their home, your home, only your office?

Will you meet with someone one-on-one?

Do you meet with children? Individually?

Do you limit the number of sessions someone has with you?

Do you charge for counseling or accept gifts?

What role would you like to church to have in establishing boundaries for you?

*What role do church leaders and church members have in providing care to other congregational members? How do you help facilitate this?

*How do you view your role in visiting church members and visitors?

*Do you have any restrictions on the performance of marriage? Do you require, and if so describe your approach to, pre-marital counseling?

*What boundaries do you hold in place between your professional role and your private/family life?

*Do you have an unlisted phone number? Do you believe a pastor should have one?

Christian Education

*How do you view your role in Christian Education at your present/last church?

*Describe your current teaching responsibilities.

*Describe your past accomplishments that represent an effective approach to:

Adult Education

School Age Education

Pre-School Education

*What Sunday School program curriculum have you used for each age group?

Why did you choose to use this curriculum? What are the current lessons/themes you are teaching?

*What other programs, besides Sunday School, are you currently emphasizing?

Missions and Community Relations

*What emphasis has evangelism played in your ministry? What form has it taken?

*What roll does evangelism play within various activities and services of your current/last church?

*What role has world mission programs had in congregations you have previously served?

*Are you familiar with the NACCC mission program?

*How do you balance local mission endeavors and world mission endeavors? How do you allocate financial resources concerning such endeavors?

*What type of focused outreach programs do you feel are important and relevant to this congregation?

*How much emphasis do you place upon addressing the social problems that affect your current community?

*What organizations are you currently active with outside of the church?

*To what degree are you involved in promoting Christianity with other churches and religions in your community?

Administration

*What is the primary role of the church board?

*What role should the church board have in defining your ministry responsibilities and priorities?

*How would you describe your relationship with your current/last church board?

*Describe an experience that you had with a church board that illustrates how best a board can function.

*Have you had a conflict with a church board, and if so, how was it resolved?

*What training and orientation have you provided for church board members?

*How is a church like a business and how should it be treated as such?

*Churches and church leaders face greater legal risk today than in the past. How do you respond to this concern? What role does risk management play within ministry today?

*Describe how your leadership style affects your relationship with other church staff members?

*How comfortable are you in giving direction to staff and volunteers?

*How often should staff meetings occur and what would be on a typical agenda?

*How would ministry decisions be made within the church staff?

*To what degree would staff members be self-directing?

*Should church members hold staff positions or should non-ministerial staff be non-members?

*What type of conflict have you experienced in working with other church staff members? How were the conflicts resolved?

*Have you ever had to terminate a staff member, and if so, how did you handle the situation?

*How would you respond if a staff member was not working up to expectations?

Financial Issues

*What are your salary expectations? (Salary, Parsonage, Housing Allowance, etc.)

*On what basis would you expect future raises?

*Please share with us your long-range career plans.

Family Life

*Tell us about your family.

*How does your family feel about the possibility of this job change?

*What role do you see your family members having within our church?

*What things would you like the church to provide to support your family?

*How has being in the ministry affected your family life?

Closing Questions

- *How familiar are you with the history of our church? Do you have any questions about our past?
 - *How familiar are you with the current life of our church? Do you have any questions?
 - *What do you see that you like about our church and congregation?
 - *What changes may be in store for our congregation if you become pastor?
 - *Describe the planning model you would use in guiding the mission of our church. How would you set goals, prioritize plans, define and evaluate success?
 - *Share with us your thoughts in how a church can best nurture a shared sense of mission.
 - *Describe the church structure you view as the best in helping a congregation achieve its mission.
 - *What factors do you believe tend to limit churches in achieving their mission? What strategies do you use to eliminate or reduce those factors?
 - *What would your operational strategy be during your first twelve months with this congregation? What would your top three priorities be?
 - *Describe how you have approached financial and stewardship issues with your current/last congregation.
 - *How have you nurtured fellowship within your current/last congregation?
 - *What do you hope to find in this position that you have not found elsewhere?
- What questions do you have about this position that we haven't covered?