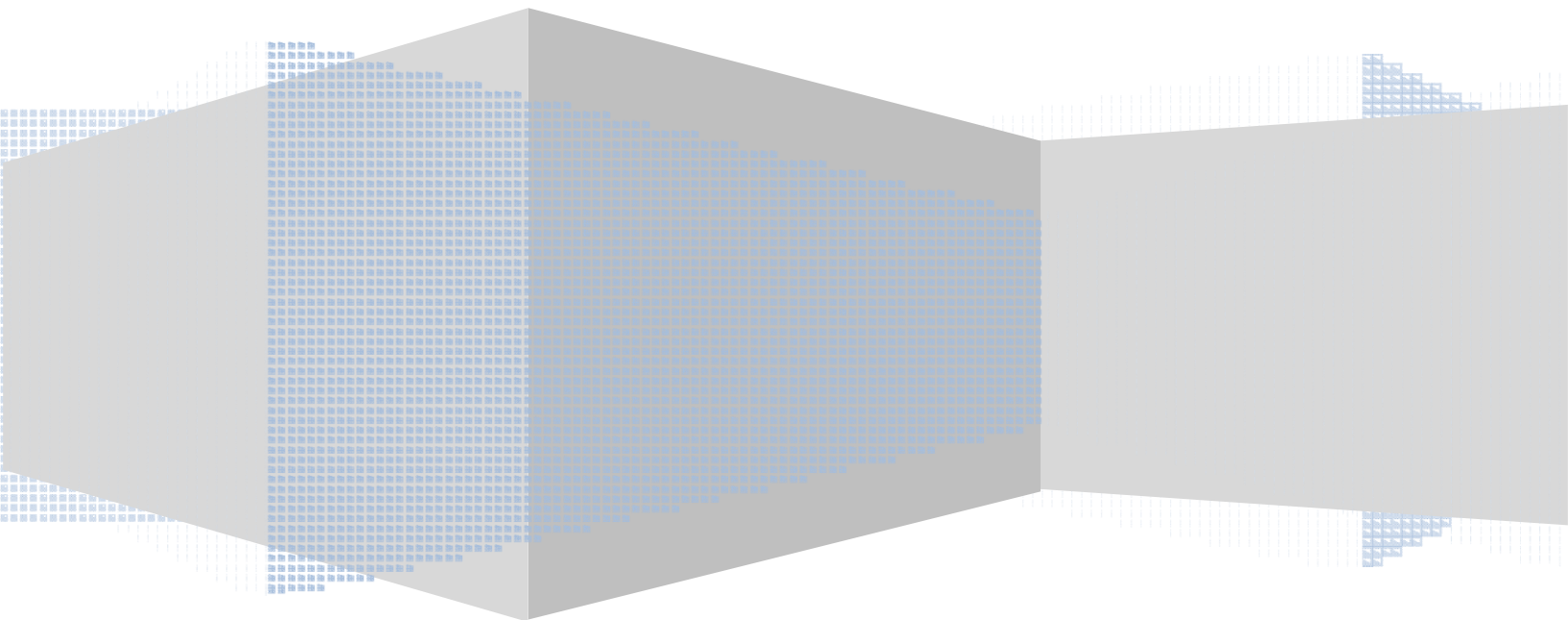


National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

# Calling A Congregational Minister

A Handbook for  
Pastoral Search Committees



**CALLING A CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER**  
*A Handbook for Pastoral Search Committees*  
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# ***CALLING A CONGREGATIONAL MINISTER***

## **A Handbook for Pastoral Search Committees**

### **ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK**

You have been selected to serve on the Pastoral Search committee. This is one of the most important assignments that can be given to a person in a Congregational church. You may already be asking yourself questions such as:

- What is the function of a Pastoral Search Committee?
- How does the committee discern God's leading in the search for the minister of your church?
- What common understandings do Congregationalists share about the ordained ministry in this process?

These and many other questions come to mind when a person is chosen to begin this important task. The purpose of this handbook is to share with you the experience of many Search Committees from other churches and to help acquaint you with resources that can assist you in the task ahead.

As you do your work, you will be looking carefully at your congregation, both what it is now, and what you want it to be. The type of ministry and mission that are significant to your church members will be important as you seek professional leadership. The experience and resources developed over time in our association will help you as you search for candidates, screen those interested and finally present one candidate to your congregation.

This book is not copyrighted by intent. You are encouraged to make copies of appropriate sections of this book for your committee.

As you work on your task of selecting a candidate to present to your church, you will want to be continually in close contact with the Pastoral Search staff from your national Association office. They have the skills and information about this process

*Serving on a Pastoral Search Committee is one of the most important assignments that can be given to a person in a Congregational Church.*

*The type of ministry and mission that are significant to your church members will be important as you seek professional leadership.*

that your committee will need during the months ahead. They value the work of your committee and will give considerable time and attention to your search process. The National Association of Congregational Christian Churches provides to member churches information about search processes. The Association also provides information to clergy about vacancies within the association. The Association makes no representation as to the fitness of any clergy person or the accuracy of information provided by a congregation. Each clergy person is responsible for evaluating each congregation's appropriateness to his or her calling. Each congregation is responsible for their own hiring process and decision. All terms and conditions of employment including the evaluation, supervision, and remuneration of the clergy person are the sole responsibility of the local church.

## **I. THE CALL TO MINISTRY**

The concept of the "call" is a very significant part of our tradition. God moves in the lives of persons and in the community of faith to call individuals to ordained ministry. Often that call comes in the context of life in the local church. Most commonly that is where one's commitment to Jesus Christ has been made, the power of the Gospel is experienced and one's gifts are affirmed and encouraged. The local church confirms the call by providing opportunities for identifying and developing the person's gifts for ministry. By giving guidance and support, the local church is often used by the Spirit to help the individual make a decision to accept God's call and prepare for ordained ministry.

In the Congregational tradition the local church examines the claim to a call from God and validates the candidate's fitness for ordained ministry. Candidates may then be asked to give evidence of their call to and preparation for ministry. If, after examination by a council of representatives of other Congregational churches, the person is determined to be suitable for ministry, it is recommended that the local church approve the call by proceeding with ordination.

God also moves in the life of congregations. God called your church into being and over the years has provided your church with members, leaders and their gifts. At this time you are once again seeking new pastoral leadership. As your congregation prays for God's guidance in this process, qualified ministers are also prayerfully seeking to know and respond to God's ongoing call for their lives. Your Search Committee will be seeking to be an instrument whereby God's call to a particular person is paired with the needs of a congregation. The result will be to create a new partnership of ministry.

Your task is to select a minister who will lead, direct and guide your church in ministry for Christ to the world. It is your committee's function to find that minister and to recommend him or her to your church for approval and call.

*As you work on your task of selecting a candidate to present to your church, you will want to be in continually close contact with the Pastoral Relations staff from your National Association office.*

*By giving guidance and support, the local church is often used by the Spirit to help the individual make a decision to accept God's call and prepare for ordained ministry.*

As God calls both men and women to a life of faith, also both are called by God to positions of leadership within the church. Committed and qualified women are responding in increasing numbers to the call of God to ordained ministry. Many more are preparing themselves to serve as pastors and professional church leaders.

It is important that your committee and church be open to receive names of all candidates whose gifts and skills match the needs of your church. In openness to the Spirit's direction you will want to give the names equal consideration to all viable candidates without regard to age, race, gender, physical handicap or marital status.

Search Committees may dismiss serious consideration of a young candidate just out of seminary, or an older minister with significant years of service to give. In doing so, great opportunities are often missed. A young person brings to the ministry a freshness and vitality that can be very stimulating. It may be that the person most able to meet the needs of your congregation is an older minister. Rich and wide experience, a tested faith, and years of spiritual growth often make the older minister highly desirable.

As you prepare to call a new minister:

- Be open to the leading of God's Spirit.
- Give thoughtful and prayerful consideration to each potential candidate.
- Focus on personal qualities of commitment, pastoral skills, and leadership ability.

If your church does not employ a full-time pastor, you may wish to consider a bi-vocational or part-time minister, a theological student or a recognized lay professional. Your NACCC Pastoral Relations office can assist you in this search process as well.

Every church would like to have a pastor who is competent in all ministerial skills--preaching, teaching, pastoral care, administration, youth work, and the many other dimensions of professional church leadership. It is readily recognized that a church will not find a minister who qualifies equally in all of these categories. The goal is to make the strongest possible match of the candidate's abilities with the needs of your church.

In the months ahead you and your committee will be working hard. You will be participating in God's miracle of calling and God's gift of providing appropriate leadership for your church and its ministry. You will want to invite the congregation to provide prayer support throughout this selection process. May God's blessing be with you!

*It is important that your committee and church be open to receive names of all candidates whose gifts and skills match the needs of your church.*

*If your church does not employ a full-time pastor, you may wish to consider a bi-vocational or part-time minister, a theological student or a recognized lay professional.*

*You will want to invite the congregation to provide prayer support throughout this selection process.*

## **II. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PASTORAL SELECTION PROCESS**

Every Search Committee's experience, to some degree, will be unique. Churches have different backgrounds and histories; traditions may differ. There are also regional and local variations as to the way the pastoral selection process unfolds. However, a basic commonality has emerged and is presented here as one suggested process for this important task.

Search Committees will progress at different paces; however, a thorough selection process will work through at least five (5) stages. Some stages may move rapidly, others could take several weeks to complete and may become more time consuming than anticipated. Occasionally it may be necessary to repeat a previous stage if the committee's progress is derailed by unforeseen circumstances.

Your committee is urged to work through each of these five (5) stages, check off each task as it is completed, and then report the committee's progress regularly to the congregation. Before you begin your work, review the five stages. Plan how you might use the suggestions and guidelines outlined here.

### ***STAGE ONE: STARTING RIGHT***

- ✓ Make early contact with the NACCC Pastoral Relations office for online access.
- ✓ Secure interim leadership.
- ✓ Elect a Pastoral Search Committee.

### ***STAGE TWO: SEARCH COMMITTEE BEGINS ITS WORK***

- ✓ Organize the Search Committee and choose a chairperson.
- ✓ Invite and arrange a meeting with an NACCC representative.
- ✓ Provide an adequate budget for the committee.
- ✓ Report to the congregation.
- ✓ Confidentiality must be maintained for all ministers that apply.
- ✓ Research church identity and vision for future.
- ✓ Complete the online CHURCH INFORMATION FORM (CIF)
- ✓ Meet with an NACCC ambassador.
- ✓ Prepare for Interviews.

### ***STAGE THREE: FROM PAPER TO PEOPLE***

- ✓ Receive candidate names from several sources.
- ✓ Review criteria for leadership.
- ✓ Narrow list to a contact group.
- ✓ Communicate with the contact group.
- ✓ Elicit additional information.
- ✓ Select potential candidates to interview.
- ✓ Interview potential candidates and observe worship leadership.
- ✓ Check references carefully.

*A basic commonality has emerged and is presented here as one suggested process for this important task.*

*Your committee is urged to work through each of these five (5) stages.*

#### **STAGE FOUR: CALLING A PASTOR**

- ✓ Choose one candidate.
- ✓ Negotiate the Minister-Church agreement.
- ✓ Inform the congregation.
- ✓ Conduct the candidating weekend.
- ✓ Present the candidate and the Congregational vote.

#### **STAGE FIVE: BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP**

- ✓ Welcome of minister and family.
- ✓ Celebrate service of Installation.
- ✓ Acknowledge your minister's leadership
- ✓ Express thanks and dismiss Search Committee.
- ✓ Establish and/or implement pastoral relations committee.

When the Search Committee has completed the CIF, that opening will be posted online at the NACCC website in PASTORATES AND PULPITS. This list also goes into THE CONGREGATIONALIST. Ministers searching for a new call have registered with the NACCC for secure online access to all church profiles. Before online access is given to an individual seeking a call, he or she must submit professional documents to the NACCC. These documents create a disclosure file that is open for your inspection should this person's candidacy become of significant interest to you. Be sure to see the online policy and forms pertaining to the NACCC Disclosure Protocol and Policy. The NACCC provides these files as a service to member churches and in no way implies NACCC endorsement of the individual. A minister registered with the NACCC can electronically submit his or her profile directly to you.

### **III. BEGINNING THE PASTORAL SELECTION PROCESS**

#### **STAGE ONE: STARTING RIGHT**

##### **1. Make early contact with the NACCC Pastoral Relations Office.**

When the prospect of a pastoral vacancy becomes known, immediately contact the Executive Secretary or the Pastoral Relations staff.

##### **2. Secure interim leadership.**

Quality leadership during this interim period is critical. One way of assuring your church of continuous pastoral coverage is by securing an interim minister. This is preferable to depending on persons to supply the pulpit from Sunday to Sunday.

*When the prospect of a pastoral vacancy becomes known, immediately contact the Executive Secretary or the Pastoral Relations staff.*

*Your Pastoral Relations office will also be helpful to your committee as you seek leadership for your church between pastors.*

An interim minister will be able to:

- Preach and lead worship on Sunday.
- Provide church program leadership during the week.
- Visit the sick, shut-ins and persons with special needs.
- Meet with the appropriate boards and committees of the church.
- Be available for weddings, funerals, and counsel as the need arises.

Churches may selfishly think of this interim time as an opportunity to save money by reducing pastoral services. The needs of the congregation continue, however, and may be even greater during the time of a pastoral search.

The interim minister who comes to serve your congregation should never be eligible for consideration as your permanent pastor. Nor is she or he to be a consultant to the Search Committee. The church and the interim minister should have a clear understanding about these matters at the outset.

### **3. Elect a Pastoral Search Committee.**

When a pastoral vacancy occurs, the congregation should elect a Pastoral Search Committee, according to its bylaws, and assign to it the task of selecting a candidate for recommendation to the church. The purpose of the Pastoral Search Committee is to locate the best person and to recommend one qualified candidate to the church.

This committee is extremely important in every church. Persons elected to the Search Committee need to be committed to give the search top priority. A great deal of time and devotion is required for the performance of this task. The work of this committee is perhaps the most difficult, yet the most important work in the life of the church. The time required for this task usually takes nine to twelve months or more.

The church's constitution or bylaws should outline specifically how the committee is to be selected. It is expected that the committee will function as a whole until the process is completed. Experience has proven that the use of alternates is confusing. If it becomes necessary for a member to drop off the committee, a replacement may be elected.

Various segments of the church's life need to be represented by the people chosen to serve on the Search Committee. Persons representative of the age, economic, gender, racial, and educational make-up of your congregation need to be included. All members should be respected by the congregation and recognized as persons of integrity. It is especially important that they be able to work well with others on the committee and be open to God's leading in the process.

***KEEP THE COMMITTEE SMALL. FIVE TO NINE MEMBERS IS RECOMMENDED.***

The Search Committee needs to be elected and its chairperson chosen as soon as a pastoral vacancy becomes known. Funds should be provided to cover necessary

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expenses for travel, correspondence, telephone and hospitality. Such costs should not be borne by the members themselves.

It is at this time that you should re-contact the Pastoral Relations office and schedule a visit or conference call from your Executive Secretary.

Finally, do not act hastily, but prayerfully. Take the time you need to pray, deliberate and do the research for this most important task.

## ***STAGE TWO: SEARCH COMMITTEE BEGINS ITS WORK***

### **1. Organize the Search Committee and choose a Chairman.**

Once a chairperson is selected it is the responsibility of that person to convene the committee. A secretary should also be elected at the first meeting. This person is charged with keeping the minutes and being responsible for the large amounts of correspondence necessary to the work of the committee. The committee's minutes become part of the confidential documents of the committee.

The Search Committee is charged with the responsibility to select a minister for recommendation to the church as a candidate for its pastorate. It is extremely important that committee members come to a common agreement about your task and the details as to how you will function together. Although not mandatory, a unanimous recommendation from the committee provides the best possible support for the person selected. Our NACCC staff can be of great help to you in working through this process. You will want to take into account any specific instructions provided in your church bylaws and by the congregation.

### **2. Invite and arrange a meeting with an NACCC representative.**

In meeting with our Pastoral Relations staff, you will find help in reviewing carefully all of the steps needed to discover the best possible person for your church. This foundational meeting is designed to take care of process issues not to discuss particular persons. Do not expect the Executive Secretary to provide names. The process of pastoral selection is important and crucial for the church; shortcut methods should not be attempted.

The Executive Secretary will lead you in outlining the process, necessary meetings and even the time sequences that are needed in order to accomplish this task. Resources available to the church will also be evaluated. Your entire committee should be urged to review this handbook carefully at this time.

*Take the time you need to pray, deliberate and do the research for this most important task.*

*It is extremely important that committee members come to a common agreement about your task and the details as to how you will function together.*

*The Executive Secretary will lead you in outlining the process, necessary meetings and even the time sequences that are needed in order to accomplish this task.*

### **3. Provide an adequate budget for the Committee.**

Budgetary provision needs to be made for the work of the committee. A proposed schedule of related expenditures should be formulated for approval by the church. Because of variables in travel, number of telephone calls, and other expenses, the budget needs to be flexible. Plan to have some funds to be used at the committee's discretion

### **4. Report to the congregation.**

The Search Committee should be introduced to the congregation at a worship service. This is a good time to request ongoing prayer support for the task ahead. A brief outline and explanation may be given the congregation regarding the search process. It is important to remember that the committee's reports to the congregation should deal with the process and not potential candidates. Do not reveal names of potential candidates so that embarrassment to those not selected can be avoided.

### **5. Assure confidentiality.**

**The confidential nature of the Search Committee's work needs to be emphasized to each member of the committee.** The committee will be dealing with records of pastors without the knowledge of the churches that they are serving. All such information must be treated with utmost discretion and kept in complete confidence. Committee members should be told that this is very important both during and after the completion of the search process.

The information from the profiles of candidates must not be discussed outside the Search Committee. This includes sharing information with family members. While the committee needs to make periodic reports to the congregation concerning its process and the progress of its work, **It does not report on the candidates being considered.** When the work is completed, all the materials about individuals used by the committee should be promptly destroyed.

### **6. Research church identity and vision for the future.**

An important part of the process for the church will be a time of intense self-study and self-reflection. Some elements of this self study may include:

- History of the congregation
- Present church program-worship, Christian education, youth ministries, etc.
- Church resources-buildings, parsonage, membership profile, financial status
- Community demographics
- Vision for ministry
- Professional specialties

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- Organizational and leadership style
- Pastoral compensation

Your Pastoral Relations office of the NACCC can aid you in this process by providing survey materials on request.

## **7. Complete the CHURCH INFORMATION FORM.**

The research of your church will provide the basis for filling out the Church Information Form (CIF). This is a description of your church's present program, resources, vision of the future and pastoral leadership needs. The committee, after gathering input from the congregation, will seek to reach a consensus on program priorities as well as professional specialties and other criteria desired in the new minister to meet the church's needs.

The finished CIF is posted online and becomes available to potential candidates who have registered a Minister's Disclosure File with the NACCC and been given electronic access to the NACCC search process. A copy of your CIF should be shared with the entire congregation. Along with the completed CIF, you may want to electronically upload and attach to your CIF the following documents:

- Annual Report of the congregation
- Photograph or line drawings of church buildings and parsonage
- Church bulletin sample
- Constitution and Bylaws
- Community information or description

## ***STAGE THREE: FROM PAPER TO PEOPLE***

### **1. Receiving Candidate Names from Several Sources.**

The committee should expect to receive names of potential candidates from several sources. There will be:

- Suggestions from the congregation or Search Committee
- Suggestions from Congregational clergy
- Names submitted by seminaries and colleges
- Persons who submit their names electronically

Accept all names graciously regardless of the source or your first impression for their qualifications. If the committee receives names directly from persons wishing to be candidates, require that the potential candidate fill out and submit a MINISTER'S INFORMATION FORM and even those candidates well-known to you should subject themselves to the process like all others. Strongly suggest that the candidate registers with the NACCC by filing a Minister's Disclosure File. This will save you time as you fully evaluate a candidate and will make your job of diligently checking references easier.

*The research of your church will provide the basis for filling out the Church Information Form (CIF)*

**Remember that at all times it is the responsibility of the committee to thoroughly research potential candidates and follow up on all possible references.**

The NACCC Pastoral Relations office is not empowered to grant standings to ministers or verify credentials. However, as a service to our churches, we provide access to professional documents that have been placed on file with the NACCC by clergy. The NACCC makes no representations about a minister's fitness.

**2. Reviewing criteria for leadership.**

Now is a good time for your committee to review the ministry priorities listed in the CIF. As you sort through the minister profiles, you need to look for those profiles which most nearly match the professional specialties and other important criteria identified in your CIF.

**3. Narrowing the list to a contact group.**

The process of reducing the prospect list will begin now. Several meetings will be necessary to complete this step. Be sure to:

- Work out any unresolved questions concerning profiles in your possession.
- Rank the potential candidates.
- Reach consensus on the top potential candidates as the contact group.

We suggest a simple “stop light” system to rank potential candidates. **Green** is for those whom you really wish to pursue, **red** for those who do not presently seem to fit your needs, and **yellow** is for those in between (those whom you do not wish to pursue yet but may wish to retain). The persons in the green group will be the first potential candidates considered by your committee.

**4. Communicating with the contact group.**

You will first need to be in touch with each person in the contact group to determine whether or not that person is open to further exploration with your committee. This should be done within a week and preferably by telephone at their home to ensure confidentiality. Clearly understand that this call is simply to determine the person's openness to further discussion. The call should be a cordial call introducing yourself and not be a surprise interview.

Potential candidates who agree to dialogue with your committee should receive a follow-up letter immediately. This letter should ask for the additional information the committee would like to have; tapes, sermons, and other additional information. Be sure that envelopes are marked “Personal” or “Confidential.” Also, be sure the potential candidate is free to speak in privacy when you telephone at this or any other time during negotiations. It is always thoughtful to ask, “Is this a good time to talk?”

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*We suggest a simple “stop light” system to rank potential candidates.*

*Potential candidates who agree to dialogue with your committee should receive a follow-up letter immediately.*

The committee should suggest a reasonable deadline (14 days) for a response. Indicate the name and address to which the requested materials are to be mailed.

### **5. Selecting potential candidates to interview.**

After the committee has reviewed the responses and all supplementary materials submitted by the potential candidates, the committee may then proceed to decide which two to four persons most nearly match the ministerial priorities. These candidates may then be invited for personal interviews. Your committee may wish to have preliminary conversations with these potential candidates in a short, personal visit or by the use of a speaker phone or conference call. Remember that the committee is responsible to pay the costs incurred by the potential candidates.

Once it has selected the persons the committee wishes to interview, the committee should immediately and courteously notify and return materials to any previously contacted persons the committee chooses not to consider further.

### **6. Interviewing potential candidates and observing worship leadership.**

When you are ready to interview and observe the worship leadership of a potential candidate, you will find it helpful to arrange for the potential candidate to lead worship and preach in a neutral pulpit. Before and after that worship service, and throughout the weekend, you will want to meet with the candidate for an extensive interview. Misunderstandings or embarrassments are less likely to occur with this method than when a committee visits the candidate in the church presently being served. All arrangements between the Search Committee, the candidate and the neutral church should be carefully worked out so that any misunderstandings can be avoided.

You may, with the candidate's permission, choose to observe him or her in their present church. If you choose to do this, be discreet in order to avoid embarrassing the minister or the members of the congregation. Do not inform any member of the congregation that you represent a Search Committee.

The opportunity to hear the potential candidate preach and to have an initial interview should be shared by every member of the Search Committee. Difficulties may develop in decision making if only part of the committee is present. If a member must be absent, tape the service and the interview. Only committee members should take part in these experiences.

### **7. Checking References.**

There are several ways in which references may be checked. When you have narrowed your interest to your top two or three, you may contact the NACCC and request to review the Minister's Disclosure File. This file must be submitted before the NACCC allows a candidate to use the electronic search system. If a person has applied to your church directly instead of using the NACCC system, you may

*Your committee may wish to have preliminary conversations with these potential candidates in a short, personal visit or by the use of a speaker phone*

*You will find it helpful to arrange for the potential candidate to lead worship and preach in a neutral pulpit.*

*The opportunity to hear the potential candidate preach and to have an initial interview should be shared by every member of the Search Committee.*

consider asking the candidate to register anyway. *This will help you* in your due diligence as you check references and the individual's professional claims.

When you have narrowed your contact group, you will want to check directly with the references of all potential candidates. Contacting at least three references for each potential candidate is a reasonable practice. REMEMBER: your committee will be responsible for checking all the references for its recommended candidate.

Talking with references in person or by phone will usually provide more candid responses. Again, keep in mind that maintaining confidentiality about both the identity of candidates and information received is of supreme importance.

*Talking with references in person or by phone will usually provide more candid responses.*

## **STAGE FOUR: CALLING A PASTOR**

### **1. Choosing one candidate.**

After prayer and careful consideration, your committee will hopefully narrow the potential candidates down to the one candidate it wishes to recommend. If you are unable to reach an agreement at first, you may choose to interview or re-interview other potential candidates.

When your Search Committee is in agreement on a particular minister as the candidate of its choice, and the minister agrees to the presentation of his or her name, you are ready to move into the final stage of the process.

***UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE SHOULD THE CONGREGATION CONSIDER PRESENTING MORE THAN ONE CANDIDATE AT A TIME. TO DO SO MAY DIVIDE THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.***

Check the bylaws of your church once again to confirm the provisions regarding the calling of a minister. Note especially the length of time and method required to give due notice for the congregational meeting to vote, the number of people required for a quorum, the percentage of votes needed to pass, and the majority to vote, and the number of people required for extending a call. Begin to prepare the necessary notices and calendar in accordance with the bylaw provisions.

*Check the bylaws of your church once again to confirm the provisions regarding the calling of a minister.*

### **2. Negotiating the Minister-Church Agreement.**

The Search Committee, through one person or a sub-committee, should facilitate negotiating the Minister-Church Agreement. The suggested Minister-Church Agreement in the resource list provides a useful model for preparing the agreement.

Adapt it to meet the needs of your congregation, being sure to include:

- Cash salary
- Housing and utilities – either parsonage or housing allowance
- A health and medical plan
- Retirement and death benefit plan
- Accountable automobile expenses
- Ministerial-related expense reimbursement
- Moving expenses
- Length of vacation
- Continuing education time
- Other agreed upon items, such as sick leave, disability provisions, reserve chaplaincy
- Sabbatical leave

Make sure that the proper boards and committees of your church are in accord with the details of this agreement prior to presenting it to the congregation for the final vote.

### **3. Informing the Congregation.**

You will want to send every member of your congregation a letter of information concerning the candidate and announcing the congregational meeting that will be held upon extending a call to the minister. Include a biographical summary of the candidate.

### **4. Conducting the candidating weekend.**

A weekend visit by the candidate and family should be planned with great care. A variety of activities will enable the congregation to become acquainted with the candidate and family. The schedule should also provide multiple opportunities for the leaders and members of the congregation to meet the candidate (and his or her family) informally. This weekend should include a service of worship during which the candidate preaches.

### **5. Presenting the Candidate and the Congregational vote.**

Before the congregation votes, the Search Committee should present its impressions of the candidate's abilities and skills in the ministry. Share your convictions for presenting this person to become your spiritual leader. Remember, you will be giving witness to your discernment of God's call to ministry.

The committee should at this time, also describe all the arrangements that have been proposed in the Minister-Church Agreement. This information should be entered into the minutes of the church by the clerk.

*Before the congregation votes, the Search Committee should present its impressions of the candidate's abilities and skills in the ministry.*

The members of the congregation will vote at a regular or special business meeting to accept or reject the committee's recommendation. This should be done in accordance with the bylaws of the church.

**As soon as a vote has been taken by the Church, it is both courteous and necessary to inform the candidate in person or by telephone.** The call of the church should always be put in writing for the candidate by the church clerk. This letter should confirm the details of the arrangements that have been authorized by the church in the Minister-Church Agreement. The letter should be mailed as soon as possible after the meeting, requesting a prompt reply accepting the call.

After the pastor has been called and has accepted the call, it is necessary that a gracious letter be written to those persons who were considered as potential candidates. This letter should thank them for their time and interest and inform them who has been called.

## ***STAGE FIVE: BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP***

### **1. Welcoming of minister and family.**

While your committee may feel that you know the new minister well, remember that from the perspective of most they will come to your community as strangers. Your committee should do all you can to make them feel at home. Try to acquaint them, not only with the members of your own congregation, but also with your community.

Your congregation may need to provide the minister with one or more opportunities to come to your community in order to make housing arrangements if a parsonage is not provided. In addition to the responsibility of caring for all costs connected with the minister's move to your community, your committee should:

- A. Make sure the parsonage, if provided, is in complete readiness. Redecoration should be done in consultation with the incoming pastor and spouse. All repairs should be completed and the utilities should be connected and in good working order.
- B. Arrange temporary housing accommodations for the minister (and family) until the furniture is moved into the parsonage/home.
- C. Arrange to have meals served by church families and/or local restaurants during the time the parsonage/home is being settled.
- D. Make sure the minister's study is in complete readiness.
- E. Introduce your minister (and family) to the community through an article in your local newspaper. Do not however, release the news item until its timing is cleared with your new minister.

*The call of the church should always be put in writing for the candidate by the church clerk.*

*Your committee should do that it can to make them feel at home.*



- F. Help your minister (and family) to become acquainted with your community. A conducted tour may be greatly appreciated and helpful.
- G. Introduce your minister to the congregation at the first worship service he or she conducts.
- H. Arrange a special reception(s) during the first few weeks.
- I. Arrange an early meeting for your minister with all church leaders. This should be an informal meeting through which the minister will have the opportunity to become quickly and more fully acquainted with the chosen leaders of the church and the programs and goals of the various organizations.

## **2. Celebrating the Service of Installation.**

Your Search Committee should be working, in cooperation with the board of deacons and other boards, and your new minister to plan the service of installation to take place a few months after your new minister arrives. Some churches plan this for a Sunday morning; most plan it for a Sunday afternoon when neighboring churches and community representatives can attend. This service should be followed by a congregational reception for the minister and family.

The Pastoral Relations office can provide examples of service used by other congregations.

## **3. Acknowledging and affirming your minister's leadership.**

Encourage the congregation to extend to your minister the respect and courtesy due him or her. For instance, do not create difficult situations by inviting the former minister to conduct weddings or funerals. The congregation has called your present minister to perform these ministries. It is important that your new pastor be called on for pastoral support.

It is ethical and appropriate for a minister to sever pastoral relations with former parishioners. Deep personal friendships are abiding, however, and the former minister should be free to continue personal relationships. Pastoral and professional contacts with former parishioners should be undertaken only on the invitation or, and with the consent of, the present minister or staff.

## **4. Expressing thanks and dismissing the Search Committee.**

When the committee's work is completed, it should be thanked by the moderator at a worship service and formally discharged at the next regular business meeting, unless it is a continuing committee. If the latter is the case, a vote of thanks should be extended to the members for their work on this special assignment.

*Encourage the congregation to extend to your minister the respect and courtesy due him or her.*

Pertinent transactions of the committee, including a summary report of the committee's work, should be given to the church clerk for inclusion in the minutes.

**ONCE AGAIN, IT IS IMPORTANT TO STRESS THAT ALL PROFILES AND CONFIDENTIAL PAPERS USED BY THE COMMITTEE ARE TO BE DESTROYED.**

### **5. Establishing and/or implementing a Pastoral Relations Committee.**

The congregation needs to continue to build the partnership between pastor and people. Many congregations have discovered that a Pastoral Relations Committee fulfills this function well.

### **6. Conducting Ministry Reviews.**

Vital to the long-term outcome of the partnership between the pastor and the congregation is an intentional process of periodic ministry review. These reviews can be conducted at various points in the partnership, but should be at regular intervals. An annual review in the relationship might focus on sharing perceptions, or any surprises, that each partner has regarding the other. This helps in establishing a pattern for healthy communication between pastor and people. This communication will become very important if at any time there are members who express feelings that some part of the Minister-Church Agreement is not being met.

Vital to the long-term partnership between pastor and people is a mutual commitment to hold periodic reviews throughout the ministry. Regular periodic reviews facilitate the possibility of adjusting to each other's expectations, defusing unnecessary tensions and conflict, as well as setting the context of trust for a productive long-term pastor-people dialogue and partnership. The NACCC can help by providing sample review forms. They can be found on the NACCC website at [www.naccc.org](http://www.naccc.org).

### **7. Conducting the First Anniversary.**

Just as healthy marriages celebrate anniversaries, your congregation and pastor will want to celebrate the first anniversary of your partnership in ministry. Many Congregationalists have a tradition of such anniversary celebrations to mark the milestones of ministry.

Congratulations! You have proceeded through the pastoral selection process safely and well. With confidence in the leading of God's Spirit you are now poised on the threshold of a new partnership of pastor and people, joined together in the privilege of ministry in Christ's name.

*Many Congregationalists have a tradition of such anniversary celebrations to mark the milestones of ministry.*

## ***UNDERSTANDING THEOLOGICAL DEGREES***

Education, especially the educated minister, has always been important to Congregationalists and Congregational churches. Evidence of this may be noted in the number of colleges and seminaries across the country that were established by Congregationalists. Harvard and Yale were both founded very early in our common history because the first New England Congregationalists wished to assure the ongoing availability of "a learned clergy."

The concern for education is still apparent in most of our churches and most of our ministers have received seminary training. To understand the nature of this training, it is important to be able to interpret the letters (degrees) attached to a minister's name or included in his or her information form.

In the United States, these degrees fall into three categories: academic degrees which are earned at a college, university or seminary and are intended to provide basic philosophical and theoretical understanding of a given field of study; professional degrees which are also earned at a university or seminary are intended to provide practical understanding and experience in the practice of a profession and honorary degrees which are conferred (not earned) by a college, university, or seminary in recognition of a person's service to society or an academic institution.

All seminaries accredited by The Association of Theological Schools (the chief accrediting agency for seminaries and theological schools) require that all entering students have previously earned four-year undergraduate degrees. To be accepted into the program of the Congregational Foundation for Theological Studies, a student must have an undergraduate degree and be enrolled in an accredited seminary.

The following is a listing of the degrees most likely to be held by ministers:

**BA or BS** (Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science)

Academic degrees requiring four years of study.

**MA or MS** (Master of Arts/Master of Science)

Academic degrees requiring at least one year beyond the bachelors. Most Master of Divinity degrees granted by ATS \* accredited seminaries require three years of full-time study beyond the bachelor's degree

**Ph.D.** (Doctor of Philosophy)

An academic degree requiring two to three years beyond the bachelors.

**B.D.** (Bachelor of Divinity)

A professional degree requiring three to four years beyond the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science. The name of this degree was changed to Master of Divinity (M.Div.) in 1971.

**M.Div.** (Master of Divinity)

This is the same degree as bachelor of Divinity after 1971.

**STB** (Bachelor of Sacred Theology)

This degree is given by some seminaries instead of the M.Div. The requirements are the same.

**STM** (Master of Sacred Theology)

A professional degree offered by a few seminaries after four to five years of study beyond the Bachelor of Arts degree.

**D.Min.** (Doctor of Ministry)

A professional degree requiring two years of study beyond the M.Div. or STB degrees. This degree also requires several years of practical experience in the ministry.

**Th.D.** (Doctor of Theology)

A professional degree offered by a few seminaries requiring five years of study beyond the bachelor of arts.

**D.D.** (Doctor of Divinity)

An honorary degree which does not involve any academic work. It is conferred in recognition of special service in ministry, or to a college or seminary.

Some of our ministers have degrees from properly accredited Bible colleges. Most of these degrees are equivalent to undergraduate degrees such as the Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science (four year degrees) except that the major emphasis is usually in Old and New Testament study or theology.

There are some organizations that sell degrees for a fee or for a fee and a minimal amount of work. In most cases, there is no school and no faculty involved. If there is any question about the origin of a degree, it is best to check the accreditation of the college or seminary conferring the degree.

\*The chief accrediting agency for seminaries is:

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS)  
in the United States and Canada  
10 Summit Park Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1103  
(412) 788-6505

The accrediting agency for Bible schools is:

American Association of Bible Colleges  
130-F North College  
P.O. Box 1523  
Fayetteville, AR 72702  
Phone: 501-521-8164  
FAX: 501-521-9202

If you have questions regarding a minister's degree(s) and you are unable to find the answer, contact the NACCC office in Oak Creek, WI. (800) 262-1620

**Education is important to the ministry and to a church; however, the important factor is the person, and it is the person who is the minister not the degree.**

***MODEL LETTER UPON RECEIPT OF A MINISTER'S INFORMATION FORM***

(Date)

Dear (Name),

We have received your personal information form and it has been made available to the members of our pastoral search committee. We appreciate your interest in our church and we assure you that we will give your application our careful consideration.

Very truly yours,

***MODEL LETTER TO THE CONTACT GROUP***

(Date)

Dear (Name),

After a pastorate of (number) years in the (name of your church, city, state) the Reverend (name) has resigned to become (state the position taken by the former minister). A search committee has been formed to seek and recommend a successor; it is in this connection that I am writing you.

Your name has come to us as one among several who could give us pastoral leadership, and we are interested in becoming acquainted with you. Without any commitment, either on your part or that of our church, we should like to know whether you are in a position to consider pastoral service with us should our later contacts and conferences lead to a mutual interest. We would be most happy to answer questions you might raise.

If you are interested in pursuing this matter, please contact me as soon as possible. Our Church Information Form is available to you online from the NAAC Pastoral Relations office. To access that online form you must register with the NACCC at 1-800-262-1620 or [naccc@naccc.org](mailto:naccc@naccc.org). Also, please arrange for us to electronically receive an updated copy of your Minister's Information Form and any other information that you feel would be of interest to the committee. Unless otherwise directed, we will keep all information regarding your correspondence with us confidential.

An early response from you, within two weeks if possible, would be appreciated. If you have any questions, you can reach me by phone at (number).

Sincerely,

***MODEL LETTER TO POTENTIAL CANDIDATES NO LONGER BEING CONSIDERED***

(Date)

Dear (name),

The search committee of (name of church) wants to thank you for the interest and time you have given our committee.

After careful discussion of the information contained in your Minister's Information Form, we have decided not to consider you further. While we were impressed with the gifts and skills you bring to the ministry, we do not feel that your strengths fit the needs of our church at this time.

We are deeply grateful for your interest and we wish you well in your continuing ministry.

Sincerely,

(Name)

Chairperson (or corresponding secretary)

## **Why Should the Interim Pastor Not Be a Candidate for the Permanent Call?**

The following is listed as the rationale for not considering the interim Pastor/transition specialist as a candidate for the permanent position:

1. An interim pastor/transition specialist has an advantage over other possible candidates who may desire to be considered for the position because he or she has more visibility to the congregation. This makes it unfair to others who may be interested in the position, but who will not have the same visibility.
2. An interim pastor/transition specialist will always have a following, but almost always will have those who are not favorably committed to him or her. If he or she were to be called to be the pastor, there would be built-in opposition from the very beginning.
3. If the decision is made to consider the interim pastor/transition specialist along with the others being considered and the interim pastor/transition specialist does not get the position, there could be hurt feelings that would jeopardize the remainder of his or her interim work until the pastor is called.
4. A precedent could be set which would result in pastors seeking interim positions with the specific idea of putting themselves in a better position to be considered and called as the pastor, thus greatly damaging the whole call process.
5. The congregation itself may pass up better leadership than it is getting, even with a good interim pastor/transition specialist, if it fails to consider a larger number of potential pastoral candidates.
6. Interim ministry is unique and an interim pastor/transition specialist may often lead in ways that would be acceptable as an interim pastor/transition specialist, but would not be acceptable to some in the congregation were he or she to remain as the pastor.
7. Other pastors will know of the ministerial ethics involved and will know that those have been broken if an interim pastor/transition specialist is called. The result could be a lack of fellowship and broken relationships with other pastors.
8. During the time of interim, the congregation often is uniquely vulnerable and therefore develops a relationship based on need and insecurity. While this can be useful in leading a congregation to prepare for the incoming pastor, it could make for a very inappropriately skewed decision for a permanent call.

Used by permission of the Interim Ministry Network, Baltimore, Maryland.



## **Suggested Telephone Interview Questions When Calling References**

Name of Minister for Whom Information is Being Requested:

Name of Reference:

Date of Interview:

Interview Conducted By:

### **Questions To Be Asked of Reference**

What did he/she bring to your Church that you really appreciated?

If he/she leaves, what will you miss the most?

How does he/she relate to:

Children?

Young people?

Young adults?

Seniors?

Please comment on his/her sermons.

Can you comment on his/her visitation activities?

Please comment on his/her relationship with church boards and committees.

Do you perceive any problems between the minister and certain members of the congregation?

Do you have any reservations about any of the work he/she does for the church?

Can you identify any weaknesses?

Has his/her spouse been active in the church? If so, how?

Has he/she been active in the community outside of the church?

Could you comment on his/her personal integrity?

If you were on a minister search committee looking for a minister for your church, would you hire him/her? Why?

## **Suggested Interview Questions for Ministerial Candidates**

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. **You will want to decide which questions are appropriate for the telephone interview and which questions are important to ask during a face to face interview should you continue to be interested in this person's candidacy.**

### **To Begin With...**

Take time to get acquainted with the candidate. Introduce yourselves and share what your role in the congregations is. Ask the candidate to briefly tell you about himself/herself. What brought them to this congregation at this point in time?

### **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)

\*Describe the demographic make up of your present church (age, economic status, ethnic makeup, etc.)

\*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.

- \*What programs are you most proud of creating or initiating at your present position?
- \*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**

- \*What are your top three skills in ministry?
- \*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?

\*Share an experience that challenged your thinking, inspired you, or deepened your understanding of the ministry and/or life? (e.g. a book, lecture, movie, event, program, article, travels, etc.)

## **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?

\*What do you feel a long term commitment to the church would be?

## **Theology and Bible**

\*What is your view of the Bible and its interpretation?

\*Is there anything you disagree with in the Bible?

\*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?

\*Do you believe there is only one path to God?

\*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?

\*What are your beliefs about baptism? Is it necessary for church membership? Can a person be baptized more than once?

## **Sermons**

\*Describe your preaching style.

\*What is the role of the sermon?

\*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?

\*What is your interpretation of the Congregational Way of worship and the Congregational church?

\*Describe what role music has in your worship services.

\*What is the role of liturgy in the church's worship?

\*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?

\*What is your attitude toward the service of communion both as to frequency and format?

## **Pastoral Counseling and Care**

\*Describe what role of 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 the 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?
- \*Do you feel counseling is necessary for weddings? If so, how far in advance and extensive is your counseling?
- \*What is your position on marrying couples of mixed race or religion?
- \*How do you feel about other ministers, rabbis or priests assisting you in a wedding service?
- \*Would you feel comfortable counseling gay or minority viewpoints even if you personally disagree with them?

## **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?
- \*What would you expect your personal relationship to be with the youth fellowship?

## **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?
- \*How do you value collegiality with neighboring pastors? What kind of relationship do you appreciate among other clergy?
- \*How would you go about improving membership and increasing growth in our church, particularly among younger people and families?
- \*In what way should the church facilities be used for secular activities?
- \*To what extent should our church be involved in:
  - The NACCC?
  - State and Regional Association activities?
  - Ecumenical Community endeavors?

## **Administration**

- \*Describe your leadership style.
- \*What functions are uniquely the pastor's?
- \*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.
- \*To what extent should the pastor be involved in annual stewardship campaigns? Capital campaigns?

## **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?

# TERMS OF CALL

## A Suggested Minister-Church Agreement

### FORWARD

When a call is about to be extended, it has become common practice for NACCC churches and ministers to reach common agreement regarding items listed below. Agreements may take the form of a letter of understanding or a more formal "Minister-Church Agreement." Either will serve the intended purpose of establishing and maintaining a good relationship, provided the items are stated with sufficient clarity and detail to prevent future misinterpretations and misunderstandings.

### THE CHURCH AND MINISTER AGREE

#### 1. Spiritual Support

Understanding that mutual support is needed for ministry together, the congregation and minister agree to support one another in private and public prayer.

#### 2. Ministry Priorities

Recognizing that the church has identified certain opportunities and needs, further recognizing that the minister has specific gifts and abilities, we agree to work together on the following identified areas of ministry in the coming year:

#### **Building the Relationships**

To develop the trusting relationship necessary to a long term minister-church partnership, the church and minister agree to utilize the church personnel committee in a regular process of ministerial review. Either party may request the involvement of the regional association or the designated national office staff.

### THE CHURCH AGREES

#### 1. Compensation

In awareness of regional costs, and the experience and education of the person we are calling, we agree to provide total annual compensation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ in the form of cash salary and suitable housing.

a. The annual cash salary shall be:\$

b. The housing arrangement shall be:

An annual housing allowance, which is determined by the minister (and submitted to the Trustees by letter by January 1, each year,) to buy or rent a home including utilities, furnishings, and appurtenances to the home shall be: \$\_\_\_\_\_

## OR

A church-owned parsonage (the fair market rental value of which is determined by appraisal and reviewed annually), together with all utilities shall be provided without cost to the minister and the total estimated annual value of these being: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

An equity allowance (to partially compensate the minister for the loss of opportunity to participate in the investment advantage of home ownership) shall be paid annually to The MMBB Retirement Plan offered through the NACCC office, an IRA, 403B or some other trust account. [Note: Formulas for possible equity allowances and arrangements are available from MMBB].

### **2. Reimbursement of Professional Expenses**

To provide reimbursement for professional expenses incurred by the minister in the exercise of his-her ministry as follows:

- a. Automobile expense will be reimbursed at the current IRS mileage rate of \_\_\_\_ cents per mile up to a maximum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Expenses incurred by the minister as a delegate to the annual state/regional association meetings and/or the NACCC Annual Meeting, up to a maximum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ annually.
- c. Annual reimbursement for the minister's continuing education up to \$ \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ weeks for study away from home, cumulative up to three years if mutually agreeable.
- d. Other professional expenses: other professional expense reimbursement for items such as professional society dues, books, periodicals, etc. up to \$ \_\_\_\_\_.
- e. A \_\_\_\_\_ month sabbatical study leave every seventh year of the minister's career, including the costs of interim ministry and the minister's tuition, travel, room/board up to \$ \_\_\_\_\_. Regular salary compensation will continue during the sabbatical.

### **3. Retirement and Health:** to provide the full MMBB benefits and protections for the minister and family.

- a. The MMBB Comprehensive (LTD, Life Insurance and Retirement Plan) premiums will be paid by the church. It is understood that the cost of this is 10 % of the total annual compensation (cash salary, housing, and utilities) or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in the current year.
- b. The MMBB Endorsed Medical Plan premiums will be paid by the church to provide coverage for the minister and family. It is understood that the current annual cost is \$ \_\_\_\_.
- c. The church will cooperate with the minister in any salary withholding arrangements as may be desired, e.g., his/her membership in The Annuity Supplement Plan of the MMBB (TAS).

- d. In the event that the minister is disabled from illness and/or accident and unable to continue the responsibilities required, the church agrees to coordinate benefits with those available through Social Security and the MMBB Benefit Program in order to safeguard the well-being of the minister and his/her family.
- e. If the period of disability is for a period of three months or less, the church agrees to continue full salary and benefits.
- f. If the period of disability extends beyond three months, the church agrees to work with MMBB to make application for disability benefits and reach an agreement for service and remuneration which would safeguard both the interests of the minister and the church.

#### **4. Maternity Leave**

- a. In the case of a clergywoman, the church agrees to provide a Maternity Leave with salary and benefits continuing throughout the leave. Experience indicates that maternity leave falls between four to six weeks if there are no medical complications.
- b. Because the circumstances surrounding each birth is unique, and because some deliveries, such as Caesarean section, require additional hospitalization and convalescence, the church and minister are encouraged to be both sensitive and flexible in determining the length of the leave.

#### **5. Paternity Leave**

Because circumstances surrounding each birth is unique, and being aware of the importance of a father's involvement with the birth process, domestic duties, change in scheduling, and his need to be present with his family, the church and minister are encouraged to be both sensitive and flexible in determining the length of the leave.

#### **6. Vacation**

To provide an annual paid vacation of \_\_\_\_\_ weeks. The minister shall coordinate the use of vacation time with the appropriate church body, but it is understood that the minister has the option of using the entire vacation time in one continuous segment.

#### **7. Associational Responsibilities**

A reasonable amount of time devoted to sharing in state and national work, giving leadership at camps and conferences, and similar activities shall not be considered as part of the vacation period. Time away from the church for these responsibilities shall not exceed \_\_\_\_\_ week(s).

#### **8. Day/Days Off**

In the interest of his/her well-being and that of his/her family and because ministerial duties require clergy to be on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the church shall permit and encourage the minister to spend two days each week free from ministerial duties. An average weekly service in the range of 50-55 hours should be the maximum expectation.

**9. Moving**

To pay the full cost of moving expenses for the minister's household goods and family from \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. The cost of this is estimated to be \$ \_\_\_\_\_ .

**10. Review**

To review, at least annually, the matters contained in this agreement with a view toward making such changes as may be mutually desirable and acceptable, and in conformity with inflationary pressures. In case of disagreement over conduct or interpretation of this agreement or the Covenant and Code of Ethics, the church and/or the minister may request the involvement of the regional association or the designated national office staff.

**THE MINISTER AGREES**

1. To provide ministerial leadership for the \_\_\_\_\_ , beginning \_\_\_\_\_ .
2. To work a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ hours/week in the ministry of this congregation and regularly report the use of his/her time.
3. To seek to maintain a cooperative relationship with the local, regional, and state Association, and the NACCC. If coming from a non-NACCC church, the minister agrees to attend an NACCC sponsored seminar on Congregational History and Polity (or its regional equivalent) within two years of starting ministry in this church. Seminar expenses will be covered by the church.
4. To endeavor to fulfill the Covenant and Code of Ethics for Professional Church Leaders as agreed to in the Minister Information Form (MIF).
5. To assume responsibility for participation in SECA (Social Security for the self-employed).
6. To serve in the ministerial relationship with the church until such time as it is terminated in accordance with the constitution and/or bylaws of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_. It is understood that the termination by either minister or church requires \_\_\_\_\_ days' notice unless a shorter period is mutually agreeable.

Signed/dated  
*(Moderator or Church Clerk)*

Signed/dated  
*(Chair of the Call or Search Committee)*

Signed/dated  
*(Minister)*