

The Calling and Locating of a Pastor

Many churches are looking for pastoral staff. Often they are not clear about the kind of person they are looking for but they are praying that the door will open for God's person to come and minister. The purpose of this document is to help churches understand their own needs and expectations so that the relationship between pastor and congregation will be a happy union. We hope that the process described will produce the desired result for the extension of God's kingdom.

The Congregational Christian Churches in Canada generally adopt the pastor/elder led model. This paper will assume that a functioning elders' board exists and that the elders and the congregation will be involved in the process of engaging pastoral staff.

Some churches have studied carefully the kind of congregation they have and the kind of pastor who would best serve them. A full time effective pastoral staff will take the church further than it would ever go without them. When a pastor and the elders work together a certain synergy exists allowing for more to be accomplished in the extending of God's kingdom than either of them could do alone. Some of the advantages of pastoral staff might be summarized as follows:

1. Provide day-to-day on site leadership and vision for the church
2. Devote time to focus on issues facing the church.
3. Devote time to ensure functional structures are in place so that all the church is operating within the stated vision of the church.
4. They can be very helpful in providing pastoral care and ensuring that the needs of people are being met.
5. They become a link to the community allowing a more effective outreach into the community.

B. Corporate structure

Sometimes the question is asked, "Can or should a Pastor be an elder/director"? The short answer is yes. But can they be a member of the board of elders/directors if the church is incorporated? An elder/director of a corporation may not be remunerated by a Registered Charity. This poses a problem if the salaried pastor becomes a director.

A workable corporate structure might be as follows:

1. The elders, apart from the pastoral staff are the directors of the corporation.
2. The Pastor and elders also serve as spiritual overseers of the church. On all non-corporate matters the pastor is a voting member of the Board of Elders but is not a director or member of the corporation.

C. The Role of Elders.

It will be very necessary to clarify for any pastor coming to a church how the elders and the pastor will relate to each other in terms of decision making. If they are one of the elders, subject to the limitations regarding corporate and legal matters noted above, the only difference between them and the other elders is the amount of time put in. The pastor should initiate changes to vision, goals and policies for the church to the board for their affirmation. The best model is where the elders have several main functions in addition to having overall responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the church such as policy development (e.g. constitution; philosophy of ministry, etc;) The major work may be done by the pastor but specific responsibility is borne by the Board of Elders. The elders need to also provide an accountability and mentoring environment for the pastor and to set goals and benchmarks for achieving the vision, mission and purposes of the church. In addition they will think through the shepherding needs of the flock, pray and maintain people contact.

Determination of Staffing Requirements:

A careful analysis of the needs of the congregation will result in identifying pastoral staff required. A rough rule of thumb might be one full time staff for every 100-150 adults in the congregation.

The elders must decide on the staffing priority. Sometimes a questionnaire completed by the congregation will give some insight as to their perceived needs. Usually starting with a Senior Pastor who will manage all other pastoral staff is a wise and prudent decision. He will also guide the elders in selecting the next staff person to engage. To engage a specific focused person (e.g. youth, worship, etc) without adequate supervision can result in frustration both for the person and the elders. As the church grows larger and adds additional staff the elders should increasingly release matters of hiring and supervising staff to the Senior or leading pastor.

D. Understanding the Church Environment

Knowing the church and its culture and environment is important for several reasons:

1. The church and its leadership, including the Pastoral Search Team (See section G), need to know the church and its needs and culture so they can identify the kind of person the church needs.
2. The applicants need to know the same (churches are encouraged to fill out a local church profile) so that they too can determine if they and the church are a good fit.
3. The following questions need to be addressed:
 - Are there leaders in place who will be active and effective in the search process? In other words, is there a capable and clearly identified group of people in place who can serve as a competent search committee?
 - There is a difference between leadership in a church and leadership in business. Church leadership requires leaders who practice the servant leadership that Jesus taught.

4. There should be a self examination among the elders along with possibly with some outside help, to consciously determine how they will adjust in their roles so that the pastor can serve and lead effectively among them. If leadership is expected of the pastor, the elders need to address how the pastor can be released to exercise the gift of leadership.
5. The elders might give some consideration to having an interim pastor who will help them in the process of finding a permanent replacement.
6. The elders should develop a list of Congregational values that explain the “DNA” or essence of the church so that a candidate will understand the nature of the church’s current environment. For example, if the church desires expository Bible teaching, a person with the primary gift and passion of evangelism would be the wrong person to engage.
7. In addition, the elders must clear up any theological issues that might be a source of contention when a new pastor is engaged. The statement of faith must be clearly understood by both the elders and pastoral candidates.
8. If there are existing spheres of unresolved controversy they should be acknowledged to incoming candidates so that such matters may be addressed openly from the beginning.
9. The elders provide direction for the pastor only when they have agreed together on a particular course of action the pastor is to follow.

E. Preparing the Church

Engaging a pastor, whether it for the first time or whether it is to replace one who has left, will always result in unsettling change for the congregation. The stability they enjoyed might be interrupted temporarily. Some will have a desire to have input into the selection process. Important steps need to be taken to make sure the congregation is ready to accept the changes that will be happening.

1. The process of finding a pastor should be communicated and periodic updates given to help ease the anxiety that church members might have.
2. Set up a prayer strategy with someone to coordinate prayer effort for God’s direction.
3. When the Elders are confident that engaging a pastor is in the best interest of the church, they should document a simple 5-6 step process that the church congregation will understand.
4. Communicate this process to the church, not only verbally but by way of bulletin inserts or by any means whereby the leadership generally communicates with congregation.

F. The Search process

The actual process of finding a pastor can happen in various ways.

1. The elders will establish a Search Team who will be empowered to do the work necessary to engage a pastor. The following considerations should be part of the process of forming the Search Team:

- It should be comprised of people who understand the culture and environment of the church-probably 6-12 persons, depending on the size of the church.
- It would be advisable to have both men and women on the team.
- The members should have the confidence of the elders.
- There should be at least one elder on the committee to keep the other elders informed as to the progress of the search.
- The procedures and guidelines for the process, including a proposed time-line should be communicated in writing by the elders.

2. The Search Team might bring together focus groups (people specifically chosen to focus on the pastoral staff needs) to meet with them to help develop a profile of the kind of person they feel the church needs.

Advertising:

Advertisements can be placed in several publications and promoted in such places as the following:

- CCCC Web Site
- www.ministryemployment.ca
- Seminaries and Training Institutions

Advertising should be clear and carefully worded so as to describe the church and the kind of person you are looking for. A carefully worded advertisement should help screen out inappropriate candidates. An example might be as follows:

Sample Pastoral Job Posting

A progressive thinking church of about 300 persons including children located in British Columbia is seeking a Pastor to assume leadership of the Pastoral staff and help guide the church into the future. He will be working in concert with a group of elders. He will be preaching on Sunday Mornings and will provide leadership to the Elders and other pastoral staff. There are presently 2 persons on staff who will be reporting to the Senior Pastor-Youth and Worship. Please email or forward resumes, including references and a video or audio tape of your preaching, to

As resumes come in screen them carefully. The following might be helpful guidelines in that process:

1. Look critically at past pastoral positions. Were there any unhappy experiences that need to be investigated?
2. Check out references thoroughly. Ask the hard questions:
 - What happened in the past?
 - Are they a team player?
 - Do they have vision?
 - What are their spiritual gifts?

- What are their strengths?
- What are their weaknesses?
- How do they relate one-on-one with people?
- What is their management/leadership style? Are they autocratic (or democratic or catalytic) as a leader? Yes/No

3. Listen to the tapes and determine if their style of preaching fits into the environment of the church.

4. Always acknowledge the receipt of the application promptly and advise them as to when they might hear from the church.

5. Make sure that the resume covers their spiritual journey and philosophy of ministry. Make sure their passions are consistent with the passions of the elders and the church.

6. Invite them to an interview with the team that is conducting the search process. Make it informal but ensure that issues are placed on the table for discussion. A suggestion might be to have two interviews as follows:

A formal interview with the Search Team where the questions listed in 2 above is thoroughly examined. An informal meeting should take place, (probably over dinner) which will include spouses of both the applicant and the Search Team.

7. Make sure that you meet the person's spouse at some stage and be sure to avoid at all costs the 2 for 1 price temptation.

8. The committee should settle on say 3 candidates and make a report to the elders identifying the relative strengths and weaknesses of each, but indicate that they would be happy with any of the candidates recommended.

9. The elders will review the applications, their notes, etc and then invite 1 or all 3 to meet with them. They will then make the selection. Present only person at a time to the congregation.

10. Keep the congregation informed through the process.

11. It is wise to have congregational approval of the selected candidate. The following may be a helpful process:

- Explain to the congregation that the Search Committee and Elders have endorsed this person and his family but will not make the appointment without at least a ____ % approval by the people.
- Have a social time when the congregation can meet with the candidate.
- Distribute a biographical sketch to allow the congregation to approve the person.
- Appoint the candidate as pastor

SAMPLE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

_____ is hereby engaged as Senior Pastor by _____ Community Church. There will be a probationary period of 90 days at the end of which time either the pastor or the Elders may terminate the appointment when notice is given within 7 days following the probationary period.

1. Responsibilities are as listed in the attached Job Description.
2. The position reports to the Board of Elders through the Chairman.
3. The position requires a minimum work week of 40 hours.
4. Vacation allowances are as follows:
 - a. From 1-5 years of service 2 weeks
 - b. From 5-15 years of service 3 weeks
 - c. After 15 years of service 5 weeks
5. There will be 9 statutory holidays: New Years Day, Good Friday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Civic Holiday, Labor Day Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day.
6. The salary for the position is \$ _____ per annum, to be reviewed annually.
7. In addition to the basic salary the following amounts will be paid:
 - a. Monthly Car allowance \$ _____
 - b. Monthly Book allowance of \$ _____
 - c. Annual Professional Development allowance \$ _____
8. Other matters of agreement:
 - a. The Senior Pastor agrees to accept the authority of the Board of Elders and will act as a non-voting member thereof in corporate matters.
 - b. The Pastor, by signing this agreement, acknowledges that he is in agreement with the church's stated Statement of Faith, Vision, Values and Constitution and the By Law of the Congregational Christian Churches in Canada.
 - c. The Pastor understands that if the elders determine that his conduct, lifestyle and teaching are deemed to be inconsistent with the church's and Congregational Christian Churches in Canada standards of behavior for leadership personnel, he will resign from his position.
 - d. It is understood that the pastor can engage in ministry outside the church as follows: _____
_____ (e.g. camp, preaching engagements, etc)

Chairman of the Elders-on behalf of the Board of Elders and the congregation

Date _____

Senior Pastor

Date _____

