

Pastoral Staff Search Manual

Revised 2015



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Acknowledgements

The content in this manual comes from a number of sources and was primarily assembled by Sam Breakey. While much is original, some material has been adapted or used with permission from documents produced by the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec, the Baptist Union of New Zealand, and the Canadian Baptists of Western Canada.

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Introduction

A. Getting Started

The calling of a Lead or Associate Pastor is one of the most important tasks of a Canadian Baptists of Western Canada congregation. Serving on the Pastoral Staff Search Committee may seem like a daunting responsibility but you will most likely discover as you work in partnership with other members of your team that it will be a landmark event in your personal journey with Jesus Christ.

As you do your work, you will be looking carefully at where your congregation is relationally and spiritually, and where you would like it to be. The kinds of ministry and mission that are significant in your church life will be important as you seek pastoral leadership. The experience and resources developed over the years by other Baptist congregations will help you as you search for candidates, screen those who are of interest, and finally present one candidate to your congregation.

The six chapters of this handbook align with the Pastoral Settlement Process diagram (Appendix 1). The appendices, making up the greatest portion of this manual, will provide surveys, interview and reference checking templates, “to do” lists and other practical resources etc. **You are encouraged to distribute copies of this manual to your committee members, and use the appendices as resources for the congregation.**

As you go about your task of selecting a candidate to present to your church, you will want to be in regular contact with the CBWC Settlement Coordinator. He/she has the skills and information that your committee will need during the months that you work together. He/she understands the value of the work of your committee and its significance to the life of your church and will give considerable time and attention to your search process.

Resource: Appendix 1 – CBWC Pastoral Settlement at a Glance

B. Biblical Principles of Pastoral Settlement

Members of a congregation seeking a lead or associate pastor commit themselves to locate and call candidates under the influence of the Holy Spirit, thus pleasing the Lord. A number of principles are to be maintained in the search process that will enable you and your candidates to discover God's will.

1. **You are Beginning a Spiritual Exercise:** Searching for a pastor is not the same as hiring an employee. In most workplaces candidates are compared side by side through interviews, tests and financial realities. Within the church, candidates are brought before God, to see them as God sees them in light of the needs of your congregation. It is good to be reminded that while we are conditioned to look at the outward appearance, God looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). In many ways searching for a pastor is as much about you as it is about finding the right person. Through this process, as you seek Him, He will enlarge your faith, deepen your dependence on the gifts of other members of the Search Committee, and confirm the mission to which you are called as a congregation.

Therefore, the search and settlement practice of Canadian Baptists of Western Canada is to engage with one prospective candidate at a time.

There are three practical reasons for this practice:

- a. To be open to seriously negotiate with more than one pastor at a time leaves the Pastoral Search Committee open to the high probability of polarizing itself and thus hampering its primary goal of finding one candidate to put forward to the church.
- b. Professional pastoral ethics require that no individual pastor will knowingly compete with any other pastor for a call to a church. Therefore, congregations must do all they can to avoid temptations to compromise on this important principle.
- c. Should the process of more than one candidate be allowed to get to the congregation itself, the risk of polarizing the congregation is greater than polarizing the Pastoral Search Committee. Such a

polarizing is far from helpful and can become the root cause for much unrest in the future.

- 2. Understanding the Call of God:** The concept of the "call" is a very significant part of Baptist Church life. God moves in the lives of persons and in the community of faith to call individuals to service. Often that call comes in the context of life in the local church 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 individuals that God has called set apart for His purposes.

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, candidates whose calling as a pastor has been confirmed by others will prayerfully seek to know God's ongoing will for their lives. The Search Committee will be working to be an instrument whereby God's call to a particular person is paired with the needs of a congregation to create a new partnership of ministry.

- 3. The Word of God, the Holy Spirit and Prayer:** Additional principles that are important in the search and settlement process are: the centrality of Scripture, the importance of the Holy Spirit, and our prayer commitment as followers of Christ.

It is our strong conviction as Baptists that we must ultimately conform to the counsel of God's Word. Thus, whether it be in the discernment of the biblically mandated qualities of a pastor, the New Testament's 'job description' for a pastor, the process of coming to consensus (Acts 15), or in the discovery of the purpose and mission of the church, we must turn to and be guided by God's Word.

It is biblically sound and practically important to give significance to the role that the Holy Spirit is expected to play in the search and settlement process. In the same way that the Spirit enabled the choosing of Paul and Barnabas, Lydia, and Timothy, a local congregation (and Pastoral Search Committee) should come to rely upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the discovery and settlement of a pastor.

- a. Individuals and the congregation must be committed to pray in a regular and informed way for God's guidance in the search for and discovery of a pastor. The Pastoral Search Committee should regularly pray regarding such issues as goals for the church, needs in the community, and primary functions of the pastor, etc.
- b. The committee or congregation that approaches the search process in a spiritually shallow way is discrediting the work of the Holy Spirit through the body.

Experience has proven that the pastoral search committee (and congregation) that keeps information and process in a healthy balance with the Holy Spirit and prayer will discover God's clear guidance.

4. **Hiring vs. Calling:** Congregations, search committees, and pastors all need to recognize the worth of the pastor in the economy of God and in the life of a congregation. The search for a pastor is much more than the simple search for someone to "do a job". Search committees and congregations, therefore, need to guard against merely "hiring an employee". In a similar way pastors need to recognize that the exploration of a call to a church is more than just "looking for a job". The divine elements of call and function must constantly be kept in view.

A pastor's worth and calling must be kept clear when developing a salary and benefit package. Luke 10:7 reminds us that the labourer is worthy of his/her hire. A church that fails to make adequate provision (at least to the average income of the members) for the material needs of its pastors lacks the essential integrity to be a vital church in God's economy.

C. Expected Process Timeframe

Every search committee's experience of pastoral staff selection will unfold uniquely, but a thorough selection process will work through all six stages. Some stages will move rapidly, others will take several meetings to complete or may consume more energy than anticipated. Occasionally it may be necessary to repeat a previous stage if the committee's progress is derailed by unforeseen

circumstances. The provided checklist will enable you to be encouraged by your progress.

Resource: Appendix 2 – Pastoral Staff Selection Process Checklist

D. You Don't Have To Do This Alone!

1. **CBWC Pastoral Settlement Coordinator:** One of the benefits of denominational partnership is the freedom for each congregation to extend ministry beyond itself and "do together with other churches what could not easily be done alone". Pastoral settlement is but one example of this statement.

The Canadian Baptists of Western Canada Settlement Advisory Committee, as an agent of the Assembly of member churches, is chaired by the CBWC Settlement Coordinator. It is comprised of the Regional Ministers of the CBWC and designates from the Executive Staff of the CBWC. Considerable time and effort is expended to prepare, seek, equip, and maintain spiritually gifted and committed pastoral personnel. Attention is given to such issues as the pastor's journey of faith, call to ministry, gifts and skills in ministry, as well as his/her ethical standards. Denominational staff members have access to "performance records" of CBWC pastors.

The CBWC Settlement Coordinator will prepare and counsel congregations seeking new personnel. He/she will expect regular communication from the chair of your committee but will place great value on the autonomy of the local church throughout the process.

2. **Local Resource Persons:** The Settlement Coordinator will from time to time appoint local resource persons to visit with your committee. In some cases this will be the Area/Regional Minister for your province. In other cases a layperson or pastor from another congregation who has been a member of one or more successful search processes may be invited to serve as an 'ex-officio' advisor.
3. **Interim/Transitional Pastor:** The Settlement Coordinator or Area/Regional Minister will be available to discuss the names of interim/transitional ministers, when appropriate. A growing emphasis is being placed on intentional interim ministry wherein a pastor/specialist in transitional

ministry is invited to help a church develop vision and address historical issues. It is important to establish finite terms to such appointments to keep the congregation moving forward rather than enter into open ended arrangements. Decisions can be made to renew contracts for an additional period of time. The interim/transitional pastor will focus on extending the ministry of the congregation and is not to be a member of the search committee. He/she is normally not eligible for consideration as a prospective pastor.

A CBWC resource entitled “A Guide to Interim or Transitional Ministry” is available at www.cbwc.ca or you can request a copy from the CBWC Settlement Office.

4. **Published Resources:** Typing ‘pastoral search resources’ in your computer search engine will undoubtedly lead you to valuable resource material. Books of interest at the time this manual was produced are:
 - a. *Confirming the Pastoral Call*, by Joseph Umidi, Kregal Publications, 2000.
 - b. *Pastor Search Committee Planbook*, by Gerald M. Williamson, Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1981.
 - c. *So You’re on the Search Committee*, Bunty Ketcham, The Alban Institute, 2005.
 - d. *Church Ministry Employment Manual*, Ryan Sandulak, Church Ministry Institute, 2006

E. Taking Advantage of a “Pastor-less” Period

There are several differing dynamics that come into play when a church is without a Lead or Associate Pastor. In many instances there are advantages to having a vacancy for a short period of time. Church leaders would be well advised to build upon the following observable dynamics:

1. **Renewed Dependence upon God:** Often when a church is pastor-less there is a greater tendency on the part of the people to recognize their dependence upon the Holy Spirit to prevail in and watch over the well-being and ministries of the congregation. Leaders should recognize and build upon this sense of dependency.

2. **Greater Sense of Personal Responsibility:** A second dynamic that prevails in congregations when they are pastor-less is that of people feeling more personally responsible for the ministries of the church. Wise church leaders will take advantage of this greater sense of responsibility and seek to call each member and adherent to new involvement and effort.
3. **Higher Tolerance of Performance Mistakes:** Many church leaders undertake responsibilities in a pastor-less church not normally their responsibility. In most instances the congregation is very tolerant of mistakes that would otherwise generate complaints and criticism. Leaders should not hesitate, therefore, to venture into new roles and tasks during the pastor-less period.
4. **Openness to Define the Kind of Pastor Wanted:** When a church is without a pastor and engaged in the search for a new pastor, it is the ideal time for a congregation to pray and openly explore the kind of pastor/leader desired.
5. **Occasion to Develop a Clear Definition of the Church:** The kind of pastor wanted is determined in some respect by the kind of church that is seeking a pastor. The pastor-less period should be seen as an ideal period to examine and define the church and its ministries so as to be able to inform the prospective candidate just what kind of a church he/she is being invited to consider. Resources are supplied later in this booklet to assist the Pastoral Search Committee and other church leaders in this important process.\
6. **New Appreciation for Pastoral Ministry:** In the absence of a pastor most congregations and individuals develop a whole new appreciation for pastoral ministries. Though there are some genuine hazards for a church in its pastor-less stage, there is every reason to believe that good leadership will enable a church to "grow" during the same period. Such growing will not just happen, but with prayerful and energetic leadership the pastor-less period can be a very productive and informative time.

Chapter 1 – Initiate

A. Primary Responsibility of the Search Committee

Your task is to select a lead pastor or associate who will lead, direct, and guide your congregational ministry for Christ in the world. In some cases you may also be asked to coordinate pulpit supply, determine overall staffing needs, respond to conflicting visions for future ministry, and even create a financial package for an incoming candidate. However it is necessary to create boundaries that will protect you from being sidetracked from your primary responsibility.

Scripture teaches that all the people of God are involved in ministry (1 Corinthians 12:14). CBWC affirms both men and women who are called by God to positions of leadership within the church. In openness to the Spirit's direction you will want to give equal consideration to all viable candidates without regard to age, race, gender, physical challenges, socio-economic status, or marital status.

Too often Search Committees dismiss serious consideration of a younger candidate just out of training or an older minister with significant years of service to give. In doing so, great opportunities can be missed. A younger person can bring freshness and vitality to ministry and can provide new energy and vision to a congregation. An older person can bring valuable wisdom and experience. Similarly, unexpected positive traits can be found in people from diverse backgrounds: ethnic minorities can have insight into our Canadian culture from outside perspectives; a physically challenged person can bring a greater sense of compassion to a congregation; and someone who has struggled with poverty can bring a deeper awareness of social justice issues in our society.

Keep in mind that you are seeking an individual who will meet your church's specific current needs as well as help your church fulfill its ministry in the future. Your committee's primary function is to find that minister and recommend him or her to your church for approval and call. Later in the manual you will find assessment tools that will enable your committee to better understand the congregation's vision of ministry.

As you prepare to call a new pastor:

1. Actively seek the leading of God's Spirit.

2. The Importance of the Chairperson: The chair is a pivotal position on any committee. A weak chairperson will inevitably lead to a lengthy, confusing, and frustrating search process. On the other hand an insensitive or autocratic chairperson will similarly generate a stressful and frustrating set of dynamics. "Somewhere between these extremes most committees include among their members that special person who is balanced and sensitive in thinking and acting, who has a clear grasp of the task ahead and can articulate it, and who is devoutly committed to Jesus Christ as Lord of the Church. This is the person that you need to chair your search." *Finding a Pastor*, T. A. McConnell, pg. 22.

The chair becomes the key individual who will determine the actual nature of the meetings and whether or not the search process keeps moving. The chair must also accept responsibility for the orderly and straightforward conduct of business, and a clear process of communication and reporting.

The chair is also accountable to elicit a co-operative commitment from each committee member to give the necessary time and attention to the committee work.

Qualities of a Good Chairperson:

- Able to lead the group to consensus
- Able to involve every member of the committee in sharing their ideas and opinions
- Able to fairly bring his/her own viewpoint into the discussions without controlling the decision-making process

C. Review Pastoral Staff Search Manual Together

This manual, at first glance, may have appeared to be somewhat overwhelming. However as you become familiar with its contents you will discover that it portrays in an orderly manner the "best practices" that congregations have used through the years. At your first meeting review the material together; you will discover that at least someone in the group will navigate the material more easily than others. Make that person, in conjunction with the chair, your manual resource person.

D. Contact the CBWC Settlement Coordinator

Canadian Baptists of Western Canada has dedicated one staff person to oversee the pastoral settlement process for pastors and congregations. He/she is available to provide assistance to your Search Committee as you seek to find a pastor for your congregation. Normally all communication between the Settlement Coordinator and your committee will proceed through the chairperson.

When to contact the Pastoral Settlement Office:

1. When you can provide contact information for your search chairperson
2. When you would like to arrange for an orientation meeting for your search committee
3. When you want to compile and post a job description on the CBWC website
4. When you want to begin receiving MIPs from our settlement list of candidates
5. When you want to stop receiving MIPs
6. When you can provide updates on your process until a candidate is called
7. When you can provide the start date for your new pastor

E. Establish Reporting Process to Congregation

At the beginning of this process, it is good to introduce the committee to the congregation:

- Explain briefly the steps you will be following
- Request prayer support for the committee members and the task they are undertaking
- Specific information, such as names being considered, must **not** be shared
- Explain the ways you will be providing input as time goes on
- If the previous minister is still in the church, he or she should only be provided with the information that is released to the congregation as a whole.

F. Predictable Dips in the Road

1. **Discouragement:** At some point in a Pastoral Search Committee's tenure weariness will set in. Theodore McConnell, who coined the phrase "exhaustion cycle", predicts that will strike the typical committee at the six or seven month point. If the committee's work has been marked by clear goals and marked progress, any discouragement will not be as severe.
2. **Power Plays:** It is predictable that "powerful people", or people who seek to have disproportional influence, will seek to influence the work of the Pastoral Search Committee. The most acceptable resolution to this possible pitfall is to see to it that "power players" do not get assigned to the Pastoral Search Committee.
3. **Name Dropping:** Some will suggest candidates recommended by a "friend of a friend in Toledo" or thereabouts. To better understand and compare cultural and social differences consider only those candidates that have completed a CBWC Ministry Information Profile (MIP). It is beneficial to compare, as the saying goes, "apples to apples and oranges to oranges".

Chapter 2 – Survey

A. Great Decisions Begin with Solid Foundations

Four variables contribute to successful pastoral settlement. Obviously, the committee will seek to discover as much as possible about a candidate by asking significant questions of credible references. At the same time a good match will also depend upon your ability to uncover your church's history, unwritten values, and preferred future. An accurate understanding of the needs of your community will enable you to call a pastor who is able to lead you to respond to others. An exit interview with the outgoing pastor, if available, will also be profitable.

At first impression the survey requirements suggested below will appear too extensive. Experience has shown, however, that the more thorough your "portrait" is, the more helpful the information will be to both committee and candidate. **While the survey process should come under the oversight of the**

search committee membership, others can be delegated to complete the surveys sharing the responsibility of your committee. A number of congregations have collected data efficiently by using www.surveymonkey.com.

B. Congregational History

Assign someone from outside your committee to prepare a congregational history document outlining when the congregation was formed, when buildings were built, names and tenure of pastors, etc. It is also helpful to create a "personal narrative history" revealing the "highs" and "lows" of the church through the years.

C. Pastoral Exit Interview (Optional)

An exit interview conducted just prior to the pastor's departure will accomplish the following:

- Provide opportunity for the pastor and congregation to say thank you to each other
- Reveal patterns that contributed to past accomplishments and difficulties
- Bring meaningful closure between leaders prior to departure
- Enhance the future ministry of this pastor, the new one, and your congregation

If the pastor is married, the spouse should be invited to participate in the exit interview. In some circumstances it may be advisable for the spouse to be interviewed separately. Include elders, pastoral staff, and church members as necessary. Your Regional Minister would also like to be involved in this interview. In many cases it is appropriate for the Regional Minister to conduct the interview, and also have another interview with other church leaders.

Resources: Appendix 5 – Optional Confidential Interviews at Pastoral Exit

Appendix 6 – Template: Recommended Separation Agreement with Outgoing Minister

Appendix 7 – CBWC Pastoral Protocol Following Resignation

D. Core Values Discovery

In marriage and business, spoken and unspoken values influence the how decisions are made and how we respond to conflict and the unexpected. The greater the number of people involved, the more difficult it can be to discover the most potent influences. The same is true in congregational life. Distribute the following document to different groups (church leaders, moms and tots participants, recent graduates, etc.) for discussion. A summary of the results should be presented to the senior board, the search committee, and the CBWC representative.

Resource: Appendix 8 – What Currently Has the Most Influence in This Church?

E. Congregational Profile

Collect information regarding how your congregation reflects the demographic of your community, its programs, and its financial health.

Resource: Appendix 9 – Congregational Profile

F. Community Profile

Demographic information (i.e. cultural heritage, language groups, median age and income, religious preferences, etc.) based on Statistics Canada material can provide strategic insight regarding your community. It is available from your local government offices or Outreach Canada for a nominal fee.

Resources: Appendix 10 – Community Profile

<http://en.outreach.ca/resources/research/communityprofiles.aspx>

G. Preferred Attributes of an Incoming Pastor

You have spent time probing your congregation's past, looked at its present membership and your community, and have begun to see more clearly, the direction you need to go in the future. You are beginning to recognise the

leadership gifts you will need in the days ahead. What you now have to determine, is what leadership gifts are already in the church, and which ones you will need in your next pastor.

*Resources: Appendix 11 – Preferred Attributes of an Incoming Minister
Appendix 12 – Your Ideal Pastoral Candidate*

****Create and analyze your own easy to use custom web survey to assess valuable responses from a large portion of your congregation with www.surveymonkey.com.**

H. Develop a Job Description

The development of a job description is one of the most significant responsibilities presented to a congregation. In some cases this will be the responsibility of the search committee; in others, the senior board. A well-defined and clearly articulated statement is a foundation for successful ministry. It is important the congregation and the pastor have the same understanding of the church's mission and the part he/she has to play in fulfillment of that mission.

Though it is important to secure as much valid input from the congregation as possible, it is also important for the Pastoral Search Committee to secure the advice, counsel, and guidance of the CBWC Settlement Coordinator. For a Pastoral Search Committee "to presume to write the pastor's job description without professional counsel is acting in a way similar to the lay committee or board of a hospital that presumes to direct a surgeon in handling the details of a complex surgical procedure." (McConnell, page 63)

A well-conceived job description will include the following:

- **Preferred Personal Qualities:** Cover such matters as relational skills, spiritual gifts, and sensitivity to the identified contemporary issues in the church and its community.
- **Desired Professional Skills:** Define expectations in the areas of counselling, preaching, administration, leadership ability, and communication. Specific details (such as particular target groups, etc.) can be added.

- **Job Responsibilities:** Create a clear delineation of the actual duties and responsibilities attached to the specific pastoral responsibility. Define the respective duties and responsibilities that are attached to each responsibility.

It should be noted that the proposed job description should also be seen as a guideline for hiring, but the final job description should be developed after settlement and a careful negotiation with the newly selected pastor so as to express the uniqueness of his/her personal gifts, skills, and expertise in the light of the needs of the church. Job description samples may be obtained from the CBWC Settlement Coordinator's office.

Resource: Appendix 13 – Sample Job Description

I. Prepare Congregation and Community Information Package

In one document, compile each of the documents prepared in the “Survey” stage, with the exception of the “Memorandum of Understanding” referred to below. The MOU document will be unique to each candidate. One copy of the compiled document should be sent to the CBWC Settlement Coordinator to assist in candidate presentation. Other copies can be released to prospective candidates of your choosing.

J. Create Memorandum of Understanding Draft

Before speaking with candidates, it is profitable to determine the high and low ends of the salary and benefit spectrum. We strongly recommend the use of two CBWC documents when creating a package that will be acceptable to both the congregation and incoming pastor. An annual “Salary Grid” reflective of pastoral salaries in your province and a “Memorandum of Understanding Template” will assist your senior board to come to a fair decision. Both documents are prepared as recommendations. Be sure to seek counsel from the CBWC Treasurer or Settlement Coordinator before rewording any clauses.

A final package should include the following information: salary range, pension and health coverage, housing, hospitality, vehicle expenses, and telephone expenses. It is recommended that such a document include further details including study leave, holidays, attendance at denominational events, office

equipment, etc. **Make sure that the church leadership is in agreement with the proposed terms and conditions.** Again, this may be delegated to a group outside the search committee.

Resource: Appendix 14 – Sample Memorandum of Understanding

K. CBWC Culture Documents

From time to time individuals searching for a church home or ministry position within CBWC want to know more about our denomination. Individuals seeking settlement are directed to our ‘Read This First’ document. Also, a descriptive document has been created to provide an overview of decisions that have been made at CBWC Assemblies that inform who we are collectively. Under Baptist polity this statement may or may not reflect the practice of a specific congregation.

Resource: Appendix 15 – ‘Read This First’ Document

Appendix 16 – CBWC Culture Statement – A Descriptive Document

Chapter 3 – Discern

A. Receive Ministry Information Profiles (MIP)

The CBWC Settlement Office maintains a list of pastors who have indicated openness to new ministry opportunities. Prospective candidates prepare Ministry Information Profiles through which you can compare one individual to another. More than resumes, these documents (often thirteen pages in length) provide significant details about a pastor’s background, journey of faith, ministry experience, and priorities. An MIP template is downloadable from the CBWC website www.cbwc.ca through the resources tab.

The CBWC Settlement Coordinator and the CBWC Settlement Committee will prayerfully select individuals that are a potential fit for your congregation. Non-CBWC approved candidates may be considered but it is expected that they will participate in the same candidate screening process outlined for CBWC candidates.

Other candidate sources include seminaries and Bible Colleges, congregational connections, sister denominations, and the internet. Private submissions may also become available. Recognise, however, that the further outside the CBWC circle an individual comes from, the more difficult it is to determine if the references are reliable. **Agree and hold to a cut-off date for receiving names.**

B. Short-List Candidates

Keeping in mind the church profile and the criteria for leadership that has emerged, it is now necessary to reduce the prospect list down to two or three. This part of the process can take several meetings, and you may need the help of a CBWC representative.

C. Reference Checks for Short-listed Candidates

Contacting the references listed in the candidate's MIP is an important part of a selection committee's work. It is imperative that this part of a process be conducted in a most confidential manner; referees may reveal highly personal information about the candidate. Relationships between pastors and their churches can be easily disrupted. Please be sensitive to and exercise care in contacting the provided references. If and when the candidate needs a referee that isn't from his/her current church, the Settlement Office can be contacted for assistance.

The importance of gathering information from discerning people who have experienced the life and work of a candidate cannot be overvalued. It is possible to become so enthusiastic about an individual that the significant input of referees becomes superficial. Pastors frequently do not have a complete understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and how their leadership style may affect others. We advise that no candidate be interviewed, even by phone, until information from referees has been evaluated.

Your search committee should decide which of its members will make the calls to the referees provided. It is helpful for two members to share the line to pick up as much information as possible. Plan the questions you will put to a referee as carefully as you will plan your interview questions. Identify specific topics about which to ask. Be ready to describe your church's situation. The person giving the reference often needs such information in order to make appropriate comments.

Be careful not to make promises or commitments, which you may personally favour but for which you have no directive from the congregation to make.

Resource: Appendix 17 – Sample Reference Check Form

Close your conversation with the referee by asking a general question that invites the volunteering of information not otherwise covered. For example - "Is there anything else that you believe our search committee might need to know about this candidate?"

D. Review Collected Information

Your committee will want to discuss all comments received, whether positive or negative. Seek the Lord's wisdom through prayer. Commit yourselves to being open with each other about any feedback that may require follow-up or concern. Make sure to make a note to follow up these concerns if a candidate interview is scheduled. Of course, your concerns must be addressed without violating confidences. Remember that the most effective leaders will still not be able to please everyone. Do not reject a candidate merely because of a single unsubstantiated negative comment. What you want to watch for are positive or negative patterns that appear from several conversations.

If there are outstanding questions after reviewing the referees' comments feel free to discuss them with the CBWC Settlement Coordinator or Regional Minister who will have contacts that may be able to help clarify unresolved issues.

E. Non-Committal Telephone Interviews

At this point a search committee may wish to contact a candidate for two reasons:

1. To follow up referee comments or information found in the Ministry Information Profile for clarifying which candidate(s) to set aside.
2. To discover if a candidate would be interested in entering a mutual process of finding a pastor for your specific congregation. (Committees must respect that pastors, as required by CBWC ministerial ethical policy, are limited to engaging as a "candidate of choice" with one congregation at a time.)

Be careful not to make promises or commitments in these clarification calls. To protect against raising his or her expectations it is advised that only selected committee members participate in the call.

F. Select Candidate of Choice

In summary, through prayer, preliminary reference checks, and then declared non-committal telephone interviews, your committee will come to a consensus on the candidate of choice (top candidate). All others must now be set aside until this candidate of choice is eliminated for any reason. The Pastoral Search Committee can then decide whether or not to approach the next person on their prioritized list or establish a fresh candidate list.

*****Under no circumstance should the committee engage more than one candidate at a time. (Please review page 6 for more details.)**

Inform your candidate of choice by telephone of your interest in continuing to another level of discussion. It is imperative at this early stage of exploration that both the pastoral search committee and the candidate recognize and agree that a “willingness to explore a call” does not commit either party to any obligations.

Once there is willingness to explore a call, the committee should forward any outstanding documentation to the candidate - detailed job description, community and congregational profile, etc. Provide as much material as possible so the candidate can prayerfully consider the opportunity.

Inform unselected candidates that have submitted profiles directly to the search committee that someone else is being pursued further. A short email is sufficient. A formal letter to all unselected candidates is not required until your candidate of choice has agreed to a candidacy weekend. See Chapter 4 E.

Resource: Appendix 18 – Sample Letter to Candidate No Longer Being Considered

The full search committee will proceed to a first formal interview with the candidate of choice. You may ask the candidate if he/she wishes to include his/her spouse in the interview. Conference calls are the normal means of interviewing at this stage.

Chapter 4 – Decide

When the search committee agrees together to proceed with one candidate, the whole committee may schedule a follow up call with the selected candidate's references. Then an interview with the candidate can be set up. In some rare instances members of a search committee visit a worship service or some other situation where the prospective candidate is leading/preaching so as to see the candidate function in the context where he/she is currently serving. If such an on-site visitation occurs it should always be with the prior consent of the candidate and should not gain the attention of the pastor's congregation.

A. Interview Essentials

1. **Interview Format:** There are two steps to the committee-candidate interaction:
 - a. **Telephone, Skype, or Video Conference:** The first step is to secure a location with quality speakerphone, webcam, or videoconference capability. Such a setting will provide advantages beyond cost saving. It will permit you to discover how the candidate relates with others without getting too far into the process, it will introduce you to the practice of sharing the questioning and answer interpretation, and it will allow the pastor's spouse to enter the conversation without feeling unnecessarily pressured. Determine in advance what issues need to be discussed and who will raise them with the candidate.
 - b. **Face to Face Interview:** The second step is to have the candidate (and possibly his/her spouse) meet the committee face to face. It is important, that the search team have some degree of certainty as to suitability of the candidate prior to an on-site visit. It is advisable to have the teleconference first and then, if the committee and candidate wish to pursue further, to arrange for the face to face meeting. Establish an interview date which allows all committee members to attend. Allow sufficient time, preferably a full evening or its equivalent. The interview could be at the church or in a home. Ensure that the setting will allow for a relaxed atmosphere and ensure confidentiality.

2. **Interview Preparation:** The value of an interview will depend on the committee's preparation. Each member will arrive better equipped if you follow these practices:
- a. Prayerfully review the Candidate's Ministry Information Profile as well as any background information that has been gleaned from referees and others.
 - b. Review the Congregation and Community Information Package in conjunction with the gifts, character, and experience of the candidate. The candidate should also by now have reviewed this material as well.
 - c. Each member of the committee should become well informed about the church, its membership, structure, direction for ministry, and relationship to the community. They should read again the congregation's constitution and by-laws. This will ensure that the candidate will be able to receive answers to his/her questions with accuracy and cohesion.
 - d. If he/she is married, the candidate could invite his/her spouse to the interview. Although it is the candidate who will primarily serve the church, an awareness of the spouse's feelings towards a call can be important. If invited, the interview process should include time for the spouse to participate.
 - e. Establish an interview date which allows all committee members to attend.
 - f. A confirmation email should be sent to the pastoral candidate. This should give all the details: hospitality arrangements, time of the interview, expense arrangements, exact place of the meeting(s), and directions. Even if these have been given in a telephone conversation, it is important for these details to be sent in written form.
 - g. The committee is responsible for **all** expenses or arrangements related to hosting candidates and spouses. These will include accommodation, meals, and transport costs. Prompt reimbursements will give the candidate a good impression of the administrative structure of the church.
 - h. If scheduling more than one interview you may wish to increase the number of people on the search committee for the second interview by adding

spouses and/or other church leaders. Continue to stress the need for confidentiality.

- i. Be prayerful, well organised, and prepared, and your interview will go well. Remember that you are going to be giving the person their first impression of your church. Make sure it is a good one!
 - j. **Confidentiality is essential:** the persons who have been interviewed may not be ready to have their current congregation know they are considering a move.
3. **Question Preparation:** Search committees generally ask questions that reveal valuable character, competency, and experiential information about a candidate. Yet important insight can be gained from how a question is answered. A willingness to be transparent, to speak of lessons learned the hard way, and evidence of allowing for the give and take of an interview, reveal deeper competencies that will contribute to the maturation of relationship between an incoming pastor and the congregation. Tentatively discuss remuneration and employment commitments. **The sample questions in the Appendix are to be spread across the two interviews.**

Resources: *Appendix 19 – Sample Candidate Interview Questions*
 Appendix 20 – Questions You May Be Asked

4. **Interview Evaluation:** Meet as soon as possible, as a committee, to carefully evaluate the interaction with the candidate. Prayer should be central to the committee's deliberation, seeking direction and guidance in selecting the person needed for your church.

Look again at the findings of the congregational survey, showing the needs of the church and the personal and professional competencies needed by the new pastor.

- a. Did the candidate meet these expectations?
- b. Respond to the manner in which he/she answered the questions.
- c. Did he/she demonstrate the professional abilities necessary for your congregation?
- d. Does he/she have the leadership style and ability that will fit your congregation?

- e. What did you discover about his/her spiritual journey that would help in relations with others?
- f. How aware was he/she of his/her personal strengths, weaknesses, successes, and failures?
- g. How well does he/she grasp the issues within your congregation and community?

You will need to decide if further information is still needed, either from the candidate, referees, or a CBWC Settlement Coordinator. You may wish to spend a further week praying before making a decision.

B. Return to References, Review Credentials, Seek God's Wisdom

1. **What is God Saying?** By definition a "Christ follower" is one who seeks to choose as Christ would choose in a sequence of personal decisions we face on a daily basis. While faith begins with the choice to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, it continues in an ongoing willingness to discern the will of our Lord. The Apostle Paul writes, "Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is" (Ephesians 5:15-17).

Spiritual discernment has four purposes. Seeking the will of Christ we choose between truth and error, between right and wrong, between legalism and freedom, and between good and best. In most cases, the choice between good and best is critical to the pastoral selection process. Consider the following as you make your decisions as a search committee:

- a. We are called to obey God's moral will as revealed in Scripture.
- b. We are free and responsible to make choices within the moral will of God.
- c. Wise decisions will be consistent with Scripture, our research, the counsel of others, and previous experience.
- d. Willingness to obey God produces a spirit of humility; His perspective will be greater than our individual or collective insight and can be revealed in dissident voices.

Questions like the following can provide deeper discernment:

- a. Will this candidate stretch our congregation and cause us to seek our full potential in the Lord?
- b. If I was advising a search committee of another congregation how would my advice be different?
- c. In light of our past experiences, our current circumstances, and our future hopes and dreams, what is the wise thing for us to do?
- d. What will I lose if the candidate of my choice is not chosen?

Resource: Appendix 21 – Search Committee Spiritual Reflection Exercise

2. Unanimously Come to a Decision: You will need to check your church constitution, but the normal process would be to first take the name of your potential candidate to the church’s senior leadership body (Deacons, Elders, or Council, etc.). Then, after giving the required notice for calling a congregational meeting, the name will be taken to the church as a recommendation of the leadership and the Search Committee. Make sure you know what the quorum is and what percentage is required for this decision. If you are unable to reach agreement, you may choose to continue in prayer, re-interview, or return to Stage 3 – Select.

C. Confirm Details of Memorandum of Understanding with the Candidate of Choice

It is appropriate that the candidate know the details of the salary and benefit package framework before he or she will be presented to the congregation. The CBWC salary grid provides a figure for the salary including clergy housing allowance before taxes. Benefits are not included in this figure. The grid makes no distinction about pastoral role.

D. Obtain Permission to Present Candidate Name to Congregation

This may seem to be obvious but there have been situations where the enthusiasm of a search committee exceeded the decision-making pace of a pastoral family.

E. Inform Unselected Candidates of Candidacy Decision

Resource: Appendix 22 – Sample Letter to Inform Candidates Not Yet Notified of the Candidacy Decision

Chapter 5 – Announce

A. Present Candidate

1. **Present Candidate's Name to the Senior Board:** You will need to check your church constitution, but the normal process would be to first take the name of your potential candidate to the church's leadership body, (Deacons, Elders, and Council, etc.). Then, after giving the required notice for calling a congregational meeting, the name will be taken to the church as a recommendation of the leadership and the Search Committee.
2. **Establish Clear Agreement re: the Purpose and Process of Visit:** Before a candidate is introduced to the congregation there should be a clear agreement as to the purpose of the visit, the discussion subjects, and nature of the proposed interaction. It is imperative that the committee, the candidate, and the board affirm that this stage of exploration still does not impose any obligations on either party to extend a call or affirmatively reply to a call. Clearly delineate how the candidate's expenses will be prepaid.
3. **Plan Candidacy Weekend:** It is important to allow the candidate and church to mutually engage in the activities of an average congregational weekend. He/she should preach if preaching will be a major responsibility. Balance should be maintained between exposure to large groups, individuals, and families.

Be sensitive to the stressful nature of this exploratory visit. Most candidates will prefer to be hosted in a local hotel, which will allow for reflection and recovery time for the candidate and spouse. Meal provision in family homes should allow for relaxed interaction.

Provide opportunity for meetings with other staff or boards, tours of the church buildings, community, schools, and parsonage, as appropriate. A real estate agent from the congregation may be willing to introduce the candidate to the housing market.

4. **Announce Candidate's Visit to the Congregation:** Members and adherents should be notified of the intended exploratory visit. The notice should include a brief but adequate résumé of the candidate and the activity timetable. Delay the release of the name as long as possible to protect the candidate who in most cases will not have announced the visit to his/her current congregation. In some cases it may be best that the name not be provided until the visit begins.
5. **Introduce the Candidate in the Major Congregational Setting:** A search committee member should outline the candidate's background and experience. It is important to tell the congregation why this particular person is being presented, their impression of his/her ability and skill for ministry, and their reasoning why this individual is the candidate of choice. Speak clearly of the way God has led you. Additional members of the Search Committee may also wish to share their convictions.

B. Call for the Congregational Decision

After the candidate agrees to let his/her name stand for recommendation, the search committee or senior board should immediately make the necessary arrangements to call the congregational meeting where the recommendation will be put to a vote. Congregational by-laws generally call for as much as two weeks' notice for such a meeting. The candidate and his/her family should not be in attendance.

The committee should describe in a general way, the terms and conditions that have been offered to the candidate. Any discussion should remain confidential. Voting instructions should include the following: voting eligibility, secret ballot, the number required for a quorum when calling a pastor, the percentage required to accept the recommendation, etc. This information can be found in the congregational by-laws.

Provide adequate opportunity to fully process the decision in a prayerful and carefully reasoned manner. It is imperative to have congregants seek the Lord's direction and reveal the intention of the greatest number of people.

1. **Communicate the Result:** If the vote is positive, put forward a motion to authorize the search committee chairperson to immediately extend the

invitation of the congregation by telephone. He/she is entitled to be informed of the percentage. Time should be given to the candidate for prayerful consideration before the final acceptance of the call is made. In some cases the candidate may have already reached a decision to accept the call if extended. He/she may be prepared to indicate an immediate acceptance. It is appropriate to establish a period (up to two weeks) in which the candidate is expected to either accept or decline the call. A follow up official letter, including the salary and benefit agreement, should be forwarded to the candidate as soon as possible after acceptance. Inform the congregation the following Sunday of the candidate's intention.

If the vote is negative the search committee chairperson must immediately notify the candidate by telephone of the negative result, and then forward a letter through which an official indication of the negative vote is communicated.

Resources: *Appendix 23 – Sample Letter Extending Call*
 Appendix 24 – Sample Letter Releasing Candidate after
 Insufficient Vote

2. **Confirm Intention of Candidate:** The candidate informs the search committee of his/her intention in time frame agreed upon.
3. **Inform CBWC Settlement Coordinator:** Call or email to keep the Settlement Coordinator up to date on the result of congregational vote and candidate's decision.

Chapter 6 – Transition

A. Establish a Ministry Partnership

1. **Warmly Welcome Your New Pastor and Family:** Your new pastor and family will come to your community as strangers. Your committee and the church leadership can do much to make them feel at home and to introduce them to your own congregation and to your community.

- a. If a pastor is purchasing his/her own home, they will need to be introduced to a real estate agent that has demonstrated a servant heart in other roles.
- b. Temporary accommodation may be required for home location trips.
- c. If there are children, it can be helpful for others of the same age from your congregation to send greetings by email or regular post. One church sent spending money for use while travelling.
- d. If there is a manse, make sure it is completely ready. Any redecoration should be done in consultation with the incoming pastor. Repairs and maintenance should all be completed.
- e. In some cases meals are provided on the day the family moves in.
- f. It may be beneficial to introduce your new staff member to the community through an article in the local paper as soon as he/she arrives.
- g. Arrange an early meeting for this pastor with the church leaders/pastors in the community. An informal coffee and dessert gathering can be helpful.

2. **Arrange The Move:** The total moving expenses for the new pastor's move should be borne by the church. Those expenses should include the cost of moving furniture, books, and all household effects. Provision should also be made for the travel, accommodation, and meal costs for the pastor and his/her family from the time they leave their former home until they are established in the parsonage or in their own home.

Arrangements for the actual moving of books and household effects can be placed in the hands of the new pastor to arrange from his/her end. If the pastor makes the arrangements with a moving company he/she is usually requested to secure three estimates and then communicate with the designated committee member to determine which company should be contracted for the move.

In some instances the pastor or individuals known to the pastor or to the calling congregation are willing to offer their own equipment or to rent equipment and to assist in the move. The congregation should be sensitive to the wishes of the pastor in this regard and in all instances should be sure to secure adequate insurance coverage for the goods and furnishings while in transit.

The search committee should be authorized to pay for all expenses incurred. Receipts are required for repayment. If the move requires volunteer help the search committee is charged with overseeing the details of recruiting and supervising the move to ensure adequate assistance is provided at all stages.

- 3. Prepare The Study:** It is extremely important for a congregation to recognize that the pastor's study can either be a hindrance to, or encouragement in, his/her ministry. The property committee of the church should be encouraged in every way to give full attention to providing as much comfort, convenience, book storage, counselling space, and work space as is appropriate to the job description and the congregation's expectations of the pastor. A major cleaning should be a minimal requirement. Many offices do not get updated with pastoral transition. If you have updated your home in the past five years, the office likely needs the same attention.

Unless major renovations are in order it may be easier for the property committee to await the pastor's arrival before undertaking to redecorate or make additions. Any plans for decoration or renovations should receive the pastor's approval in advance.

- 4. Extend Hospitality and Friendship:** The search committee should become personally involved in extending a tangible and warm welcome to the new pastor and his/her family. Creative individuals can be asked to form a special welcoming committee to provide assistance with unpacking (if the pastor and family are open to such help), a pantry shower, a house warming party, take-in meals for the family during the unpacking stage, hosted lunches and suppers during the unpacking period, guided tours of the community, etc.

B. Make Commitments

- 1. Plan the Commissioning Service:** While senior church leaders may take over on function, it is appropriate for the search committee to make sure that this is more than a ceremony. This service should be a real celebration. Some churches have the commissioning in a Sunday morning service; others would have it at a time when neighbouring congregations can participate.

Cooperating with the new pastor, you will need to plan the following:

- a. Determine service date and time

- b. Send invitations to nearby congregations; encourage those who cannot attend to send greetings
 - c. Select worship leaders and someone to bring a charge to the new pastor
 - d. Secure someone to convene the Commissioning Liturgy. This will normally be a denominational leader or nearby pastor. Material can be obtained from your CBWC Regional Minister.
 - e. Officially, yet warmly, welcome the minister, spouse, and children with appropriate gifts
 - f. Invite leaders to share greetings
 - g. Prepare a time of shared refreshment after the service
2. **Establish a Pastoral Support and Advisory Group:** For the sake of continuity, some congregations invite committee members to be part of a review process (scheduled at regular intervals) that takes place after the pastor arrives. This may or may not be the prevue of the senior board.
3. **Register Benefit Packages:** Shortly after his/her arrival at the church a pastor new to Canadian Baptists of Western Canada will receive a complete packet of information and registration forms (pension and insurance benefits, health coverage, etc.). The forms should be completed and returned to the denominational office as soon as possible because enrolment deadlines affect coverage. In most instances the pastor is responsible for completing these forms, but the search committee should make clear which benefits the church treasurer will be paying. Details regarding the various dimensions of benefits will have been agreed upon at the time of the negotiation of the salary and benefit package.
4. **Establish Denominational Credentials:** The Assembly of CBWC churches has delegated the licensing, training, and oversight of ministry personnel to the Ministerial Credentials Committee (MCC). As a result the denomination, on behalf of its churches, is charged with maintaining an accurate list of all ministry staff within CBWC. Credentials are entrusted to pastors so that they may officiate at weddings, qualify for a Clergy Housing Allowance with Revenue Canada, and maintain ministerial protocols. Distinct credentials are provided for Candidates for Ministry Training, Youth Ministers, Children and Family Ministers, and individuals in ministry beyond a local congregation. There are separate credentials for Licensed Ministers and fully Accredited (Ordained) Ministers. The MCC requires the full co-operation of your church

board in order to properly fulfill the wish of the Assembly that all pastoral staff persons be credentialed.

If your new pastor is ordained and was serving in Canadian Baptists of Western Canada when called, only a simple change of address and congregational affiliation is required.

If your pastor has come from outside the CBWC, but from among our Canadian Baptist Ministries partners, approach your Regional Minister to initiate a transfer of credentials to the CBWC.

If your pastor was ordained by, and holds current credentials with, a non-Canadian Baptist denomination holding membership in the Baptist World Alliance, ask the MCC, through your Regional Minister, to process a transfer of credentials to CBWC.

If your pastor does not fit the preceding examples but is ordained by another denomination and wants that ordination recognized by the CBWC, contact your Regional Minister. He/she will acquaint you with the essentials of the process. The MCC sets in place a supervised period of mentorship and instruction leading toward recognition of prior ordination.

If your pastor holds a 'non-ordained' credential with the CBWC, a transfer of that credential to your congregation can be processed by MCC. If, and when, you desire to seek his/her ordination, your Regional Minister will acquaint you with the essentials of the process, whereby the MCC sets in place a supervised period of mentorship, instruction, and examination leading to ordination by your church.

C. Publicly Acknowledge and Dismiss the Search Committee

The final responsibility of the search committee is to present a summary report of the process to the Church Clerk. When the committee's work is completed, its members should be thanked by the church leadership during a worship service. The committee then can be discharged with prayer. Minutes, or a "summary of proceedings," should be stored to the church office.

All résumés, MIPs, and confidential papers used by the committee must now be shredded or returned to the Settlement Coordinator. All confidential electronic

documents must be deleted from all computers. Minutes of the Search Committee have traditionally been destroyed as well.

D. Special Note to Search Committee Chair

Your feedback on the search process will help us better assist your congregation and other congregations in the future. Please complete the survey found in the Search Manual Supplement.

Resource: Appendix 25 – Post Search Feedback Form