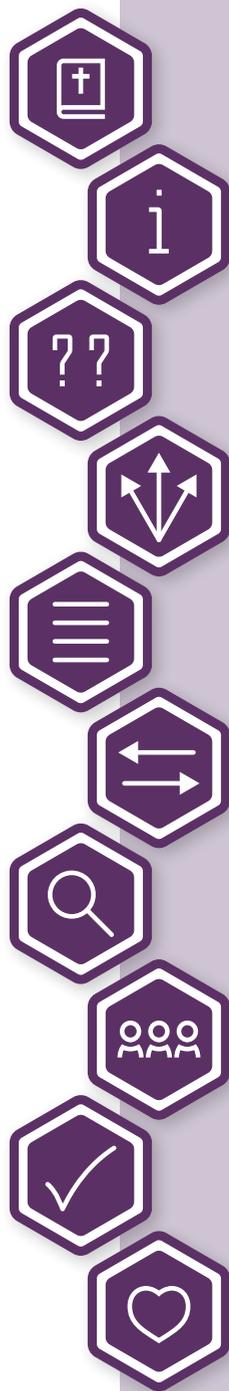


CALLING YOUR PASTOR

*Practical advice
for churches*



PAGE 1

INTRODUCTION

PAGE 2

STEP 1: KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

PAGE 4

STEP 2: UNDERSTAND YOUR CHURCH

PAGE 6

STEP 3: ASSESS YOUR SITUATION & DIRECTION

PAGE 7

STEP 4: DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES

PAGE 8

STEP 5: DRAW UP A LIST OF NAMES

PAGE 9

STEP 6: MAKE CONTACT

PAGE 10

STEP 7: EXPLORE THE ISSUES

PAGE 12

STEP 8: MEET THE CHURCH

PAGE 14

STEP 9: MAKE A DECISION

PAGE 17

STEP 10: CARE FOR YOUR PASTOR

PAGE 18

APPENDICES

INTRODUCTION

Every church needs the ministry of the word and pastoral oversight. Indeed it is hard to conceive how a gospel church could function without these gifts. Generally speaking, if these ministries are to be carried out adequately it is necessary to have a man (or more than one) set apart full-time.

A Pastor is understood to be a man who has been called by a local church to join its leadership with particular responsibility for regular preaching, teaching, giving spiritual direction and pastoral care.

One of the greatest privileges, and sternest challenges, faced by Independent churches is the responsibility to call their own leaders. So what steps should a church take in these circumstances?

What follows is wisdom and advice distilled from many churches who have appointed new pastors – including those who have made serious mistakes in the process. Though the guide seeks to be as helpful and comprehensive as possible, it does not negate the need for your church to think carefully about the best way of calling a pastor.

Please be prayerful about this process. It can be easy to get busy with all of the work that needs doing, but most importantly you need God's wisdom and guidance.



STEP 1: KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

The New Testament emphasises that Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 1v22; 4v15; Colossians 1v18). In the opening chapters of the book of Revelation he is seen as risen and glorified in the midst of the churches, with their 'angels' in his right hand, addressing his word to each of them. He is the chief pastor (cf. Hebrews 13v20; 1 Peter 5v4) and overseer of the flock (1 Peter 2v25).

It is God in his sovereignty and providence who chooses, equips and sends out men to serve the church and spread the gospel (Matthew 9v38; Acts 20v28; 1 Corinthians 12v28). So in choosing men to serve, you must seek God with earnest prayer (Matthew 9v38; Acts 6v1-6; 13v2,3; 14v23) and make good use of the wisdom he gives you in considering the gifts of those available to you (Acts 6v3; 16v2,3; 1 Corinthians 6v5; 1 Timothy 3v1-13; Titus 1v5-9).

The New Testament words below will help us both in understanding what the church needs and also in considering who is suitable to fulfil these roles:

'Pastor'

Ephesians 4v11; cf. Acts 20v28; 1 Peter 5v2-4

A pastor is a shepherd – or under-shepherd as 1 Peter 5v4 suggests. The model for shepherds is the Lord Jesus himself. To read Psalm 23 or John 10 is to see what kind of person the pastor must be and how he should care for Christ's flock.

'Elder'

Acts 14v23; 15v2; 1 Timothy 5v17-19; Titus 1v5-9

This suggests spiritual maturity and experience. 'Elders' were recognised both in Greek and Jewish culture as groups of men with accumulated wisdom and understanding who exercised leadership, made decisions and gave counsel within their communities. Elders in the church need not be older in years than others, but they must be wiser in judgment.

'Overseer'

Acts 20v28; Philippians 1v1; 1 Timothy 3v1-7; Titus 1v7; cf. Hebrews 13v17

Translated in the AV as 'bishop', the overseer has the responsibility of spiritual oversight, watching over those entrusted to his care (1 Peter 5v2,3).

'Teacher'

Acts 13v1; Ephesians 4v11; James 3v1; cf. 1 Timothy 3v2; 5v17

This is self-explanatory. The word introduces us to all those verses which speak of the ministry of the word in preaching and teaching (e.g. Acts 6v4; 1 Timothy 4v6-16; 2 Timothy 2v15; 3v14-4v5).

'Leader'

Hebrews 13v7, 17, 24

Leadership is also hinted at in the ideas of ruling, directing and setting an example (e.g. 1 Timothy 5v17; 1 Peter 5v3). The idea suggests the authority, wisdom and skill to guide God's household.

QUALITIES NEEDED FOR OVERSIGHT

The characters called for in those who have oversight are set out by Paul in 1 Timothy 3v1-7 and Titus 1v5-9. These are not so much qualifications, as they are sometimes called; rather they set out in terms of general Christian

character the sort of man who is suitable for service.

They reflect this profile – someone:

- > with a consistent Christ-like character. This is the main emphasis and is the prerequisite for calling to the ministry.
- > who has already developed the ability to lead and rule wisely in his own family if he has one.
- > whose reputation with unbelievers is untarnished.
- > who has been a believer for long enough to have gained some experience and maturity so that he is not exposed to the temptation of pride.
- > who has a sufficient knowledge of the gospel to be able both to teach and preach it faithfully and to refute those who contradict it.

Appendix 1 outlines a character profile of the kind of man a church should look for as their pastor.



STEP 2: UNDERSTAND YOUR CHURCH

A period without a pastor gives the church an opportunity to pray, to review its life and come to a clear understanding of itself. You should seek objectively to consider questions like:

- > What were the good things about the way the last pastor and the church related?
- > Why did he leave?
- > Were there any problems?
- > Are there any matters in the life of the church which must be dealt with before it is right to call another pastor?
- > Is the church of one mind about the need of having another pastor?
- > Can we afford a pastor?
- > Are there any non-negotiable issues for you in terms of doctrine or practice?

Now is the time to do two things:

- > To resolve any outstanding issues facing the church and that need to be resolved before a new pastor arrives; and
- > To settle practical arrangements like the terms and conditions of appointment. These are fundamental to the relationship between the church and its pastor, and need to be discussed and agreed in principle before you proceed any further. For further information, see the companion booklet *Caring for Your Pastor*.

Appendix 2 suggests a number of questions the church might ask itself at this crucial moment.



STEP 3: ASSESS YOUR SITUATION & DIRECTION

It is sensible, and not in the least unspiritual, to put down on paper:

- > the kind of person you should be looking for – list things like experience, training, temperament; and
- > the kind of ministry you believe you need from him – list things like doctrinal emphasis, preaching ability, pastoral care, evangelistic gifts, teamwork and strength of leadership.

In the midst of this it's important to remember that the church is about God's mission to gather the lost – it's not about pampering the found. So avoid the temptation to look for a pastor who will make church comfortable for you.

The leaders will need to:

- > agree a profile of the church with a copy of your statement of faith, church constitution and any other governing documents. To have credibility it is wise for this to be agreed by the church. The profile should include history, doctrinal distinctives, leadership, ministries, finance, location, housing options, ministry plans, church vision - Who are we? Where are we? Where do we hope to be in five years time?

- > draw up an application form together with a reference request proforma. Appendix 4 suggests the kind of questions a referee might be asked.

Having made your list, use it as a flexible guide, not a fixed template. You may be surprised to find that you are drawn to a pastor who is very different from your original idea. However you do need something definite in mind about the kind of ministry that would be most appropriate at this time.

STEP 4: DELEGATE RESPONSIBILITIES



It is the responsibility of the appointed leaders of the church to guide the church in the calling of a pastor. The church governing documents may cover how a pastor is to be appointed, including who the search team are. Any such procedures should be followed. To lighten this burden it may be appropriate to appoint a wider Search Group and/or a Moderator. Churches will vary in their way of doing things. Some consider that it is the sole responsibility of the elders/existing leaders to take the lead in the process, while others will wish to involve a wider group.

Search Group: The Search Group may therefore be the appointed leaders or it may be made up of some leaders plus other men and women recognised by the congregation for their maturity and discernment. This arrangement may relieve the entire leadership of

attending to every detail of the selection process. At the same time it may draw in a wider representation of the whole church body and focus attention on the task of looking for a pastor in an orderly way.

Moderator: By the very nature of the situation there will usually be limited experience of the special task of calling a pastor. It may therefore be wise to invite a gospel minister who commands the respect of the church to give advice, to assist the Search Group and the leadership team and to chair business meetings. To do so in no way impinges on the independence of the local church. If you do call a Moderator, make sure you check your church governing documents to see if he will be counted as one of the managing trustees. Our recommendation is that he should not be classed as a managing trustee and should not be involved in voting on church business.



STEP 5: DRAW UP A LIST OF NAMES

It is essential that the Leaders/Search Group do some spade-work before a man is invited to preach. First, they should draw up a shortlist. This may include:

- > potential candidates within the congregation;
- > visiting preachers who have particularly warmed the heart of the congregation in recent years;

- > suitable candidates recommended by experienced ministers who know the church and the evangelical scene;
- > students recommended by the principals of theological colleges in which you have confidence; and
- > networks to which the church belongs like FIEC or a local Gospel Partnership

Some churches advertise for a pastor in the Christian press. They often get many replies, many of them unsuitable. On balance, it is safer to ask for introductions from those in whom you have confidence.

Be open to God's leading; the man he has in mind may not match the picture you imagined. And remember that no candidate, however experienced, is the "finished article." As the body of Christ, your church should be looking to help your pastor grow in his character and gifts just as he seeks to do the same for you.

STEP 6: MAKE CONTACT



It is possible at this early stage to do preliminary work with more than one applicant, though it is unwise for a church as a whole to consider more than one person at a time. Working with more than one applicant too easily becomes a beauty parade where everyone picks their favourite, rather than the most suitable one. This can prove very divisive for a church.

Having listed the possibilities, the Leaders/Search Group should find out all it can about those listed. You can sample a man's preaching by listening to him online, going to hear him in his own setting (such a visit must be carried out sensitively to cause no embarrassment either to him or to his church), and seeking the opinion of those who know his ministry.

Initial contact should be made, explaining the church's interest. This may lead to an informal meeting, the purpose of which is to check the candidate's availability, explore the likelihood of a mutual fit and explain the church's situation and selection process. If there is a mutual desire to pursue the possibility further, the candidate should be requested to complete the application form and arrange for a formal visit at the earliest opportunity.

It's important to act with clarity, efficiency and integrity, treating individuals with dignity and courtesy. Part of this will mean working to a definite timetable and communicating it to the candidate. Every candidate has a life to live and probably a family to care for, so don't keep them waiting. Alongside it being your search for a pastor, this is an opportunity for fellowship in the gospel and relationship building.



STEP 7: EXPLORE THE ISSUES

The best time for this discussion is when the church leaders see someone as a serious possibility and

therefore before he is formally invited to preach with a view to the pastorate.

This discussion is often described as 'the interview'. However, this is the wrong language; it should not be regarded as a grilling but as a mutual act of fellowship. In a brotherly way, you need to find out a man's views on a range of topics and priorities that would reflect in his ministry if he were appointed. You need to know if he and your church are compatible and could live and work happily together. Failure to satisfy yourselves on this now could lead to problems later. You can find some questions that may help you in **Appendix 3**.

You will need to discuss with the potential pastor such issues as: his doctrinal position; his views about worship; the place of preaching; the gifts of the Spirit; his approach to evangelism; his understanding of the authority of the minister, the elders and the church meeting; his attitude to team leadership and women's ministry; and his policy on gospel partnership and ecumenical relationships. Of course, you must be ready to set out your church's position on these issues too.

You will also want to evaluate the candidate as a person, so you will ask about his family life, his general fitness, his interests and hobbies. Does his demeanour remind you of the Lord Jesus?

The formal discussion should explore his CV / references and detail the terms of his appointment. References as to his character, training and track-record will help you in the task of assessing his suitability.

You should ensure that you give every opportunity for the candidate to ask questions of the panel. The questions he asks will tell you a great deal about him. If you have thought carefully about the questions in **Appendix 2** then that will help you to be prepared.

You can only seek a reference from the church of which a man is at present pastor if he agrees to your doing so. It may be wise to seek a verbal reference in addition to a written reference.



STEP 8: MEET THE CHURCH

MAKING THE MOST OF THE OPPORTUNITY

Ensure that the members are aware of this visit and prayerfully committed to it. They must be able to pray specifically about the occasion, to hear the preacher as their potential pastor and then to decide whether they feel he is right for the church. In churches where there are marked differences of opinion, it may be wise to ask the church to approve an invitation to preach with a view before it is sent, so that there is a greater hope of unity when the final decision is taken.

If the candidate is already a pastor it is wise to discuss with him at an early stage how he wants to handle the matter as far as his church is concerned. Some will want to share news of a possible move with their present church leaders soon, others will prefer not to confide in them until much later. The view of the person concerned must be respected.

If possible a married man should bring his wife and family. This could take place over a weekend with opportunity for the candidate to meet as wide a range of ministry leaders as possible, but avoid cramming the day with taxing activity. The candidate should preach and take as full a part in the Sunday service(s) as possible. Build in 'getting to know you' time and make provision for his children.

Afterwards, consult with the members at the earliest opportunity, communicate the outcome and (if appropriate) approach referees and arrange for the next visit.

Following this visit, the church will plan to reach a final decision. Again, the members should be aware of the process and prayerfully committed to it.

WHAT YOU SHOULD LOOK FOR IN A PREACHER

When a man preaches as a candidate you need to evaluate his ability as a preacher. There are certain things you do need to determine as you listen to a potential pastor:

- > Does he teach God's word faithfully and clearly?
- > Does he cast a vision that captures and holds your attention?
- > Is there authority and power in his preaching?
- > Does he present Christ as Lord and Saviour with conviction and urgency?

- > Does he move the hearts of believers in devotion to the Lord Jesus?

Some churches get hung up on whether they want a pastor who is a teacher or a preacher. Every sermon must have a teaching element to it, but a sermon is more than the conveying of information; preaching addresses the heart as well as the mind. It is a proclamation of truth that is applied to the whole person of the hearer in a way that calls for a response of repentance and faith. Teacher or preacher? The pastor must be both.



STEP 9: MAKE A DECISION

WHAT MAJORITY SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

After a formal 'preaching with a view' it is understood that the church will make up its mind whether to invite the candidate. What percentage of votes is necessary to issue an invitation to the pastorate?

This may already be determined by your church constitution, which may also include how notice of such a vote is to be given. Often 75% or 80% of the members voting is required. To require unanimity may sound spiritual, but it is unwise in practice. It can lead to government by a minority of one!

What if the constitution requires something like 90%? In these days of diverse opinions, that may be so high a figure that a good man may be rejected by a vote or two even though the vast majority want him. If there is no

opportunity to amend the constitution it may be wise for the church to make its decision in two stages: one informal, one formal. If you take a straw-poll in a church meeting and there is a strong indication in favour, it may help the 'don't knows' to gauge how others feel and so to make up their own minds. Then, say a week later, a formal vote can be taken and the invitation to the pastorate issued if the constitutional percentage is obtained.

The exact percentage of the vote does not have to be announced to the church meeting; it is enough to advise them if the required majority has been achieved. Knowing the exact percentage may cause speculation about how people voted. It may also cause problems for the new pastor if a significant number of members voted against him.

If the majority required was not achieved, churches should normally resist the temptation to re-run a formal vote in order to obtain a favourable result. As a rule, having gone through the constitutional process, the church should be content to let the matter rest there.

THE PRACTICAL ISSUES

Like the rest of us, pastors and their wives and families are human and the practicalities affect them as they do you. A caring church will want to provide adequately for them.

Before extending an invitation, the leaders of the church must think carefully and realistically about what it can offer regarding housing, salary, pension, holiday, expenses, study leave and so on. FIEC offers a wide

range of advice which may help churches to work out their practical responsibilities to their pastors.

The church's decision should be conveyed ASAP by phone and confirmed by letter with reference to the timescale for, and the terms of, his appointment. In conclusion, it is vital to recognise that this is a two-way process. The man you are assessing is also assessing you. He will be interested in the vision of the church, the spirit of unity or otherwise, the opportunities for gospel growth, the way in which you and the congregation relate to him and his wife, and recognise his family's needs.

You will also need to make sure you have an employment contract and policies in place. Edward Connor Solicitors have sets of model documents available for purchase which are designed to ensure you are caring wisely for your pastor.

For more details visit **edwardconnor.com** or email **info@edwardconnor.com**.

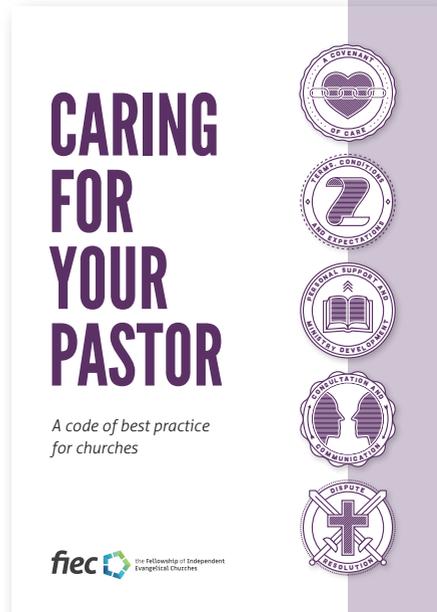
STEP 10: CARE FOR YOUR PASTOR



It's essential to remember that this isn't the end of the process; it's simply the end of the beginning. In a marriage, once the joy of the wedding day is over, the relationship must continue to grow and deepen. Likewise, after a pastor's induction, he and the church should strive for their mutual love and trust to grow, so that all may be built up in Christ.

This booklet has explored the issues behind calling your pastor; a companion booklet, *Caring for Your Pastor*, outlines a Code of Best Practice for safeguarding the relationship. It has been written to help churches manage the expectations they have of their pastor and the relationship they enjoy so that they adorn the truth of the Lord Jesus and reflect well on his gospel. You can get a copy of *Caring for Your Pastor* from the FIEC office:

admin@fec.org.uk
01858 43 45 40



APPENDIX 1: A CHARACTER PROFILE

What characteristics should a church look for in a man they want to call as pastor? Trevor Archer and Paul Mallard have 60 years of pastoral ministry between them and they offer 12 pointers for churches to think through.

1. A CHRISTIAN

This may seem so obvious as to be unnecessary, but it is tragically possible for someone to claim to be sent from God but prove to be a false prophet, a wolf in sheep's clothing. It is not only contemporary denominations that are riddled with unsaved, unbelieving leaders. The frightening fact is that the evangelical scene is not exempt from the danger.

2. A LOVE FOR JESUS

When Jesus called Peter to shepherd His flock, he first questioned him over the depths of his devotion (John 21:15-17) – *“Do you love me?”*

Ministry flows out of a love for Jesus. It is a frightening truth but it is quite possible for a person to be in “love” with a particular ministry or status in the church rather than in love with the Lord.

So in considering a man for the pastorate, explore the man's delight and intimacy with the Father, his captivation with Jesus and sensitivity to the voice of the Spirit in the word. If he is not daily devoted to Jesus, he will not survive the rigours of ministry. He will eventually either lapse into bitterness and cynicism or bail out.

3. A LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

Christian ministry has at its heart understanding, teaching, applying and living out the gospel in all its breadth and depth. There must be evidence in the life of anyone aspiring to ministry that there is a growing understanding of the word of God, a rejoicing in the gospel, a delight with its glory and an excitement about its power.

This is not saying that a person must have an “academic” bent or theological qualifications, some may, but that in itself is not qualification. What matters is an appetite for God’s word, a readiness to get to grips with the great doctrines of the faith, a hunger to understand how the gospel applies to all of life in all its complexity, challenges and issues.

4. A LOVE FOR GOD’S PEOPLE

Jesus obviously loves the church – He gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25). She is His reward (John 17:6, 24) and she is destined for glory (Ephesians 5:26-27).

Whilst people who make up the church can be delightful, enchanting and encouraging they can also be frustrating, difficult and stubborn. As one wag once put it – *“church would be great if it wasn’t for the people!”*

Never think of gospel ministry in a vacuum. Some people in church are “Grace Growers” - those difficult customers that God uses to grow the grace of patience and compassion in our lives! A call to ministry is a call to love and serve people of all kinds!

Is there a heart to be around people, a willingness to share life with others, a readiness to face conflict resolution for the sake of the gospel and the capacity to maintain a thick skin with a tender heart?

5. A LOVE FOR THE LOST

Pastoral ministry will have at its core a desire to see people come to Christ, to be rescued from the wrath to come. A heart for the lost is not something magically endowed once a person has been commissioned to a ministry, it has to be part of who they are and how they “tick”.

Ask questions about the number of non-Christian friends, the consistency with which they pray for unbelievers and their readiness to witness to unbelievers. These questions provide the best answers to this aspect of any call.

6. A DESIRE TO SERVE

A call to ministry is essentially a call to serve God, His Gospel, His people, His world. "Here is a trustworthy saying: whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task". (1 Timothy 3:1). The word translated "aspires" means "to stretch oneself out in order to touch or grasp something". It is to "desire passionately".

Such a desire will be evidenced by an awareness and readiness that sees what needs to be done and sets about the task. Whilst a desire to serve is not enough in itself and needs to be accompanied by other criteria, an absence of such desire or reluctance to serve ought to ring alarm bells.

7. A MATURING CHARACTER

Those to be appointed to leadership in the church are to be "blameless and above reproach and mature, not a new convert". The parallel list in Titus 1:6-9 makes the same point. The Bible always places character before gifting. That's because gifts can and should always be developing, but a fundamental flaw in character will undermine and eventually destroy any ministry.

Ministry exists in the context of character. Character authenticates leadership. But the Bible is not talking "perfection". It recognises that every Christian, including the pastor, struggles with sin (Romans 7:21-24), and needs forgiveness (1 John 1:8-2:1). Growth in grace is a lifetime activity and maturity. It is a process only finished on the day of home-calling, so coupled to this matter is the next: teachability.

8. A TEACHABLE SPIRIT

The greatest challenge anybody faces in Christian ministry is themselves! It is important that a pastor has a self-awareness that invites other Christians to speak into their lives and welcomes constructive critique of their character and abilities.

Can a man identify his own strengths and weaknesses? Does he have some degree of emotional intelligence? Are there trusted friends in his life who challenge and if needs be rebuke Him? Have they some ability to laugh at themselves – it is never a good sign if a man takes himself too seriously and lacks a sense of humour.

9. A STABILITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Being married is not an essential qualification for ministry! A man who is single when first responding to the call to ministry might find themselves married five or ten or even twenty years later. Conversely, a married couple entering ministry might experience a bereavement that leaves the spouse single.

Far better therefore when examining suitability for ministry to look for the stability and appropriateness of their relationships, particularly with the opposite sex. Qualities such as humility, respect, appropriateness, purity, consistency and other person centredness are high on the list of the Bible's qualifications for role modelling good relationships.

If a married man is to be a pastor, examine the health of his marriage. A perfect marriage does not exist but there should be clear evidence of faithfulness and love which mirrors in some measure the love that Christ has for His church (1 Timothy 3:2; Ephesians 5:25-33).

Furthermore, a pastor's wife must be totally supportive of her husband's call to ministry. Gospel ministry will have inevitable implications for a marriage and a family. There will be particular burdens to bear and pressures to withstand, a certain loss of privacy and an emotional cost to be paid. Unless both in the marriage are committed to the call, it will not work. These things must be fully discussed and explored.

10. A GIFTEDNESS FOR THE TASK

A man might love to study and pour over the Bible. He may well do this out of a genuine heart and passion for God's Word. His intellectual capacity

means that he has a really good grasp of theology and doctrine, he finds it a pleasure to dig into the Scriptures and he is diligent and earnest in the task. Yet put in front of a congregation, though “solid” in his doctrine, he is found to be lacking any real ability to communicate. He comes across as rather dull and boring – and worse still makes the Bible seem dull and boring!

Pastoral ministry is about real people with real problems. A pastor needs the ability and gifting to be able to feed his congregation on a regular basis and connect and apply the gospel into the mess which is our everyday life.

11. AN EVIDENCE OF GOD’S BLESSING

Coupled to this issue of giftedness is the question of evidence. Ask how the Lord has used a man aspiring to the pastorate; what evidence has there been of God’s blessing on his ministry? It is an entirely legitimate and important question.

12. THE 3 Gs – GRACE, GRIT AND GUMPTION

It is only grace that will enable anyone to survive and thrive in ministry and reach the finishing line. It is only grit that will keep them at it. And it is only gumption – the ability to decide what is the best thing to do in a particular situation – that will enable them to do it with energy and determination. So look for evidence of these characteristics in any prospective pastor.

This appendix is based on ‘The Call’, a short book which the authors have published through 10 Publishing, available at 10ofthose.com. It’s written to help both individuals considering ministry and churches considering gospel workers.

APPENDIX 2: QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

These questions provide an opportunity for the leadership team to reflect with the congregation on the church's present condition. As the church faces the need to appoint a new pastor, these questions can form the basis on which a profile and a job description will be drawn up for potential candidates to consider.

- > How would we describe our church's cultural context?
- > What's the context of the communities around us?
- > How do we relate to one another? As leaders? As a church?
- > What are we looking for in a new pastor?
- > What are our theological/ministry priorities?
- > Do we wish for an interregnum or a smooth transition?
- > How do we function as a team?
- > Where do we think we are as a church?
- > What's going well and not going well just now?
- > What needs to change?
- > What are our "red-line" issues that cannot be changed?
- > Where do we wish to be in five year's time? What stands in the way?
- > What are the expectations of our next pastor? From the leadership team? From key ministry leaders? From the congregation?

- > Are we able to support our next pastor generously? Materially? Emotionally? Spiritually?
- > How is our prayer life? As a leadership team? As a congregation?
- > Is there anything in our life as a church, past or present, which would bring dishonour to the Lord Jesus?

Below are some further questions that could help when you're talking with prospective pastors. They could be the key toward avoiding some unpleasant surprises later on.

Why did the two previous pastors leave? The answers to this question may give clues to the way you treat or mistreat your pastor. By the way, you should assume that any prospective pastor will speak with the immediate predecessor pastor. Skipping this question is neither wise nor healthy.

Who are the influential figures and opinion-formers in the church? The most influential members in the church aren't always just the leaders. Make sure you know who they are and why they are deemed influential.

When did the church last make a significant capital investment? If a new pastor wanted to lead the church to do so, what would the process look like? This question can help you explain the way significant decisions are made in the church.

What one-word descriptors would you use to characterise your church business meetings? Be honest, but recognise that words like divisive, angry, brutal, argumentative, painful, lengthy, and draining will make any prospective pastor very cautious.

How would you describe your top three expectations of a pastor? Get individuals on your leadership team and/or Search Group to write them down, then read them aloud to the entire group. It could be a wake-up call.

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONS TO ASK

THE CANDIDATE'S COMPETENCY

These questions will help the search team/leadership team to assess the suitability of candidates in terms of experience and gifting.

- > Does the candidate meet the requirements of our job description?
- > What's the candidate's secular experience? Does he bring transferable skills to the ministry of our church?
- > What's the candidate's church experience? Does he have a proven track record of building teams and growing church?
- > Is he a good theological fit?

CHARACTER AND CHEMISTRY

These questions will help the Search Group/leadership team to assess the suitability of the candidate's character and ability to work with the church.

- > What is the candidate's SHAPE? (S = spiritual gifts; H = heart/passion; A = abilities; P = personality; E = experience)
- > Is he an introvert or an extrovert?
- > What are his interests? What does he like to do with his free time?
- > What evidence is there that he is growing in grace and in his knowledge of the Lord Jesus?
- > Is there anything in his personal life, past or present, which would call his ministry into question?
- > Will we be able to work together?

- > Will we be able to flourish together? Will we be “good” for each other?

CALLING – FROM THE CANDIDATE’S PERSPECTIVE

These questions will help the leadership team to assess whether the candidate senses that God is calling them to serve the church at this time.

- > Why does he feel called to local church ministry?
- > Why does he feel called to ministry in this particular local church?
- > Is he aligned with the current vision for the church?
- > Is there anything about the church as he sees it that he would wish to change?

CALLING – FROM THE CHURCH’S PERSPECTIVE

These questions will help the leadership team to assess whether the candidate is a good fit for the church at this time.

- > Do we sense that God is in this?
- > Would we as a leadership team like the prospect of serving Jesus with this man?
- > Is there evidence that the congregation feels drawn to him?
- > Have we taken up references?
- > What would he bring to the life of our church?
- > Are we willing and able to detail clearly the terms of his appointment?
- > Are there any special arrangements we need to make to enable him to take up the appointment as our pastor?

APPENDIX 4: REFERENCE QUESTIONS TO ASK

PERSONAL LIFE

1. How long and in what capacity have you known the applicant?
2. What impression do you have of his daily walk with God?
3. How would you describe the applicant's temperament and character?
4. Does he show maturity and emotional stability in his life? (please elaborate)
5. If married, does he demonstrate a loving and healthy relationship with his wife and family?
6. Are there any family-related matters that may hinder the applicant's ministry?
7. How does he relate to non-Christians?

MINISTRY

8. What would you see as the strengths and weaknesses of his ministry?
9. How would you evaluate his effectiveness as a preacher?
10. How would you describe his style and approach to pastoral care?
11. Do you consider his preaching and ministry to be in accordance with the enclosed Doctrinal Basis?
12. What evidence is there of God's blessing in his present ministry?

CHURCH FAMILY

13. How does he relate with his fellow leaders in the church?

14. Are you aware of any significant breach of fellowship between the applicant and any other Christian? (please give details)

CONCERNS

15. Do you have any concerns about...

- a) ...his reputation outside of the church?
- b) ...his character and reliability?
- c) ...his sexual integrity?
- d) ...his financial integrity?

16. Are there any other areas of his life that cause you concern?

ANYTHING ELSE?

17. Is there any other information that you think would be of value to us?

CONTACT DETAILS

Name, church, position in church, signed & dated.

This document may be freely reproduced and distributed. It is strictly advisory on matters of best practice and does not represent legal advice. If you wish to discuss any aspect of this document, please contact the FIEC Pastors' Network: pn@fiec.org.uk

fiec.org.uk

admin@fiec.org.uk

01858 43 45 40

The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered in England and Wales with charity number 1168037 and in Scotland with charity number SC047080.