

In Search of the Near-Perfect Pastor

Every year one-fourth to one-third of all Protestant congregations in the United States lose their minister. The process of calling a new pastor is usually an intense, time-consuming one. Pastor Search Committees can take several steps in order to function more effectively.

1. It is usually best to designate a special committee rather than having the entire church board take on the task of finding a new minister. Problems faced by the typical pastor search committee include the inexperience of most committee members and their failure to communicate adequately with the congregation.
2. It is essential that the committee not make a hasty decision. Half a year is a long time to go without a pastor, but doing without a pastor for a few more months is better than ending up with one who doesn't fit in with the congregation. Normally it takes longer for a larger church. They typically have more applicants to sort through whereas smaller congregations often feel like they need to grab the first available candidate before some bigger church gets to him.
3. Prayer is a vital element in the selection process, enabling Committee members to be well prepared for the hard work of reading resumes and checking out references.
4. Successful search committees have usually discovered that investigating their own congregation is as crucial as interviewing prospective pastors. They should study the church's strengths and weaknesses, goals for the future, philosophy of ministry, and especially its expectations regarding a pastor. This will enable them to find a better match.

"In search of the near-perfect pastor" by James Watkins. Moody, October 1991, pages 12-15. Quoted in *Current Thoughts and Trends*, 1991.