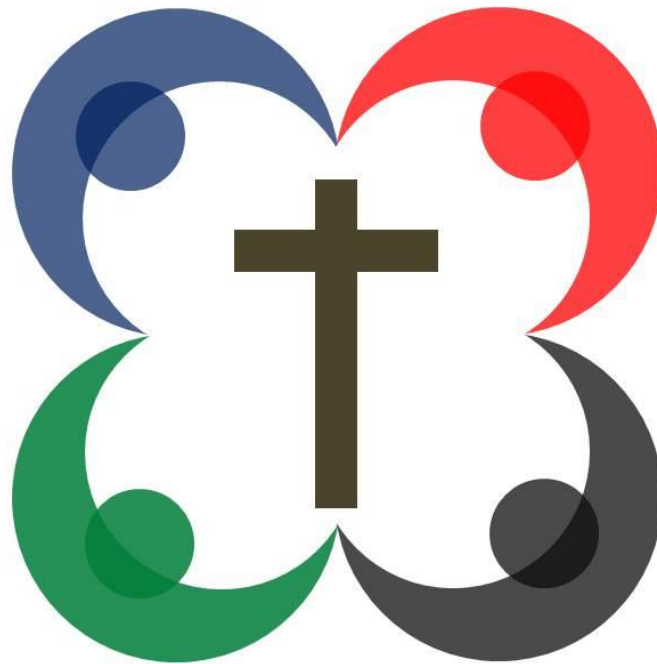


A Participative Church Minister Hiring Process

Involving the Autonomous Congregation for Maximum
Benefit



Brian L. Dowler

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INTRODUCTION

Deciding which man to hire as your next minister is one of the most important decisions your congregation will make. In many ways, the man (or men) serving your congregation, and their families, will play a huge role in determining the harmony, growth, and spirituality of your members. Yet all too often the hiring decision is based on as little information as a tryout sermon and brief interview with a few select members or church leaders.

In this guide, a process is outlined which has been used successfully to identify the specific traits needed by your congregation. You can use and modify this process to find suitable candidates, and then to select and hire someone – driven by congregational involvement. This congregational inclusion helps insure that the man selected will be effective, and supported by your members from the start.

At times, we mention the role of “church elders” in the process. If your congregation does not have elders, you may substitute the term “church leaders” – or adapt the process to fit the individual makeup and organization of your own congregation.

It is my hope that the material provided will assist you in finding and hiring the right person for your open position. May God bless the work of your congregation, and may all we do be for His glory.

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The Heart of the Process

The underlying premise of this minister search process is the belief that it is much too important to undertake with a half-hearted effort. Unfortunately, autonomous churches often do not apply the appropriate thought, activities, and decision making into this decision.

There are many reasons for this:

- Lack of guidance or experience
- Busy and hectic lifestyles (lack of time)
- Underestimating the importance of the task
- Underestimating the work required to appropriately identify and select top candidates
- Belief that things will “work themselves out” on their own
- Over reliance on word-of-mouth advertising and references
- The burden of the process is placed on one or two people, without enough congregational support

I have had the privilege of serving as the leader of a minister search committee in two different congregations. As part of this work, several “tools” were developed, which fit within a specific hiring process that worked well for our search committee.

At the heart of this process are a few key principles:

1. Mutual Openness and Respect
2. Congregational Involvement
3. In-Depth Evaluations Prior to Any Interview Trip
4. A Detailed, Weekend Long Interview Process
5. An Elder-Based Hiring Decision with Congregational Input

Please keep in mind that every congregation is unique. This should not be construed as a “one fits all” approach – but as a set of ideas and templates which may spur thought, be discussed, and then adjusted to fit the unique needs of your congregation.

The manifold wisdom of God is evident in the autonomy he grants each local congregation. My work in minister searches has been conducted for different congregations among the Churches of Christ. As the Churches of Christ have no national organization, they are “autonomous” – each local congregation rules its own affairs independent of any requirements or authority from other groups or bodies. Thus, Church of Christ congregations are not subjected to some “headquarters” telling who our ministers will be – regardless of their “fit” with our membership. Praise God that he has given us the freedom to choose who we will hire - and the enjoyment of working with this man and his family on a daily basis.

As always, with freedom comes responsibility. In this case, we are responsible to be “good stewards” – using the talents God has given to us to benefit the church by identifying and hiring effective men for the benefit of the church.

Mutual Openness and Respect

The minister evaluation is a two-way process. You must remember that these men (and their families) are also in effect “interviewing you.”

These men have devoted their lives to preaching the gospel. Their wives and families are fellow laborers with them. They are worthy of your admiration, honesty and respect. Just as you seek to find someone who will work well with your congregation and its goals, they are seeking a church home where they can be effective in living out their mission. They have just as much or more at stake.

Time must be set aside to appropriately answer the questions they have about your congregation. These questions should be answered openly and honestly – do not “sugar coat” your situation or cover-up any “issues” your congregation has. These men will be called upon to help you overcome these issues. They deserve your honesty.

Do not fall into the trap of wanting a particular candidate “so bad” that you tend to present only the positive aspects of your congregation. Most men will respond to openness and honesty with reciprocity. They will pick up on your respect for the decision they have to make, and work with you to establish together whether they are indeed a good fit for your congregation. Hiring someone without full disclosure of the issues will only make it difficult for the relationship to work, and is not beneficial to either side. In fact, if you are working to overcome issues, then the selection process should be geared toward finding someone who is well equipped to work with your congregation on these problems.

The process of changing ministers is difficult for a congregation – and the minister and his family. Congregations often suffer “setbacks” in membership, involvement, and energy level during these periods. For this reason, the goal of the process should be to find a man who can be with you for a long time. Depending upon the size of your congregation, it can take a minister several years just to establish the relationships and comfort level needed to reach peak effectiveness.

A football coach needs a few years to gain trust, to implement his system, to gain key recruits, and to build a successful program. The work of a minister is very similar – and we owe him the time and support needed to be successful in their work as well. This can only happen if the church is fully transparent up-front. Like a coach, the minister needs to understand our present condition. There are ministers who are well suited to helping a congregation work through conflicts or divisions. Others may be better equipped to help take a stable and established congregation to the “next level” of spiritual growth. Only by being open and working together can we find the optimum candidate.

Give each candidate the courtesy of an honest assessment of your congregation. And expect the same in return.

Congregational Involvement

My experience is that if given a properly framed process, the congregation will not just support the minister search; they will actually get excited and respond to opportunities for involvement.

Getting the congregation involved in a participative manner has many benefits:

- Obtains “buy in” to the process and the decision by church members
- More sets of eyes and ears to evaluate candidates
- Helps take the burden off of a select few
- More qualified candidates are obtained as a result of member networking
- Uses the full range of talents in your congregation
- Gives a favorable impression to candidates, who are also searching for a church home with involved and active members

I suggest establishing a “minister search committee” to establish and run the process.

- Five to eight members would be appropriate – with more members you risk decision making gridlock.
- One very important aspect of the team is the leader – this person should be carefully chosen. The leader should have strong organizational and delegation skills, and have a proven track record of getting things done. Clear plans should be laid out for the team, with tasks delegated and with appropriate follow-up.
- The team members should represent a cross-section of the congregation – both men and women, of different ages.
- Team members should be experienced Christians who are aligned with the church leadership in regard to doctrinal issues and approach. This process is too important to open up to possible “power struggles” over doctrinal or leadership issues.

In addition to the church team, congregational input can be achieved by additional steps:

- Involvement in a pre-search survey. This survey is used to determine the characteristics of a minister that are important to the congregation. (See results of this survey in Attachment M).
- Involvement in the interview process. The process should be allowed to give every member a chance to meet the candidates. This is where the weekend-long interview process comes in.
- Post-interview surveys used to determine the opinion of the congregation in regard to each candidate. (Attachment B)

In-Depth Evaluations Prior to Any Interview Trip

The hiring process takes a lot of work and careful evaluation. The process outlined in this guide is very detailed – taking significant time and effort to compete. But the stakes are too high to go about this in a half-hearted manner.

The first step in evaluating candidates is to obtain candidates. In my experience, you should try to get many resumes. Some upon first read will be obviously unsuitable for your position. Others may be weeded out by “asking around”, listening to sermon audio files, or by checking references. In my experience, out of every 10 resumes received, we ended up conducting perhaps two phone interviews and inviting perhaps one of the 10 for a site visit.

The goal of the search committee should be to bring only fully qualified candidates into the on-site visit. The time, energy and expense that go into the weekend-long evaluation are significant – to use this energy on unqualified candidates not only wastes time and money, but can sap the enthusiasm for the process from the congregation.

As part of the process, we suggest setting up a detailed phone or skype video interview to screen the candidates in detail. In politics, this is sometimes called “vetting”. (To *vet* was originally a horse-racing term, referring to the requirement that a horse be checked for health and soundness by a veterinarian before being allowed to race. Thus, it has taken the general meaning “to check out.”)

This telephone/skype interview is used to check items such as:

- How the candidate feels on doctrinal issues, and how this meshes with your congregation.
- The candidate’s philosophy on ministry; for example, is he more comfortable focusing on equipping existing members, or is he more in the mold of an evangelist, with a strong focus on seeking the lost?
- Current salary and expected salary/benefits. If you are not in mesh on this issue, then there is no point in an on-site evaluation. A defined salary range you are willing to pay should be established up-front.
- The candidate’s willingness to submit to the weekend long interview process – which of course necessitates a description of the process.
- More detailed explanations of item on or missing from the resume.
- Gives the candidate time to ask questions about your congregation – they are also “interviewing you” and your congregation as they seek a place where they can be effective.

While the tone of the interview should be friendly and accommodating, you must keep in mind that the goal is to make sure the man is a potential fit before the on-site visit. Therefore, a detailed checklist and series of potential questions should be prepared for the call. Do not “wing it” - you should have a definite plan of action. Not every question on your list may need to be asked – how the candidate responds to one question may make it clear how he would respond to others. They may volunteer information that answers other questions.

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Establish a time for this call when both the committee member and the candidate can devote a period of uninterrupted time. Do not be surprised if this call goes for 1-2 hours as you establish an in-depth dialog.

In regard to “congregational participation”, I suggest you get input via the congregational surveys – which can help guide you in the issues and minister characteristics that are important to your members. But the phone interviews should only be conducted by a few key people. In fact, I suggest using one well-qualified person for these interviews, as this provides consistency.

The person conducting the interview should:

- Have experience in interviewing, perhaps as a hiring manager in the workplace;
- Have the necessary time to devote to the process;
- Be an experienced Christian, who is familiar enough with the trends and “issues” within your fellowship to pick up on the “nuances” of the conversation when dealing with doctrinal issues. This will help verify that the man being interviewed meshes well with your congregation’s practices and future intentions.

The telephone interviewer does *not* have to be one of your elders or church leaders:

- Allow your elders to focus on shepherding, not the early nuts and bolts of the process.
- They will be given ample time with the candidate during the on site visit.
- Keeping them out of the process in this early phase of the process allows them to “re-ask” questions for clarification if you pick up on any concerns during the phone interview.
- It also ensures that the first impression of the candidate of your elders is positive; it allows them to spend their time with the candidate on more important, in-depth issues than the early “congregational fit” and doctrinal vetting.
- Someone other than an elder should do the phone interviewing *only* if there is someone with the maturity and experience to do this task well.

In some cases, a “stealth” visit to the current congregation of a candidate might be appropriate. This would give someone a chance to see and assess the minister in his “home environment.” There is, of course, the chance that he will greet you and ask where you are from – creating a potentially embarrassing situation. If that happens, be honest about where you are from, but do not make any comments about him applying for a position at your home congregation. Remember, he may be looking discretely and may not have announced that he is leaving. At minimum, the person visiting the congregation should understand this situation and be prepared to keep a good “poker face”. I do not believe such a visit to be unethical – unless you slip up and make it an embarrassment. But I leave it to you to make your own judgment.

Do not skip the process of checking references. Check the references provided by the candidate. Also, use the network of your own members to learn as much as you can about the candidate. Again, if the candidate has not yet decided to leave his current congregation, or if he has not announced that he will be leaving, use extreme discretion.

In regard to salary, it is a natural tendency of each party to have the others “show their cards first” – this is true in the business world, as well as in matters of hiring ministers. A good approach here is to ask the man you are interviewing to reveal his current salary – but then give him time to discuss his thoughts on the issue. You may

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find that he is having trouble making ends meet, and is purposely seeking to increase his pay. Or, you may find that he is content with what he makes. You should also keep in mind the “cost of living” in your area, compared to where he is currently located. When hiring a man from another congregation, a salary increase would typically be expected. Again, be open and honest on this issue – do not try to lure a man to work for you when you know you cannot pay the salary he expects.

See the attachments for more resource material.

A Detailed, Weekend Interview Process

The process leans heavily on a weekend-long evaluation visit. This contrasts with the “Sunday morning sermon and one hour visit with the church leaders” that is used by many congregations. This hiring decision is much too important to both parties to leave to such a short and non-participatory process.

This “on site evaluation” should involve not just the minister, but also his wife (if married) and children (if living at home).

Establishing a weekend-long evaluation has many benefits:

- It allows the church leaders and the congregation to really get to know the candidate.
- Involves the congregation in the process.
 - This is helpful in “vetting” the candidate – sometimes certain members will ask questions that others will not. This can be very helpful in really understanding how a candidate feels about or would approach certain issues.
 - It raises the excitement level of the congregation, and helps ensure “buy in” on the hiring decision.
 - It helps the minister (and his family) determine how comfortable they are with your membership. And it streamlines the integration when they are hired and move to your area.
- It allows you to see how he interacts with his wife and children in multiple settings – and how his children are trained.
 - Ministers may reply back and ask to not bring their children, for different reasons. We gave in to one such request – and ended up hiring that man for the job. And it worked out well for us. But if we go through the process in the future, I believe we should be more forceful in requesting that the entire family come.
- It gives a glimpse of how he handles himself under some fatigue and stress. (That is not to say we try to make the process stressful – in fact, we go out of our way to reduce the stress. But whenever you are “under the microscope” for an extended time, there is naturally a significant level of stress. Seeing the candidate in this situation has enabled us to determine how they will react when under the stress of the job.)
- It gives time for the candidate and family to see the community, including schools, housing, etc.

This weekend-long process can be expensive, but it is a wise investment by the congregation. I suggest budgeting for the following items:

1. Travel – either airfare, or gas reimbursement money, for the minister and his family.
 - a. You are requesting the interview – so you should pay all expenses.
 - b. Yes, buying airfare for a family is expensive – but it is less expensive than hiring the wrong person for the position. Tickets should be bought and paid for directly by your congregation – you should not force the candidate to buy the tickets and then wait for reimbursement.
 - c. Make allowances for food and other expenses during the trip. A general rule of thumb is that it should not cost the candidate anything to interview with your congregation – all expenses should be covered. You can either ask for receipts, or pay a “per diem” which is sure to cover reasonable costs.

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2. Hotel expenses. While you no doubt will have many members willing to host the family , I suggest putting the family in a hotel room:
 - a. Remember, it is a two-night stay – which can be hard for someone hosting the family in their home.
 - b. More importantly, it gives the minister and his family some real “down time” when they can relax from the stress of being in front of other people.
3. Rental Car. In most cases, this can be avoided, using different members with appropriate vehicles to safely drive the minister and his entire family around. But there may be times when renting a car or minivan is appropriate.
4. Meals – for example, if the elders are taking the minister to lunch at a restaurant.

We have incorporated many events into the typical weekend schedule. The schedule should be set, and sent to the candidate in advance of his trip. You do not want to surprise the candidate with the level of detail – rather, you should give him time to prepare.

This detailed, involved process has a potential downside. For example, if your go through the process with three or four men, then are not able or willing to hire any of them – you have to watch the risk of congregational exhaustion. If you have to pack up and start all over, for whatever reasons, it is sort of like being tired from walking down a mountain for half of a day, then realizing over lunch that you have to walk it again – only this time it is uphill. This is why the pre-screening process is so important.

A typical schedule which we have used successfully is included in the attachments. Note that we had established events such that all members of the congregation would have a chance to meet and hear the candidate and his family, including:

- Friday night meeting with the youth. (Many parents of the youth would stay for this activity).
- Saturday breakfast with the church elders/leaders.
- Chances for members to drive the family around the community.
- Meeting with members of the congregation at-large.
- Dinner with elders/leaders and their wives.
- Sunday Bible class and sermons.
- Sunday fellowship dinner or dinner with associate minister.

We enlisted the services of members to help with driving the family to the different events. In some cases, the candidates asked to spend time at the home of a family in lieu of hotel “down time” – we would let them bring this up, and if they asked, we would find a way to make it happen. Some members might stay at the building and baby sit young children while the minister and his wife were exploring the community or doing other vents. Others might prepare food for events held at the building – or host an event in their home.

These events we well publicized (bulletin inserts, etc.) and were well attended. The congregation reached a level of excitement, and they were pleased to have a real role in meeting and evaluating the candidates.

An Elder-Based Hiring Decision with Congregational Input

Church leaders should not farm out the entire hiring responsibility to the congregation. The elders may empower a team to manage the process, working the “nuts and bolts” – but must remain actively involved in the interviewing process. It is ultimately their responsibility.

In congregations without the benefit of an eldership, the hiring decision will of necessity be handled differently – perhaps by committee, congregational voting, or in a men’s meeting. This should be decided based upon the dynamics of your congregation.

The key point is that the hiring decision is made by the elders, with input from the congregation.

This input is obtained by surveying the members about each candidate, then compiling the results. As always, the difficult part is to get the forms filled out and returned. To ensure that this happened, we would hand out the forms in the auditorium on Sunday morning the week after the interview. We would then give the congregation five minutes to complete the forms and pass them to the aisles for pickup. Our experience is that if you let the forms be taken home, the return percentage will be low – due to “human nature”.

If we brought in candidates two weeks in a row, then the second candidate would see us engaging in the process for the candidate from the prior week. We had no problems with that, because we were very open with the candidates in regard to our process, and informing them that we were evaluating other men as well. We also explained to them our policies in regard to the confidentiality of these surveys.

We chose to treat the results of these surveys with strict “dual” confidentiality – we did not ask the members to sign their evaluation form, nor did we release the results to the congregation at large. When you are ranking “Candidate One” vs. “Candidate Two” you do not want this information leaking back to the candidates, as hurt feelings could result. Also, the church leaders may decide to make an offer to the man who was not scored highest by the congregation – for various reasons. That is their right, and we lean on their accumulated wisdom to make these tough decisions. The hiring decision should include congregational input, but not be bound by it. Making the information public will only give ammunition to those who did not have their “favorite” candidate hired.

A sample evaluation survey is included in this guide (Attachment B).

I advise bringing all your candidates in a close time cluster. This ensures that candidate one is still fresh in memory when evaluating candidates three and four. It also keeps you from having to keep men “hanging” for your decision as they are also considering other places for employment. During our last process, we brought four men in over four consecutive weekends – this was tiring, but worked well for us.

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The optimum time period is summer, when the kids are out of school. Interview trips conducted in May and June give time for the hired candidate to give notice, and make appropriate moving plans to get settled in before the next school year begins. Interviewing and hiring can and does take place at other times – but doing this in the middle of the school year will restrict the candidates who are willing to give your congregation their consideration. If you are without a minister, I suggest that you try to make arrangements for preaching until the summer begins, if at all possible.

Summer interviews have issues – such as overlapping with members or elders vacation plans. This means that some members may not get to see each candidate. For that reason, I suggest audio or video taping the Bible class and sermons, at minimum, for these members.

We asked the men to teach a “participatory” Bible class on Sundays – as opposed to a lecture-type class. We wanted to see how they would respond to questions from the congregation – and with two sermons on tap for the day, we wanted to see them at a different angle.

After the interview trips are completed, the forms filled out and tabulated, and the bills paid, the church leaders are ready to make a decision on an offer.

I suggest that the search committee also ensure that someone is planning an appropriate “going away” celebration with your current minister. Whether he is looking for the next step up, retiring, or leaving because things did not “work out as planned”, the minister has devoted himself to serving your congregation – and is worthy of your respect. A going away event allows people to express their appreciation, and provides appropriate closure.

Communication

I cannot over-stress the importance of communication in the minister search and hiring process. You cannot over-communicate. Keeping the congregation informed is a key part of getting them to participate in the process.

The first step is to communicate the process itself. Let the congregation know how you will be evaluating the candidates, and ask for their help and input. As part of this, we conducted a survey of our members to determine what traits and characteristics were important to them.

Next, we asked the congregation to help us find candidates, using their own personal networks. Many members have attended school and churches in other places, lived or grew up in other places, and have friends and family members in other locations. These can all be tapped into to find qualified men who would consider working for your congregation.

We would give periodic updates to the congregation – how many resumes we have received, how many were under “active consideration”, etc.

When you decide upon candidates to bring in for on-site evaluations, the communication must kick into high gear. We did the following:

- Used a Sunday morning sermon to outline the importance of this task, and to communicate what was happening (see a copy of the sermon in the attachments).
- Shared the results of the survey on important traits and characteristics with the congregation.
- Published each weekend schedule in the church bulletin and posted on bulletin boards.
- Sent the schedule out by email to a congregational distribution list.
- Sent the schedule to the candidates in advance of their trip. This included, as needed, flight schedules, information on airport pickup, hotel information, etc. We did our best to reduce the stress level by giving the candidates as much information as possible about the process – even letting them know that our members would be evaluating them by survey.

Attachments

The following attachments are provided as a guide. While you are free to use them as provided, I encourage you to modify them to fit the needs and style of your own congregation.

You may decide to skip some steps and forms, or add others. There is no single “right way” to go about the process of hiring a minister – you should seek to do what is comfortable and works for you.

Attachment A: Minister Evaluation Process

Candidate: _____

Friday - Travel

Delta Flight XXX, departing _____ airport ____ p.m., arriving _____ Airport ____ p.m.
You will be met by Mr. and Mrs. _____ for transport to _____. Mobile 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx.
You will have time to check into the _____ hotel.

Friday Evening, 7:00

Devotional and Fellowship with Youth Group
Return to Hotel.

Saturday Morning, 9:00 – 11:00

Mr. _____: Meeting with Elders

Saturday Afternoon, 11:00 – 1:00

Mrs. _____ - Luncheon with Ladies of Congregation
- Children can attend lunch, or if comfortable, can stay with Mr. and Mrs. _____ and their children for lunch at their house
Mr. _____ - Luncheon with Deacons

Saturday Afternoon, 1:00 – 3:00

_____ Family - Introduction to the _____ Community
- You will drive though and explore the area with Mr. and Mrs. _____

Saturday Afternoon, 2:30 – 4:00

Mr. _____ - Interview with Minister Search Committee
Mrs. _____ - Additional community evaluation, or early start to "own time"

Saturday Afternoon, 4:00 - 7:00

Down Time – at Hotel

Saturday Evening, 7:00

Dinner with Elders and Wives – At the home of Mr. and Mrs. _____

Sunday Morning

9:30 Teach Bible Class (interactive class requested)
10:30 Sermon

After Church

Lunch with _____ (Associate Minister) and family, or
Congregational Fellowship Meal, followed by “down time” afterward.

Sunday Evening, 5:30

Evening Worship & Sermon

Return Travel

(Give details). Candidate may return home that evening, or if necessary, stay overnight and go home Monday morning.

Attachment B: Minister Candidate Evaluation Form

Candidate: _____

Please evaluate the minister candidate to the best of your ability. We appreciate your input as we continue the evaluation process.

Your Age: ___ 12-18 ___ 19-25 ___ 26-40 ___ 41-55 ___ Over 55

Number of years you have attended our congregation:

___ 0-5 ___ 6-10 ___ Over 10

Opportunities for Evaluation (check all that apply):

- ___ Spent time with the candidate one-on-one
- ___ Attended Friday night youth devotional
- ___ Met in a small group discussion
- ___ Present for Bible class
- ___ Present for sermon
- ___ Had a meal with candidate and his family
- ___ Other (Specify): _____

Please rate the candidate from 1 to 5 in the areas below. Rate only those areas that you have had the opportunity to observe.

Poor	Average	Excellent			<u>Personal Evaluation</u>
1	2	3	4	5	Appearance (neatness, grooming & dress, energy)
1	2	3	4	5	Personality (attitude, cordiality, personal attributes)
1	2	3	4	5	Ministerial preparation (knowledge, education)
1	2	3	4	5	Family life (spouse, children, family relationship)
1	2	3	4	5	Ability to fit into the _____ congregation

Poor	Average	Excellent			<u>Bible Class Evaluation</u>
1	2	3	4	5	Involved the congregation in the class
1	2	3	4	5	Kept your attention
1	2	3	4	5	Demonstrated in-depth knowledge of God's Word
1	2	3	4	5	Able to draw meaningful conclusions
1	2	3	4	5	Overall effectiveness

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Poor	Average		Excellent		<u>Sermon Evaluation</u>
1	2	3	4	5	Presentation effectiveness (speaking ability)
1	2	3	4	5	Ability to draw you into the message
1	2	3	4	5	Demonstrated in-depth knowledge of God's Word
1	2	3	4	5	Message was relevant and appropriate
1	2	3	4	5	Overall effectiveness

Poor	Average		Excellent		<u>Overall Evaluation</u>
1	2	3	4	5	

Comments:

Attachment C: Action Item List - Minister Search Committee

Action Item	Responsible	Timing
Establish Committee Meeting Times	Committee	
Finalize & Communicate the "Search Process"		
Finalize, Conduct and Compile Results of Congregational Survey		
Write Job Description & Advertisements/Email		
Ask Congregation for Candidate Recommendations		
Advertise Position & Initiate Email Job Broadcast		
Set up Contacts for Phone/Email/Postal Responses		
Finalize Interview Process and Participants		
Compile and Rate Resumes		
Send Job Application Kit to Top Candidates		
Finalize Congregational & Youth Rating Forms		
Determine Questions to be Asked of Every Candidate by Search Committee		
Review Application Materials/References from Top Candidates		
Visit Home Congregations of Top Candidates for Discreet Evaluation		
Schedule Candidates for Visits		
Candidate Evaluations – Congregation, Committee, Youth, Elders		
Appreciation Event for the Departing Minister and His Family		
Candidate Selection & Job Offer		
Relocation Arrangements		
Welcome Events for Family		

Attachment D: Sample Advertisement

This is a sample of an advertisement that can be placed in online minister search forums, magazines, or even newspapers.

The _____ Church of Christ (located in _____, ____) is currently seeking a minister who defines his ministry as preaching, teaching and equipping others to serve. We are a congregation of _____+ families that is seeking to grow.

The ideal candidate should have an in-depth knowledge of God's Word, hold fast to Biblical truths and be able to effectively communicate those truths for the edification of the congregation and growth of the church. Additionally, he should be sensitive to cross-cultural issues, relate well to young people and be effective in handling family and marriage issues. Under the oversight of _____ elders, he (and his family) should be active in church ministries and in the lives of individual members of the congregation.

If you would like to be considered for this position, please submit your resume, audio or video media of two sermons and a concise statement (1-2 pages) that characterizes your current ministry efforts and style. Please mail this information to:

Church of Christ
Minister Search Committee
<< Address >>
<< email >>

If you have any questions, please contact _____ at ____ - ____ - _____

Again, this should be edited and adjusted as needed for your particular congregation.

Attachment E: Committee Questions

These “sample questions” were developed by our minister search committee. These questions could be asked by committee members at different points during the process.

Not all of these questions were asked – but we found it useful to have some of these on hand, to use at different times during the weekend.

Note that many of these questions ask the minister to explain something that he did, or a situation he was involved with, in the past. This is a common interviewing technique, based on the premise that by understanding how someone handled something in the past, we can gain keen insight into how they will react to such situations in the future. Thus, it is better to dig into an actual past event, than to ask questions that begins with “What would you do if...”

1. Why did you apply to this position?
2. What has led you to consider leaving your present post?
3. Tell us about the growth patterns of the churches you have served. Has attendance and activity levels increased after you began your work there?
4. Tell me about a few very difficult counseling situations you have been involved with in the past year. What was the situation? How did you approach your counseling advice?
5. Do you feel that most conventional churches utilize women to their potential? How do you feel we should or might change our approach to better utilize women’s talents?
6. What would you look for in a church to “warn” you that you should not take a position there?
7. In every congregation there are people who love the minister’s “style” and others who do not care for the minister’s style. What do people who love your style and approach say? What do those who do not love your style or approach say?
8. What is your approach when moving to a new location to learn the individuals of the congregation and the community?
9. If selected, how long do you plan to stay on as our minister? Do you like to move on after so many years?
10. Describe your ministry “style”. How do you expect to impact our congregation after being here for 6 months? What will you do to drive this change?

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11. What are the two or three things that bring you the most pride when you look back on your ministry efforts so far?
12. What would it take to convince you that this is the right church for your next assignment?
13. Can someone be a member of a denomination and still be in the church? To what extent do you consider someone a “brother” or “sister” in Christ?
14. Tell us about the best sermon you have ever preached. What was the response? Have you been able to emulate this or change your sermons to move toward this again?
15. Tell us about a time when you had difficulties with an elder or church leadership. What happened, and how did you attempt to resolve it?
16. If we were to call your references and ask them to tell us the one area in which you are in the most need of improvement, what would they tell us?
17. What are some areas in your work where you have shown great initiative?
18. Have you worked with the elderly? What have you organized?
19. How knowledgeable/proficient are you with a computer and electronic equipment, such as PowerPoint, or blogging? Do you have any innovative methods that you have used to communicate with your congregation?

Attachment F: Questions for the Elders

We developed these questions as suggested items for our elders to discuss with candidates.

1. How long of a probationary period would you be willing to accept?
2. What is your understanding of a divorced man serving as a deacon or elder?
3. Tell us about a time when you became very discouraged in your work. What was the cause? How did you overcome this? Does it happen often?
4. What experiences do you have in conflict resolution?
5. How do you think the worship services of most mainstream Churches of Christ differ from those of the 1st century church? Do you think we need to change our worship to better fit this model?
6. Do you feel the Church of Christ should become more “contemporary” in worship styles? What does this mean to you?
7. What do you think are the most and least effective evangelistic methods we can use in our communities today?
8. Have churches where you have served used home Bible studies? What was the result? What do you see as the pros and cons of this approach?
9. When you meet with elders to review your job performance, what do they most often praise you for? What do they most often challenge you to improve?
10. If you were to teach a class concerning I Cor. 11, 12, 13 and 14, how would you approach it? (Especially chapters 11 and 14.)
11. How would you describe your hermeneutic style of interpreting the scriptures?
12. Under what situations would you resign?

Attachment G: Phone Interview Questions

The following are questions that you can pull from for interviews. We pulled from this list for our telephone interviews. As the phone interview progresses, it may become obvious which questions you wish to ask – others may be dropped as it becomes obvious how he may answer certain questions.

We also thought about setting up a “questionnaire” where we asked for responses in writing to some of these questions. But we ultimately dropped this as we felt it would be too time consuming for the ministers.

1. How would you define baptism? (Sprinkling, immersion, etc.) What is the purpose of baptism?
2. If you could change one thing about the church, what would it be?
3. If you could change one thing about our worship methods, what would it be?
4. If you could change one thing about our Christian colleges, what would it be?
5. If you could change one thing about the church’s evangelistic methods, what would it be?
6. What is your opinion on the clapping of hands during singing in our worship?
7. What is your opinion on the use of “worship teams” (men or women) to guide us in our musical worship?
8. How do you feel about instrumental music in worship?
9. What is your understanding of celebrating/observing Christmas?
10. What is your understanding of wearing costumes and celebrating/observing Halloween?
11. Do you have any issues with using our building for:
 - Meals?
 - Community events?
 - Wedding receptions?
 - Recreational youth activities?

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12. At what point are does someone become a Christian? Who are the “saved”? Who comprises the church?
13. What is your understanding of the role of women in our worship services?
14. What is your understanding of women leading prayer, singing and/or preaching?
15. What is your understanding of:
 - Women serving as deacons or elders?
 - Head covering for women?
 - Women with short hair?
 - Women wearing slacks?
 - Proper dress for modesty?
16. Do you have a problem with supporting orphanages?
17. Do you believe having Sunday Bible classes is ok?
18. What is your belief or understanding of serving communion from one cup?
19. How would you handle getting no response from the elders when you would like to see some action taken on an issue?
20. If married, does your wife have any experience in teaching children’s classes? Has she taught ladies classes?
21. Does your wife normally take a leadership role among the ladies?
22. We would like for you to answer the following questions as part of your application process. Please write your answers on the form provided. If necessary, you may add additional pages. We appreciate your time and honesty in responding to these questions.
23. What are your concepts on preaching and teaching? What approaches do you prefer?
24. What do you see as your primary goals in a new location? How do members of your family adjust to and complement your goals?

25. Do you have preferences in studying from or reading from a particular translation of the Bible? How do you evaluate the various popular translations?
26. What is the target length of your sermons? Why? Do you normally go over or under this target?
27. How do you feel about the use of “children’s worship” during our worship assemblies?
28. Do you feel it is proper to incorporate drama into our worship? Why or why not?
29. What training and/or experience do you have in counseling:
- Those about to be married?
 - Members with marital problems?
 - Members with family problems?
 - Those contemplating divorce?
 - New converts?
 - Members with spiritual problems?
 - Depression?
 - Drug abuse?
30. Many congregations of the Lord’s church have entered into a practice of having two services: one that is “conventional” and one that is “contemporary.” What are your thoughts on this? Do you believe it is beneficial?
31. What is your understanding of Biblical teachings on:
- Divorce and remarriage?
 - Instrumental music?
 - Abortion?
 - How one can lose salvation?

Attachment H: Letter for Late Applicants

We reached a point where we selected our top candidates and had lined up site evaluations. But then resumes still kept coming in. At that point, we had two choices:

1. Send a rejection letter for unqualified applicants
2. Send an “on hold” letter for candidates that looked promising.

A sample “on hold” letter follows:

Dear _____

I just wanted to drop a quick line to acknowledge receipt of your resume/application by mail. We very much appreciate your interest in the _____ Church of Christ.

Let me explain where we are in the process of hiring a new minister. At this time, we have selected some men to visit our congregation to try out for the position. The men were chosen through a process of resume reviews, phone interviews, and reference checks. Right now we have schedule late June and early July for the visits.

We have not “closed off” the process. After we interview the men we have chosen, we may decide to bring in another candidate or two. But I do not believe we will be in a position to make this decision until early or middle July.

Feel free to call me at 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx if you would like to discuss the situation. I would be glad to discuss things with you. However, I prefer not to conduct extensive phone interviews with additional candidates until we better assess the men we have already committed to visits.

Whatever happens here, I wish you the best in your search for the best place for your work.

Sincerely,

For the Minister Search Team

Attachment I: Letter for Rejected Applicants

Courtesy demands a written response to each applicant. The following is an example “rejection letter” to be sent to candidates who are not a good fit for your congregation.

My general philosophy is to be courteous, and to be direct and to the point.

Dear Mr. _____,

We appreciate your interest in the pulpit minister position at the _____ Church of Christ.

We have begun the task of reviewing resumes and qualifications for all those who have applied. As you might guess, this is a difficult process, and it is tough to make these choices.

Upon review of your application, we feel that your qualifications are not as good a fit for our congregation as others that we have received. We do, however, wish you the best in your ministry, and pray that God will lead you to a productive work, wherever that may be. We praise you for dedicating your life to the preaching of the gospel.

Again, we thank you for your interest in the _____ congregation.

Sincerely,

For the Ministry Search Team

Attachment J: Minister Recommendation Form

Do you know a strong candidate who may be interested in being our next minister? If so, please make a recommendation below. Be advised that we may contact the candidate.

Your Name: _____

Minister's Name: _____

His Current Congregation: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Currently Preaching Full Time? _____ Currently Seeking New Employment? _____

Why do you believe this man is well suited for the position?

What do you consider to be his greatest strength?

What do you consider to be his area in most need of improvement?

Please rate the candidate, from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) in the following areas:

_____ Preaching Ability (content, presentation)

_____ Evangelism & Outreach

_____ Family Life (strength of his family relationships)

_____ Counseling & Visitation

_____ Biblical Knowledge and Soundness

_____ Social Skills (outgoing, ability to relate to different members)

_____ Ministerial Training & Education

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_____ Relationships with Elders and Church Staff

_____ Visionary Leadership and Motivation

_____ Bible Class Teaching Ability

Attachment K: Youth Devotional Questions

The following questions were developed to ask the minister as he met with our youth group. These would be asked after the youth group first had a chance to ask their own questions. Or, we might give these out to different members of the youth group, using them to ask these questions.

1. Have you worked with youth groups? If yes, what size was the group?
2. What youth activities have you organized or been involved in?
3. Are any of your sermons geared toward the young?
4. What is your opinion on the age of the earth? What about evolution and men evolving from apes?
5. At what point in your life did you know you wanted to be an evangelist? What led you to this decision?
6. What do you think is the greatest danger facing the church today?
7. What is the greatest danger facing our Christian colleges today?
8. Have you worked with singles groups? What have you organized?

Attachment L: Minister Advertising and Posting Locations

When soliciting resumes, there are basically two main approaches:

1. Fishing with a net (a broad cast)
2. Fishing with a lure (targeting a specific fish)

Both approaches are appropriate.

First – fishing with a net.

This involves running ads, contacting Christian college Bible departments, posting on web sites of schools and contacting preaching schools. Many colleges and schools run Internet forums for churches seeking ministers, and also for ministers seeking churches. You can find everything from new graduates, to men preaching without degrees and certificates, to very experienced and senior men. It is possible to obtain a lot of resumes if you work hard in publicizing your opening with these groups.

The down side is that you will get a lot of resumes from men who are not a good fit for your congregation. You will even get a few responses from men who are not presently preaching within your own fellowship. You have to be prepared to do the work of “weeding through” the resumes to find the best candidates. But, the effort is worth it, as you are likely to find some good, quality candidates that match your needs.

Next – fishing with a lure.

You can often find a very good candidate by “targeting” men who you feel would be good for the job. These men may or may not be actively or openly seeking a position.

You may identify these men through word of mouth – that is, by using the network of the committee members and your congregation to try to find these hidden gems. We even passed out a form (Appendix J) in which we asked our members to make recommendations. We then would have someone call these men to ask if they would be interested in our open position.

You can also ask other area ministers if they have acquaintances that would be interested – perhaps someone they went to school with, or that they met at a lectureship.

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The following organizations provide opportunities to post and search for candidates among the churches of Christ, or to run targeted advertisements.

- Gospel Advocate, email to ads@gospeladvocate.com for information on advertising in the magazine
- Florida School of Preaching, <http://www.fsop.net/>
- Southwest School of Bible Studies, <http://www.swsbs.edu/>
- Brown Trail School of Preaching, <http://www.browntrailsofpreaching.com/>
- In Search Of The Lord's Way TV, <http://www.searchtv.org/>
- Lipscomb University--Minister Placement Search, <http://careercenter.lipscomb.edu/careersearch.asp>
- Christian Chronicle Classified Ads, <http://www.christianchronicle.org/classifieds>
- Qohelet Web Ministry--Ministry Jobs, <http://epreacher.org/ministryjobs/>
- Ohio Valley University Ministers Looking for Churches, <http://bible.ovc.edu/bible/prchrlook.htm>
- Ohio Valley University Churches Looking for Ministers, <http://bible.ovc.edu/bible/chlookpg.htm>
- Memphis School of Preaching, <http://www.msop.org/>
- West Virginia School of Preaching , www.wvsop.com
- Truth Bible Institute, <http://truthbibleinstitute.org/index.php>
- East TN School of Preaching, <http://www.etspm.org/>
- Theological University of America, <http://www.theologicaluofa.com/>
- Gospel Gazette Resources, <http://www.gospelgazette.com/links/index.shtml>
- Freed Hardeman University, <http://www.fhu.edu/>
- Abilene University, <http://www.acu.edu/>
- Heritage Christian University, <http://www.hcu.edu/>
- Harding--Churches Looking for Ministers, http://www.harding.edu/career/churches_ministers
- Harding School fo Theology --Ministry Opportunities, <http://hst.edu/our-community/ministry-job-opportunities/>
- Heritage Christian University--Church List, <http://www.hcu.edu/resources/churchlisting>
- Pepperdine - Churches Looking for Ministers, <http://www.pepperdine.edu/churchrelations/resources/jobs/openings.htm>
- Sunset International Bible Institute--Churches Needing Ministers, http://www.sibi.cc/ministers_needed
- Directory of Schools of Preaching, http://church-of-christ.org/sop/United_States/United_States.htm

Attachment M: Sample Results – Desired Minister Characteristics

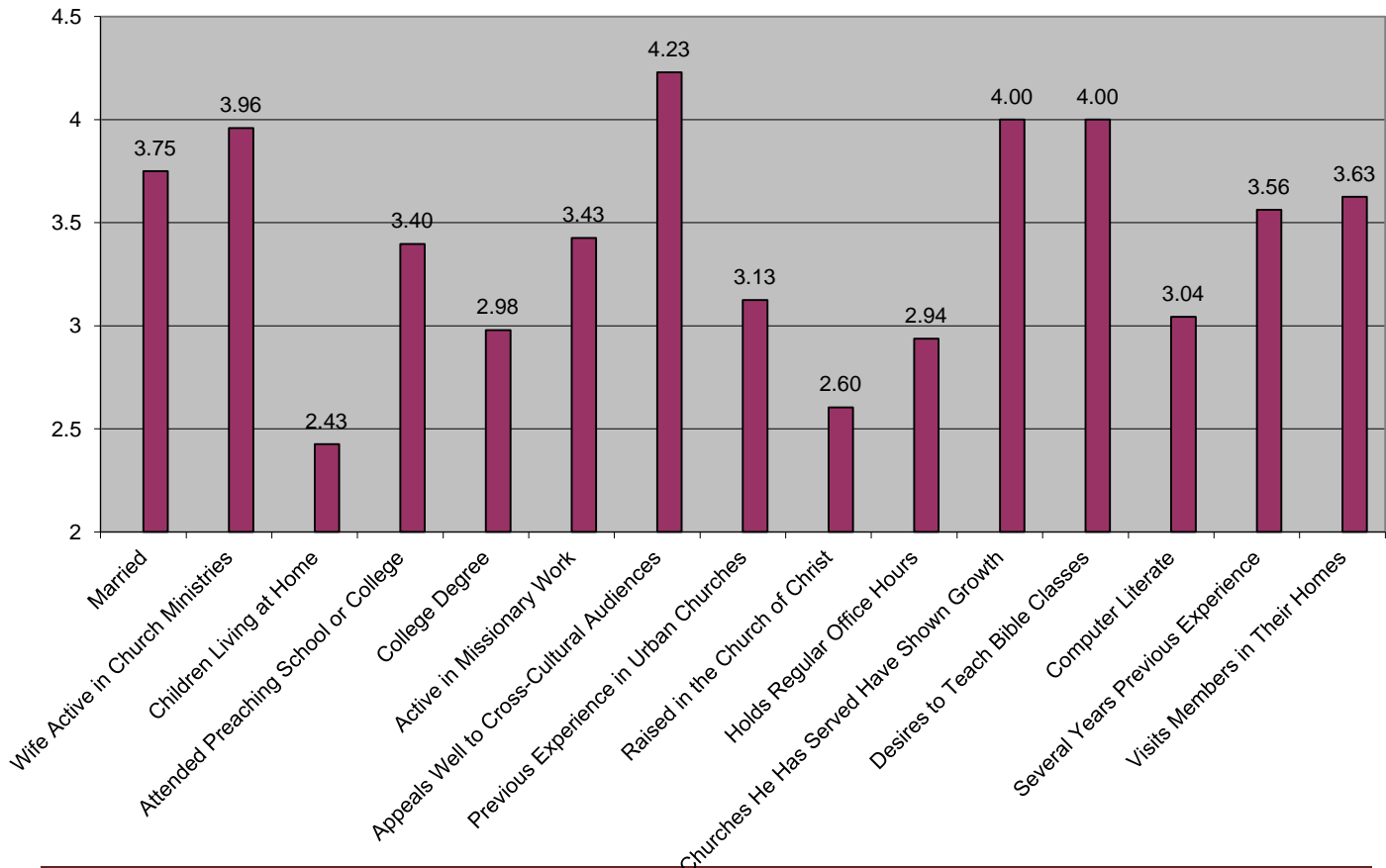
This chart shows how the Camp Hill, Pennsylvania congregation rated the desired traits in a minister. We used these results as a guide when discussing which men might be most effective in our congregation.

Note that the highest score is on “Appeals Well to Cross Cultural Audiences”. Our congregation is diverse, with members of many races and backgrounds. Even though we have great diversity, we are fortunate to have overwhelming love and unity. We guard this unity very jealously, and this mind set manifested itself in the survey.

It is interesting that the man we hired after this survey was conducted had these traits:

- Was not raised in the church of Christ
- Had experienced growth in his previous congregation
- Married with children living at home
- Became very active with our minority members after he arrived.
- Teaches many home Bible studies.

Minister Characteristic Importance



This table shows additional tabulated results on how our congregation rated the importance of difference minister characteristics. The committee was pleased to see “Holds fast to Biblical Truths” in the top spot. Effectiveness in the pulpit was a close second.

Important Minister Characteristics		
Characteristic	Score	Rank
Holds fast to Biblical truths	173	1
Strong pulpit minister & sermon delivery	156	2
Relates well to and active with young people	94	3
Effective in teaching	88	4
Strong marriage and family relationship	53	5
Strong interpersonal skills, outgoing	52	6
Equipping the congregation toward evangelism	37	7
Strong outreach focus and capabilities in the community	30	8
Effective in counseling	22	9
Relates well to and active with older members	20	10
Strong organizational & planning skills	7	11
College level education	6	12
Which of these characteristics of a minister would be most desirable?		
Stronger in pulpit ministry than personal evangelism and teaching		22
Stronger in personal evangelism than pulpit ministry and teaching		8
Strongest in teaching and equipping others to serve		16
Other		1

The bottom half of the table shows an interesting blend of results when thinking about the importance of a strong “pulpit” minister vs. a “teaching” or “personal evangelism” minister.

If you are fortunate, you find someone who has all these traits. But everyone has their strengths. Some men are more “evangelists” – active in the community, going house-to-house, spending little time at the office. Other men tend to spend time in the office, counseling in the church building, preparing for sermons. You should decide in advance how flexible you wish to be. Some men will not like to hold given “office hours” – in fact, the effectiveness of an “evangelistic” minister will be hindered if you force him to hold long or specific office hours. But the leadership and members of the congregation must be willing to give an “evangelist” a lot of flexibility to maximize his effectiveness.

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This should be discussed openly and honestly. If you hire an “evangelist” style man, but do not give him the freedom to work in his unique style, he will not be happy or effective. Likewise, you should not try to force a man into this mold if it is not his natural style.

The table below shows the scores and rankings – the “raw data” – for the bar chart shown early in the attachment.

On a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important) please rate how important the following characteristics are for a minister to serve our congregation:		
		Rank
Married	3.75	5
Wife Active in Church Ministries	3.96	4
Children Living at Home	2.43	15
Attended Preaching School or College	3.40	9
College Degree	2.98	12
Active in Missionary Work	3.43	8
Appeals Well to Cross-Cultural Audiences	4.23	1
Previous Experience in Urban Churches	3.13	10
Raised in the Church of Christ	2.60	14
Holds Regular Office Hours	2.94	13
Churches He Has Served Have Shown Growth	4.00	2
Desires to Teach Bible Classes	4.00	2
Computer Literate	3.04	11
Several Years Previous Experience	3.56	7
Visits Members in Their Homes	3.63	6

Note that we ranked “holds regular office hours” to a low position. But growth and teaching were rated highly. It is interesting to note that the man we hired after conducting this survey is in the mold of an “evangelist:

- He is rarely in his church office
- He works highly irregular hours
- He is very active in the community, in members lives, at their homes
- He conducts many home Bible studies

But we also presently have a senior associate minister, who is much more structured. He keeps regular office hours, and spends a lot of time compiling class and teaching materials and doing organizational work for the congregation. We give each man the flexibility he needs, and as a result both men are effective. This works for us at Camp Hill – but every congregation is different. It took some time for us to get used to the “evangelistic” model used by our new minister – and some education and teaching – but now we are much the better for accepting it.

Attachment N: Introductory Sermon

The following sermon was used to prepare the Camp Hill congregation for the arrival of four candidates.

The Camp Hill Church of Christ at a Crossroads

Suggested Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

As most of you know, we are currently looking for a new full-time minister. Our previous minister, _____, recently retired from full-time ministry. He and his wife _____ are still members here and worshipping with us. I am not a professional minister, but I am a member of this congregation. I am also a member of our minister search committee, and this morning I want to talk about the ministry, and our search for a new full-time minister here.

Unlike most of the denominational world, in the churches of Christ each congregation is autonomous. In other words, we run our own affairs, and there is no national organization to tell us what we can and cannot do. This is in accordance to the planned structure for the church as laid out in the New Testament – we are under the leadership of independent elders, not a council, synod, or other man-made organizational structure. I could spend a whole sermon on that! Because of our independent structure, we are free to look for and find a new minister who is well suited to our congregation.

The wisdom of God is evident in how he set this up. We have had friends who were members of denominational churches, and their national headquarters would move their ministers around at will. Our friends would get very frustrated, because they were in a small congregation, and they typically got ministers who were not very qualified, or who were not a good fit for their congregation. Although it takes much more work to search for and locate a minister independently, it is much better, and we can see clearly the wisdom of God in allowing us this freedom. We can also see the folly of man in setting up unauthorized structures that hinder, rather than aid, the Lord's work.

But with freedom comes responsibility. It is up to us to find our own minister. And that is a difficult and somewhat scary proposition. It requires a lot of thought, planning, prayer, and work. The search committee has tried to do our best to give our elders the chance to evaluate and hire someone who will be a good fit with our congregation.

I would like to start this morning by discussing some scriptures that relate to the ministry, or that relate to how we as a congregation should approach this process. I hope to challenge you to think about your approach to our search process.

John 17:20-23

²⁰"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

This passage discusses unity of the church. Jesus prayed fervently that we should all be as one.

This is important because the process of finding a minister can unite us, or it can divide us. We could all rally together in this cause, or we could degenerate into squabbling among ourselves over which candidate is the best. We could all unite around the man who is selected by our elders, and do our best to welcome him and his family to our congregation, or we could give them a cold shoulder because we felt someone else could have been given the position.

I challenge you to resolve to use this point in our history as a means of uniting ourselves together.

1 Corinthians 1:10-17

¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹²What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? ¹⁴I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. ¹⁶(Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Note here Paul's plea that we not unite behind "this man" or "that man", but behind Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:1-8 (A similar passage...)

¹Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. ³You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? ⁴For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men? ⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. ⁷So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

We will be bringing in four men to try out for this position, starting next week. Each candidate will have his supporters. Each will be the favorite of someone. Each of us will have candidates we like the best. But only

one can be chosen. We must not deteriorate to jealousy and quarreling like the Corinthian church. The decision of who to hire will not fall to us in a democratic vote, but to our elders. Our elders will have more information and in-depth discussions with each of the candidates than we will as members of the congregation. Whatever the outcome, it is our Christian duty to support these men, support their decision, and support the family that we bring to our congregation.

There are many characteristics of a minister that are important. I challenge you to look beyond the obvious. Usually we place a lot of emphasis on how the man looks and projects from the pulpit. We focus on his preaching style, and his ability to deliver his material and hold our attention. That is certainly important. But so are a lot of other areas:

Personal Evaluation

Appearance (neatness, grooming & dress, energy), Personality (attitude, cordiality, personal attributes), Ministerial preparation (knowledge, education), Family life (spouse, children, family relationship), Ability to fit into the Camp Hill congregation

Teaching

Involves the congregation in the class, Keeps your attention, Demonstrates in-depth knowledge of God's Word, Able to draw meaningful conclusions , Overall effectiveness

Sermon Delivery

Presentation effectiveness (speaking ability), Ability to draw you into the message, Demonstrates in-depth knowledge of God's Word, Message is relevant and appropriate, Overall effectiveness

Ministry Style

Teacher (Classic teacher/preacher pulpit minister)

Evangelist (Goes out into the community and actively find lost souls)

Equipper (Effectively teaches us and motivates us to be evangelistic)

Once at another congregation I attended, we were searching for a minister, and one woman was overheard saying about a candidate, "We can't hire him! He's not handsome enough..." That is shallow thinking. We should not put much stock into how tall, handsome, or tanned a candidate is. Certainly conservative dress and good appearance is important. But we need to keep all things in perspective.

A Western rancher had asked about what kind of man would be trying out for the open position at his church. "How big a man do you want?" asked one elder. "Well, Sir," the rancher replied, "we're not overly particular, but when he's on his knees we'd like to have him reach Heaven." Isn't that what's really important?

1 Corinthians 3:19

¹⁹*For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.*

But the most important factor of all is whether he builds his foundation on Jesus Christ and His teachings. This was confirmed by your congregational surveys, in which you rated this as the top priority for a minister.

1 Corinthians 3:10-14

¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹²If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward.

No matter how good a speaker someone is, how personable they are, or how they keep your attention, if they are not working with us to build a foundation on Jesus Christ through careful application of God's word, they are not the right person for the job.

Being a Minister is a Tough Job!

Preaching the Word of God is a tough assignment. We need to keep that in mind as we look for, evaluate, hire, and support a minister. They and their families live their life under a microscope, and though we all are held to the same standard in God's eyes, they are often held to a higher standard than we are. The Apostle Paul must have felt some this, when he wrote:

1 Corinthians 4:9-13

⁹For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! ¹¹To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. ¹²We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; ¹³when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.

I challenge the congregation to be understanding and supportive of whom ever we hire. We need to be supportive also of Paul and Mildred Cantrell, as Paul works with us as an associate minister.

We also must be supportive of paying a decent salary.

1 Corinthians 9:3-14

³This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. ⁴Don't we have the right to food and drink? ⁵Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? ⁸Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the

same thing? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? ¹²If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? ¹³But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

Unlike most of us, a minister's salary is public information. Any one of us can read the church financial report and know what they are making. But you have to keep one thing in mind. Under our salary structure at Camp Hill, their salary is everything, they must pay own social security, housing, insurance, and taxes. You cannot directly compare their salary to another person's salary, which may include many of these items. We also must remember that this is a professional position, and we have to pay competitive wages with other congregations to attract and keep a good minister. We do have our limits, and several candidates were removed from consideration due to our inability to pay them a salary commensurate with what they are making today.

I can tell you that finding the right person for the job is a very involved task. The search team has narrowed down about 25 candidates to get to the four that we are inviting in. As we did this, we were challenged to consider some tough issues. What are we really looking for? Would we consider an evangelistic minister who has no desire to sit in an office and maintain hours? Would we consider someone finishing an advanced degree, or who speaks at a lot of out-of-town events, or who makes a lot of mission trips? What about a minority candidate, would that be a viable option for the congregation?

Consider the Apostle Paul. Apparently he was not the greatest public speaker:

2 Corinthians 10:1-2

¹By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you--I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! ²I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world.

2 Corinthians 10:9-11

⁹do not want to seem to be trying to frighten you with my letters. ¹⁰For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing." ¹¹Such people should realize that what we are in our letters when we are absent, we will be in our actions when we are present.

Here is a good illustration:

A member of a search committee undergoing this painful process finally lost patience. He'd just witnessed the group reject applicant after applicant for some minor fault -- real or imagined. It was time for a bit of soul-searching on the part of the committee. So he stood up and read this letter purporting to be from another

applicant. "Gentlemen: Understanding your pulpit is vacant, I should like to apply for the position. I have many qualifications. I've been a preacher with much success and also have had some success as a writer. Some say I'm a good organizer. I've been a leader most places I've been. "I'm over 50 years of age and have never preached in one place for more than three years. In some places, I have left town after my work caused riots and disturbances. I must admit I have been in jail three or four times, but not because of any real wrongdoing. My health is not too good, though I still accomplish a great deal. The churches I have preached in have been small, though located in several large cities. I've not gotten along well with religious leaders in the towns where I have preached, even though I have been known to preach past midnight. In fact, some have threatened me, and even attacked me physically. However, if you can use me, I promise to do my best for you." The man turned to the committee and said, "Well, what do you think? Shall we call him?" The good church folks were appalled! Consider a sickly, trouble-making, absent-minded ex-jailbird? Was he crazy? The man eyed them all keenly before he replied, "It's signed, 'The Apostle Paul.'"

So What Is The Work Of A Minister?

Consider Paul's advice to the young minister, Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:1-2, 6-8

¹The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. ²Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.

⁶If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. ⁷Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. ⁸For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

1 Timothy 4:12-13, 16

¹²Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. ¹³Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.

¹⁶Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 6:11-12

¹¹But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

2 Timothy 2:15

¹⁵*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

- Pointing out false teachings. Training to be Godly.
- Being an example in life, in love, in faith, in purity.
- Devoted to reading, preaching, and teaching God's word
- Watching his life and doctrine closely. Fighting the good fight of faith.
- Correctly handling the word of truth

A noted speaker once said, "We don't want ministers anymore, we want CEOs. We don't want prophets, we want politicians. We don't want godliness, we want experience. We don't want spirituality, we want efficiency. We don't want humility, we want charisma. We don't want godly authority, we want relational skill." As a result, we have thousands and thousands of churches in this country whose ministers are very qualified to do what the Church has asked of them, but the one thing that hasn't been asked of them is to love Jesus. So they don't. And neither do their people.

Let's resolve that this will not apply to us!

Comments about the Process:

- We hope that one of the four men who are being evaluated will be a good fit for the congregation. And we have to be a good fit for them. But, it is possible that we may have to keep looking.
- Resumes and schedules posted on bulletin board, and schedules will be in each previous week's bulletin. Weekend long event.
- Each Saturday, 10:30 – Noon, we encourage everyone to drop by the building to meet the candidates.
- Surveys- will be passed out each Sunday morning, we will get to rate each candidate. This is an evaluation tool for the elders, and the results will not be released to the congregation.
- The search committee has put in a lot of effort. Hours on the phone, interviewing, checking references. They coordinated schedules, lined up volunteers, sent out information packets, made travel reservations, etc. Be sure to thank them!

Candidates:

- (At this point we made brief introductions to each candidate)

In summary, the process of finding a minister is one that can unite us, or it can divide us.

Let's resolve now to support our elders as the work toward making the best decision for the congregation as a whole.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (good closing verse)

³¹So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Attachment O: Survey from a Minister Candidate

This survey was given to us by one of the candidates. The candidate asked us to fill it out. In return, he filled out a pre-trip survey from our search committee.

I am not including our answers; the answers from each congregation would be different. But I am including this as this gives some insight into the types of items that are of interest to men seeking to find a good church home for their ministry.

You might consider writing up a “description” of your congregation that covers some of these issues. You could bundle this with some recent church bulletins and other materials that help men to get to know your congregation. This then could be sent to men who are being given consideration for the preaching position.

Congregation

1. Describe your congregation in terms of its growth goals:
 - Inward focus (plan for growing spiritually and numerically?)
 - Outward focus (plan for being known and developing a good reputation in the community?)
2. How many core members/attendance (not visitors) do you average for each of your AM Sun. Bible classes, AM worship, PM worship, and Wed. Bible classes?
3. What if any, do you do in the way of extra scheduled fellowship, planning, and preaching and teaching efforts, like: gospel meetings, seminars, congregational meetings, congregational/member retreats, monthly singings, prayer meetings, neighbor day, etc?
4. Please describe your congregation in terms of age and group make-up percentages? For example, what percentage or how many are children k-4, 5-6th, Teens 7-8th, 9-12th, college age 18-25, young married/ professional and married with preteens-teenagers 26-50, married with adult children 50-65, semi-retired-retired 65 and older?
5. If any, what other regularly scheduled meeting times do you have in a week at the building?
6. Are there any organized activities for the members for the purpose of fellowship?
7. Do you ever have fellowship meals at the church?
8. Do the ladies or men in the congregation participate in or host Ladies or Men’s Day programs?
9. Are there Ladies Bible classes?
10. Are there other churches of Christ in the immediate area and are there opportunities for fellowship?
11. What is your thinking on house churches/small groups?

A Participative Church Minister Hiring Process

12. If any, describe your special in-reach and outreach efforts/programs?
13. How many domestic or foreign mission work projects are you supporting, including organizations like "Truth for the World?"
14. Has the congregation ever been involved in a split or church dismissal of immoral members?
15. Discuss the circumstances that have led to the congregation's search for a new evangelist?

Elders

1. Are the elders active in the member's lives and in taking a definitive leadership role (visiting, teaching, guiding, comforting, admonishing, rebuking, and encouraging)?
2. Are the children of each elder baptized for the remission of sin and living and conducting themselves in the examples of faithful Christians in attendance in Bible class and worship, church peer group interaction, and responsible personal and home and family life (if married)?
3. How are the elders evaluated concerning their performance as elders?
4. What is the elder's belief and teaching concerning apparel in worship at the building and Bible classes for all members, but particularly teenager girls and women?
5. What is the elder's belief and teaching on the role of women in the church?
6. Do the elders, deacons, and preachers meet on a regular basis, or are there separate meetings for each by invitation and request, only?

Education and Children

1. What is the average attendance for your children's Bible classes?
2. What are the children's grade divisions?
3. What Bible school materials do you use?
4. Do you have Vacation Bible School (VBS)?
5. Do you permit skits, drama plays, or clapping during VBS and youth rallies?
6. Do you have any organized fellowship/activities for the children?

Evangelism

1. Is there an ongoing plan or class to equip and focus the members in improving their soul winning abilities?

A Participative Church Minister Hiring Process

2. What do you think about radio and TV broadcasting? Are there any popular and local AM or FM talk radio stations?
3. How do you measure your growth from year to year?
4. Is there an annual talent survey conducted?
5. Are there any periodic new member recognition fellowship and teaching opportunities?
6. How are the various age groups being used for evangelism (See "Congregation" #4)?

General

1. Is there an associate/youth/involvement minister?
2. Would I be the only one in the pulpit, or is there team evangelism or a men's preacher training effort?
3. What is your thinking on team evangelism (the preacher and others, or two preachers share the preaching responsibilities)?
4. What would people in the community say about the church of Christ at _____?
5. Is there a church secretary?
6. What is the history of your congregation?

Preacher Family

1. Is there a church house or parsonage?
2. What salary would you say a family of 3 (2 adults and 1 child), with a mortgage, utilities, federal, state and local, and property taxes, a car payment, retirement savings, insurances, medical expenses, and other normal and reasonable living and recreation expenses and savings would need to live in the _____ Metro area with only one adult in the family working?
3. What other expectations will the elders and the congregation have of the preacher's wife outside of what is expected of all the other Christian women in the congregation?
4. Will it be completely up to the preacher to plan his sermon material or will the elders and members be making suggestions for the preaching curriculum?
5. How much vacation, gospel meeting, and lectureship time will the preacher be allowed annually?

Appendix P: Minister Characteristics Survey

The minister search committee would like your help in rating the qualities of a minister that are important to you. We plan to use these results to guide us in identifying men who would be a good fit with our congregation.

We appreciate your input. Results will be shared with the congregation in the near future.

Characteristics: On a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (extremely important) please rate how important the following characteristics are for a minister to serve our congregation:

<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Married
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Wife Active in Church Ministries
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Children Living at Home
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Attended Preaching School or College
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	College Degree
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Active in Missionary Work
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Appeals Well to Cross-Cultural Audiences
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Previous Experience in Urban Churches
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Raised in the Church of Christ
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Holds Regular Office Hours
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Churches He Has Served Have Shown Growth
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Desires to Teach Bible Classes
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Computer Literate
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Several Years Previous Experience
<u> </u> 1	<u> </u> 2	<u> </u> 3	<u> </u> 4	<u> </u> 5	Visits Members in Their Homes

Rankings: Rank each of the following from most important (1) to least important (12)

- Holds fast to Biblical truths
- Strong pulpit minister & sermon delivery
- Relates well to and active with young people
- Effective in teaching
- Strong marriage and family relationship
- Strong interpersonal skills, outgoing
- Equipping the congregation toward evangelism
- Strong outreach focus and capabilities in the community
- Effective in counseling
- Relates well to and active with older members
- Strong organizational & planning skills
- College level education

Which of these characteristics of a minister would be most desirable?

- Stronger in pulpit ministry than personal evangelism and teaching
- Stronger in personal evangelism than pulpit ministry and teaching
- Strongest in teaching and equipping others to serve
- Other

What is Your Age?

- 12-18
- 19-25
- 26-40
- 41-55
- > 55

How Many Years Have You Attended Our Congregation?

- 0-5
- 6-10
- > 10

Please do not write your name on this form. All individual results will be treated with confidentiality.

Attachment Q: Letter for Desired Applicants

The following letter is an example of one that might be sent to a candidate that has been identified as a possible fit for your congregation:

Dear _____

On behalf of the _____ Church of Christ, we want to thank you submitting a resume and audio tapes of a few of your sermons. We appreciate your devotion to preaching the Word of God.

The Minister Search Committee believes that you may be good fit for our open position.

As a next step in the process, we would like for a member of our search committee to conduct a telephone interview with you.

It is our desire to have the top candidates identified by << date >>. We will then begin the process of bringing men and their families to _____ for a weekend-long on-site interview.

In advance of our phone conversation, we are sending you the following information:

- Several recent church bulletins
- A brief write-up that describes our congregation, our leadership, and our current approach to serving God in _____.
- Information about the _____ community.
- Information about or on-site minister evaluation process.

As you know, this is a big step both for our congregation, and the men interested in working with us. We believe it is in the best interest of both parties to conduct a thorough and open dialog, as we strive to determine how we might work together.

We will call you soon to establish a convenient time for a telephone interview. In the meantime, you can always feel free to call me at << phone >> if you would like to discuss the process.

I am looking forward to our conversation.

Sincerely,

For the Minister Search Team

