



SEARCH and CALL

Committee Workbook



This resource is meant for use by member congregations
of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey.

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Search Process Outline

The Discernment Retreat

A healthy search process begins with holy introspection and biblical reflection.

- Grounds the pastoral call journey in **Christian** spirituality
- Forms the Pastoral Call Committee

The Congregational Profile

The search committee will create an accurate and attractive presentation of the church, including a three paragraph narrative describing the type of pastor the church believes they need as they move into the future.

- Paragraph One – Spirituality and Vision
- Paragraph Two – Pastoral Skills Most Needed and Desired
- Paragraph Three – Personal Qualities and Pastoral Style Needed and Desired

Presenting Candidates

ABCNJ will present a set of twelve to fifteen potential candidates which have been vetted based on the ministry priorities of the church.

- Profiles reviewed asking one question, “Which of these candidates do we desire to have further conversation?”
- Goal is to reduce the pile to between four and six candidates for interview.

Candidate Conversations

With the region’s assistance the committee will schedule video conversations, each lasting between fifteen and twenty minutes.

- Committee creates a set of questions appropriate to their setting.
- Candidates will receive questions prior to interview.

Decision Time

If desired, committees may move into more serious conversations with up to three finalists in several different ways.

- Candidates may respond to a set of questions on paper, audio, or video. These questions should be *tough*, and centered on key issues which the committee finds important.
- Candidates may be invited to visit the community for face to face conversations.
- A sermon video might be requested from the candidate.
- If the committee finds no finalists after the interviews, the process returns to “Presenting the Candidates.”

The Choice

Once the committee decides on a final candidate, their choice is brought before the church for a vote.

Interim Ministry Overview

In the vast majority of cases, the pastoral transition is attended by positive energy. In some cases, however, such transition is attended by a good amount of negative energy. Nonetheless, when a pastor leaves the congregation he/she has served – whether voluntarily or involuntarily – a period of unsettling ensues because a significant dimension of a congregation’s – and a pastor’s - journey has come to an end. The congregation then enters a “between and betwixt” time – an interruption of continuity, an interlude, and a gap. This “in – between” time is a period needing great care.

- It creates a space wherein a congregation is given the opportunity to intentionally reflect and examine its recent past, history and heritage for the meanings of present experience.
- It is a gift of time that gives a congregation the opportunity to connect the meanings of these present experiences to the task of imagining a future ministry of the congregation.
- It is a time to proactively participate in “contextual forecasting” – asking concrete questions about the future ministry of the church in light of its gifts, its surroundings and social reality.

Types of Interim Ministry

The Interim Pastor

The traditional interim pastor functions to provide the routine pastoral services or preaching and leading worship, visitation, officiating at weddings, funerals, attending board/committee meetings as requested by church leadership, and officiating in the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. This is commonly identified as maintenance ministry.

The Intentional Interim Pastor

However, there are special situations when a congregation may need additional time and specialized skills to navigate through a specific developmental issue or set of experiences before they can start a formal pastoral search.

If your congregation is in an “in-between” time and/is...

- Has just ended a very long-term pastorate
- At a critical point in setting new directions for its life and ministry
- A demographically complex and diverse congregation
- Experiencing severe or chronic conflict
- The pastor resigned suddenly or died
- The pastor left because of professional misconduct

...it is seriously advised that an Intentional Interim Pastor be considered.

The Transitional Pastor

A variety of regressive factors occurring over an extended number of years may combine to create an unsustainable congregation. After a pastor leaves, it is realized that the congregation is dangerously weakened and no longer able to mount a traditional pastoral search. In such situations, a Transitional Pastor is assigned to the congregation with the goal of leading the congregation through intense revitalization. After an agreed upon time when stability is reached, the congregation has the option to either launch a formal pastoral search, or move the transitional pastor into the settled pastor role.

The Discernment Retreat

The First Step in the Pastoral Call Process

Why?

In the American Baptist tradition, the pastoral call committee is at the vanguard of the church's journey in seeking for a new pastor. This is a crucial, formative stage in the journey of the church. Who the committee members are, and how they choose the new pastor, play a decisive role in the eventual health of the pastor-congregation relationship. The call process has profound and long-lasting implications in the life of the church.

Purpose

Calling a new pastor is not merely hiring a new employee. The Discernment Retreat will introduce into the pastoral call a process a committed and intentional spirituality framework. The retreat will also focus on understanding better the spiritual dynamics that underlie each stage of the discernment process by exploring the nature of the divine summons as gleaned from scripture and the insights of those who have integrated spiritual journey with the developmental sciences.

Anticipated Outcome

As an end result, the Discernment Retreat is aimed at providing a resource that guides congregations through a creative, faithful, spiritually-grounded and life-giving outcome in their discernment process as manifested in the calling of a pastor whose qualifications, vision for ministry, sense of call, gifts and skills complement their own.

Target Audience

Joint leadership/boards and officers of the congregation. In smaller congregations, the event can be opened for the entire congregation.

Logistics

This retreat requires at least 5 hours. A preferred schedule is a Saturday, beginning at 8:30 AM, through a working lunch, and conclude at 1 PM.

Our Church in Five Years

1. What do we need to be a more healthy and faithful church?
2. What ministries do we need to start or strengthen over the next 5 years?
3. What could our church look like if we find the right pastor?
4. How do we decide on our vision and discern God's will?

Candidate Benchmarks

1. Minimal level of Education

2. Minimal level of Ordination

3. Baptist Roots

4. Ministerial Experience

5. Other

Desired Spiritual Qualities

1. Spiritual Characteristics:
2. Personality Characteristics:
3. Work-Related Characteristics:
4. Other Qualities: