

CALLING A PASTOR

GUIDANCE FOR CHURCHES
WHEN ISSUING A PASTORAL CALL



1. APPOINT A MODERATOR AND PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE:

A Moderator and a Pastoral Search Committee should be appointed to search for a suitable Pastor and to make a recommendation on the matter. The Pastoral Search Committee may be:

- (a) The Deacons. This has often been the tradition.
- (b) A representative group of Church people. Many churches are moving to the position of electing a Committee made up of representatives of the Diaconate and other aspects of the Church life.

Churches are strongly urged to contact the Superintendent for suggestions of a suitable Moderator. This person ought to be an experienced lay or pastoral leader. The role of the Moderator is to:

- (a) Chair Pastoral Search Committee meetings and Church meetings,
- (b) Listen, offer wise counsel and arbitrate where necessary, and
- (c) Liaise with the Superintendent, as necessary.

2. PROCEDURE FOR THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE TO FOLLOW IN SEEKING A PASTOR:

- (a) Call the Church to concerted corporate and private prayer. Some churches call a special weekly prayer meeting until a Pastor is called.
- (b) Seek the help of qualified advisers. The Pastoral Committee of the Baptist Union of Tasmania is established to help in this situation. Their services are available through the superintendent who is available to meet and give counsel regarding procedures and people, when invited to do so.
- (c) Evaluate the current situation of the Church. Any worthwhile Pastor will want to know the present condition of the Church. Honesty in being able to give a factual account is the only way to a good future relationship with the Pastor who finally accepts a call.
- (d) Clearly define the short term and long term goals of the Church. Any church which cannot define where it is wanting to go will have great difficulties in defining what sort of pastoral leadership it needs.
- (e) Discover the gifts resident in the Church Members. The gifts that are available for service within the membership may change the concept of what is required of a prospective Pastor.
- (f) Define and list the qualities (gifts, temperament, background and vision) that are desired in a future Pastor. Read 1 Timothy 3: 1 – 7 and Titus 1: 5 – 9 to discover spiritual qualities required by the Holy Spirit. Then to those add the qualities that are required if the Church is to achieve the goals established above.

- (g) Seek the names of suitable Pastors. The Baptist Union Pastoral Committee is established to assist, but also request suggestions from Church Members, and any other appropriate source. Some churches advertise for expressions of interest through state denominational papers and other Christian magazines. This approach can have both advantages and disadvantages.
- (h) Enter a process of group discernment, prayerfully evaluating every name submitted. To do this meaningfully, certain steps should be taken:
 - (i) Obtain as many facts as possible about the person nominated. Avoid rumours and try to discern whether you are being given personal bias or facts. Seek to obtain information about the effectiveness of his present ministry, but be careful in so doing not to cause disruption in that Church.
 - (ii) Compare the evidence presented, with the qualities compiled to suit your needs. A pastor may be having a great ministry in one Church, but may be totally wrong in our situation because his gifts are not what you need.
 - (iii) Take time to achieve comfortable unanimity about any recommendation. Until constant prayer has brought the Committee to that place it would be disastrous to make a recommendation to the Church.

3. HOW TO PROCEED ONCE A NAME IS AGREED UPON:

There are different methods that can be adopted from this point on and the Church as a whole should agree what method is to be used. This should be done at the time the pastoral Search Committee is appointed so that it understands its responsibilities.

- (a) Approach the Pastor re availability. One practice is that when a name has been determined upon, that Pastor is approached to see if he is agreeable to his name being submitted to the Church. That approach can be made either by:
 - (i) Preferably the Superintendent on behalf of the Church, or
 - (ii) The Church Pastoral Search Committee.

The former approach has some advantages. It allows the prospective Pastor opportunity to consider the implications and – when there are matters not known to the Pastoral Search committee – allows him to give a negative answer which would have been inevitable and thus saves the Church long meetings and needless discussion.

If such an approach brings an affirmative response then the Church is able to meet in a very positive frame of mind to see if they believe that the Pastoral Search Committee has discovered the will of God.

- (b) No approach being made until the Church has issued a Call: Some Pastors and Churches prefer this method where no specific contact is made with the Pastor until the Pastoral Search Committee has made its recommendation and the Church has voted to issue a Call.

This has the advantage that when a Pastor receives the Call, he knows that it isn't an "enquiry" but is an "invitation". It can have that advantage for the Pastor, but it can have the disadvantage for the Church, in that they must meet and pray over every name that is recommended, and as only one name should be considered at a time it can make the process of finding God's person a lengthy one.

4. MATTERS THAT SHOULD BE CONVEYED TO A PASTOR WHEN A CALL IS ISSUED:

- (a) Term of Call.
Is it a call for a specific time period, or is it an “open” call of unspecified time. If the Church has carefully considered who they call, an “open” call has some very real advantages, particularly if periodic initial review of the church and its work is carried out.
- (b) Stipend and Allowances to be paid, and when and how reviewed.
- (c) What other areas of financial support the Church gives:
Superannuation
Long Service Leave
Book Allowance
Petty Cash
Entertainment Allowance.
- (d) Annual Holiday conditions, including holiday loading if applicable.
- (e) Accommodation:
Is a Manse supplied? If so, give a description including a floor plan. However, consideration should be given to the alternative option of providing a House allowance and allowing the Pastor the opportunity to purchase his own home. This option should be considered most seriously, as changing Government regulations are going to make it most difficult for Pastors to provide both a home and an income for retirement, if they have not been able to purchase a home during their working life.
- (f) Removal Costs:
Define how these are to be met. (Suggestions as to how the removal might take place can be conveyed after an acceptance.)
- (g) A Description of the Church:
Adequate details should be given covering membership, finance, future plans and its ministry locality.
- (h) A description of the area in which the Church is located: Matters that do impact on Pastors and their families should be explained, especially if the Call is to a mainland Pastor. (Pastors from other states may be unsure about Tasmanian lifestyle and services available.) Such matters would cover facilities available for education, recreation, shopping, medical needs and business matters. A good tourist brochure of your town might be very helpful.
- (i) Expenses the Church expects the Pastor to meet such as:

Personal telephone calls,
Electricity used in the Manse,
Heating fuel for the Manse.

These may seem to be petty items, but customs vary from place to place, and if not clearly understood at the start, unnecessary problems can arise later on.

5. MEETING WITH A PASTOR BEFORE A CALL IS ISSUED OR ACCEPTED:

Practice differs widely. The following possibilities exist:

- (a) If the Pastoral Committee makes an approach to a prospective Pastor regarding availability, it is not uncommon for a meeting to take place if “he/she” indicates positive interest. This allows for the clarification of many more details than can be done by correspondence and allows both sides to do further assessments that are not possible with limited information.
- (b) If the Church decides it will not make any approach until a Call has been issued, the request may come from the Pastor to meet, specifically gain further details understanding. Such a meeting would best be between the Pastoral Committee and the Pastor as above.
- (c) Some Pastors prefer to have no meeting so that their decision is based on prayer alone, and not influenced by either positive or negative thoughts about such matters as the state of the Manse, etc.

Each church should seek to work out what it believes the Holy spirit is saying to it, as there is evidence that all of the methods suggested have brought about fruitful settlements.

These issues are set out to help simplify matters by seeing that the relevant issues are covered. Obviously there are areas following the acceptance of a Call which have not been included here. Such information is covered in a separate paper.

WHERE A PASTOR IS NOT ALREADY ORDAINED OR ACCREDITED SUCH A PROCESS REQUIRES 12 MONTHS SERVICE IN A CHURCH WITHIN THIS STATE TOGETHER WITH A FORMAL APPLICATION TO THE PASTORAL COMMITTEE.

PASTORS SERVING IN OUR CHURCHES ALSO REQUIRE COMPLETION OF DOCUMENTATION FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN, INCLUDING CURRENT POLICE CHECK. NOTE: THIS IS IMPORTANT FOR ETHICAL AND INSURANCE REASONS.