

YOUTH MINISTER SEARCH COMMITTEE IDEAS

Process For Adding Ministerial Staff (For Church Leadership Prior to Selecting Search Committee)

A search committee requires a team of people committed to the long-term benefit of the local church and with a good knowledge of the church and youth group. Each church can shape this group as they decide to include youth, parents, youth workers, members of the personnel committee or deacon body. The work should not be rushed based on upcoming calendar events in the youth ministry. Remember that it would be better to not have a youth minister for that event, than the wrong youth minister for that event and many events to come. But, the group should work at a steady pace.

Before the committee begins meeting, it is assumed that the church has already done a study of the need for the staff position, including:

- a. Study the history, growth potential and ministry goals of the church.
- b. Survey church and ministry leadership.
- c. List benefits to the church for this ministry position.
- d. Evaluate ministries of churches with similar sizes, locations, or dynamics.

If this study has not been completed prior to the formation of the search committee, the search committee should consider doing this study as a precursor to their work.

The search committee should be selected and organized according to the church constitution, by-laws or church policies concerning committee selection. It is appropriate to elect a committee with representation of the ministries involved, including youth parents, youth workers, youth and those interested in youth ministry. The congregation may also want to consider placing a parent with younger children on the team, to add long term perspective, since the team is looking for someone who will be youth minister when that parent's children are youth.

Process for the Youth Minister Search Committee:

1. Select a Leader and ground rules

- Committee forms and appoints a leader, if one is not designated.
- The committee should prepare a job description for the committee and set ground rules for how the committee will function. Ideas for committee ground rules could include:
 - Be Faithful in Prayer ó You have a great responsibility in your church, pray often. This is a spiritual process, so you should approach it with spiritual priorities.
 - Be patient ó You will second guess yourself in a year if you do not take your time in the process.
 - Be Unanimous ó Do not allow your team to be divided over the process of the search or the candidates.
 - Be Considerate ó Do not talk to someone, bring them in for an interview or go listen to them speak unless your committee already knows that this is a person

worth considering. When any church contacts a minister for information, it causes a distraction in their prayer time and in their ministry planning. Do not lead a person on with requests for information if you already know they are probably not a possibility. Do not call references for a candidate until you are in the final stages of the process. Word travels fast around churches, so please do not cause a disruption by checking references early in the process.

- Be in Contact - Any youth minister that you talk with, in any manner, should be kept informed of the work of the committee at all times.
- Be Quiet ó Do not release the names of the people being discussed or any information about them until after the process is complete. Also continue to keep quiet about personal information after the staff member is called, since you will know about their salary, benefits, personal family information etc., and that information should always be kept private.
- Be Consistent - How resumes will be solicited and examined.
- Be a Team ó Committee members will agree not to work solo outside of the team rules and structure.
- Be Committed ó When the new staff member is selected, be committed to support them in any way possible to make sure they are successful in their ministry among the church body.

2. Pray

- Pray over the process and decide how the search will be conducted and how to protect private information.
- Continue intensive prayer throughout the process. Establish a prayer and Bible study priority with the committee and the congregation discerning God's will for this ministry of the church. You may even calendar a specific period of prayer and Bible study for God's will for this ministry of the church.

3. Discover Expectations –

- Talk with the staff, parents, youth workers and youth about their expectations for the next youth minister. Develop a profile of the next youth minister based on these expectations. (A sample Profile is included in this packet) Be careful that your list does not become so "pie in the sky" that even Jesus would not meet the criteria to be your next youth minister. Look at expectations like: education, ministry experience, male or female, marital status, number of children, family life, spiritual experience, leadership skills, etc. Also be aware that many churches have the tendency to choose someone that is the opposite of their last youth minister as an over reaction to the previous staff members weaknesses.
- With the youth committee, review the church's youth mission statement or expectations and clarify it if needed.

4. Prepare or Update the Job Description

- Make sure there is a clear youth minister job description. Your Search Committee should provide detailed information about the purpose of the Youth Ministry, relationships within the church, work expectations, typical office hours per week, ministry opportunities, additional job requirements like recreation, education, missions, etc. to any person they interview. (A sample job profile is attached.)

5. Evaluate the budget, salary and benefits

- ❑ Review and clarify job benefits like salary, health, parsonage, mileage, additional insurance, etc. as adjusted by the Finance Committee. If the Search Committee sees a need for a salary and benefits review, forward recommendations to the Finance Committee for consideration.
- ❑ Examine youth budget. In the youth ministry budget study, review similar churches for budget provisions for their ministries and propose possible budget adjustments to the ministry, if needed, to the Finance Committee for consideration.

6. Review or develop church personnel policies

- ❑ Working with the Personnel and Finance Committee, it may be necessary to also review or develop church personnel policies.
- ❑ Recommend adjustments in the personnel policies to the church. Special consideration should be given to the length of service of a potential candidate on policies and recommend adjustments.

7. Gather names, but don't contact them yet

- ❑ Begin gathering resumes and names, but do not begin contacting individuals until step 11 is complete. Great places to gather resumes include: Youth ministers in your area that may know other youth leaders that they would like to serve with in their area, Ministerial services Office at the BGCO, Student Ministry Office of the BGCO, congregational and staff member input, OBU and seminary placement offices, BCM Directors on local college campuses, utilize Baptist Messenger or other Baptist publications for resume notices, etc.

8. Prepare a church information packet

- ❑ Prepare an information packet about the church, community and youth group to send to any prospective candidates. Include in the packet: population of the area, the church mission statement, characteristics of the church, average attendance in the church/youth group, staff make up within the church, map of the area, church directory, youth calendar for the previous year and coming year, youth budget, recent church newsletters and bulletins, unique issues or features of the church and or area, recent audio tapes of a morning worship service, promotional flyers from previous youth events, etc.

9. Develop a pre-interview questionnaire

- ❑ Prepare a list of questions that you will eventually mail to prospective youth ministers prior to the interview. These questions should be brief, but they will give the committee a base of knowledge about the candidate. There may be questions that come up about their answers or issues that do not need to be dealt with in person because of the quality of their written response. This is also an appropriate time to ask questions that would exclude them from service like alcohol use, credit problems, moral issues, etc. Please do not be afraid to ask direct questions on this questionnaire. (A sample questionnaire is included with this book)

- ❑ Before you mail the questionnaire add a date to be returned, a good length of time needed to fill out the form is about two weeks from when you mail the form.
- ❑ Other questions for the questionnaire may include: Are you willing to move right now in this stage of your ministry? How should parents be involved in the ministry? What do you see as your role on a typical Sunday morning? Please tell us about your family. Please tell us about your current ministry. Also include, other questions unique to your church.

10. Now it is time to consider resumes and narrow the list

- ❑ Go through the list of names and resumes that you have been given and begin eliminating some prospects based on the needs and characteristics of your church.
- ❑ Decide how and when the first candidate will be interviewed.

11. Make initial contact and begin mailing the questionnaires

- ❑ Consider calling the prospects before you mail the questionnaire to let them know that the committee has their resume and would like to know if they are interested in completing a questionnaire with additional information. Please let them know that this is only an initial contact and that the committee is only gathering information at this point.
- ❑ When you mail them a questionnaire, consider also sending them some basic information about the church so that the candidate will have a point of reference on the church. This information could include the job description, church/youth ministry size and some information about the community.
- ❑ Keep a list of all individuals who returned a questionnaire so when a new youth minister has been selected, they can be contacted to let them know the position has been filled.
- ❑ Be committed to staying in weekly contact (phone call, e-mail, etc.) with the individuals who returned the questionnaires. This is a courtesy to the individuals who have spent a significant time writing their response to the questionnaire and praying over a possible relocation of their family. Knowing that you will need to stay in contact with these individuals, it is best to keep the number of people filling out questionnaires to a minimum, limited to only those you would seriously consider.

12. Narrow the list to one candidate

- ❑ Continue gathering names and resumes of individuals as the questionnaires come back to the committee.
- ❑ Decide if other questionnaires need to be sent. Continue to use the same process to gather and eliminate candidates until you select one person to interview.

13. Prepare interview questions

- ❑ Develop a list of questions to ask during the interviews. Questions should include: doctrine, philosophy, experience, family involvement in the ministry, youth ministry goals, etc. Good questions find specific answers and lead to other issues. For instance, instead of asking for their Sunday School philosophy, ask, "How do you think a Sunday Morning Bible study should be organized and who should it be designed to reach?" Questions about experience could be worded, "What do you think are the three best events or strategies in your current youth

ministry and why. When developing the questions, your goal is not to stump the person, but to find out significant information about them.

- ❑ You should consider mailing a list of the key questions to the person before the interview to let them prepare for your question. Every interview goes better if both parties are prepared for the discussion. (A sample list of interview questions is included in this packet, also there is a short list of possible questions in point 14 below.)
- ❑ In any area that their questionnaire or resume was not clear, be prepared to ask them specific questions related to those issues.
- ❑ Decide if you will want their family to come with them to the interview. Either way, plan to take care of all of their travel expense for the interview, including child care.

14. Conduct the first interview

- ❑ Decide the best site and setting for the interview.
- ❑ When you contact a person to interview, please deal with only one person at a time. The idea is not to find the best person you have a resume from; the idea is to find the right person God has designed for your church. If they are not the right person for your church, let them know right away and thank them for their time. If your committee interviews different people on successive weeks, everyone will become confused and the interview will become a choice of who is the best of the three, rather than who is God's person for the church. Also, candidates will have to wait weeks for an answer from your committee and that is very difficult.
- ❑ Please make sure that once you contact a candidate, you maintain weekly contact (phone call, e-mail, etc.) with each candidate so they will know where your committee is in the process, even if the committee has not met that week.
- ❑ Before the interview, do not forget to send the candidate the information packet you have prepared (see number 8 in the timeline) and the list of possible questions they will be asked in the interview.

Sample Interview Questions:

- How do you think a Sunday Morning Bible study should be organized and who should it be designed to reach?
- What do you think are the three best events or strategies in your current youth ministry and why?
- What are the key components of a well-balanced youth ministry?
- What curriculum do you plan to use on Sunday mornings?
- Sunday School and Wednesday Evening – Is there any difference to you?
- What does Youth Worship look like to you?
- What type of Youth Worship experience would you like to bring to our youth?
- What elements of your ministry would bring our youth and parents together?
- What level of involvement do you expect from your youth's parents?
- What do you believe concerning: (Doctrine) Salvation; Baptism; Holy Spirit; etc.
- What do you believe concerning: (Moral Issues) Abortion; Alcohol; Dating; etc.

- ❑ During the interview, it is very appropriate to discuss the ministry needs, opportunities and ministry responsibilities. Plan to ask the candidate to share ideas and dreams for their ministry. Allow the candidate time to ask questions as well. They will want to know about the past, present and future of the youth ministry.
- ❑ It is a good idea to allow the candidate some informal time to privately meet with the current church staff. Every future staff member wonders what the church staff team is like at the church and every current church staff would appreciate being allowed to give input on the possible future team members that will be serving the congregation along side of them. After the church staff has met with the candidate, they should be allowed to report their impressions to the search committee.
- ❑ It is also appropriate in the first interview to let the person know what the salary and benefits package might be so they can evaluate their family budget in their decision making process. Do not make the prospective youth minister bring the subject up in the interview, since it is a very difficult subject to address for most people. The reason you should let them know the salary and benefits package at this time is to allow the candidate time, before a possible second interview, to evaluate the cost of living of their family and the cost of living in your community. If you choose to wait to discuss finances until the second interview, then if there is a problem or question with the salary package, it will give the appearance that the candidate is only concerned about money.
- ❑ Before the interview has concluded, ask the candidate for permission to contact references and do a background check (see point 15)
- ❑ The chairman should schedule a follow up phone call with the candidate to assure there is an opportunity to discuss committee questions, salary questions, and to let the candidate know the wishes of the committee concerning a second interview or if the process will stop with the candidate at this stage.

15. Check references and follow-up with the candidate

- ❑ Immediately after the interview, decide if this is a person the committee would like to pursue further. It is advisable to do a criminal background check on every staff member before they join the staff. These can be done through OSBI if they live in state or through the FBI if they are out of state. The OSBI background check has a small cost, but it can provide a protection for the church. OSBI can be contacted at Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation, Attention: Criminal History Reporting Unit, 6600 North Harvey, Building 6 Suite 140, Oklahoma City, OK 73116 405/879-2689.
- ❑ References should be contacted and asked specific questions about the candidate. Please ask the reference you are talking with to maintain secrecy in the process since no decisions have been made and the person you are interviewing did not initiate the process.
- ❑ When you begin calling references, it is best to develop a list of questions and a form to fill out for notes when you call each reference. (A sample reference check form is attached.)
- ❑ Great questions to ask during a reference check include: How long have you known them and how do you know them; What do you consider their personal and ministry strengths and weakness; are there any issues or problems that we

should discuss with them during our interview or that we should know prior to considering them; What is their relationship like with their family, how have you seen him interacting with the youth parents, youth, youth leaders and other church staff; describe their spouses role in the youth ministry, if they are involved in the ministry; any family issues unresolved; if they feel the person is qualified for your church; any known problems in previous churches; staff relationships in previous churches.

- ❑ When you call each reference, please be polite by not taking too much of the person's time, try to make the call as brief as possible. If you have to leave a message, please be willing to leave a home and daytime number.
- ❑ You may also consider mailing a reference check form to the references the candidate has provided. (A sample mail in reference check form is attached.) Please be aware that this process will take longer, but it may be easier to reach some individuals with a brief form through the mail than it is possible to reach them by phone. When some of the mail-in references are returned, you, may want to do a follow up phone call to some of them to acquire additional information.

16. Conduct a second interview

- ❑ Before the final selection is made, you will want to have a follow up interview in person or on the phone to discuss other questions that have come up during the previous weeks. Remember, this is a person that will be serving the youth and parents of your church family for years to come, taking a second opportunity to get to know them and for them to get to know you is always a good idea. In many ways, they are also interviewing you and trying to discern God's call to you church and community. The more time they have to get to know you and you them, the better.

17. Extend the invitation to come in view of a call

- ❑ Your team has now worked prayerfully through the process. It is time to come to a decision.
- ❑ When your team chooses to vote on the candidate, whether by voice vote or secret ballot, the decision should be unanimous. If even one person is not certain, it is best to wait and allow them to pray through the decision. If someone on the committee is not supportive of the candidate, when the new youth minister comes there will always be a seed of doubt concerning their calling to the church. Remember this is not a popularity contest it is an affirmation of God's call.
- ❑ After your committee votes to extend the call to the new youth minister, it is time to let the candidate and the church know. When you ask the candidate to come in view of a call, be prepared to tell them when you need an answer and when you would like to present them to the church. A good schedule for presenting them to the church is to bring their family into town for a weekend and give them an opportunity to meet with parents, youth, youth workers, staff and the church as a whole. Make the weekend fun and informal as much as possible. Allow them to drive around town on their own to get a "feel" for the community.
- ❑ Please do not announce the name of the person coming in "view of a call" in advance of the weekend unless you have mutually agreed with the candidate to do so. Many people will not tell their present church they are leaving until they have already accepted the call at the new church. So, protect their privacy until the

weekend is completed and they have an opportunity to tell their current church family. You may need to wait until the weekend of the call to present to the congregation the candidates biographical information and a picture.

18. Extend the Call

- ❑ Before the weekend, the committee should check the church constitution and bylaws for direction on the manner of vote by the congregation and how much advance information must be announced to the church. Talk through with the candidate the process of the vote.
- ❑ Travel arrangements and accommodations should be made along with a contact to the church hostess if receptions are anticipated.
- ❑ It is also advisable to talk in advance of the weekend with the candidate about the weekend schedule and set an expected time of response to the church's call, if the church chooses to call them. Some congregations choose to conduct the vote at a different time from when the candidate is first presented, to allow the congregation a time of prayer and reflection about the candidate. Evaluate which process is best for the long-term health of the congregation and which method will allow maximum trust in the whole process.
- ❑ During the weekend of the call, present the recommendation of the committee to call the candidate before you conduct the vote.
- ❑ After you count and verify the vote, announce the results to the congregation and give the candidate the agreed on time for prayer and response. Then allow the candidate to announce their decision or allow a member of the committee to announce the decision to the church body.

19. The job is not done yet - Follow-up, welcome, and evaluation.

- ❑ When the candidate has been called by the congregation, write the candidate a letter to formalize the call and welcome the new minister to your congregation.
- ❑ As a courtesy, send a letter of prayer support and affirmation to the church from which the new minister is moving.
- ❑ Contact other candidates who were considered in the process and thank them for their participation and inform them of the outcome of the church's selection process.
- ❑ Make sure you offer plenty of assistance to the new minister for the transition to your church and community. You might even arrange welcome events, coordinating with appropriate committees or ministries. The committee should serve as hosts during the welcome events and the welcome weekend.
- ❑ Set up an evaluation session with the candidate within three months after they come to the church. This meeting should focus on resolving any issues that have arisen in the first three months and determining what the new youth minister needs to accomplish what the congregation has asked them to do.

<p>If there is any way that the Student Ministry Office of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma can be of assistance to you, please let us know. Our e-mail address is youth@bgco.org, our mailing address is BGCO, Student Ministry, 3800 North May, Oklahoma City, OK 73112, 405/942-3000 X 656.</p>
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