

The Minister's Guide with the Search Committee



Search and Interview Preparation

Suggestions are intended for your use in the interview process with a church search committee and should be adapted to each individual and church situation.

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Some material has been adapted from the Illinois Baptist State Convention publication, "Minister's Guide to the Search Committee Interview", and made applicable for Texas Baptist churches and ministers.

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I. How Do I Get My Name Before Church Search Committees?

A. State Baptist Convention websites

A good way to get your name before Texas Baptist churches is to use convention resume service websites. Most online resume services allow the minister to create their own profile through a self-selected password. Menus guide each person through a step-by-step process for listing family, education, experience and other pertinent information. Several options are also available which include preferred region and worship style preferences.

You will want to be in complete control of your personal data and determine which churches will receive your resume. Most resume services assist ministers in finding job opportunities for full time and partially funded (Bivocational) ministers. Self-entered personal data should be activated, deactivated, restricted, or shared only with your permission. These services usually provide for specific parameters:

- Preferred region
- Selection of worship styles
- Full time or Bivocational positions
- Preferred language
- Ministry philosophy
- Ministry experience

The minister's name and personal data should be available only to a committee whose search criteria match the minister's profile.

In addition to this website profile, you will need to update your written personal resume with a recent picture of your family (or at least of you). After a church contacts you through the website, you will want to follow up the contact by sending them your written resume listing your references. You will also need it for the following sources as well. Use the next section for tips on writing a good resume.

B. Other ways to get your name before church search committees:

- One of the best ways is to contact the Director of Missions of local Baptist associations throughout the state to learn of staff vacancies. Some DOMs keep a resume file in their office to share with churches that needs to fill staff vacancies in their association. A simple phone call would let you know of vacancies. Most state conventions have a listing of Associations. See Texas Baptists at www.TexasBaptists.org
- Don't forget your fellow ministers who know you personally. They often hear about staff vacancies near their place of service. Occasionally, they may overhear ministers talking about staff positions at conferences or workshops.
- State newspapers (like the Baptist Standard – 214-630-4571) also provide an opportunity for you to purchase a classified ad for a reasonable fee. Search Committee members often check Baptist newspapers for minister listings.
- State Baptist Universities and Seminaries also have placement offices to help churches and ministers connect.

II. Quick Basics for Writing a Good Resume

Today, most search committees in Baptist churches begin their work by gathering resumes of prospective staff persons to be considered for their vacant position. Churches can get hundreds of resumes and they look for very specific positions (lead pastor, youth pastor, music pastor, administrator, missions pastor, etc.), so you need to be very clear right up front with what the Lord has called you to do or they will file it in the "Not Applicable" stack. Avoid writing a resume for "any position available" – it will go in "file 13".

As a candidate, your goal is to share your ministry skills and abilities in an effective way that would make you a good candidate for the position they are seeking. How you present yourself in your resume can make a big difference in whether or not you make the "short list" as they sort through hundreds of resumes. Since the initial impression of you is from your resume, it should serve one basic purpose – to create a positive first impression with the search committee. You will have approximately 15 seconds to present yourself as a good candidate. It must be a carefully prepared document matching what they are looking for. So write from *their perspective* and you will more likely get their attention.

Suggestions on preparation:

1. Take the necessary time and effort. Prepare your resume so it will create the positive impression you desire.
2. Be brief. One page (front & back) is the ideal length.
3. Be neat. The actual appearance of your resume may say as much to the committee about you as its content. Erasures and misspelled words detract from the quality of your resume. Do not over-crowd the material. Leave some white space for easy reading. Sometimes it is best to use a table format (without lines) to align text in a neat and organized way.
4. Skip the embellishments. Be accurate. Be certain all the information given is accurate and complete. Cast a careful eye over your descriptions to make sure they tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Double-check all the phone numbers and mailing addresses to make sure they are current. Above all, be sure your name, address, email and phone number is on the first page and your name is on all other pages.

What to include:

1. Contact Information. List your personal contact information at the top of the resume. Include your full name (and any nickname you want to use), mailing address, phone number and email address. If you have a personal website, include the URL if the site shows your skills or applies to your ministry goals. Be sure your name is on all other pages, normally in the top right-hand corner.
2. Photo. Use a small, (approximately 1 ½" x 2") color photo of excellent quality. Place it in the upper right-hand corner of the first page. Some include an additional photo of the family (included in the letter). Churches like to see happy and healthy families.
3. Other Personal Information. Include your date of birth, marital status, number of children and their ages, and whether or not you are ordained and/or licensed to the ministry.
4. Ministry Objective or "Position Desired". The objective section gives committee members an immediate sense of who you are and what you're looking for, without forcing them to wade through the entire resume. What church staff position are you seeking? Be specific.
5. Philosophy of Ministry. Share what you can add to their ministry, not merely what you are looking to achieve.

6. Education. Include only institutions from which you earned a degree and the date of graduation in that order.
7. Church Related Experience. List your experience chronologically; with your most recent job first. If your latest experience wasn't your most impressive or what they are looking for, arrange your list by importance. (You want to show them quickly that you have some experience in the position for which they are looking.) Include the name of church, location, position held, and the dates of each experience; or list other experiences that prove you have what it takes to be considered. Also, give a brief description of your accomplishments.
8. Skill and Interests. Today's churches are more tech-savvy than ever before, so make sure you mention your technical and computer skills. List programming languages, software programs and operating systems you've used as well as certifications you have. Don't forget "soft skills" like foreign languages and interests in ministering to certain age groups.
9. Include a Few References. Select about four people who are well acquainted with you and your ministry. Get permission from them to use their names as references. State their names, mailing addresses, phone number and their position or relationship to you. Include at least one layperson on your list that holds an influential position in a local church. (Remember search committees are lay persons not ministers.) If you run out of space, you could forego this section and state "references provided upon request".
10. Include a Cover Page. Churches like to know that you are genuine and real, but show some initiative without posing yourself as braggadocios or overly confident. Briefly express why you are looking for a new position. Then turn your focus on a summary statement that will speak directly to why you think this church should consider you as a candidate for this position. The entire cover page should be no longer than ½ page. Keep it brief, warm and personable.

Tips for a Better Resume

- Emphasize your most important responsibilities even if they weren't your primary duties.
- Use active voice. Strong sentences are those in which a person performs an action (active voice) as opposed to an action being performed on the person (passive voice). "I scheduled regular choir practices," is stronger than "Choir practices were scheduled weekly."
- Use cause-effect relationships and tangible results. Quantify your achievements with percentages and numbers like "increased Sunday School enrollment by 35% in three years" or "supervised a three-person staff".
- Use strong verbs to highlight your sense of initiative. Present yourself as an initiator with verbs like, "launched", "supervised", "proposed", "managed" and "created."

Finishing Touches

- Create several versions of your resume; each tailored to the type of position you're applying for. Writing multiple resumes can be time-consuming, but it's a small price to pay for the job you want.
- Whatever job you are applying for, research the position and the church. Pay attention to the previous employee and things like annual statistics. Highlight your qualifications as they reflect on these things.
- Use fonts that are easy to read, not overly creative ones.

- Proof-read your resume, Proof-read your resume, Proof-read your resume! Read, edit and re-read your resume to make sure it's well written, clear and typo-free. Read it again. Ask your friends and family to do the same.
 - If you use an electronic version of your resume, consider saving one version as a pdf file that will look good on any computer. Send your resume as an attached pdf file.
- II. *Be careful discussing finances too quickly in the process as you might be perceived as "overly concerned about money". However, if after studying the budget, you sense that the committee is intentionally avoiding the subject, you may want to consider speaking privately and honestly with the chairman about your family needs before spending too much time in dialogue. Don't get yourself backed into a corner and not provide for your family. A good rule of thumb is to always have your spouse with you when discussing compensation and get everything in writing. An objective view is always helpful when talking about money.***

Some churches may want you to submit a **video or audio tape** of you preaching a sermon or talking about your ministry philosophy. If your church does not regularly tape services, you may want to tape several special services well in advance of when you are looking for a new church. Or use a camcorder to record yourself. Keep them in a safe place and you will be ready when the appropriate time comes.

III. Prior to the Interview – things to do when the committee first contacts you.

A. List the names of all Search Committee members:

Position	Name	Phone	Email
Chairman			
Secretary			
Vice Chairman			
Member			
Alternate			
Alternate			

(Pray for these to have wisdom in asking the right questions and for them to follow God's will.)

B. List the names of all Staff and their positions:

Position*	Name	Paid	Volunteer
Pastor		\$	hrs.
Music Minister		\$	hrs.
Education Minister		\$	hrs.
Youth Minister		\$	hrs.
Pres./Child. Minister		\$	hrs.
Secretary**		\$	hrs.
Pianist		\$	hrs.
Organist		\$	hrs.
Custodian		\$	hrs.
Nursery worker		\$	hrs.
		\$	hrs.

*Add or delete positions based on church preference.

** This person should be your secretary.

(Pray for these as they proceed through the interim time, and to follow God's will .)

C. Request copies of important documents:

- Current annual budget
- Previous annual budget
- Church Mission and/or Vision Statement
- Church Core Values
- Sunday bulletins for the last few weeks
- Drawings of the buildings and grounds
- Constitution & By-laws
- Job Descriptions for all staff positions
- Organizational Chart
- All Policy Manuals: Personnel, Deacon, Child Care, Vehicle, etc.

D. Request organizational information.

Ask the search committee for a list of all church organizations (Bible Study / Sunday School, Discipleship Training, Women's ministry, Men's ministry, etc.) and persons currently serving in these capacities. The nominating committee should have this list, or a copy could be retrieved from the business meeting notes if kept in the records. If not, this should indicate a need for assistance and/or training in this area.

E. Request Music and Worship information.

Style of music in worship (traditional, contemporary, blended, gospel, etc.):

Adult Choir?

Youth Choir?

Children's Choir?

Drama Worship Team?

Other?

Seasonal events, pageants, performances, presentations, etc.?

F. Request Outreach information.

Current Outreach strategies being utilized:

___ Visitation (weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, etc.)?

___ Community Bible Studies

___ Apartment ministries

___ Direct mail

___ Door-to-door survey

___ Phone survey

___ Tract ministry

___ Outreach events

___ Concerts

___ Outdoor services

___ Other: _____

Are these outreach ministries on the church calendar and in the budget?

G. Request Age Group information.

Adult Ministries:

How many Bible Study Classes (Sunday School)?

How are classes grouped (by age, topic, couples, co-ed, etc.)?

How are classes organized (teacher, outreach leader, secretary, group leaders, etc.)?

Home Bible Studies? How many?

Support Groups?

Senior Adult Ministries:

Is there presently an active Sr. Adult ministry?

Bible study class?

Fellowships, socials, or events?

Youth Ministries:

Is there presently an active youth ministry?

Youth pastor?

Junior High Bible Study Class (Sunday School)?

Senior High Bible Study Class (Sunday School)?

Off campus Bible Studies?

How often do Youth fellowships occur?

When do they most often meet (day(s) and time(s))?

List current youth events:

Single Adult Ministries:

Is there currently an active Single's Ministry?

Bible Study Class (Sunday School)?

Off campus Bible Study?

List current single's events:

Preschool / Children's Ministries:

What church sponsored events and meetings are you presently providing a nursery?

How many preschool and children Bible Study Classes (Sunday School) do you currently have?

Do you provide extended care during worship times? What ages?

Is there a children's church service?

Do you provide a children's sermon (special time) during worship times? When and how often?

Vacation Bible School? What month of the year and how many days?

Is there a Day Care or Mother's Day Out program?

Children's events or programs?

H. Contact the state convention or association office for church statistics.

Churches affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas are asked each year to complete an annual church profile of basic church organizational statistics and bookkeeping information and is kept on file for reflections upon the past (and situations like this). A 10-year church profile can be mailed or faxed to you by

contacting the Research & Information Services Office at 214-828-5138. However, conventions will only have profile information on churches affiliated with them, and if the churches turned in their annual reports.

Another good source of information on churches is the Baptist association where the church is located. A brief call to the Director of Missions will help you understand the participation of the church in association, regional and state denominational work and training. You could learn about the church's reputation among sister churches and the community. Often times, the DOM can give you a brief history of the church including pastors and staff. You will want to know the general attitude of the congregation toward local cooperation among churches.

This information can be studied to determine the numerical growth of the church and their stewardship patterns over the past 10 years including local and foreign missions. Questions about spiritual growth can be asked at the interview.

I. Research to get a cost of living comparison.

Before you talk compensation with the Search Committee, it would be helpful to have a cost of living comparison between the city where you currently live and the city where the church is located. Use the Internet to view the city's Chamber of Commerce website to give you some basic information about the quality of life including cost of living, demographics, schools, medical facilities, recreation and area attractions, climate and other helpful information. Compare this knowledge to the information from the city where you currently live to get a dollar for dollar comparison. Use good common sense when negotiating your compensation.

You may also wish to contact a realtor in the city where the church is located and ask about the cost per square foot on housing in areas near the church, and the average range of rental property for the size of home or apartment you need. They will often help you estimate a house payment and utilities if you can give them the needed information.

IV. During the First Interview

For those of you who have interviewed before, these guidelines may seem a little rigid or extreme for a church environment. However, I have found these to be the *rule* rather than the *exception* in smaller and larger membership churches. Remember, “image is everything” and first impressions can never be undone!

A. “Image is Everything”

According to some professionals, 55% of another person's perception of you is based on how you look. Here is some “Dress for Success” information that will help you look your best, without necessarily spending a lot of money. Here's a quick look at the basics for both men and women:

1. Dress your best for all your interviews, regardless of the dress code of the church
2. Wear at least a conservative suit coat with a coordinated shirt (perhaps a tie if appropriate)
3. Wear moderate shoes
4. Make sure your hair is well groomed and neat
5. Don't overdo the perfume, makeup, or aftershave
6. Limit your jewelry
7. Make sure to try on your outfit BEFORE the day of the interview
8. Bring a portfolio, or briefcase, pad and pen
9. Empty pockets - no bulges or tinkling coins
10. No gum or candy

Tips:

- Your clothes are part of your image, check the mirror and see what others see.
- It is better to be overdressed than underdressed.
- If it's too tight or too loose - don't wear it!

If you are still not sure how to dress for the interview, call them and ask! That's right - call the chairman of the search committee and say:

"I am looking forward to our time together. What do you think would be appropriate dress for the time and place we are having this interview?"

Sure, you run the risk of the chairman wondering about you, but that's a lot better than having the committee distracted by inappropriate interview dress.

While many work environments have shifted to business casual as the work standard, business suits are still the interview standard. When in doubt, it is almost always better to err on the side of conservatism.

One final note on interview dress: while it goes without saying that your interview clothes should be neatly pressed and clean, very few interviewees give the same time and attention to their shoes. Shoes? Yes, shoes. Some people believe that those who pay attention to details like their shoes are also likely to be diligent in their work life and pay close attention to work details. And it is not just that person's opinion. Many have said that you can judge a person by their shoes. Make sure your shoes are conservative, clean, and polished.

The Most Important Interview Nonverbals

Many interviews fail because of lack of proper communication. But communication is more than just what you say. Often it is the nonverbal communication that we are least aware of, yet speaks the loudest. Following are the top five nonverbals, ranked in order of importance, when it comes to interviewing:

- **Eye Contact** - Unequaled in importance! If you look away while listening, it shows lack of interest and a short attention span. If you fail to maintain eye contact while speaking, at a minimum it shows lack of confidence in what you are saying and at worst may send the subtle message that you are lying. Do not just assume you have good eye contact. Ask. Watch. Then practice. Ask others if you ever lack proper eye

contact. If they respond that they did notice, ask if it was during speaking or listening. Some people maintain excellent eye contact while listening, but lose eye contact when speaking. Or vice versa. Next, watch yourself on videotape. It does not necessarily have to be your mock interview; in fact, if you were videotaped informally (that is, you were not aware you were being taped), this will provide even stronger evidence. Then sit down with a friend and practice until you are comfortable maintaining sincere, continuous eye contact.

Eye contact is an area of importance that many give lip service to, yet fail to implement in actual practice. If you have difficulty maintaining eye contact, try this simple technique to lock in a strong first impression. Concentrate on noticing (and remembering) the color of the person's eyes as you shake hands. In doing so, you will not only show excellent initial eye contact, you will also create interest in your eyes, which will be clear and focused.

- **Facial Expressions** - It continually amazes me how many ministers are totally unaware of the sullen, confused, or even mildly hysterical expression plastered on their faces during the entire course of the interview! Some interviewers (not myself, of course) have been known to hang humorous labels on these candidates, such as "Ms. Bewildered" (who looked quizzical during the interview) or "Mr. Psycho-Ax-Murderer" (who looked wide-eyed and determined to do something, although you dare not ask what). Take a good, long, hard look at yourself in the mirror. Look at yourself as others would. Then modify your facial expressions - first eliminate any negative overall characteristics that might exist, then add a simple feature that nearly every interviewee forgets to include - a smile! Not some stupid Bart Simpson grin, but a true and genuine smile that tells me you are a happy person and delighted to be interviewing today. You do not need to keep the smile plastered on for the full interview, but remember to keep coming back to it. Think about it - who would you rather spend thirty minutes with?
- **Posture** - Posture sends out a signal of your confidence and power potential. Stand tall, walk tall, and most of all, sit tall. I don't say this to offend the "short people" of the world - in fact, I am 5'5", which is a full seven inches shorter than your proverbial 6-foot man. Height is not what's important, posture is. When standing, stand up straight. When you are seated, make sure you sit at the front edge of the chair, leaning slightly forward, moving within an overall range of no more than 10 degrees back or 20 degrees forward, intent on the subject at hand.
- **Gestures** - Contrary to popular belief, gestures should be very limited during the interview. So please don't use artificial gestures to try to heighten the importance of the issue at hand (pardon the pun). It will merely come off as theatrical. When you do use gestures, make sure they are natural and meaningful.
- **Space** - Recognize the boundaries of your personal space and that of others. If you are typical of most Americans, it ranges between 30 and 36 inches. Be prepared, however, not to back up or move away from someone who has a personal space that is smaller than your own. Hang in there, take a deep breath, and stand your ground. For most of us, merely the awareness of our personal space is enough to consciously prompt us to stand firm when speaking with someone. If you have a smaller than average personal space, make sure you keep your distance so that you do not intimidate someone who possesses a larger personal space.

Body Language

Everyone uses body language during the interview (whether they realize it or not), but very few think about it in advance and modify their body language to produce the most positive effect. Body language is merely the smaller, less prominent nonverbal cues that we give others while communicating. Following are some typical interpretations of body language cues:

- **Openness and Warmth:** open-lipped smiling, open hands with palms visible, unbuttoning coat upon being seated.
- **Confidence:** leaning forward in chair, chin up, putting tips of fingers of one hand against the tips of fingers of other hand in "praying" or "steeping" position, hands joined behind back when standing.
- **Nervousness:** whistling, pinching skin, fidgeting, jiggling pocket contents, running tongue along front of teeth, clearing throat, hands touching the face or covering part of the face, pulling at skin or ear, running

fingers through hair, wringing hands, biting on pens or other objects, twiddling thumbs, biting fingernails (action itself or evidence of), tongue clicking.

- **Untrustworthy/Defensive:** frowning, squinting eyes, tight-lipped grin, arms crossed in front of chest, pulling away, chin down, touching nose or face, darting eyes, looking down when speaking, clenched hands, gestures with fist, pointing with fingers, chopping one hand into the open palm of the other, rubbing back of neck, clasping hands behind head while leaning back in the chair.

As you can see, there are far more negatives than positives - possibly more than we are consciously aware of. This list is given not so that you can artificially adopt the positive body language techniques, but more to help you recognize and avoid the negatives. If you have a habit of doing any of the above negatives, remove that action from your pattern of behavior before it sends the wrong signal. Concentrate on removing it now so you will not have to think about it during the interview.

And keep in mind the opposite side of the desk. As you talk with an interviewer, be aware of (although not preoccupied with) their body language and nonverbal cues. Do not try to read in more than is actually being communicated, but try to develop a sense of the interviewer's perception of you. The most obvious example is the smile connection - when your smile brings about a smile from the interviewer. Do your best to stay connected with your interviewer - both verbally and nonverbally.

Nonverbal Technique

Don't just give lip-service to the concepts listed previously--practice them! How? With a Nonverbal Interview. Unlike the mock interview, this one does not require a great amount of preparation - just an observant friend. Ask the friend to ask questions, but instead of focusing on your answers, ask him to make note of your nonverbals and body language and the messages being sent. Or play back your mock interview with the sound off. The results might surprise you.

Being Sincerely Honest

If you have a tendency to use phrases such as, "To be honest with you," "Just between you and me," "Well, I'll be completely honest about this," or other such qualifiers, eliminate them from your vocabulary. Think about it. A person who uses such a qualifier is implying by its usage that they typically are not being honest. If you are being honest all the time (which you should be), there is no need to use this kind of qualifier.

Interview Psych Technique

The night before the interview, spend some time with a friend or family member, telling them why you would be the best for the position. The purpose is to put you in the right frame of mind for the interview, so that you truly believe you are the best possible candidate for the job. Why is this so vitally important? See the next item.

Whom Would You Believe?

Before you can possibly convince me as the interviewer that you are right for the job, you have to believe it yourself. It's amazing how many candidates seem tentative and reluctant to express confidence in their own abilities. Remember, you are all alone once the interview starts. No one will sell you if you don't sell yourself. How can I believe in you if you don't believe in you? I am not here to sell you on our church until after you sell me. Once you have sold me on you, I will sell you on the position and the church, but not until then. So don't expect the interviewer to tell you why you are right for the job. That is your job.

Personal Connection

No matter how good you look on paper, no matter how well you present yourself, no matter how well you answer their questions, you will probably not get the job unless you make a personal connection with the search committee. I need to know from the very start that you are someone I can trust to represent me and my church. How do you establish that trust? Simple. At the very beginning of the interview, when the introductions are being made, concentrate on looking directly and solidly into each committee member's eyes, giving them your sweetest and most endearing smile. I tend to think of it as a "shy smile," or, if we can venture into the bounds of cuteness, a "cute smile." The bottom line is to make it a warm and friendly smile. Then think about the fact that you are truly pleased to be there in the presence of this person. Establish that personal connection both physically and mentally with the search committee.

How do you know when the connection is made? When they return your smile in a comfortable, relaxed manner, you are connected and ready to communicate on a personal level. Remember, committees only choose people they are comfortable with. If the connection is not made, you won't be chosen. So take the time to establish that personal connection.

Adapted and made applicable for a church search committee interview environment from the Internet website:
<http://www.collegegrad.com/jobsearch>.

B. Ask about the church's History.

How was this church started?

What was the basic purpose for its beginning?

Here is where you can ask questions from the 10-year church profile:

- Why is membership - plateaued, declining or growing?
- What plans do they have to remedy this, or keep it going?
- Why were there drastic changes in the profile? Church splits, divisions, new pastor, revival, or what?

Are there any legal matters pending or about to be pending against the church?

C. Ask about the vision and goals of the church.

Does the church have a viable church mission statement?

Who developed it? Pastor, staff, committee, or the church at large?

Is it really the standard by which everything in the church is measured?

Are there plans for future growth and ministry?

Is there a written plan? 5 year, 10 year?

Are there specific written goals for this year? Or next?

What changes need to be made in the next year to accomplish your goals? 5 years? 10 years?

Are there specific building plans for the near future? Any drawings or plans?

D. Ask about current issues.

What is the church's traditional stand on social issues such as divorce and remarriage, etc.?

How does the church handle disputes, conflicts, and is there a specific written policy?

Is the church in conflict at this time?

What is the community's image of the church?

How many attend Sunday morning worship? What was your highest attendance?

How many non-members are active attenders in worship?

What specific groups of people is the church trying to reach at this time?

Is there an active Evangelism Committee or team?

How are people coming to Christ?

What evangelistic tool works best in this church?

What new ministries has the church initiated in the last three years?

What kind of music is used during the worship services? (traditional, choruses, hymns, contemporary)

How would you describe your worship service? (formal, informal, quiet, liturgical, exciting, noisy, worshipful, inspiring, free, orderly, etc.)

What instruments are used during worship? (organ, piano, guitar, drums, brass, choir, etc.)

How flexible do you feel the church is to change in the worship style today?

Is there currently a Bible Study (Sunday School) teacher training program?

Are there currently qualified adult Bible study teachers in classes today?

Do you have trouble finding qualified teachers?

How many adults attend Bible Study?

Are the youth involved in the life of the church?

How many children attend Bible Study (0 – 12 grade)?

E. Ask about congregational sermon expectations and preferences.

What kind of preaching does the church prefer?

- Animated
- Creative
- Discipleship
- Expository
- Grace-filled
- Humorous
- Intellectual
- Monologue
- Practical
- Sermon series
- Storytelling
- Textual topical
- Topical
- Controversial
- Deeper life
- Evangelistic
- Family
- How to ...
- Illustrated (PowerPoint)
- Logical points
- Outline in Bulletin
- Serious
- Social issues
- Straight exposition
- Theological
- Witty

What would the church say are the most important pastoral strengths?

- Administration
- Associational leader
- Be a friend
- Committee work
- Conflict resolution
- Counseling
- Discipling
- Hospital visits
- Planning & Vision
- Teaching
- Visit members
- Altar calls
- Church leadership
- Community leader
- Continuing education
- Denominational leader
- Evangelism
- Study of the Word
- Training
- Visit new attenders

F. Ask about congregational pastoral ministry expectations.

Who were the last three pastors?

What was the previous pastor's length of stay?

What conditions caused this pastor to depart?

What were the previous pastor's strengths?

What were the previous pastor's weaknesses?

How do you expect a new pastor to be different?

How do you expect a new pastor to be similar?

Is there a written job description? Any changes that need to be made?

Describe the role of the pastor within this church?

How is the pastor made accountable? Evaluated?

How would you prioritize the pastor's activities?

Hours expected weekly? Days off?

Counseling load?

Outside speaking ministries permitted?

Is time absent for continuing education permitted?

What is the preaching schedule? AM? PM?

Are sermons taped? Aired? Televised?

Is there a tape library?

What are the expectations of the pastor's wife?

What are the expectations of the pastor's children?

Adapted from the Illinois Baptist State Convention publication, "Minister's Guide to the Search Committee Interview", <http://www.ibsa.org/churchmob/ministersguide.pdf> and made applicable for Texas Baptist churches and ministers.

V. At the Final Interview

A. Ask about salary and benefits.

Here is where it can get uncomfortable. Talking about money is not easy for some ministers. However, it is your responsibility to provide for your family, and unfortunately there are those churches who adopt the philosophy, "God, if you keep him humble, we will keep him poor!"

For a healthy relationship between the pastor and congregation, there needs to be a high degree of trust on both sides. If you sense that the committee is being reluctant to discuss compensation or is being obviously unfair, this should be a warning of a potential long term problem. Hopefully, your experiences will be good ones and your negotiations will be fair and considerate of both budgets.

Due to poor economic conditions, many churches are trying to cut corners by reducing or even eliminating staff benefits. Make sure you discuss all of the issues below openly and honestly. And before you go in "view of a call" or for a church vote, it is very important that you ***get all financial arrangements including moving expenses in writing.***

Not all churches provide all of these benefits, but ask about them. Some churches may not have thought about some of them. And they might be added later as incentives to keep a good pastor or staff member. The most important thing is to be clear, with no misunderstandings. You never want to come back later and try to renegotiate a misunderstanding about money after you have accepted the position. I cannot emphasize it enough – get it in writing up front!

Compensation:

Salary	\$ _____	(to be paid _____ [how often], beginning _____)
Housing	\$ _____	
Utility Allow.	\$ _____	

Protection benefits:

Health Insur.	\$ _____	(___ Pastor only, ___ Pastor and family)
Life Insur.	\$ _____	
Liability Insur.	\$ _____	(counseling, etc.)
Retirement	\$ _____	
Disability	\$ _____	
Soc. Sec.	\$ _____	

Ministry-related expenses:

Travel	\$ _____	(mileage reimbursement recommended)
Hospitality	\$ _____	
Books/Publications	\$ _____	
Professional Dues	\$ _____	
Conventions* & Conf.	\$ _____	
Continuing Education	\$ _____	

Other considerations:

Christmas Bonus	\$ _____	
Insur. on parsonage	\$ _____	(content insurance)

Insur. on pastor's library, computer etc. \$ _____

Moving, relocation expenses \$ _____ (transporting furniture, utility deposits and auto licenses from out of state)

*Conventions and Conferences----mark as many as apply:

- Expenses for conventions and conferences attended by Pastor
- Includes Pastor's wife when she attends with him
- To be used at Pastor's discretion
- Pastor to give account for reimbursement (recommended)

Balance at the end of year belongs to: Pastor Church

Holidays:

Vacation allowance:

(Some churches want a new minister to start over with only one week's vacation, and earn more in future years. However, most churches honor a minister by allowing him to use his previous experience when calculating vacation time according to policy.):

B. Ask about staff housing policies.

Does the church allow the minister a housing allowance to build his own equity in a home?

Is the minister required to live in the immediate neighborhood of the church?

Is there a church parsonage? Where is it located?

Is it comparable to the housing of the average church member?

What is included in the parsonage, and what is its condition?

Item / Room			Condition			
	Yes	No	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Refrigerator						
Stove						
Washer & Dryer						
Air-conditioning						
Dishwasher						
Garbage Disposal						
Fireplace						
Basement						
Attic						
Carpet						
Master Bedroom						
2 nd Bedroom						
3 rd Bedroom						
4 th Bedroom						
Dining room						
Master Bath						
2 nd Bath						
3 rd Bath						

Den						
Closets						
Storage Space						
Recreation room						
Garage: _Connected _ Not connected						
Yard						

Who is required to pay for maintenance on the parsonage?

How are emergency repairs handled on the parsonage? Define emergency.

What is the approval process for emergency repair work and preventative maintenance ?

C. Ask about office accommodations and work environment.

Where is the pastor’s office in the church?

Does the pastor have a private secretary? Full time? Part time?

Where do other staff members office?

What other secretaries are employed? Financial secretary?

Is there an allowance of time to do church work at home?

What is the policy of the church regarding the purchase of office supplies, equipment and furniture?

What are the office hours for the church?

What is the church policy about breaks and lunch time? How long?

VI. Small Group Interviews and “A Unanimous Vote?”

Over the past 39 years, I have almost always gotten a positive unanimous vote from a local church when going “in view of a call”. There is a secret to getting such a vote. I always made it a practice to meet with as many small groups as possible on the weekend of the church vote for my position.

Think about it. If you could ask questions of everyone in a small group setting, you could get the best picture possible of the church. And in turn, they would get a chance to hear your personal philosophy of ministry and the practical application that you bring to their congregation. It has always seemed so unfair for a congregation to base their vote on personal appearance, a sermon preached, a testimony given, the recommendation of a committee or a combination of any of these. It just makes sense to spend some time with the people you will minister to and exchange ideas, dreams and visions for the future.

Open ended questions are your friend! If you get the chance to meet with several small groups, try to avoid making a lot of direct statements. Instead, learn to ask questions that reveal who you are, while stimulating their thinking and learning about their personality and make up. For example, if you make direct statements about dealing with a difficult deacon body at your last church, you will be looked upon as one having trouble working with deacons – regardless of whose fault it was. On the other hand, a good question to ask would be, “How well did the last pastor work with the deacons to minister to the church body and advise each other on important matters?”

Remember, people like to talk about themselves and their church. So let them talk while you learn. You will get many more “brownie points” by asking good questions than by dominating the question and answer time by telling them about you. However, carefully answer any questions they may ask you.

At the meetings, I would quickly share my salvation experience (no more than 5 – 10 minutes), introduce my spouse and any children still living at home. Then with a file folder of questions, I would begin a dialogue with each group. It is best to write your questions prior to the meeting and prioritize them because there is never enough time to ask them all. Be sure to leave time for them to ask questions.

As a rule of thumb, I would suggest that each group meeting last only one hour and make sure there is at least a 30 minute break or longer between them. The exception would be with the staff or deacon body where you suspect conflict or unresolved issues. You don’t want to rush between groups or have them standing around in the hall waiting for their meeting. This should be a relaxed time of question and answer for you and the group. So make sure there is nursery and childcare provided for your family at all meetings and for the members as needed.

Here is a sample schedule of the groups that I always try to meet with (in order of importance and based on a Sunday evening vote):

- **Staff members** - Thursday night with a 6:30 pm catered meal together at the church followed by about an hour or so of undisturbed time in a relaxed atmosphere (be flexible).
- **Office support staff** – Friday morning around 11 am followed by a lunch together (eat out).
- **Deacon body** – Friday night with a 6:30 pm pot luck meal together at the church followed by about an hour or so of undisturbed time in a relaxed atmosphere (be flexible).
- **Sr. Adult group** – Saturday morning from 9 –10 am.
- **Bible study leadership** – Saturday afternoon from 2 - 3 pm.
- **Adult Choir** – Saturday afternoon from 4 - 5 pm.
- **Youth group as a whole** – Saturday night with a 6:30 pm pizza supper together at the church followed by Q&A time from 7 – 8 pm.
- **All other members** not included in one of the above – Saturday or Sunday afternoon from 3 –4 pm depending on when the church will vote.

This schedule will be a grueling one, but will allow you and your spouse time to rest between meetings and not go too late at night. You will need your rest to stay sharp and thinking clearly because you will feel that you have

been thoroughly interrogated. However, by the time you meet with all of these groups, you should have some idea of God's will for you and your ministry. And so will they!

At this point you should sense a genuine love and care for this congregation. If not, be honest enough to say it is not God's will for you to be their minister (they will probably be thinking it, if not saying so). Don't compound the mistake by being disobedient to God's will for your life and cause them to stumble as well. However, if and your family senses God's call to be their minister, spend some time in prayer to confirm it and enjoy your time together. I cannot guarantee you a unanimous call (vote), but if you are God's minister for this congregation, I would expect a better than average positive vote.

God bless you as you seek to serve in His kingdom!