SEARCH COMMITTEE
GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES

CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)
IN NEBRASKA

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Introduction

Thank you for sharing your faith through service. Searching for, and calling a minister is both a sacred and time-consuming task. The sacredness of your work will show-up both in reviewing the minister profiles that you receive, as well as in sharing with one another about your thoughts, feelings, and reflections about each candidate. In sharing of yourself, you will also be enlarging your sense of what others in your very own church are, and probably have been, thinking about the role and responsibilities of a minister, the character of the person you are inviting into the church where you worship, and how "who" they are and their sense of calling fits the mission of your church.

But before you even begin to review ministers profiles, it will be up to you as a committee to describe the church --- where you believe God is calling you, and from that sense of calling how to best articulate the church's purpose and mission.

The Mission of the Church

You may have heard the Greek work *ecclesiology*, which translated in its most direct form, means *your thinking about (the study of) the assembled people/the body of Christ.* Why do we gather together? For what purpose? While the Church Universal will claim a universal purpose – that is, to worship God, through Christ – particular gathered communities, or local congregations may want to emphasize a more specific purpose.

What is the particular missional characteristic of the church where you gather to worship together?

It is worth taking some time to visit the specific question now because it will be asked of you, in more than one way, on the Congregational Profile Form.

If the church has a Mission Statement, and even a Vision Statement, that will be helpful to you. Do you know if such a Statement was prepared in the last three to five years? If it was crafted longer than three or five years ago, now would be a good time to visit with the Board/Leadership Team/Council about how the church might like to re-visit and update their sense of purpose.

Kay Committee Principles

1. **Pray** --- Individually, and as a working group of the church, pray and ask for guidance. Be intentional about setting aside time alone, and when you gather, to enter a time of prayer. Move beyond "praying in" and "praying out" of the meeting. Maybe even consider asking one person to be the Committee's "chaplain;" someone who will take time before each meeting to prepare a reading from Scripture, a reading from another source or poetry.

   Consider your meeting space as a sacred gathering place. Prior to each meeting, light a candle to note that Christ is with you. Leave open a Bible with the passage of Scripture that will be read as a part of the opening of the meeting. If someone is familiar with Lectio

Divina, you may want to consider entering such a time together as you begin each meeting.

Finally, ask and remind the gathered community to pray for the Search Committee, for the candidates, and *that God's will be done*.

2. **Maintain Confidentiality ---** The congregation has charged ***you*** for this important responsibility on their behalf. Confidentiality protects the integrity of the process.
   - Make decisions in the meetings, not outside the meetings.
   - Bring concerns into the meetings.
   - Work openly with candor and trust.
   - Keep your committee materials secure from others and properly dispose of them at the end of the process.

3. **Work as a Team ---** Establish a regular weekly meeting schedule. Share feelings openly and honestly. Your major decisions should be by consensus and the decision to call a candidate should be a unanimous decision of the committee. Good attendance of every member is essential. Seek a minister who can best serve the whole congregation.

4. **Select a Chairperson and Recorder** -- The Chair will coordinate and preside at your meetings and will serve as the primary contact with the congregation, with the candidates, and the Regional Office. The Recorder will capture key elements of discussions at each meeting and ***send these by e-mail (or regular mail) to the Regional Office following each meeting.***

5. **Secure Authorization for Committee Expenses** – Costs may be as simple and inexpensive as copying and mailing costs, but should also include possible travel expenses for candidates (and possibly the committee). Also, at an upcoming Board meeting ask the Board to approve a budgeted amount the minister's possible relocation cost.

6. **Report Periodically** – on the progress of your work to both the Board and to the Congregation. By keeping the Progress Chart (Appendix) up-to-date and displayed in a prominent place, you are providing members and visitors and a chance to see that the Committee is working to call a settled minister. At Board meetings, the Chair of the Search Committee should only provide a board update (e.g., we have reviewed X# of profiles provided by the Region, and have done Skype/Zoom videoconference interviews with Y# of candidates). *Do not try to oversell your work by either speaking of any decisions of the Search Committee, nor promising timeframes for when you will complete the next step, or have a candidate to bring to the Board for their recommendation to the Congregation.* Rather, simply provide a sense of where you are in the process which will, in turn, invite support and trust.

7. **Be Patient with the Process** – On average a search process is ***12 – 18 months.*** We, that is you, the Local Church and the Regional Church, cannot rush the process. And while the processes and procedures that this booklet outlines seems lengthy, they are recommended on the basis of thousands of congregations' experience in searching for a settled minister.

Successful Search Committee Practices

(adapted from *The Pastoral Search Journey* by John Vonhof)

1. **Take time to review a pastor's profile and materials thoroughly,** and compare these with the selection and evaluation criteria. Do not jump on first impressions.
2. **Conduct a complete and honest evaluation of your church** to identify strengths and weaknesses. This helps the congregation and the potential candidate see the church as it really exists.
3. **Choose a Pastor who can lead you** into a new promise of what God is calling you to be, based on the Holy Spirit's leading.
4. **Carefully look at the pastor's previous ministry** for length, growth, congregational size, and ministries developed under his or her leadership. This will give you clues to his/her leadership styles.
5. **Choosing a pastor, prayerfully,** who the committee thinks the congregation needs.
6. **Selecting a pastor who understands** the culture of your church or community.
7. **Hold the Search Committee accountable** to its own ground rules - especially confidentiality.
8. **Hold all candidates to the same submission requirements.** All candidates should be expected to submit the same materials - regular Search and Call papers from the denomination, sermons, and criminal background check, etc.
9. **Stand firm in the process.** Not allowing the Board or certain members or groups in the church to "push" the process in a direction different from the one the committee deems advisable.
10. **Taking the time necessary** to choose the minister who's calling and mission meets that of the congregation.

<u>The Search Process</u>

Before beginning to review Ministerial Profiles and interviewing candidates, there are a number of steps that need to be taken *in The Search Process*. The first three steps are integrally related to one another, and each step is fuel for the third, and final step, which is creating a Congregational Profile and Narrative.

<u>Step 1:</u> Engaging the Congregation

Each congregation will, of course, do what it sees fit in how and when to engage members of the church. And often there will be both public and private conversations with the board of directors/core team, the matriarchs/patriarchs of the church, the one or two families who often have "final" say in what will and will not be OK for the church (yes, many churches have such decision-makers). But, finally, we hope that each church will choose a way that will engage as many members and visitors of the church as possible – and even people in the broader community to gain a perspective that might otherwise be missed in how the community more broadly sees the church in its context.

There are a number of ways that the Search Committee can engage members of the congregation, from surveys to small group meetings, to town hall meetings, to World Café. The Search Committee will want to decide which approach will work best for your particular church. There isn't a "one-size-fits-all" to engaging the congregation. But the hope is that as many people who are engaged in your church are asked for their thoughts, ideas, concerns, and questions that they would like the Search Committee to consider when reviewing candidates.

A. **Congregational Survey** – The Regional Office have some sample survey instruments that can be used, or modified, to meet your church's particular interests. Determine a timeframe for distributing the survey, receiving responses, and the Search Committee reviewing the contents. The surveys can be distributed by including them in the Sunday Worship Bulletin, or by sending them out in mail, or including them with the church newsletter (by snail mail or Email), or including them as an attachment to an Email, or through an on-line survey instrument (e.g., Survey Monkey - https://www.surveymonkey.com/).

   The Search Committee should then decide who will compile the results into a summary -- - in particular, be clear with the person/people who are doing the summary whether the committee would like to see a verbatim response to each question, or a general sense of each question, or a set of themes that surface from each question. Whatever you decide, some things that those who summarize, and the Search Committee later, may want to consider are:

   a. **Mission of the Church** – see if the survey surfaces what people are saying they believe the purpose of the church has been, is currently, and/or should be. "Listen" closely to what is being said – for things like unique opportunities to serve the community.
   b. **The Ministries of the Church –** often, people will name the ministries of the church that are much appreciated and beloved (e.g., Bible studies, food pantry,

sports ministries, wedding and funeral meals/hospitality, Month of Miracles). Make a list of all of the ministries that are named, and keep a running tally of each one --- and notice if something is not mentioned, yet is still being done (that may suggest that it is time for that ministry to end).

c. **Naming New/Emerging Possibilities for Fulfilling The Church's Mission** – often people will suggest some new(er) ideas for how the church can be engaged in ministry. If the same idea(s) surface again and again, it may well be worth the Search Committee's time to name those possibilities – first to each other as a Committee, and then to the governing board/core team/leadership to see if there is appetite to embrace these emerging interests and/or trends in the church. And/Or how to name them in the Congregational Profile/Church Narrative.

B. Small Group Meetings – there are two parts to hosting the small group meetings: 1) Content of the Meeting, and 2) Process for Facilitating and Recording the Meeting.

First you may want to decide the size, location, and timing. Generally, it may be best to have six to eight people in each small group, but you decide. Certainly, keep the size to smaller than 12. You also may want to ask each Board Member and/or Elder of the church, or people who have the time and space in their home, or a nice mix of people ranging from long-time members to newest members to host a small group, whether in their home, or at the church building, or at a local coffee shop. Once you know who will host the meetings, you also want to ask them about dates/times when they are available to host the meeting.

As a Search Committee you may want to be a bit more defined in your design of these meetings. For instance, the Search Committee may want to have Small Group Meetings in the format of "Dinners for 8," or "Evening Dessert Conversations," or "Morning Coffee Clutch Conversations," and/or "Afternoon Cocktail Hours" (for some Disciple churches, the last one may be a bit unusual to consider). Of course, adding food to the invitation creates more work for the host(ess), which is why the Search Committee will want to be clear about the design of the Small Group Meetings up-front; so that expectations are clear from the very beginning - "Would you be willing to host a Small Group Meeting of 6-8 people at your house for a pot-luck dinner/desserts/coffee/cocktails?"

Be as creative as possible when considering this task. To that end, the following comments are offered to open up your thinking to possibilities. Use what is offered below, not as choices to be made, but considerations that might guide what you think will work best in the church where you worship.

a. **Content** –

i. **Following Congregational Survey** - if the Search Committee chooses to conduct a Congregational Survey, you may want to share the Survey Summary with each Small Group. Based on the "findings" of the survey, you may want to craft some "open and honest" questions that will create an atmosphere of curiosity for everyone (e.g., "The survey suggests that we want a minister who can walk on water. What gifts and skills would you consider essential to walking on water?"). What you want to avoid is "leading" questions that will, in essence, tell the participants that the Search Committee already knows what they want to hear (e.g., "We want our new minister to walk on water, right?")

ii. **Without Congregational Survey** – The added benefit of hosting Small Group Meetings is the conversation that can ensue. If the Search Committee decides to not conduct a Congregational Survey, then the Small Group Meetings act as a way to engage the questions that would have been included in a survey, but in more of a conversational tone. So, you might modify the questions in the sample surveys (you can get copies from the Regional Office) to questions that would create a conversation between and among the participants.

For instance, you might ask, "When was the last time that you were involved in evaluating or establishing the church's purpose – whether in a mission statement, strategic planning process, or otherwise?" (A "leading" version of the same question might be, "Do you like our current mission statement, which reads …. ?")

b. **Process –**

i. **The Invitations** – Do you want Small Group Meetings to be a mix of the members – by age, areas of interest, leadership, or any other "category" you can think of? You might also ask whether you want people who are most familiar with each other in the same Small Group Meetings? And whether you will invite family units to be in the same Small Group Meetings?

1. **Elders and/or Prayer Groups** – some Disciple churches have prayer groups, or individuals "assigned" to Elders for spiritual care, and such groups may create a simple way to gather people.
2. **Families** – some Disciple churches have a number of households who are related to one another, so it might be simple to invite family units to be in one group.
3. **Small Groups** – many Disciple churches have "small group" ministries, even though they go by another name (e.g., Sunday School class, choir, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry), and those structures might suggest a way to organize Small Group Meetings.

ii. **Shared Commitments** – because the church is usually made-up of people who know each other, and often feel that they already know what each person is going to say anyway, it will be important to establish some shared commitments to the group. It will help with the group owning the commitments if they are asked to come up with them. But as a Search Committee, you will want to make sure that some commitments are included – in case they are not named by the participants. Some possible ones to consider include:

- ✓ Limit your comments to 2 minutes;
- ✓ Each person has a chance to share before you speak a second time;
- ✓ One person speaks at a time – avoid side conversations while others are

talking;
- ✓ Listen attentively even if you think you know what the person is going to say;
- ✓ Turn cell phones off, or on vibrate – if you get a call during our meeting, please step outside so that we can go on with our conversation and not interrupt you.

iii. **Room Set-Up** – to the extent that the host site can accommodate this, try to have people sitting in a circle facing each other. If there is a meal/snacks/drinks, see if there is a way to have people not sitting at a table. What facilitators have learned is that a table becomes a barrier and actually limits people's participation. So, the ideal set-up is for people to be sitting in an open circle, facing the facilitator and recorder.

iv. **Facilitating** – One of the Search Committee members will want to facilitate the Small Group Meetings. Different members of the Search Committee may want to facilitate different Small Groups so that the responsibility doesn't fall to one person. Or, if the Search Committee knows someone in the church who is a skilled facilitator, you may want to ask them.

There are two competing demands of a facilitator: one consideration is that the facilitator create what is called a "strong container," or a space where people know the boundaries of the conversation; and facilitate the conversation in a way that engenders an openness to new ideas and thoughts, as well as conversation among the participants.

Where this can get "sticky" in the church is when the facilitator has to ask someone to wrap up their comments after they have talked too long. Which is why it's important to establish the Shared Commitments (see the first check mark above).

The other tendency is for facilitators to comment following each remark, making the conversation more of a two-way dialogue, than a fluid conversation among six, seven, or eight people --- with the facilitator remaining silent for the most part, or using what someone said to prompt a follow-up question for others to respond to (e.g., "Sally, that was a helpful insight --- what do others think about Sally's suggestion that the church should seek a minister who is ….").

v. **Recording** – often times we try to capture what people are saying by either having one person typing notes into a laptop, or by writing notes on a pad. Unfortunately, such capturing of what people are saying is often seen as secretive. So, facilitators have learned that by capturing the notes on an easel pad it does two things: 1) it shows the person that is speaking that what they said was heard and captured; and 2) publicly displays everyone's comments so that people are, or can be reminded of earlier comments. So, it is suggested that a member of the Search Committee who has good penmanship with markers, and who can write in large letters, be the Recorder.

C. **Town Hall Meetings** – most Disciple churches have Congregational Meetings. Town Hall meetings are very much like Congregational Meetings, but without the formal structures and processes. There is no need for an agenda, or the use of Robert's Rules of Order, or any such. It's simply a chance to host and facilitate a conversation in a larger group (whether that's 15, 30, 50, or 100 people). Whatever the size, though, be prepared. Don't simply call for a Town Hall meeting and hope that by asking one question, you'll have the input the Search Committee needs and desires.

Town Hall Meetings are a lot like the Small Group Meetings, so please refer to the notes above. But, because of the sheer size difference, you will want to approach the Town Hall Meeting differently. **Shared Commitment; Room Set-Up; Facilitator; Recorder** are all, essentially, the same as above for Small Group Meetings.

One thing to consider, though, when thinking about the **Room Set-Up** is to not simply use the sanctuary (because then people are looking at one another's heads), or the typical fellowship hall set-up with tables and chairs (because, again, the tables act as barriers to participation). Instead, meet in a large enough room (which may be the sanctuary or fellowship hall, but only if people can sit in a circle, in chairs, without tables).

Once you manage the logistics, then it's important to ask yourselves what five, six, or seven questions will evoke good conversation among the full church membership.

a. **Craft Questions** – because the group is much larger, it will be more difficult to facilitate a series of modified questions from the Congregational Survey. For instance, one way you might get a conversation started is to try some things like asking everyone to line up along the wall in response to the following questions ---- from one end with Strongly Agree, the other end with Strongly Disagree, and the middle as Kinda':

i. As a church, we want to grow in new members;
ii. As a church we need to focus on growing our own faith – discipling;
iii. As a church, we need to strengthen our outreach ministry to the community;
iv. What else????

One you've gone through the list of topics/questions, then ask people to sit down. And ask,

- "What did you observe from those lines?"
- "What were you feeling inside when you saw how people lined-up?"
- "Were there any surprises for you?"
- What elese??????

It may be helpful to include as the final question at the Town Hall Meeting something like, "What else do you want the Search Committee to know, or to consider as we do our work?"

Then close the Town Hall Meeting with some brief comments, and reminders about the Search Committee Process; the importance of maintaining confidentiality, the process of building the Congregational Profile and Church Narrative, and the timeframe. ***And please remember to not give into the impulse to try to promise some timeframe by which the church will meet a candidate.***

D. **World Café –** this is a wonderful way of meeting as a whole church, but in small groups of five on a rotational basis. By crafting a series of three critical questions, in less than 2 hours, the whole congregation will be able to engage all three questions in a new small group for each question. One of the outcomes of a World Café is that old relationships are transformed, and new networks of relationships can be created. Either way, the engagement with the three critical questions may very well develop a logical discovery through dialogue.

   Because this approach is new to many Disciple churches in Nebraska, you may want to ask the Regional Minister to help with designing, and maybe even being the overall Café facilitator. Contact the Regional Office to get a copy of the "World Café: Café To Go," or visit the Region's web site to download (www.disciples-ne.org).

E. **Widening Your Perspective: Getting Input from the Wider Community** – there are leaders in the community who are familiar with the church where you worship. Give them a call, or send them an Email and ask them if they would have some time to visit with you about the church. People like school principals, city government staff, people elected to public offices, neighboring pastors, community business leaders, and others may well have an impression about the church that is worth hearing. Ask open and honest questions about the person's view of the church, about the role and relationship of the minister to the community, and what they would desire most in the coming years for the church.

<u>Step 2:</u> Defining the Compensation, Benefits and Reimbursable Expenses

Often, churches combine all expenses that they relate to and with the minister and then report to the full church that the minister's compensation is the sum total of all three areas.

We will try to help differentiate the three areas of expenses that relate to and with the minister, and differentiate the Compensation, from the Benefits, from the Reimbursable Expenses.

<u>COMPENSATION:</u> The Compensation is what most people in the pews would consider what they take home from their employer. For most people, however, their take-home pay is their salary minus income and Social Security/Medicare taxes. For ministers, however, they are provided a separate tax status because they are ***both*** an employee of the church ***and*** self-employed. Therefore, there are tax consequences, and off-setting tax benefits for the minister.

For further guidance around what is, and is not considered Compensation, please review the Disciple's Pension Funds' Minister's Compensation Planning Guide (https://pensionfund.org/uploads/Ministers-Compensation-Planning-Guide.pdf) that includes the following insight:

> When congregations lump all of the above items as a "Salary Package" and "cap" total expenses, it is often at the expense of the minister's salary. Experience shows that many ministers dip into salary to meet church business expenses or benefit costs, decreasing real income on which to live

Cash Salary – This is the amount that the church will pay the minister for her/his employment with the church. This does not include the Housing Allowance amount, nor the fair market value of the Housing Parsonage should the church provide such.

Housing Allowance – The IRS allows ministers to place some portion of the Compensation into a Housing Allowance. The Housing Allowance can include all related costs for maintaining a home, including rent/mortgage, utilities, maintenance, furniture, cookware. It is up to the minister to review the available materials that provide guidance on Housing Allowances, including the Disciples Pension Fund's booklet on Minister's Compensation Planning Guide (https://pensionfund.org/uploads/Ministers-Compensation-Planning-Guide.pdf).

> The housing allowance is limited to 1) the fair rental value of the home, furnished plus the cost of utilities; or 2) the actual expenses of operating the home; or 3) the amount properly designated by the congregation, whichever amount is lower. The housing allowance must be noted in official church records (e.g., church board minutes) and must be designated in advance (i.e., by December for the following year). The housing allowance is excluded from income tax but ministers must pay Social Security on the fair rental value of the parsonage and housing allowance. (See Section D, Taxes and Tax Reporting.)

Housing Parsonage – If the church has a parsonage, the reported income for the minister is the Fair Market Value of the home. Whether the church, or the minister, is responsible for utilities is up to each church. But, if the minister is responsible for utilities, the minister may choose to have some portion of her/his Salary set aside for Housing Assistance (e.g., utilities, furnishings).

Social Security Offset (7.65%) – The minister, as a self-employed person, must pay the full burden of taxes for a self-employed person. To help offset that expense, which can be 25% or more of their income, ministers can place some portion of their income in what is considered a Housing Allowance (unless the church provides a parsonage). The church can provide ***additional*** monies to the minister to offset their Social Security/Medicare taxes – employers are required to pay, essentially, 7.5% of the employee's income to SS/M and deduct another 7.5% from the employee. So, a church can offer to provide that 7.5% as an addition to their salary to help offset the tax consequence. If a church is willing to do this, but tells the minister that s/he must take it from their budgeted Salary, then there really is no Offset.

BENEFITS:

Pension Fund (14%) – The Disciples Pension Fund is often cited as one of the best, if not the best pension plan of any denomination. We continue to have a defined benefit program that also includes in-service death and disability benefits. The church pays either the full 14% of the minister's Cash Salary plus Housing Parsonage/Housing Allowance, or 11% of the same and has 3% deducted from the minister's Salary to get to the full 14% contribution.

Health Care – The Disciples Pension Fund does provide a Churchwide Health Care (for details consult the Disciples Pension Fund's Minister's Compensation Planning Guide booklet – pages 12 and 13, or email: healthcare@pensionfund.org).

Additinoally, ministers have three options: 1) if their partner or spouse is employed and has access to health insurance coverage for the spouse/family; 2) obtain health insurance on their own through an insurance broker; and/or 3) accessing health insurance/coverage through the Affordable Care Act. In Nebraska, accessing ACA coverage is through HealthCare.gov (https://www.healthcare.gov/create-account).

Dental and Eye Care – The church may opt to include funding for either/both Dental and/or Eye Care through any provider that they choose. The church can choose to include these expenses as a line-item of the church, as a benefit for the minister.

REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES:

Moving/Relocation Expenses – One of the questions asked on the Congregational Profile is whether the church will pay for relocation costs for the minister. Most often, churches pay for the moving expenses. Therefore, it is recommended that the Search Committee get clear about their intention/hope. And then request that the church's budget include a specific dollar amount that is available for the minister (and family) to move to your town.

As of 2017, moving expenses are considered taxable income, including for ministers (the income tax exemption for Housing does not apply, and the fact that ministers are not considered employees for Social Security purposes). Prior to 2018 this cost was not considered income to the pastor. Since 2018 congregations who assist their ministers with relocation expenses should report that to the IRS. If the church pays the minister directly the amount should be added to the minister's W-2 that year in Box 1. If the church pays the moving company directly to a moving company, they should issue a Form 1099-Misc to their pastor and enter the amount in Box 7.

Since the minister will owe both state and federal income tax and SECA (Self-Employment Tax 15.3%) on this amount, congregations are encouraged to give their new minister an additional 25% above the cost of the move to cover the tax liability.

The congregation should report the reimbursement as income to the IRS in the year the payment is made, even if the move occurred in the previous tax year.

Criminal Background Check – To complete their Ministerial Profile, ministers are asked to complete a background check so that churches are assured of the person's integrity. That Background Check Report is included with the Ministerial Profile. As a part of the package, ministers ask that the cost for the Background Check be paid by the church who is extending him/her a call.

Mileage ($.575/mile) – each year the IRS changes the reimbursement rate for mileage incurred for work. Because ministers often travel a fair number of miles to visit people in their homes or in hospitals, to conduct church business, to attend meetings, and to represent the church in the community, the church sets aside a budgeted amount so that they can reimburse the minister for the miles that they drive. The IRS mileage rate not only includes the cost for gas, but also car maintenance, car insurance, and other related costs.

These costs are reimbursements, and are not considered income. The minister will need to provide a report to the church, that will include the date, miles traveled, and purpose for the trip. Whether the church will pay all, or some part (e.g., $100/month or $250/month) of the actual cost, is up to the church and minister to negotiate as part of the Letter of Call.

Continuing Education – to better serve the church, a minister needs to keep current on church dynamics, Biblical studies, pastoral care, community ministries, ecumenical and interfaith relations, and other related issues, the minister is provided an annual dollar amount to be used for Continuing Education. Whether the minister attends a conference in another state, or a local workshop, or an on-line course, or a spiritual retreat, the costs are considered part of a minister's continuing education. It is up to the minister and the Search Committee to negotiate the dollar amount available, and then each year to continue to negotiate the funds that will be available (usually, not to go below that initial year's agreed amount).

Pulpit Supply (When Minister is Gone) – the church should budget for the time when the minister will not be in the pulpit, whether due to vacation, continuing education, sabbatical, or sick leave. Often, the person who fills the pulpit when the minister is gone is provided a stipend (traditionally in the range of $150 - $250).

Books/Periodicals – ministers often have significant libraries in their offices because they need to be able to reference the most current thinking in regard to not only the Bible, but also the issues related to pastoral care, worship, church trends and dynamics, how to partner with churches in other denominations/ecumenism, how to relate to and with people of other faith traditions/interfaith relations, and spiritual growth and formation including devotionals, poetry, and reflections.

Disability Insurance – the church can purchase disability insurance for the minister, but will want to explore how such insurance would work in relationship to and with the Disciples Pension Fund.

Professional Expenses – ministers will, from time-to-time need such professional wear as robes, albs, and/or stoles. Additionally, computers, laptops, and tablets that are used for at least 50% of the time for work, can be professional expenses. And dues to professional organizations that may facilitate their ministry (e.g., International Facilitators Association).

Denominational Meetings – ministers are often asked to participate in meetings hosted by the denomination, whether they are committees, or task forces, or clergy gatherings and expenses related to such meetings should be covered by the church.

Regional or General Assemblies – During the even years of the calendar the Christian Church In Nebraska hosts a Regional Assembly, and during the odd years of the calendar the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada hosts a General Assembly. All ministers with Standing in the Disciples of Christ are voting delegates, and it is hoped that they will attend and actively participate in both the Regional and General Assemblies.

REST AND RENEWAL:

Paid Vacation – One (1) week for each three (3) months of service, or 2½ days per month served, with up to one week of unused vacation time allowed to be carried over at the end of each year, with any remaining vacation leave being forfeited. Unused vacation time is considered cash/compensation at time of termination.

Sick Leave – One (1) day for each month of service, with unused sick leave at the end of each year being allowed to accrue up to 180 hours. Once the minister accrues 180 hours of sick leave, no additional sick leave will be accrued until some sick leave is used. Accrued sick leave is not available as cash/compensation at time of termination.

Continuing Education - One (1) week for each six (6) months of service.

Educational/Sabbatical Leave Time – Three (3) months of paid time for each five (5) years of continuous service.

As a Regional Church, the Christian Church In Nebraska recommends that the pastor will be provided time, and not be expected to use any form of leave time, to participate in wider church (e.g., Regional Assembly, General Assembly, Kamp Kaleo) and community activities within reason (e.g., community ministries, chaplaincy). To support such an understanding of ministry, CCN includes the above language in its template of a Letter of Call.

Step 3: Creating a Congregational Profile and Narrative

Steps 1 and 2 above can help the Search Committee with more accurately completing the Congregational Profile. The most up-to-date version of the Congregational Profile Form can be found at the General Church's Disciples Home Mission's Search & Call Office at: http://disciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Congregational-Profile-rev-Oct-2017.pdf, as well as the Christian Church In Nebraska web site: www.disciples-ne.org.

Congregational Profile:

Instructions for completing the Congregational Profile Form can be found at the Disciples Home Mission's Search & Call Office at: http://disciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Instructions_for_Completing_the_Congregational_Profile-rev-01-2017.pdf, as well as the Christian Church In Nebraska web site at: https://disciples-ne.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/CONGREGATIONAL-PROFILE-INSTRUCTIONS-PDF.pdf.

When the Search Committee has completed a DRAFT of their Profile, please share it with the Regional Minister so that s/he can review it and pose questions to ensure that what is being said is fair, accurate, and consistent. For instance, there are some questions on the Congregational Profile Form that it may be helpful to explore possible differences or variances: XI Congregational Discernment, Question #2 asks about the process the Search Committee used to gain congregational involvement. The answer might be that the Search Committee talked with a few members to make sure that their assessment was accurate. But, in Section X Congregational Dynamics the Profile might indicate that the first area is labeled as a "C," or Closely characterizes the way the congregation respects and listens to each other. The Regional Minister might ask some questions about whether it's accurate to place a "C" next to that characterization of the church when it only spoke to a few, select leaders for input.

Ethical Guidelines for Congregational Conduct

At the end of the Congregational Profile there is a question about whether the congregational has taken official action to adopt the *Ethical Guidelines for Congregational Conduct*: https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/SC-EthicalGuidelines.pdf

The Regional Minister will review this document with the Search Committee and encourage the Search Committee and Governing Board to review, study, and take action on these Guidelines. The Region's experience, though, is that it is best if the entire congregation is engaged in the study of the Guidelines.

Congregational Narrative:

In addition to the Congregational Profile, we have found it helpful if the Local Church works with the Regional Minister in crafting a brief (1-page) Congregational Profile. The process that seems to work is for each member of the Search Committee respond to the 8 (eight) questions below, sends their individual responses to the Regional Minister, and s/he drafts a narrative based upon the responses as well as what s/he knows about the Local Church. Your responses can be one-word answers, or a string of one-word answers – the important thing is to convey the idea, but don't feel like you need to write even full sentences.

The Congregational Narrative helps to fill-out the picture of the Local Church so that Ministerial Candidates have a bit more of an idea about that church's story.   Which, in turn, helps her/him to consider whether they could find a place to stand inside that story.

8 Questions:

1. *In the last 15 years of NAME Christian Church what are the most significant events that you would lift up for people to know?*
2. *How would you describe the spirit of NAME Christian Church?*
    a. *Historically*
    b. *These past 5 years*
    c. *Currently*
3. *If you were to describe the members of NAME Christian Church, what words would you use, and why?*
4. *In what ways would NAME Christian Church like to grow in the next year, or two?*
5. *What would you like to say about NAME Christian Church's long-term future?*
6. *How would you describe NAME Christian Church's way of making decisions:*
    a. *Leadership/Board*
    b. *Congregation*
7. *How does NAME Christian Church see itself in relationship to its neighbors?*
    a. *Historically*
    b. *These past 5 years*
    c. *Currently*
    d. *FuturE*
8. *Please describe NAME Christian Church's unique worship experience*

Submitting the Congregational Profile and Narrative:

When the Congregational Profile and Narrative are complete, the Regional Minister is able to post it to the General Church's Disciple Home Mission's Search & Call Office's web site so that ministers can read about your Local Church.

Now the Search Committee is prepared to review Ministerial Profiles. The Regional Minister, guided by the Congregational Profile and Narrative, will search the Search & Call database for candidates indicating an interest in serving in Nebraska. The Regional Minister will do a brief, pre-screening call to all potential candidates, and will share the Congregational Narrative as an introduction. Additionally, each candidate will be told how to access the Congregational Profile if they are interested in learning more about the Local Church.

Web Site and Social Media:

If the church has a web site, or a Facebook page, or any other form of social media that helps to connect to members and visitors, now is a good time to update them. Particularly the church's web site, as it is the new "front door" to any church. Potential ministers will quickly do a search on the internet for the name of your church, and whatever comes up – your web site, your Facebook page – is what they will see first. *What is the first impression that you want to make with someone?* Create that image using both pictures and words.

Process For Selecting a Candidate

Selecting *the* candidate for the Local Church where you are serving on the Search Committee is sacred work. I hope that you will remember to bask yourselves in prayer during these times so that you remain open to the Spirit within yourself, and between each of you.

If the Local Church has decided that you would like to have an interim minister, that Selection Process is only a bit different from the Selection Process for a Settled Minister.

A. Interim Minister

Interim Ministers serve for an *Interim Period* of time in the life of the Local Church. Interim Ministers can serve in one of two capacities: 1) "place holder" until a Settled Minister is called; or 2) Intentional Interim Minister who helps the members of the Local Church *transition* between the previous Settled Minister, and the Settled Minister to come. Interim Ministers *are not* candidates for the Settled Minister's position.

Either choice should not be made for financial considerations. The Interim Period in the life of a Local Church is ***not*** a time to save money. In fact, when Local Churches have tried to save on their budget expenses by reducing costs related to the Minister, they have often struggled to survive when the new Settled Minister arrives --- mostly because giving has fallen off since people know that they Local Church "doesn't need as much money now."

When a Local Church does not feel the need for a structured approach to processing the *transition* from the ending of one Minister's time with them, to a new Minister's arrival, then the Regional Minister will seek someone from within Nebraska who might be willing to serve by filling the pulpit each Sunday, provide pastoral care for people who are sick or grieving, and provide some administrative support to the Local Church governance. Often, such Interim Ministers prefer to serve on a part-time basis.

The 2nd type of Interim Minister is what many are calling "Intentional" Interim Ministers. Because such Interim Ministers serve with an *intention* of walking alongside the Local Church as it *transitions* from an *ending* to a *new beginning*[1]. William Bridges wrote extensively about *transitions*, including his seminal book titled by the same name – *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*, and his follow-up titled, *The Way of Transitions*. The *transition* is the period between *ending* and *new beginnings*, or what Bridges called the *neutral zone*.

In Interim Ministries, Bridge's work is coupled with what is known as *family systems theory*[2], often connected to Murray Bowen, and the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family. The theory, when applied to the Local Church, would suggest that the members of the church function as a single unit, but within that single unit are many complexities. Like any other family, the church members have a close, often times intense relationship with each other. The type of connections affect the interactions. An Intentional Interim will use what the Interim

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[1] Bridges Transition Model explained briefly - https://wmbridges.com/about/what-is-transition/
[2] Bowen family system theory explained briefly - https://thebowencenter.org/theory/

Ministry Network outlines as The 5 Focus Points of an interim period. *The Calling of An Interim Minister* is a booklet that the Christian Church In Nebraska has updated in July 2019. If your church is interested in exploring Interim Ministry, please contact the Regional Minister to request copies for the Board and/or Search Committee to review.

B. **Transitional Minister** – This is a relatively new "category" of ministry. It is best that the Local Church and Regional Minister decide at the beginning of the search process if the church would like to consider a Transitional Minister. On rare occasion, Interim Ministers might become a Transitional Minister by extending the ministry an additional year, but only with a new Letter of Call for the Transitional Minister's position.

Transitional Ministers act very much like Intentional Interim Ministers, but with the understanding that both the minister and the Local Church may wish extend the person's ministry, allowing the Transitional Minister to become the Settled Minister. The first twelve to twenty-four months are structured as an Interim Minister, and about three months before the Interim Period ends, the Local Church and Transitional Minister can begin to explore whether they both would like to extend the relationship. If so, the Search Committee and Transitional Minister should contact the Regional Minister so that a clearly defined process is established: detailing the role and responsibilities of the Settled Minister, as compared with the Transitional Minister.

C. Settled Minister

1. **Regional Selections** – The Regional Minister has access to the Search & Call database using a software known as CDM+. The General Church's Search & Call Office maintains the database of all Ministerial Profiles. Those ministers who indicate a willingness to serve a church in Nebraska are then available to the Regional Minister to review.

   Using the Congregational Profile and Narrative, the Regional Minister will scan Ministerial Profiles to find the best possible fits for each Local Church based what s/he knows about your church. S/He will then call possible candidates to ensure that they are willing to move to Nebraska (if they're not already in Nebraska), and then begin a conversation about that person's ministry, and what they are looking for in their next call. If there seems to be a connection, the Regional Minister will share the Congregational Profile with the prospective candidate.

2. **Candidate's Initiative** – Because the Region does post Congregational Profiles to the Search & Call Office's list of open congregations (known as MinPro), ministers can see where there are churches open in Nebraska. From time-to-time, ministers will ask the Regional Minister to forward their Ministerial Profile to a church's Search Committee. Such candidates profiles are forwarded to you with an Email from the Regional Minister that says something like "this candidate has requested that his/her profile be submitted to your church…" The Regional Minister has done no additional screening, or pre-screening calls.

3. **Congregational Initiative** – From time-to-time names of possible candidates will surface

from someone with the Local Church. Thank the person who submitted a name, and let them know that you will get the name included in the search process.

The person's name should be submitted to the Search Committee Chair who, in turn, should submit the name and contact information to the Regional Minister. The Regional Minister will search the database/CDM+ to see if the person is in Search & Call. Using discretion, the Regional Minister will contact the potential candidate to ask them about their sense of call at this time. If the person is a Disciple's Minister, the Regional Minister will ask her/him to prepare and submit a Ministerial Profile. In the meantime, the Regional Minister will send the prospective candidate the Congregational Profile and Narrative.

The Search Committee should ***not*** contact the candidate directly. If the person contacts the Search Committee directly, asks for an interview, or a phone conversation, please do not do so. Ask the person to contact the Regional Minister. The systems and structures that the General and Regional Churches have put in place for Search & Call are intended to both facilitate finding the best candidate, and to protect the Local Church.

4. **Reviewing Ministerial Profiles**
   a. **Confidentiality** – Please remember that entering Search & Call does not mean that everyone knows that the minister is considering leaving their current position. And since the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a small denomination, and a lot of people know each other in the denomination, it is best to maintain the strictest confidentiality. Even saying "this young man from Kanas is married and has three children," maybe be enough for someone to figure out who it is.

   b. **Background Check** – The Office of Search & Call at the General Church requires a background check on every minister before their Ministerial Profile can be circulated. The Regional Minister can work with the Search Committee in reviewing the Background Check Report that is included in every Ministerial Profile. The Local Church, then, is asked to include in their Compensation Package the funds to cover the costs for the background check, when they extend a call to a candidate.

   c. **Read Through Twice**
      - ☐ **Pre-Screening Call** – chairperson or member designated with the task to call each candidate the day of, or the next day after you receive Ministerial Profile(s) – *ask the candidate if s/he remains a candidate, and if they are willing to consider moving to Nebraska*;
        - ❖ Identify who you are as a member of the search committee at XYZ Christian Church in ABC, NEB;
        - ❖ Explain that you are simply calling to see where they are in the relocation process and that the Search Committee is at the beginning of the process of reviewing candidates' profiles, and that you may, or may not be back in touch with her/him --- that no consideration has been given to their candidacy, and that this simply a pre-screening call to make sure that they are still a potential candidate.

- ❖ Chairperson/Committee Designee ***then*** will distribute the Ministerial Profiles of candidates who are still potential candidates for a full review;
- ☐ **First Reading** – read each Profile to see what your general sense of each candidate is;
- ☐ **Second Reading** – Read each Profile again, but this time mark/note specific attributes you appreciate, see as lacking, and are curious to learn more about, as well as how their attributes do, or do not align with the Congregational Profile and Narrative.

5. **Selecting the Top Candidates from Profiles** – Note what you find as strengths and concerns for each candidate, as well as what your general sense is for each candidate. Bring those notes with you to the Search Committee where, together, you will review each candidate. Whether you create a matrix to measure each Search Committee's "rating" for candidates, or simply use a general sense/consensus of the Committee about each candidate is entirely up to the Search Committee. One note of caution/suggestion: *please recognize that some members will want to emphasize "objective" criteria, while others will want to emphasize "subjective" criteria. Rather than struggling with which is a better/more fair/defensible approach, the Committee would be well-served to recognize that both objective and subjective evaluations are going on in all of us at all times. So, the evaluation is a personal one that is shaped by our own thoughts, experiences, attitudes and values. Which is why we ask that the Committee work by consensus and not a vote; talk and listen to each other so that you might better discern God's desire for the Church and the candidate.*

   Once you have one, two, or three candidates that the Committee would like to meet and learn more about, select dates when the full Committee is available for a tele/conference call. Either schedule these calls for the same evening, or within 24 hours of each other.

6. **Series of Interviews**

   a. **Screening/Get-To-Know-You Videoconference Call**
   Videoconferencing has become a more common way for us to connect with people, whether they live in the same town or state, or across the country. Contact each contact and provide them with the options for a 20-30 minute "get to know you" videoconference call.

   As a committee, prepare two or three (2-3) questions that will enable you to get a feel for who this person is. The questions should be crafted in a way that they are open-ended enough for the candidates to tell you about themselves: e.g., *Tell us about your call to ministry and how you have lived into that calling? In this past month, how have you spent time other than in ministry, or working? If you were a tree, what kind of tree would you be, and why?*

<u>Common Videoconference Tools:</u>

Zoom: www.zoom.us
Skype: www.skype.com/en
Facetime (all participants would need to use Apple products): Program installed on Apple phones, iPads, and Apple Computers

b. Interview by Videoconference Call

Once the Committee has had a chance to get to know the possible candidates, you are ready to interview the candidates that are still interested in you, and you find interesting enough to want to learn more. If the "get to know you" call didn't go well, but your read of their Ministerial Profile suggests that they would be a good candidate, push past that first impression from the video call and invite the candidate for an interview anyway.

Weeks before the interview, prepare a list of 12-15 questions. In building those questions you may want to refer to the 16 Elements of Ministry listed in the Congregational Profile (of which your church selected 4 areas); the Minister's Profile, and the areas of ministry s/he selected; specific areas committee members identified as strengths and weaknesses; create scenarios to which the candidates can respond (e.g., how would you respond to a situation like a 36 year old woman in our church who is suffering in grief over the death of her husband over a year ago; she has six children, and no income). (The Regional Minister may be able to provide you with some example questions.)

Write down your questions so that they are same questions with each candidate, finding a way to reference each particular candidate's strengths and limitations/weaknesses, but not crafting completely different questions for each candidate. For instance, you might say, "The church identified these 4 areas of ministry that are most important for us. And your profile suggests these 4 areas (and then list --- the different list for each candidate). What are your thoughts about how the church and you as a candidate are a good, and not-so-good match given this one way of looking at each other?"

It's helpful to both the committee and the candidates if they hear different voices throughout the interview, so it's suggested – strongly encouraged – that questions are asked in a rotation by each member of the Search Committee (e.g., Member A ask Q1, B asks Q2, C asks Q3).

The chair of the committee can begin each interview with a conversational tone, expressing appreciation for their giving you a chance to get to know them, and how the interview will be structured. It is suggested that you tell them the time set for the interview is 45 minutes, the committee members have 12-15 questions that they would like to ask for the first 30 minutes, and then provide the candidate with 15 minutes to ask the committee some questions. By revealing the structure, the committee can assess how well the candidate does at managing time, and how much time they take to answer questions. After 30 minutes, end your questions no matter where you are on the list. After 45 minutes, bring the interview to an end – no matter how well, or badly, the conversation is going. The search committee can then take the next 15 minutes for a "bio break" and prepare for the next interview.

The first interview usually does not surface questions about compensation. However, the search committee and/or the candidate may want to test whether you are in the same "ball park" of understanding about compensation, and/or any confusion about a specific detail provided in the Congregational Profile.

When the interview is over, indicate the search committee's planned next step, and when the candidate will hear from you – either way. Then invite each candidate to close the interview with a devotional/prayer.

The search committee will want to take the 15 minutes following the 45 minute interview to begin to de-brief the conversation/interview while it's still fresh. Listen to each other's broad, general impression of the candidate, with any specific topics or issues or questions that arise for committee members.

c. Reference Calls

There are three references for each Ministerial Profile, plus a fourth reference from the Regional Staff where the candidate currently serves. Prepare a list of questions that will be asked of each reference (examples of questions available from the Regional Office, and on the Region's Web Site: www.disciples-ne.org).

Each Committee member is asked to make reference calls, and to keep very detailed notes. It's ok to tell the candidate to wait a minute while you catch-up on note taking if you need to. But, it may be better to write your notes after the call is over, and rather than capturing everything a person said, you can summarize their responses to questions.

Generally, you are wanting to get a sense of how each reference person knows the candidate, and how they would describe the candidate's ministry. Specifically, you'll want to know what each reference identifies as the candidates' strengths and weaknesses/growing edges, their preaching and teaching, and other areas of ministry of greatest concern to your church as indicated on the Congregational Profile (the 4 Elements of Ministry that you selected).

Please do not call anyone except the four references, and particularly ***not*** anyone connected with/to the church where a candidate is still serving. If, after calling the four references, the committee would like some more information, please go back to the ministerial candidate him/herself and ask for two or three more references who can speak (more?) candidly about specific areas of ministry about which the committee would like to learn.

d. Select Top Candidate

The Chair of the Committee should contact each candidate to let them know the next steps in the process. The most uncomfortable call(s) will be with someone whom the Committee has not chosen to advance to the next stage. To help provide some guidance, you might begin the conversation by saying, "*I've been asked by the Search Committee to let you know that you have not been selected to move onto the next stage of the search process. I'm sorry for that, but want you to know that we appreciate the chance to meet you, and wish you the best in your continued discernment.*"

In anticipation of the candidate asking if there are some specific reasons, or more specific feedback that you can provide, the Chair should work with the Search Committee to identify two or three specific things that you would say to each candidate. In many ways this is a part of the Search Committee's responsibility so that our ministers can learn and grow as a part of their discernment in ministry. Your feedback can be a really big help. Your silence may leave them wondering, "What's wrong?" Or, "What's wrong with me?" So, please consider these calls to candidates who are not moving forward to be just as important as calls to those who are moving forward.

The Chair, or Committee designee, should call all of the candidates with whom you wish to move forward in the search process. Let them know how pleased the committee is with them as a candidate, let them know that you will be contacting their references, ask them about how you can access a video of them preaching a sermon (e.g., can they send as an email attachment, link to YouTube), and ask them if they would like to send any additional information about themselves that they think would be helpful to the committee to get to know them more fully.

e. Review of Sermons

It used to be that Candidates would do a trial sermon on a Sunday, or that Search Committee members would visit the church that the Candidate is serving to listen to him/her preach. But with today's emphasis on technology, churches are relying upon audio and video tapes of sermons that they can listen/watch together.

Watch the sermon together as a committee. In the case where you are not all able to be in the same room together, you can use a videoconference software like Zoom to share the screen and watch and listen together, and then discuss your responses. For guidance on how to download and use Zoom please contact the Regional Minister (there is a one-page guidance that s/he can send to you).

Below are some possible questions to ask the Committee to discuss after watching/listening to a sermon:

What did you see and hear?
What engaged you?
What would engage others in the congregation?
When and how did you experience God in the message?
What would you say is the Good News of the sermon?

f. Selecting The Top Candidate: Committee Discussion About Candidates

Discuss each candidate one-by-one so that you can explore each candidate individually. For instance, you might structure a conversation about each candidate using the following three questions:

1. In one word, what was your feeling about the candidate following the interview?
2. What did you (committee members) hear from your reference call?
3. How did you (committee members) respond to the sermon(s)?

After you have discussed each candidate individually, then begin to compare and contrast candidates. What did you appreciate, and not appreciate about candidates?

Then, begin to identify which candidate surfaces as the "top" candidate. Sometimes it's as easy as asking, "Do we have a clear top contender?" If so, that name will surface. If you're not sure, simply say, "At the count of three, call out the first name of your "top" contender." If the same name arises, you have a top contender. And now you can talk about him/her. If different names surface, you have at least culled the list to two or three. And continue to discern through further discussion how each candidate fits what your church is looking for in a minister.

Once you have a top candidate, contact him/her first to explore whether they would like to advance in the process. If they say "Yes," then move onto the next step.

If the candidate of your liking says "No" they do not want to move forward, then the committee will want to consider whether there is a candidate #2 that you would like to pursue. If so, and her/his answer is "Yes," they would like to move forward with you, then move onto the next step.

But, if the answer from candidate #2 is "No," or the committee would rather not move on to candidate #2, then contact the Regional Minister to let him/her know, and tell him what you liked and did not like about each candidate so that s/he can learn from your experience with the first pool of candidates. It's also a time to explore next steps: more work that the Committee needs to do; changes to the Congregational Profile and/or Narrative; gathering a pool of more candidates.

7. Review of Compensation Package

When you call the candidate that the Committee discerns is your top candidate to let him/her know that you're interested in going to the next stage of the process, you are, in essence, telling the candidate that you are not going to talk with any other candidates, and asking the candidate to only talk with you (to stop talking to any other churches). If the candidate says "Yes," then you are in an "exclusive" relationship. Ask your top candidate if you can schedule a time to talk through any additional questions, topics, or areas of concern, as well as the Compensation Package, broadly outlined in the Congregational Profile; the conversation will be a time to review a proposal from the Committee that specifies Salary and Housing, Benefits, and Additional Costs to the Church.

The Regional Minister will provide two items for this step in the process: 1) Sample Letter of Call; and 2) Spreadsheet Template to calculate Salary and Housing, Benefits, and Additional Costs to the Church. Prior to the call with your top candidate, the Committee will want to work together to complete the Spreadsheet Template. When you contact the Regional Minister, let her/him know whether and how you would like him/her to be involved with you as a Committee. S/He will modify the template so that there will be three columns: 1) Example (with dollar amounts plugged-in); 2) Name of Your Church (with all cells empty); and 3) Name of the Candidate (with all cells empty).

This is where the Church's budget is critically important. To enable the Committee to negotiate with the Candidate, the Board should provide the dollar amounts for each line-item included in the Spreadsheet Template. Many churches have moved to having a "universal" dollar amount for the cost of employing a minister. While such a "universal" dollar amount does make it simpler for the church to manage its funds, it often causes the minister to have to choose between their compensation (i.e., salary and housing), benefits (i.e., pension and health care), and reimbursable expenses (i.e., mileage, continuing education, books and supplies, denominational meetings). We are suggesting, instead of a "universal" dollar amount for all three categories that churches begin to budget by individual categories: Compensation, Benefits, and Reimbursable Expenses.

The line-items on the spreadsheet correspond with the items included in the Letter of Call. One way that you might consider using these two documents is to use the Spreadsheet Template as the "negotiating" document that provides dollar amounts. Once you are able to come to some level of agreement within the Committee, and then with your Candidate, you can let the Spreadsheet fade into the background as you transfer the agreed upon dollar amounts to the Letter of Call.

The Letter of Call is more inclusive of the Call, so it may open up some additional questions and areas for further negotiation. For instance, the Candidate may request an additional week or two of vacation if the Total Compensation (first section) is less than they had hoped or desired. The Committee might then agree to keep the weeks of vacation at the standard four (4) weeks, but increase the Compensation to a higher level. All of which can now be adjusted in the Letter of Call itself.

The Regional Minister can be available for any, and all of the discussions about the negotiations. S/He will share both the Letter of Call, and the Spreadsheet Template with the Candidate so that s/he will have the same information that the Committee has.

8. Face-to-Face Interview

Once the Search Committee and the Candidate have an agreed upon Letter of Call, but before presenting the Candidate to the Board or Church, if the church is able, and the Candidate is able, it is time for the Candidate to visit the Church.

Getting ready for the face-to-face interview has two parts. The first task is to consider how long the Candidate will be in town, and how the time with him/her is structured. Make this time as productive as possible, and be as creative and responsive as possible. , remember that this is a good time to spend with the Candidate both in interviews and formal conversations, as well as more informal time such as meals and time to drive around the community. Ask the Candidate what s/he would like, or feels they need when they visit. The Candidate may ask for an hour of time with the Committee to do an exercise together, or a Bible study, or a conversation so that s/he can get a feel for the congregation life. Once you have talked with the Candidate about all of what to include in the time together, then agree with the Candidate how much time s/he will be with you (e.g., two days and one night, three days and two nights). Remember, the Candidate is probably not familiar with your community, housing, and if s/he has a spouse/partner what job opportunities are available, or if s/he has any what the schools are like, so they may ask to have some time to explore many facets of the community that reaches beyond the church life.

Second, the Search Committee will want to craft a series of additional questions that are particular to this Candidate. Now is the time when you get to really ask the questions about him/her specifically (whereas, in the earlier interview, you were asking the same questions of each candidate). But be sure to have those questions written-out.

When you decide on the structure of the time being spent with the candidate, you can begin to envision what to cover in which meeting. Some of the material might be covered during the driving around the community, while other information might be shared/explored over meals. If there is one interview time slot, then craft the questions to meet that time slot. But, if the Committee and Candidate would like to have two interview times – one each day, for instance – the Committee can craft questions accordingly (e.g., Topic A theme of questions in day one, and Topic B theme of questions in day two). Remember to ensure that the candidate has time to rest between times together --- your Candidate may need that time to catch her/his breath and reflect on the conversation(s), as well as to get in some exercise to release some of the anxiety, both of which may be a regular pattern of her/his day.

When the formal, structured time is completed, the Search Committee may want to take the Candidate to where they are staying while the Committee meets to review their time with the Candidate, measure the level of excitement about him/her as the minister, and any questions or areas of concern. If the Committee is ready to reach unanimous agreement about the Candidate, you can meet with the Candidate one last time to let him/her know your unanimous decision. Provide the Candidate with at least 72 hours (not including travel time!) so that they can relax, reflect, and discern God's will for this calling. And then await his/her call – the most difficult part of the process!

9. Presenting Candidate to Church Board/Governance

If the Candidate accepts the Committee's call, it is now time to bring the Candidate to the Board. The Chair(s) of the Committee will want to ask for a special meeting of the Board to meet the Candidate, ask any questions that they may have, and then review the Letter of Call.

The Candidate can join all or part of the Board meeting via tele- or video-conference (e.g., Zoom, Skype).

The Committee will want to prepare a full report for the Board, including the number of Ministerial Profiles reviewed, number of Candidates with whom they conducted a screening interview, and the number of Candidates they interviewed. Additionally, the Committee will want to prepare a written summary that best captures the fullness of the Candidate, and why they are unanimously supportive of this particular candidate. The report about the Candidate might be very straightforward in a narrative format, or it might be that each Committee member will read his/her own highlights about what they appreciate about the Candidate, or the Committee Chair/Member can read something that the Candidate provided that really captures his/her own character (e.g., an excerpt of a sermon, a paper or article that they have written). Whatever method you choose, make sure that each member of the Search Committee speaks clearly about why s/he voted to bring *this* Candidate to the Board.

If the Candidate does join the Board meeting, there can also be a time set aside for him/her to answer any questions from Board members.

When the Board is ready to vote, the Candidate can be excused from the meeting with a clear indication of when the Chair of the Search Committee will follow-up with the Board's decision.

The Board should vote for this Candidate. The Search Committee will want to read thoroughly the Church's By Laws to make sure of the process, and the threshold needed for a Candidate to be considered viable. It is suggested that an 85% affirmative vote of the Board is what is needed for a Candidate to be presented to the full congregation.

10. Presenting Candidate to Congregation

If the Board votes to recommend the Candidate to the full Congregation, a special Congregational Meeting will be held for the sole purpose of meeting the Candidate, reviewing his/her candidacy, and voting whether to affirm his/her call to be the minister.

Again, the Search Committee will review the By Laws for clarity about the process (usually, there is a two-week notice required), and what is needed, but it is suggested that a minimum of 75% of the Congregation would vote in favor of extending a call to the Candidate to now become the minister of the church.

The Candidate may, or may not be present (e.g., in-person, via tele- or video-conference) for the Congregational Meeting, depending on when the meeting is held. If it is a Sunday, and the Candidate is pastoring another church, s/he may not be able to get away. Please contact the Candidate to work through any scheduling demands so that you can find an agreed-upon date.

To open the Congregational Meeting, the Search Committee will want to present the Candidate – maybe with a one-page handout that captures the Candidate.

Then the Candidate may be asked to offer some reflections (not a sermon) about his/her call to ministry, their experience in ministry, and why s/he is excited to become the minister serving this church. The Candidate should then make him/herself be available for questions (but the Church Moderator may want to put a time limit on this, and will want to facilitate a question-and-answer period closely so that the Candidate isn't forced to moderate the time).

When the Congregation is ready to vote, the Candidate (and family) should be asked to leave. Per the Church's By Laws, the person who is to chair Congregational Meetings will call the meeting to order. The Chair of the Search Committee will make the motion to call the Candidate as the pastor of the church. A second is usually not required since the motion is coming from a Committee. So the Congregation now has a chance to discuss the Candidate, ask questions of the Committee, and then vote.

It is suggested that the affirmative vote of the congregation be 95% or better, but the Church's By Laws may be prescriptive about the percentage threshold for a minister to be called to the church.

The Chair of the Search Committee will want to contact the Candidate immediately with the results of the vote.

11. Uh Oh! What If We Have to Start Over?

If the Candidate does not meet the required threshold with the Board and/or the Congregation, then take a look at your next most favored candidate. If that person is still of interest, then begin the process with him/her. If there are no favorable candidates left, then contact the Regional Minister to let him/her know, and to request another set of Ministers Profiles.

It is critical that the Chair of the Search Committee contact the Candidate to let him/her know of the results of the vote, and that they are not moving forward in the process.

It is important to remember, ***do not rush the process!!!***

12. Confidentiality – Still!

The Candidate will need to have some time to inform the place where s/he is serving, whether in another church or another form of ministry. So, ***please*** foster a sense of confidentiality in the Board and Congregation until the Candidate informs you when they have been able to inform their current place of ministry. Which means, of course, that there is no public announcement of his/her call to serve the church --- until s/he lets you know it's ok. Also, the congregation needs to be reminded (at, and following the Congregational Meeting) that they should not share the Candidate's name anywhere (e.g., conversations with friends, phone calls with family, social media postings).

13. Announcing the Good News!

The work of the Search Committee continues! Prepare an announcement that can go out to the full congregation letting them know that it's now OK to let everyone know that there is a new minister coming to town. You may even want to provide a news release to the local newspaper that a new minister is coming, and provide them with a bit of his/her background.

14. New Beginnings! The Minister Is Moving In!

Partnering with the Board, the Search Committee will want to assist your new minister in making the move to the community. If the new minister is interested in purchasing a home, the Search Committee may want to provide the names and contact information of possible realtors with whom they can work. If they are looking for a place to rent, you may be able to help them get a feel for where there are places that meet their needs/desires. If the minister has a spouse/partner, you may want to help them with searching for work. If there are children you may want to help them with schooling and/or child care.

This gets back to when your now minister visited the church and community as a candidate. If you've asked them about such considerations during the face-to-face interview process, you will already have a head-start in considering the concerns that the new minister may be facing as they transition into the ne community.

If there is a parsonage, the Church will want to make sure that the home is ready for someone to move in. And, if you are able, you may want to host a "pounding" – a pound of this, and a pound of that (e.g., flour, sugar, spices) – to include maybe some fun items for and about the community (e.g., Nebraska sweatshirt or baseball cap).

15. And There Is Paper Work

Now that the minister is coming, it's time to ask the Treasurer and minister to meet/talk so that they can think through such matters as payroll, pension, health care, and reimbursement requests. Ask the Regional Minister for advice, contact information, and connections as needed.

16. ***Transitioning* In**

The Search Committee is now asked if they would all like to continue for another year, or two of service. As the minister is "transitioning" in to the new ministry, and since the members of the Search Committee know the new minister best, we are suggesting that the full Search Committee become the Pastoral Relations Committee.

The Regional Minister has another booklet, *Pastoral Relations Committee Guide*, that s/he can provide to you, and then meet with you and the new minister to review during your first such meeting.

The other element of *transition* is to mark the new beginning with an official Service of Installation. When you contact the Regional Minister about the PRC guide, also ask about the booklet *Beginning a Pastoral Ministry*, which includes a variety of liturgies for the Service of Installation.

The Regional Minister will share both booklets with the new minister, and ask him/her how they would like to transition into the ministry; when they would like to have the first PRC meeting, and when they would like to host the Service of Installation.

17. **Celebrate!**

After you make sure that all confidential materials have been disposed of properly, you are ready to celebrate! You may want to have one last conversation together, maybe over a meal, to reflect on your relationships. Remember, while the Search Committee did a great deal of work together and accomplished a great deal, you also did something even more significant than call a minister: *you deepened relationships with other people in the church in a way that could only happen through this process.* You prayed together, you pushed and prodded each other, you asked tough questions of one another, and you listened deeply to each other in ways that you may not always have a chance to do in other church settings. Celebrate! Together!