

Pastoral Call Process Toolkit – for Congregations

Introduction

This **toolkit** was prepared by lay members of the Pastor and Congregational Care Team (PACCT), who have been through the process of calling a pastor, for use by churches seeking guidance and help in calling a pastor, **remembering that the congregation is the right form of the kingdom of God on earth.**



The **toolkit** has multiple components, not all of which need to be used in all situations – think of it like a **toolbox** with MANY tools for many purposes, and select the right ones for YOUR situation.

It includes suggestions for use of surveys to learn about your church and community, strengths, needs, and opportunities.

There are **sample** documents and letters that can be personalized for your church’s use and tweaked as needed.

Questions that a congregation may want to ask a pastoral candidate are included, as well as questions that a pastoral candidate may ask.

Resources from truthhelp.org, the AFLC, and Church Answers were used in this toolkit. PACCT is grateful for each contribution.

Pray First

Congregation needs to prioritize prayer – for the Holy Spirit to infiltrate their Church

1. Leadership needs to pray before each worship service with the Pastor.
2. Leadership needs to pray at all council meetings for the members and Pastor.
3. Leadership needs to pray against Spiritual warfare in their church.



Congregation needs to take ownership of the church God has entrusted to them

1. You are a team with your Pastor; it is not the Pastor’s job to do everything.
2. Good teams work together and forgive each other frequently.
3. A good church member makes a commitment like a marriage to a church. For better, for worse for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health. Don’t bail on your church when a pastor leaves; God has put you here for this season in the life of your church.

www.AFLC.org/PACCT

Toolkit Map, Terms, and Definitions

SWOT analysis: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. A good SWOT analysis can efficiently identify the various strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that may not be visible, but they are present.

Exhibit A – Know Your Community Report. Available through ChurchAnswers.com, an organization founded by author and speaker Thom S. Rainer. With nearly 40 years of ministry experience, Thom has spent a lifetime committed to the growth and health of the local church and her leaders. At Church Answers, you will find helpful resources, experts and community to guide you through the ups and downs of ministry and church health. Their library of free materials and customized solutions are organized around the most common questions heard about church growth, revitalization and leading more effectively. The **Know Your Community Report** includes two key attributes often used to describe a particular group of people: 1) Demographics, and 2) Psychographics. Demographics are WHO people are, including age, gender, and ethnicity. Psychographics are WHAT people prefer, including motivations, beliefs, and priorities.

Exhibit B – Know Your Church Report. Another useful tool from ChurchAnswers.com, the Know Your Church Report consists of a 160-item questionnaire that measures a church's perceived health in six purposes of the church: worship, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship, prayer, and ministry. Church leaders choose a sampling of the church membership to complete the 15-20 minute survey, and Church Answers provides a detailed health report for the church.

Exhibit C – PACCT survey. This simple, free survey is intended to help churches and church leaders identify areas of need and direction for future training and mentoring opportunities within their church body. It is available for pastors, church staff, congregational leaders, volunteers, and church members to complete and use in-house, or request assistance from PACCT to score and prioritize areas of strength and concern.

Exhibit D – Change Readiness Inventory. Another resource from ChurchAnswers in a Revitalization Course, this 50-statement inventory measures the readiness of a church for change on a scale from 1-6. One person, a group of people, or the entire congregation can take this inventory.

Exhibit E – Brief Church Membership/Attendee Survey. This is a two-question survey allowing participants to identify what they appreciate and what they would like to see happen at their church.

Exhibit F – Cover Letter. An MS Word document that can be personalized.

Exhibit G – Pastoral Information Form. Another MS Word document to help a church get acquainted with a potential pastoral candidate.

Exhibit H – Reference Questions. Use to gather information about the pastoral candidate from references he provides on the Pastoral Information Form.

Exhibit I – Questions for a Church to ask a Pastoral Candidate. These questions are designed to help the church learn the strengths, skills, and priorities of the pastoral candidate. Questions can be edited, added, or deleted as needed to fit the needs of each church.

Exhibit J – Financial Compensation for Pastors. The AFLC provides this document at www.aflc.org.

CHURCH LEADERSHIP PREPARATION

After the church recognizes the need to call a pastor, the congregation should notify the AFLC President's office to inform them of the upcoming need to fill the pulpit for an interim period and to call another pastor.

Know (or Evaluate) your Church and Community

Church Leadership develops a plan to discover the needs of the church and community. Knowing church needs will help the church leadership identify the strengths and weaknesses of the church (SWOT analysis).

Tools available:

- Know Your Community from Church Answers (\$) (Exhibit A – sample available upon request)
 - Demographics and Psychographics and Tapestry
- Demographics of the church (gather statistics from church records)
- Demographics of the community (gather statistics from various sources)

Evaluate your church needs

Tools Available:

- Know Your Church from Church Answers – 160-item questionnaire (\$) (Exhibit B – sample available upon request)
- Pastoral and Congregational Care Team (PACCT) survey (Exhibit C – sample included)
- Change Readiness Inventory from Church Answers (free) (Exhibit D – sample available upon request)
- Brief Church Membership/Attendee Survey (Exhibit E – sample available upon request)

Tools are helpful to church leadership, whose responsibility is to recognize and define needs of the church in areas of worship, evangelism, discipleship, prayer, ministry (music, outreach, visitation, youth, adult, Sunday School, etc.). All tools may not be needed in all situations. Use the ones you believe would help in your particular congregation.

Assess information gathered from tools

- Develop a written summary and share with the congregation
- Publish on church's website (consider having a password-protected site for this)

Use this summary to develop a church overview to be sent to the pastoral candidate

- Define your church's needs
- Identify your church's opportunities in the community
- Explore how your church deals with conflict
- Identify your church's expectations for the pastor's wife (keeping in mind that she is not the one being called)
- Relate your church's traditions

CALL PREPARATION

1. Review church's constitutional procedure for calling a pastor and follow it precisely.
2. Recruit church members to pray for the selection of a call committee, to pray for the call process and to ask God to begin preparing for the future pastor. You may even want to set up a prayer group specifically for the call committee, call process and the new pastor.
3. Spend at least a week in prayer as a call committee, seeking for God to soften your heart and spirit toward His will.
4. Gather names of possible candidates from members of the congregation, other pastors you know and trust as well as from the AFLC President's Office.
5. Once gathered, take at least a week to daily pray for each pastor on your list while asking God to reveal which one to pursue.
6. Come together as a committee and determine which candidate to pursue.

PRELIMINARY CONTACT (INFORMATION GATHERING)

1. Construct a cover letter, pastoral questionnaire and a church and community overview that would be of interest to the pastoral candidate. A sample Cover Letter (Exhibit F – sample available upon request) and Pastoral Information Form (Exhibit G – sample included) are attached for your consideration.
2. Mail the cover letter, pastoral questionnaire, and other information in a packet to the prospective candidate with a self-addressed, stamped return envelope. Be sure to give a deadline for their response (about 3 weeks from the date of mailing).
3. You may want to follow up the mailing with a phone call asking if he received the packet, does he have any questions and will he consider sending in the questionnaire.
4. Make copies of the received questionnaire for each call committee member and take a week to review it and pray through it.
5. Meet to determine if this is the right person to contact for an interview. Keep in mind that this is an "information gathering" time. You want to learn as much as you can about the pastoral candidate. It is wise to visit the serious candidate's congregation on a Sunday morning just to observe how they interact with their people and conduct ministry. It is also wise to call their references and at least ask the questions that are attached (Reference Questions - Exhibit H – sample available upon request).

FORMAL CANDIDATE CONTACT

1. Set a time for the chosen candidate to meet with the call committee for an interview. This can be virtual or in-person, depending on distance and time constraints. Determine your questions ahead of time (Exhibit I – sample available upon request) and save time for the candidate's questions. Spend time thinking and praying through questions related to the tough issues of the day and listen carefully to the candidate's answers during the interview.
2. After much prayer, determine if this is the pastoral candidate to introduce to the church council (leadership). Why introduce only one? The job of the Call Committee is to seek and present a pastor for call. Presenting only one candidate forces the council and congregation to seek the Lord as to how the candidate will fit with the congregation versus comparing the personalities and outward traits of multiple candidates. Allow the leadership to ask the candidate questions.

3. Allow the candidate to ask questions of the church leadership (Call Committee).
4. As a final step in the interview process, explain the pastoral finance package the church has in mind and allow open dialogue with the candidate. Information on how to best establish a salary package can be found in the AFLC document Financial Compensation for Pastors (Exhibit J – available at AFLC.org).
5. When the above is satisfactorily complete, schedule a Sunday for the candidate to meet the congregation, preach and answer congregational questions.
6. The congregation then meets at a legally called meeting following the Constitution's guidelines and votes on extending a call to the pastoral candidate. When a candidate is accepted by the congregation, send him an official letter of call which includes a request for the candidate to acknowledge receipt of the call and a time limit defined as to when a response from the candidate must be received. The call letter does not include the job description (they are separate; the job description can change).
7. Send an official update letter to any other candidates who expressed interest.

The congregation must be committed to pray for the pastor and family, knowing that they too are faced with a decision which must be in accord with the Lord's will. **Pray first – and pray last.**