

## Unique Dimensions of the Pastoral Search Team in a Congregationally Governed Church

The Pastoral Search Committee is unique in churches in many ways but most of all because it is the one committee that works for many months making many decisions that lead to just one decision – which is a decision that is one of the most important ones made in any church – deciding on who the pastor should be.

It is unique in that on that one decision the entire committee must be united. This should be very obvious but because requiring that a committee come to a unanimous decision is practically unheard of it is often overlooked – until too late!

The reason why the decision must be unanimous is because it is inconceivable to think that when the decision is made after constant prayer and a commitment to and dependence on the Holy Spirit to lead this committee during much work for many months regarding who to recommend to the church to call as pastor – it is inconceivable that these 7 people will come to the church and say “5 of us believe that this is the man God is leading to be the next pastor of our church – and 2 of us do not.” Clearly that simply cannot be.

THEREFORE – that being the case, no one who is not a team player, one who can't compromise or accept another's point of view, or is too strong willed to listen to different opinions and is inclined to insist on their own way should be on THIS committee. These people often are great people and are very valuable in many ways in a church – but not on this committee because every one of the 7 has absolute veto power on this decision since it must be unanimous.

Some of the things that should be said when people are asked if they are willing to serve on this committee:

- Are you willing to stay on this committee until the job is done even if it takes more than a year? (Accept only those whose intention is not to drop out until the task is completed.)
- Are you willing to make this committee a priority for your time and attendance? (The ideal is that every member attends every meeting.)
- Are you willing to keep absolute confidentiality about who is considered – even from your spouse? (Most candidates demand confidentiality)

Other general guidelines for a Search Committee – Get balance of age, gender, interests, abilities, church activity, and length of time at the church. Consider carefully if you want to include a former pastor on the team as they may come with many preconceived ideas of the process and position.

Make sure that some members are at least relatively new to the congregation – do not choose just “insiders”, people that everyone knows that are the “permission givers”.