**Find a “Date” with Your Next Pastor: How to Get Out There!**

While You are Looking for a Pastor—Candidates are Looking at You

Finding your next pastor may be the most important decision your church will make in a decade. It is worth spending as much time as possible to prepare—and utilizing as many people as possible to make your church look good. While you are examining lot of possible candidates, candidates are examining you among lots of possible churches!

The traditional approach has been: (1) electing a PNC; (2) letting them write the MIF and submitting it to the CLC; and (3) hope/pray for the best. You can do it this way—or you can be proactive, inventive and fruitful. Expanding your search to other sources, particularly electronic options, will provide more candidates—and better candidates. It will cost you more time. It will cost you more money. Let me ask you: Is it worth the extra effort to find and call the best possible pastor? If you think so, read on.

Ministry Information Form: Vital and Limited

Every church seeking a pastor must complete a Ministry Information Form (MIF) and file it with the Church Leadership Connection (CLC). The MIF is vital for initial matching with candidates who are actively searching. However, as a promotional piece it is limited since every other Presbyterian Church has written one too. Spend some time looking at other MIFs from churches that may be similar to yours and begin thinking about what sets you apart so that you can highlight this on your website.

Advertising: Worth Every Dollar

Carefully placed ads in magazines, like *Presbyterian Outlook* and *Christian Century,* are extremely helpful. Don’t worry about creating a lot of verbiage. The key is to buy a bigger space so it stands out. Include a picture of the church or one of your children. Don’t worry about a lot of glowing language. Just include the basics: church name, town (and suburb/part of state—so they can find you), number of members, position title—and “find more information on our website: www.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.org/pastorsearch.” You’re not trying to convince them in the ad. You’re trying to get them to look at your website—where you have more time and space to convince them! The ads will cost lots of money—and worth it.

Don’t forget to send emails to the Presbytery Executives (done through APE’s—contact Dr. Flo Barbee-Watkins), Seminary Presidents (they want their alumna to be your next pastor), and any congregations/pastors you know. The emails, like the ads, point to one place—the pastor-search information on your church website.

Pastor-Search Information on Church Website: Unlimited Possibilities

Your website is the first place a candidate goes! Begin by updating your website, making sure that information is up-to-date and easy to use. Unlike the MIF, there are no limits on what you can print on your website. For the pastor-search information, include lots of pictures of everything you do, bright colors, smiling faces, and lots of eyes! Include a couple videos—a complete worship service, interview a young person—anything that makes a candidate want to learn more. Allow ten months to do this work.

Creating a Strategy for Your Website

The key is to organize your information well. Use headings like these that connect to each section:

1. **About our Church—Past and Present:** Briefly describe church’s history, highlighting key accomplishments; tell where you are—how many people, how much you care, what you value
2. **Worship and Ministry:** Describe your worship style—include a video of entire service; Briefly outline key ministries in education, outreach, mission—especially anything you do that’s unusual!
3. **Living in our Community:** Think of Chamber of Commerce on steroids! Lots of pictures/links
4. **Serving with our Session:** How many members/committees—list/describe them; what does session dream of doing in the next five years? How are they willing to help the pastor lead the church?
5. **Working with our Staff:** List present staff members/titles; include pictures and personal words
6. **Compensation Information: The most important part!** Include minimum and maximum—yes, real dollars! Include all benefits/expenses—yes, real dollars! Most candidates are lost because of compensation—be honest from beginning and you will have a better chance of keeping them later.
7. **The Ideal Candidate:** Have links to MIF and Position Description; list your ten Leadership Competencies from MIF; and “Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound—and look good doing it!”
8. **How to Apply:** Have links to PNC email account (or designated person); include links to references.