

When Your Church Seeks New Pastoral Leadership: Guide for the Church Board

- Begin by making contact with your area conference minister. Resource materials for a search committee can be found at <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/ministerial-transitions-committee-packet/>. Because this process takes time, you should plan to be intentional about each step. Invite the area conference minister to your first search committee meeting to orient the committee to its task and the resources available to you. The area conference has experience in working with a number of congregational search process. Remember, it is the area conference that holds the credentials for ministers. Therefore, it is important to include area conference leadership in the search for new pastoral leadership.
- The church board/council/elders/deacons (hereafter referred to as *governing body*) takes official action to accept the resignation after agreeing on a date for termination.
- Inform the congregation if the resignation was not publicly presented.
- Make plans for an interim pastor or an intentional/transitional pastor if needed or appropriate. The responsibility for arranging for the transitional interim leadership should remain with the governing body and should not be assigned to the pastoral search committee.
- Plan for a congregational event of thanksgiving and appreciation for the departing pastor.
- Prepare an accurate and balanced portrait of your congregation by completing the Congregational Information Form (CIF). This form can be found in the Ministerial Transitions Packet-Search Committee Version at <http://mennoniteusa.org/resource/ministerial-transitions-committee-packet/>. This form will help introduce your congregation to potential candidates as well as give your congregation opportunity to review who you are as a congregation.
- There are several questions related to the theological perspective of your congregation. We suggest that you answer these in response to *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, 1995*. This can be purchased from Menno Media at <http://store.mennomedia.org/Confession-of-Faith-in-a-Mennonite-Perspective-P408.aspx>

- ❑ A companion document, with which it is important for ministers and other leaders in your congregation to become familiar, is *A Shared Understanding of Ministerial Leadership*. This book describes the theological background for ministry, the call by God and the church to ministry, ethics for ministry, and credentialing understandings and procedures. It can also be purchased from Menno Media.
- ❑ When you have completed the **Congregational Information Form**, you should forward a copy to your area conference minister. This signals your readiness to begin looking at candidate Ministerial Leadership Information (MLI) forms. Remember to retain a copy of your completed Congregational Information Form for your own use and reference.
- ❑ Ask your area conference minister to advertise on the Pastoral Opening list on the Mennonite Church USA website. <http://mennoniteusa.org/pastor-openings/>. This list is free to your congregation and is a list that is regularly checked by potential candidates.

Selecting the search committee

The search committee should be persons highly trusted in the congregation and who are committed to its future. They should be respectful of others and good at trusting and working with others.

Serving on a pastoral search committee is a unique and special responsibility, for many a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Training and support will be important.

The search committee should represent the broadest diversity of the congregation. It is important to include different age groups, both genders, new and long-term members, various interests or points of view.

Generally it is not wise to appoint a standing committee or board as the search committee. However, a small pastor-congregational relations committee might form the nucleus with other representative persons added for the search process.

The search committee is responsible to the body which appointed it, most often that being the governing body. The search committee should report to them and bring them the committee's recommendation regarding the candidate. Together they will make a recommendation to the congregation and set up visit by the candidate.

The search committee should be provided with sufficient finances to carry out their responsibilities, including travel costs of candidates or of the committee to interview and moving costs of the new pastor.

The search committee should have a clear understanding of their assignment. They should be provided with the pastor job description and the completed Congregational Information Form.

A chairperson and a recorder should be designated or selected.