

Pastoral Search Handbook

REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

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The *Pastoral Search Handbook* was created through the cooperation of the Reformed Church in America (RCA) regional synods and the RCA's Office for Ministry Services as a general resource for church supervisors, consistories, and search committees.

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Introduction

Near the end of the monthly consistory meeting, Pastor Dan Johnson, the minister of Faith Reformed Church, makes an announcement.

As you know, I have been considering a call to be pastor of the Reformed Church in Overtown. My family and I have given this matter careful consideration, and it is our belief the Lord is leading us to accept that call. It was a difficult decision, but I believe it's the right one at this time.

The Rev. Johnson goes on to describe his new opportunity in ministry, to reflect over the past seven years at Faith Reformed, and to advise the consistory that he is inviting the classis to send a person to moderate a meeting at which a request for dissolution of the pastoral relationship will be considered.

That consistory conversation signals both an **end** and a **beginning**. It **signals the end of a pastoral relationship**. Both the congregation and the pastor may experience a great range of feelings and reactions, including sorrow, joy, anger, frustration, loneliness, and shock. The time of termination can be a traumatic experience in the life of a congregation.

The announcement also **signals a beginning**. It signals the beginning of a period when a congregation will be without installed pastoral leadership. It signals the beginning of the process of looking for a new pastor to meet the needs of the church in the next time period in its life. It signals a time when the church will have the opportunity to evaluate its direction and its program. It signals the beginning of a time when a church can create appropriate directions as it seeks to minister to its community and people.

Every pastor, church member, denominational staff person, and researcher agrees that this period when a church is without a pastor is a crucial time in the life of a congregation. Decisions are made that move the church to find the person to be chosen for their ministry. It is very important to find the right person. Since each church has unique needs and since each pastor has special gifts for ministry, it is essential that the church and candidates be involved in a process of prayerful and intentional discernment.

One of the difficulties is that often neither churches nor supervisors have much experience in a pastoral search process. Normally, fewer than one-third of

the people on a search committee have ever looked for a pastor before. This presents a tremendous opportunity to teach search committees as well as classis-appointed supervisors, who do not function in that capacity very often, a discernment process that will be helpful and effective in their search.

At the heart of this discernment process is a deep and abiding dependence on God's call. Pastors and congregations are ultimately not involved in "selling" themselves in an ecclesiastical market, but rather in discovering what God intends for them. The call to a particular congregation is much like an invitation to unite a pastor and congregation as companions in ministry. They commit to work together in faith and work together with grace. As one would expect, discerning God's call is often not an easy assignment.

The *Pastoral Search Handbook* identifies effective ways to search for a pastor and provides a helpful resource for church supervisors, consistories, and search committees.

The *Pastoral Search Handbook* is organized according to eight steps identified by the Alban Institute in *Journey in Search of a Pastor*:

- Termination
- Early Decisions
- Direction-Finding
- Self-Study
- Search
- Decision-Making
- Installation
- Pastoral Start-Up

The *Pastoral Search Handbook* is intended for general use. Classis and/or regional synod requirements must be met throughout the search process. The supervisor has the responsibility of informing the consistory and the search committee of those requirements during the process.

The quotes at the head of each section of this handbook are taken from Journey in Search of a Pastor, a publication of the Alban Institute.

1. TERMINATION

Our minister is leaving. We need to understand and deal with our emotions about the end of that relationship so that we are ready to build a new life with a new pastor.

Conclusion of Minister's Relationship with a Church

The Reformed Church in America has carefully outlined the steps necessary in terminating a pastoral relationship. The *Book of Church Order (BCO)* states:

When the termination of a minister's relationship to a church is in view, a minister of the classis having jurisdiction shall be invited by the church to be present at a meeting of the consistory for the purpose of superintending the application for such action. The supervising minister shall attest such application and shall deliver it to the classis with a written report (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part II).

Some classes designate a specific person to superintend all applications for termination. Consistories should check with the classis stated clerk for any classis requirements. The invitation to a minister of classis to be present at a consistory meeting comes from the church, which means there has been some consultation between the consistory and minister prior to the invitation.

Normally, this is a smooth process. Consistories usually concur with their pastor's decision. The classis representative at this meeting makes certain there is agreement about all matters of salary, payment of benefits, vacation, and termination date. The supervising minister submits a written report to the classis. Termination must be approved by a two-thirds vote. Many classes have empowered their executive committees to act in this matter of termi-

nation of pastoral relationship because termination does not usually take place near the date of a meeting of classis.

When a classis approves termination of a pastoral relationship, it also sets the effective date of termination and approves all agreements relating to salary, benefits, and vacation.



Occasionally the termination of a pastor's relationship with a church is not amicable. The *BCO* carefully outlines responsibilities of the superintending minister in the event the consistory and minister do not agree on the application for termination.

The classis should be committed to the task of helping a church conclude a pastoral relationship and be willing to invest energy and time in the process. The result will be a stronger church, a stronger classis, and hence a stronger denomination.

Classis Supervisor's Role with the Search Committee

The classis shall appoint one of its ministers as supervisor of all proceedings of the consistory of a church without a minister or senior minister. The supervisor shall attend all formal meetings of the consistory, due notice having been given (*BCO*, Part II, Art. 7, Sec. 3).

The classis has the sole authority to appoint the supervisor of an open congregation. While the classis can take into consideration requests by a con-

gregation for a specific supervisor, the classis must appoint a minister who, from the classis point of view, has the gifts and abilities to be the supervisor of a church. A church doesn't need someone they "like"; they need someone who has the gifts to help them through this crucial period.

The appointment of the supervisor should take place immediately upon the approval of the application for termination. It is important that the supervisor participate in consistory meetings immediately and, if possible, before the departing pastor has left.

While the *Book of Church Order* specifies that a supervisor shall attend all meetings of a consistory, it does not specify other meetings of the church where the supervisor's participation is also essential. **Because the search process is so important in the life of the congregation, it is important for the**

supervisor to be present at search committee meetings.

The supervisor is usually a pastor with full-time responsibilities with another congregation. The consistory of that church should be informed of the additional services their pastor is rendering and asked to consent to this temporary arrangement. The supervisor will incur expenses in performing these extra services.

Reimbursement should be made either by the classis or the church receiving the benefit of this arrangement.

The supervisor should make arrangements to meet as soon as possible with the consistory and its departing pastor. Important decisions need to be made very quickly. The sooner an initial meeting occurs, the more likely it becomes that the consistory, supervisor, and departing pastor will have time to discuss issues thoroughly and make informed decisions.



2. EARLY DECISIONS

Appointment of a Search Committee

The responsibility for providing pastoral leadership for a congregation belongs to the consistory.

The consistory shall provide a minister, or ministers, for the church. It has the authority to call persons to the ministry of the church if the charter of the church has not made other provisions (*BCO*, Part I, Art. 2, Sec. 2).

Normally the consistory delegates the responsibility for the search process to a pastoral search committee. This committee should be representative of the congregation: people who represent various groups and points of view concerning the church's ministry should be included.

The question "How many people do we need on the search committee?" emerges quickly. A rule of thumb regarding size is "large enough to be representative and small enough to be effective." Too few people on the search committee means it will not be representative. Too many people means it will not be able to function effectively. A search committee of ten to fifteen people is usually sufficient, depending on the size of the congregation. It is normally not helpful to have immediate family members (e.g., husband and wife, parents and children) appointed to the search committee, since this tends to limit the representative nature of the search committee.

The search committee will need a chairperson. This choice is very important. This person can either be appointed by the consistory or selected by the search committee. In any event, he or she must be

someone with the gifts and skills to chair the committee.

This person must be able to plan the agenda, run meetings, state consensus, encourage committee members, and follow up quickly on group decisions. The chairperson also needs to be impartial and respected by other committee members.

This search committee will also need someone to serve as secretary to the group. Again, the committee or consistory needs to identify the gifts and skills needed before they select someone.

The supervisor and consistory should formally communicate with each appointee to the search committee. Appendix 1 shows a sample letter.

Pastoral Leadership in the Interim



When a minister leaves, the consistory is responsible for meeting the pastoral needs of the congregation. Some consistories themselves take on responsibility for the pastoral needs of church members, such as calling, hospital, and nursing home visits. These church-

es usually employ supply pastors to conduct the weekly worship services.

Other churches contract with a minister to provide more extensive pastoral leadership during the search for a new pastor. These ministers are sometimes called interim pastors. They perform pastoral responsibilities as contracted with the consistory. In some instances this means leading worship and making hospital visits. In other instances the interim pastor assumes full responsibility for the pastoral duties of the church.

Before interviewing potential interim ministers, the consistory should outline responsibilities for the interim and agree to a remuneration range and hiring procedures. The contract should be for a specific period of time. Appendix 2 shows a sample contract. **Under no circumstances should the interim pastor become a pastoral candidate for the church.**

Interim pastors are helpful in any open church. Having the same pastor each Sunday gives the congregation a strong sense of continuity. No one has to wonder, “Who’s going to be there this week?” In instances where a long, successful pastorate is concluding, the interim can provide space between the departing pastor and the new pastor. In instances where there is conflict, an interim can help a congregation move through the conflict toward the future.

The RCA’s Office for Ministry Services has developed a group of professionally trained interim pastors; one or more may be available at any given time, depending on the current demand for interim pastors.

Termination Interview

A few representatives of the pastoral search committee and the consistory should arrange for a termination interview before the departing pastor leaves. A departing pastor’s insights include important information the search committee needs to begin the search process. This information should be shared with the entire search committee in written form. Committee members should keep in mind that while it is important information, it should not become the sole determinant of the church’s future ministry.

The Office for Ministry Services has developed suggested questions for a termination interview. They are included here as Appendix 3. Obviously, if the pastor has already left, a termination interview is

not possible. Detachment must be respected.

Saying Farewell

The consistory will want to find appropriate ways for the congregation as a whole to say farewell to its departing pastor. Many individuals will express their feelings to the pastor on their own. The congregation will want to say farewell in some formal way. A reception is certainly an appropriate way to permit the church to express its thanks and say farewell.

Dealing with Grief

The search committee, with help from the supervisor, will need to deal with their feelings about their pastor’s departure. Dealing with grief is often overlooked, yet it is essential if a church is to move into the search process with a healthy mindset.

Supervisors and regional synod staff carry much of the responsibility for helping churches through the grief process. One method for dealing with grief is to give all church members an opportunity to gather in small groups to identify specific instances when the former pastor was helpful. People can be invited to tell their favorite stories about the former pastor.

People will experience a variety of feelings. The search committee must find ways to permit its members to talk about those feelings in nonjudgmental ways. Pastors arouse strong feelings in most people. Some will be angry with the former pastor for leaving; some will be happy; some won’t care; some will grieve. All feelings need to be honored and expressed.

In dealing with the feelings and emotions people have about the pastor’s departure, the important thing is to respect each person’s feelings, whether you agree with them or not.

3. DIRECTION-FINDING

Where do we go now? We can find the way with help from our denominational office through resource people and guidelines for how to go about the task. We must take time to become a team and get clear about our task.

Understanding the Search Process

Very early in the process, both the pastoral search committee and the consistory need to meet to review how the search for a new pastor will take place. The church's supervisor and classis and regional synod staff can be most helpful in providing the necessary information.

This joint meeting should be scheduled as early as feasible. People will have many questions about process, and good information needs to be shared in helpful and informative ways.

Who's Responsible for What?

Plan ahead: the consistory and search committee need to be very clear about the authority each has. Some questions need to be answered:

- How long does a search process normally take?
- Does the consistory approve the church profile prepared by the search committee?
- How much authority is the consistory giving the search committee?
- What salary range is the church able to provide?
- Does the search committee have authority to negotiate salary, benefits, etc.?
- How and when will the search committee report to the consistory?
- Does the consistory expect the search committee to present a slate of candidates or one candidate?
- What kind of budget does the search committee have to cover committee expenses and expenses in interviewing candidates?

These and other questions must be answered so that responsibilities are clear. Questions of responsibility not answered at the beginning of the process will come back to haunt the search committee and consistory. An orderly, careful process in the very beginning will give all church members confidence, and an important task will be accomplished in the most orderly manner possible.

The search committee needs a budget to cover the costs for candidates' travel and overnight accommodations and for the preparation of church information packets, etc. A thousand dollars may seem like a lot, but airline tickets can take most of it. Think of the money as an investment in the future ministry of the church.

Decisions

Many decisions during the search process require a vote. It needs to be clear at the beginning how those decisions will be made and what kind of vote is required. Some areas where agreements need to be reached include:

- How many search committee members need to be present at a meeting for a quorum?
- How many search committee members need to vote favorably to approve the church profile?
- How many consistory members need to vote favorably on the church profile?
- Does the consistory approve the church profile before sending it to the Office for Ministry Services?
- When examining a minister's profile, how many search committee members need to say yes in order that the search committee grant an interview?
- After an interview, how many search committee members need to say yes in order to hear the candidate preach at a neutral location?
- How many search committee members need to say yes in order to recommend one candidate to consistory?
- How many consistory members need to vote yes in order to invite a candidate to preach at the church?
- How and when will "the will of the congregation" be determined?
- How will the consistory make a final decision to prepare the call?

Each question should be discussed in detail so that

agreement can be reached. Agreements vary from one congregation to another. Appendix 4 shares the decisions one church's search committee and consistency made about some of the above issues.

Sharing Information

While it is advisable for the search committee's minutes to be kept confidential, everyone in the



PHOTO BY SKJOLD

congregation will be interested in and concerned about the progress of the search for a new minister. The pastoral search committee must find effective ways of communicating this information to the congregation. If information is not shared or if the process takes longer than people expect, they will wonder what's wrong.

Here are some ways the committee can keep everyone informed:

- Share the eight steps of a pastoral search with the congregation through bulletin announcements and newsletters.
- Report search committee activities at consistency meetings.

- Make announcements about search committee progress during worship.
- Place information, progress reports, and announcements in the church newsletter.
- Post current information about the search on bulletin boards and the church website.
- Hold informal meetings, perhaps during fellowship hour on Sunday mornings, to update church members and respond to questions.

Everyone in the church will be interested in what's happening. Keep them informed! The new pastor will be their pastor too!

Search Committee Meetings

Regular search committee meetings should be scheduled for a period of one year. Most pastoral search processes take at least

a year. Some are accomplished sooner. Others take much longer.

If meeting dates are set, time for this important process is protected in the busy schedules of the search committee members and the supervisor.

Special meetings will occur throughout the search process. Potential candidates may not be able to be present at the regularly scheduled committee meetings. Search committee members and the supervisor will need to keep their schedules somewhat flexible in order to accommodate interviews and to hear candidates preach at neutral locations.

4. SELF-STUDY

Who are we and where are we going? What is our congregation's special calling? How will we learn about the hopes and dreams of our church members? The answers to these questions will be gathered in a parish profile that will help us decide what kind of ordained leadership we need for the next stage in our journey.

The self-study part of the pastoral search process takes time, but self-study is one of the most important steps in searching for a new pastor. The search committee will need to complete a self-study to discover the full nature of the church's current ministry and to begin planning for future ministry. Members of the church who are not a part of the search committee will be impatient. The search committee must keep the congregation informed about progress. During self-study, no pastor is being considered as a candidate for the church. Appendices 5 and 6 are models of self-studies.

Self-study provides a good opportunity for a congregation to take a look at itself, to learn what it has become, what its gifts are, who its people are and what their gifts are, what the community is like and what changes are expected, and, most importantly, what the church will be doing next in ministry.

When the self-study is completed, the church and search committee will be able to draw some conclusions about the type of pastoral leadership the church needs. Ministers have different skills. A good self-study will help a search committee understand the specific gifts and talents it needs in the church's next pastor.

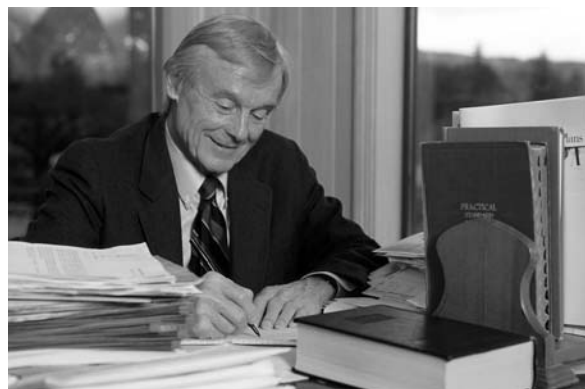
There are a variety of approaches to self-study. Church supervisors, synod executives, classis committees, and denominational staff are prepared to assist. The method of self-study should be designed by the search committee and the supervisor. The time of self-study provides an opportunity to involve many people in the process—not just the search committee. Various groups (teachers, consistory, women's groups, etc.) should be interviewed for their input. Congregational dinners provide an excellent setting for a well-planned program to get input from members. The search committee also could conduct a survey of the entire congregation with a carefully prepared questionnaire.

When the search committee has completed the self-study, it will be helpful for their process and for the

congregation if the search committee writes a summary that describes what the self-study has revealed and includes some goal statements for the congregation. It will also be helpful to share this document with potential candidates for the church. They will want to know the results of the self-study and the goals the church has for the future.

Church Profile Form

When the self-study and summary statement are completed, the search committee must then fill out the Church Profile Form (see Appendix 7). The information gathered during the self-study will be valuable in completing the church profile. A copy should be made for search committee records, and the original should be sent by email to eratmeyer@rca.org or by regular mail to the Office for Ministry Services, Reformed Church in America, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115. The Church Profile Form should have the approval of the consistory prior to being sent to the Office for Ministry Services. The regional synod should also receive a copy of the profile.



The Office for Ministry Services uses the Church Profile Form to match potential candidates with churches. A number of pastor profiles are sent to a search committee for consideration. Sometimes the search committee already has received suggestions for potential candidates from several sources. The committee may request these candidates' profiles from the Office for Ministry Services.

5. SEARCH

There are many ways to find out about possible candidates—from members of the congregation, from our local or national denominational office, from pastors of nearby congregations. We need to learn how to manage our records, narrow down our list, and interview candidates.

While they are waiting for ministers' profiles to arrive from the Office for Ministry Services, search committee members have important work to do.

Information Packet

The search committee needs to develop an information packet to share with ministers it is interested in interviewing. A variety of information about the church and community can be included in this packet.

- Church bulletin
- Completed Church Profile Form
- Summary statement from the self-study
- History of the church
- Set of church bylaws
- Information about local school systems
- Community information (shopping, entertainment, etc.)
- Photos of the church, church activities, and community
- Special edition of the church newsletter

Compile several packets, as they will probably not be returned.

Letter of Introduction

The search committee must also prepare a letter of introduction to send to ministers the committee wishes to interview. The letter should introduce the congregation to the minister, indicate that the committee would like to consider that pastor, among others, as a potential candidate for the ministry, and suggest a date by which the search committee would prefer to have a response to the letter of introduction. Indicate that if a response is not forthcoming by the date suggested, the chairperson will contact the candidate by telephone. Appendix 8 shows a sample letter.

Reviewing Profiles of Ministers

Before the ministers' profiles arrive, the search committee will need to determine how they will review them. One profile for each minister is sent to the church or supervisor. It is most helpful if each search committee member has a copy of each minister's profile. Search committee members should ask themselves, "Do the skills and interests of this minister seem to match the profile we prepared for our congregation?" Committee members should openly discuss each profile the committee receives. At the end of the discussion, a decision must be made: Do we send a letter of introduction to this pastor or not?

Since the questions on the church profile and the minister's profile are not identical, the committee should exercise care as it reaches conclusions. At this early stage in the search process, it is not helpful to compare pastors with each other. A search committee is looking for people who generally meet the needs of the church as identified in the Church Profile Form. They are not looking for the best pastor among a group of pastors.

Profiles are confidential and must not be distributed. If copies have been made, they should be collected and destroyed at the end of the search process.

Additional profiles can be requested from the Office for Ministry Services. This will keep a flow of potential candidates "in the pipeline." As new profiles are received, the search committee reviews them.

It's important to keep new profiles coming. Many search committees fail to do this when they become invested in a candidate or two who ultimately are not the right match for the church. If a committee continues to request new profiles, members can continue the search process uninterrupted, saving valuable time.

The search committee sends ministers it wishes to consider the letter of introduction together with the information packet. Give a specific date for response so that the process may proceed in an orderly way. The committee should explore references given by a candidate. Synod staff can also be reference sources. A guide to checking references by telephone has been prepared by the Office for Ministry Services (see Appendix 9).

Interviewing Candidates

When a minister responds favorably to the church's letter of introduction, the search committee makes arrangements with the candidate for an interview at the church or another mutually agreed upon location. This interview will involve only members of the search committee and the candidate. **The candidate should not preach at a worship service.** It's too early in the process. It will not be helpful to have the candidate preach.

Traditionally one of the first steps in a pastoral search was to observe a minister leading worship. Experience has shown that this is not the most helpful first step. There are several reasons. First, when several pastors preach at the church, the members of the congregation begin to choose sides for "their candidate." Not everyone likes the same minister. Conflict results.

Second, the search committee needs to find the pastor who has the gifts and skills to lead the church in the next time period. The interview permits the committee to explore all areas of a candidate's gifts, and the candidate's gifts can be compared with the needs highlighted by the church's self-study and profile. If the search committee hears a minister preach first, their decision to continue consideration will be based on preaching and worship ability alone when the church profile may indicate that administration, education, counseling, and other areas are also very important in the life of the church. It is unfortunate when a person is disqualified whose gifts excel in regard to many of the church's needs, but who is a bit less gifted in leading worship than the church would like.

Third, the search committee must have adequate time to reflect on a candidate's ability. Hearing someone lead worship tends to push the process along too quickly.



The interview needs to be carefully arranged. Some members of the search committee should meet the candidate upon arrival at the church. The candidate should arrive early to tour all church facilities (including the parsonage) and the community. If the candidate arrives in the afternoon and the interview with the whole search committee is in the evening, have members of the search committee entertain the candidate at dinner. If members of the candidate's family have accompanied the candidate, the committee will want to find appropriate ways to host these guests.

The entire search committee should be present for the interview. Throughout the interview, search committee members must keep in mind that they are comparing the candidate with the requirements for ministerial leadership identified in the church profile. Guidelines for conducting an interview with a prospective minister have been prepared by the Office for Ministry Services (Appendix 10). The search committee may want to prepare itself in advance for an interview by participating in a role-play with the church supervisor.

At the conclusion of the interview, an agreement should be reached between the candidate and the search committee (an interview checklist is included as Appendix 11). The committee will want to know if the candidate is interested in pursuing the possibility of becoming the pastor of the church. The candidate will want to know if the church is interested in further conversations. The search committee and the candidate should agree on a date by which each party will be informed of a decision.

A phone call from the search committee chairperson to the candidate is the most effective way to share these decisions. Decisions should not be reached at the end of the interview. The candidate needs time to reflect on the interview; the search committee needs time to discuss whether it wants to proceed.

If the search committee does not wish to consider a particular candidate further, it will be helpful to that candidate if the committee chairperson is able to communicate the reasons for the church's decision.

Caution: Judging a minister only on an interview can be as inappropriate as judging only on worship leadership. Before the committee makes a decision at this stage, it may be helpful to observe the candidate leading worship.

Hearing a Candidate Preach

Ability to lead worship and proclaim the Word is important. If both the search committee and the candidate want to continue talking, it is then appropriate to arrange to hear the candidate preach and lead worship. This can be accomplished in several ways.

The search committee can arrange to bring the candidate to lead worship at a neutral location. When a candidate lives a long way from the church, this is probably the most efficient way to accomplish this portion of the search. The supervisor can arrange for another Reformed church in the area to be used as a neutral location. Search committee members alone should hear the candidate at the neutral location. It's still too early for other church members to hear the candidate lead worship. If additional interview time is desired, arrangements can be made for this to take place after worship.

The search committee can also visit the candidate's current church. This should be arranged with the candidate. A suitable date should be selected. When visiting, the search committee should not attempt to interview the pastor at the church. If the search committee wishes to have interview time with the pastor, this should be arranged prior to the visit and at a location chosen by the pastor.

If the potential candidate lives a great distance from the search committee's church, a tape recording or video of a worship service led by the person under

consideration may be helpful. This is only an intermediate step and can be used to confirm a decision to hear the minister at a neutral location.

Following the worship experience, the search committee should take time to evaluate the candidate's skills. (See Appendix 12.)

Agreement again needs to be reached between the search committee and the candidate so that each will know when the other will be advised of continuing interest and when decisions will be reached. Any candidate who is no longer being considered should be notified immediately.

Considering Seminary Students

Seminary students normally do not have profiles on file with the Office for Ministry Services. If a church wishes to consider seminarians for its ministerial position, contact should be made with New Brunswick Theological Seminary, 17 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, NJ 08901, (908) 247-5241; Western Theological Seminary, 101 East 13th Street, Holland, MI 49423, (616) 392-8555; and/or the Ministerial Formation Coordinating Agency, (800) 435-5136. When calling or writing seminaries,



churches should ask that their messages be forwarded to the person responsible for placement.

Procedures for Calling a Seminarian

The following steps have been adopted as approved procedure for negotiating a provisional call with a seminary student.

The consistory follows the same procedure in negotiating with a seminary student as with any prospective minister, with the following exceptions:

1. No provisional call shall be extended before February 1 of the senior year; no agreement, either verbal or written, shall be considered binding on either the student or the church prior to the issuance of a provisional call.
2. A provisional call, when authorized by the consistory and approved by the ministerial relations committee, shall be presented in writing to the student. In addition to the usual requirements, it shall state that when the student has completed seminary work and satisfactorily passed the licensure examination, the consistory will present to classis for approval an official call. The letter may also request the student to reply in writing giving a response to the provisional call.
3. Such a provisional call, when duly given and accepted, shall be considered binding

upon consistory and student. However, it shall be borne in mind by other parties that ultimate fulfillment of the provisional call will depend upon the classis, whose prerogative it is to conduct the examinations for licensure and ordination, and also upon the classis approving the call.

4. All negotiations between the consistory and the student shall be with the knowledge of the ministerial relations committee of the classis and the classical supervisor.

5. A student may preach in a vacant pulpit on assignment by the seminary as a supply preacher.

6. The consistory may request the return, for a second visit, of a student whom they wish to consider as a prospective minister.

7. The pulpit committee of a church is at liberty to confer with the seminary concerning students under consideration for a provisional call.

8. The consistory shall not seek an agreement from the student to assume partial responsibility for service in the church prior to the approval of the official call by the classis. However, a limited number of preaching engagements may be arranged for the student through the seminary professor in charge of preaching assignments.

6. DECISION-MAKING

How do we decide which candidate best meets the need of our congregation? What do we do if we have trouble agreeing?

Once the search committee has interviewed candidates and heard them preach, it moves into the decision-making step of the search process. The search committee will decide on one candidate to recommend to the consistory.

No one seems able to describe exactly how the decision process takes place. The Alban Institute has called it “a little bit like falling in love.” The search committee will need to give careful consideration to all candidates who seem to meet the church’s requirements. The purpose of careful consideration is to determine which candidate best meets the requirements of the church. Sometimes it’s not easy to tell if the search committee is ready to make a decision. Any search committee member can assist in the process by simply asking, “Can we make a decision or do we need more information?” If no one asks a question like this, the process could continue unnecessarily.

If the search committee has more than one candidate it believes can provide effective ministerial leadership, it must compare candidates with each other to determine which one to recommend.

Recommending a Candidate to the Consistory

When the search committee has reached a decision, it should recommend that candidate to the consistory.

A presentation should be made to the consistory. The presentation should defend the choice of the search committee and build the case for the candidate with the consistory. The search committee will describe how the recommended candidate meets the needs of the church.

If the consistory concurs with the choice of the search committee, the consistory invites the minister to the church to lead worship. The candidate is then presented to the congregation as its choice for the church’s pastorate.

Candidate’s Visit

Careful preparation must be made for the Sunday on which the candidate will lead worship. The search committee and consistory will need to pay careful attention to travel, housing, and scheduling for the entire time of the candidate’s visit.

Committee members will need to provide information to include in the church bulletin. In addition, the candidate will need information concerning how the church’s liturgy is conducted. The candidate also will need to know if a robe or suit is normally worn to lead worship.

The search committee and consistory should make arrangements for a reception following the worship service so that all members of the church have an opportunity to meet the candidate and vice versa. Since the candidate is being presented as the recom-



mended choice of the search committee and the consistory, it is appropriate to advocate for the candidate with the congregation. One way of doing this is to schedule a number of smaller receptions throughout the afternoon of the candidate’s visit. One reception might be with the choir, another with church school teachers, another with senior adults.

At each of these gatherings, following a brief getting-acquainted time, the search committee chairperson

or consistory vice president should give the candidate an opportunity to address the group. The candidate's remarks could be introduced this way: "The search committee is especially pleased with Pastor Jones's perception of how the church can minister with senior adults. We thought we would ask Pastor Jones to say a few words so you too can understand his point of view."

In this way, more people will have an opportunity to get to know the candidate and understand why the search committee is recommending this person.

Seeking the Will of the Congregation

The *Book of Church Order* states:

The consistory shall endeavor to learn the mind of the congregation with respect to any person who may be called to the ministry of the church. The judgment of the congregation in such matters shall be considered to be of considerable weight, but not binding (*BCO*, Chapter 1, Part I, Art. 2, Sec. 2).

The mind of the congregation is normally sought at a congregational meeting either on the evening of the candidate's visit or shortly thereafter. It should not be done while the candidate is "touring the parsonage." Early in the direction-finding process, the consistory will have determined how to seek the mind of the congregation. Normally a vote is taken. A simple majority is not a mandate. It can indicate too much division. At least a two-thirds yes vote of those at a congregational meeting should be required. Some churches may require a higher favorable percentage.

The congregation's vote is advisory to consistory. Even after a favorable response from the congregation, the consistory may determine not to issue a call.

Negotiation

Clear, open discussion will help us arrive at a contract that will be helpful in planning and evaluating our work together.

Final negotiations of the call process are the responsibility of the consistory. While details such as bene-

fits, salary, and work responsibilities will have been discussed prior to these final negotiations, it is the responsibility of the consistory to prepare the details of the call.

The Call

The call is prepared by the consistory with assistance from the supervisor. Call forms are available through classis clerks and can be found in appendices of the *Book of Church Order*. The call should include some details of position responsibilities when these are not included in the standard form of the call. The call should also identify salary and benefits for the minister. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to inform the consistory of classis salary guidelines. The consistory will want to give careful consideration to all matters of employee remuneration and benefits. The call must be signed by the members of the consistory.

The call is presented to the classis by the church supervisor.

If the call is approved by classis and accepted by the person called, the latter's name shall be published in the church on three successive Sundays so that opportunity may be afforded for raising lawful objections. If no such objections are raised, the classis or its committee shall install the minister according to the office for installation in the Liturgy (*BCO*, Part I, Art. 2, Sec. 2).

No arrangements to move a minister or seminary student shall be made by either party, the church, or the candidate until the call has been approved by the classis and received by the minister or student.

Starting Date

The final negotiations should clarify when the minister will be available to start work. Adequate time should be permitted to terminate the current relationship and to relocate.

If the church owns a parsonage, it is important to bring the minister's family to the church in order to reach an agreement regarding housing improvements.

7. INSTALLATION

We will celebrate the beginning of an important relationship.

The installation service is the time for pulling out all the stops. It is the beginning of a new chapter in the life of a congregation and a pastor. It's a time for celebration! Every effort should be made to create a meaningful and celebrative installation service.

The Classis

The date and time for the installation service must be negotiated between the church and the classis. A date should be selected that will permit maximum attendance of church members and classis delegates. This worship service is conducted by the classis. It is the classis that establishes the pastoral relationship.

Some classes have developed guidelines for planning the worship service. It is not unusual for a committee composed of the new minister, classis representatives, and church members to meet in advance to plan the service.

Reception

The installation celebration includes a reception. Members of the church and classis are invited to participate in this informal time of welcome. The reception provides an informal and appropriate conclusion to installation.

Supervisor Dismissal

When the pastor is installed, the classis supervisor is relieved of responsibilities. This has been an important relationship in the life of the congregation. The supervisor has been with the consistory, the search committee, and the congregation through the entire search process. The church should find an appropriate way to express its appreciation to the supervisor for help given during the search process.



PHOTO BY SKJOLD

8. PASTORAL START-UP

This is just the beginning of a deepening relationship. We need to work at living and ministering together so that we can journey into the calling of God for our congregation.

The church has a new minister. The installation service is complete. The supervisor is gone. It seems like the process is completed.

But in reality the pastor and the congregation are just beginning a new phase of the process: the pastoral start-up. The importance of the pastoral start-up phase is often overlooked by both church and pastor.

Pastoral Family Grief

Moving to a new location and beginning a new job is a traumatic experience for any pastor's family. A congregation has been left behind. Friends are now a long distance away. Schools and shopping centers are unfamiliar. New friendships are budding. New church relationships are forming.

The church's members need to be particularly alert to the feelings of the pastor's family during this start-up time. Understanding, care, and love from members of the congregation are most helpful in making this transition.

Pastoral Start-Up

When the installation is over, the real work begins. The pastor starts to minister with the congregation. The congregation waits to see what's going to happen with this pastor.

Before long a few irritants arise. The pastor isn't doing certain things the way peo-

ple expected; the people of the congregation aren't doing some of the tasks the pastor thought they were going to do.

Some adjustment of expectations is bound to take place in any relationship. But when irritants arise between a pastor and a church, it's important to handle them as soon as possible. One way to do this is to participate in a pastoral start-up workshop. These workshops can provide an opportunity to state clearly and agree to goals for the congregation and the expectations the pastor and parishioners have of each other. Work responsibilities for all parties should be carefully listed, and evaluation built in.



PHOTO BY SKJOLD

Appendix 1

SAMPLE LETTER TO SEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBER

[Church name and address]

Mr. Howard Jackson
65 First Street
Rochester, NY 14605

[Date]

Dear Howard,

We are pleased that you have accepted the responsibility of serving on the pastoral search committee of Second Reformed Church. As a member of the committee, you will have a unique opportunity to identify goals for our congregation and to help select a pastor to lead us in the next few years.

The first meeting of the pastoral search committee will be held at 7:30 p.m. on October 13 in the fellowship hall. Our task for the evening will be to become familiar with the process of seeking a new pastor. Our supervisor, the Rev. John Anderson, will present a detailed overview of this process.

This will be a joint meeting with the consistory. A complete list of committee members is enclosed for your information.

Warm regards,

John Morris
Vice President of Consistory

Donna Matthews
Search Committee Chairperson

Appendix 2

SAMPLE CONTRACT FOR SPECIALIZED INTERIM MINISTRY (details may vary by classis or synod)

(Name of Congregation)

THE SYNOD OF MID-AMERICA, REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

and

(Interim Pastor)

We believe that congregations can be creative and vital during the period between permanent pastors.

We covenant to work together to assist persons and the corporate membership to discover and fulfill tasks of mission and ministry in their lives, their community, and the world.

We believe that congregations have specific and varied needs during the period between permanent pastors.

We covenant to work together to discover those needs, to enable individuals to recognize and resolve their feelings, to learn how to cope with differences and conflicts, and to satisfactorily resolve any unfinished agenda that may block effective corporate and mutual ministries and mission.

We believe that congregations and individuals are dependent upon God's grace for reconciliation and renewal of spirit.

We covenant together to be intentionally open to the Holy Spirit in the processes of interdependent searching for direction and clarity of purpose as a congregation seeking renewal in an intentional interim ministry.

COVENANT PRINCIPLES OF MUTUALITY

The Specialized Interim Pastor

- Will not be considered a candidate for the position to be filled.
- Will normally serve as interim pastor until the congregation has a permanent pastor.
- Will provide normal pastoral and administrative leadership during the interim period.
- Will provide special leadership for helping the congregation deal with grief and conflict matters and projection of congregational goals.

The Consistory

- Will give direction during the interim period and support for the interim pastor.
- Will be expected to work together to resolve unfinished agendas and to establish goals for ministries and mission.

- Will not pursue the search process until it has determined, in consultation with the interim pastor and the supervisor, if the congregation is ready by virtue of having completed essential tasks.

The Classis/Synod

- Will provide a supervisor to work with the consistory and the specialized interim pastor during the interim period.
- Will provide a variety of consultative services to be used as requested by the consistory or the interim pastor.
- Will provide appropriate resources for use by the congregation and the interim pastor.
- Will provide continuing consultative help to the congregation when the search process is begun.

Period of Service

- Will be from _____, 20____, through _____, 20____.
(month/day) (month/day)
- Will include vacation of _____.
- Will be extendable upon mutual agreement.

Remuneration

- Will be \$ _____ annually, \$ _____ per month.
- Plus housing allowance of \$ _____.
- Car allowance of \$ _____.
- Telephone expenses, except for personal calls.
- Entire contribution required of the church for the pastor to RCA Retirement Plan, RCA Major Medical, Dental, Long-Term Disability, and Group Life Insurance premiums.

COVENANT/CONTRACT PARTNERS

 Vice President of Consistory

 Specialized Interim Minister

 Clerk of Consistory

 Supervisor

 Date of Covenant

Appendix 3

SUGGESTED TERMINATION INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions are among those that may be explored in a termination interview with a pastor.

1. As our pastor, what do you see as the most significant strengths of our congregation? What are our weaknesses?
2. In what ways do you believe the church has been particularly effective in mission during the past two years?
3. What do you think would be the best mission strategy for the congregation in the five-year period ahead?
4. What were the three major priorities in time and effort during the past two years of your ministry?
5. To what degree do you believe our congregation supported you in your choice of these priorities?
6. To what degree do you believe the consistory shared your understanding of your task? How did they differ?
7. In what ways did the consistory review your performance? Was there any systematic review? What was helpful? What wasn't?
8. What was the length of a normal work week? In what areas did you spend time? How much?
9. How adequate was the salary you received? Did increases keep pace with cost of living? How did your salary reflect the value placed on your efforts?
10. Did the auto allowance actually meet your costs?
11. If you were to stay for three more years, what changes would you want to see take place?
12. Do you have any recommendations regarding the parsonage or housing arrangements?
13. How were the human needs of your family met within the life of the congregation and community?
14. What conditions, if any, do you feel blocked your sense of personal and professional fulfillment during your ministry here?

Appendix 4

SEARCH COMMITTEE AND CONSISTORY PASTORAL SEARCH GUIDELINES

Guidelines for a search committee of 12 members:

1. Search committee quorum: 8 members
2. Approval of church profile
 - a. Search committee: 9 members
 - b. Consistory: majority of those present
3. Approval for search committee to consider candidate for interview: 6 members
4. After interview, approval for decision to hear candidate preach at other location: 8 members
5. Approval for search committee to recommend one candidate to consistory: 9 members
6. Approval for consistory's decision to concur with search committee: majority of those present
7. To determine the will of the congregation requires the approval of two-thirds of those active members attending a meeting to be held the night of the candidate's visit or as soon as possible after that night.
8. If the will of the congregation is favorable, the consistory will proceed to prepare a call for classis approval.

Appendix 5

A WORKSHEET TO DISCOVER POSSIBLE FUTURES FOR OUR CHURCH

Introduction: The possibilities for relevant planning to occur in our congregation increase if you are willing to share your insights and suggestions. The purpose of this worksheet is to stimulate your thinking and to help you participate in the vital task of clarifying future possibilities for our church. You may write your contributions in the spaces provided on these worksheets.

1. **Surroundings.** Think about the neighborhood around our church building, especially in terms of *population changes* (growth or decline, changes in kinds of people); *infrastructure changes* (new buildings or structures that are deteriorating or being torn down); *institutional changes*, including other churches (in terms of what they are and are not doing and if and how they are changing); and *road or transportation changes*.

a. What important changes have occurred in the neighborhood around our church building in the last five years?

b. What important changes are likely to occur in this neighborhood in the next five years?

2. **People we can reach.** Think in terms of types of people—age groups, how many are single or married, lifestyles, interests, needs, where they live, etc.

a. What kinds of people are easily accessible to us?

1. Close to our building?

2. Close to where our members live?

b. What kinds of people are active in our congregation?

c. What kinds of people under part "a" can our church members relate to most easily?

3. **Program possibilities.**

a. Which programs are most popular in our congregation?

b. Which programs do we have experienced leaders for?

c. Which programs can we most easily find resources for (space in the building, equipment, money, etc.)?

d. What programs can we develop (expand) most easily that will attract new people to our church?

4. **Getting it all together.** Review the information in 1-3 above.

a. What things fit together, are important to see together, or seem to be important trends?

b. What important actions should our congregation take in the next year?

c. What steps do we need to take to get going?

d. What other people, churches, or institutions do we need help from and/or should we work with to take the above important actions?

Appendix 6

SAMPLE SELF-STUDY

Self-Study Outline

I. Gathering Historical Data

- A. What are our “roots”?
- B. Where has all the money gone?
- C. Which programs have taken priority?

II. A Look at Our Community (its makeup and our image)

- A. Community interviews
- B. How do we relate to our community?

III. A Look at Ourselves

- A. Opinions about our congregation
- B. People picture (Who comes to our church?)
- C. Congregational survey

IV. Collate Information for Church Profile

We believe as Reformed Church people that the Bible is the only rule of faith and practice. Therefore, throughout this study, we will be spending a certain amount of time in biblical reflection, trying to discern what the Scriptures have to say to us and how they inform us regarding the task before us. We also encourage each member of the committee to pray daily for guidance in the task at hand, for each other and for the congregation as well, for it is only when we seek God’s will that our endeavors can be successful.

The following Scriptures will be used as a basis for this self-study:

I. 1 Corinthians 12:27
Luke 10:25-37

II. Ephesians 4:11-12
Romans 12:4-12
1 Corinthians 12:4-7

III. John 17:15-18
Matthew 5:13

IV. Proverbs 29:18
Philippians 3:13, 14

Appendix 7

CHURCH PROFILE FORM

Reformed Church in America

The Church Profile Form has three purposes. First, it is often useful as a self-study document that helps a consistory look at the ministry of its congregation and determine the direction and kind of leadership needed for the chapter of ministry immediately before it. Second, the Church Profile Form is helpful to the Office for Ministry Services and synod executives as they match the material with the priorities and gifts of potential candidates. Third, those who have been contacted as to whether or not they are willing to be among those considered as potential candidates often request a copy of the calling church's profile to help them decide whether or not they wish to be considered.

This form should be filled out by the consistory or, if it is delegated to a committee, the answers should be received by the consistory before they are sent to the Office for Ministry Services. Some of the data is available in the annual report each consistory makes to its classis. It is important that answers be factual or the result of a consensus of consistory opinion and not representative of the views of just one or two people.

The profile form can be downloaded from the RCA website at www.rca.org/lead/ministry/churchprofile.php.

Mail or email the completed form to:

Ellen Ratmeyer
Office for Ministry Services
Reformed Church in America
475 Riverside Drive
New York, NY 10115
eratmeyer@rca.org

CHURCH PROFILE FORM
Reformed Church in America

Position to be filled

Today's date

CHURCH INFORMATION

Name of church _____

Mailing address _____

Telephone _____ Email address _____

Classis _____

Classis supervisor _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email address _____

Chair of search committee _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email address _____

Membership	Five years ago	Today
Active Confessing Members	_____	_____
Inactive Confessing Members	_____	_____

Explain significant changes:

Age of all active members (baptized and confessing)	_____ % 0-20	_____ % 50-64
	_____ % 20-34	_____ % 65+
	_____ % 35-49	

Racial/ethnic composition of congregation:

_____ % African American _____ % Caucasian
_____ % Asian _____ % Hispanic
_____ % Other (please specify): _____

WORSHIP/EDUCATION INFORMATION

Worship schedule

Time	Average Attendance Five Years Ago (adults and children)	Average Attendance Today (adults and children)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Comments on significant changes:

Please indicate the title and publisher of the hymnal(s) used in worship:

(Please attach a bulletin of a typical service. If the service is different in the summer, please also enclose a bulletin used during the past summer.)

Describe a typical worship service (order of worship, music, etc.) What is your congregation's preferred style of worship? Does your congregation use more than one style?

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Financial information	Five years ago	Today
Total spent for congregational purposes	\$ _____	\$ _____
Total contributed to benevolences	\$ _____	\$ _____

Percentage of total budget contributed by living donors:

100-90% _____ 75-89% _____ 60-74% _____ 45-59% _____ 44% or less _____

(Please attach a copy of your annual budget.)

Congregational giving

Number of those whose annual contribution is:

\$100 or less _____	\$1,001 - \$1,500 _____	\$2,501 - \$3,000 _____
\$101 - \$500 _____	\$1,501 - \$2,000 _____	\$3,001 and over _____
\$501 - \$1,000 _____	\$2,001 - \$2,500 _____	

Financial assistance—Do you receive financial assistance beyond congregational giving? (rents, etc.)

Yes ____ No ____

If yes, amount received last year: \$ _____

List other fundraising programs that support the church:

MINISTRY INFORMATION

What is the stated mission, vision, or purpose of your congregation? (Use separate sheet if necessary.)

What specific ministry goals have been developed from your mission and vision statement for the next five years? (Use separate sheet if necessary.)

What leadership roles do women currently fill in your church?

What new program or outreach ministry expansion do you hope to provide in the next five years? Include long-range or strategic plan. (Use separate sheet if necessary.)

Church/Sunday school

Five years ago

Today

Average attendance:

Explain significant changes:

Children’s program/organizations (Briefly describe educational curricula being used for each age group.)

Young people’s program/organizations (Describe briefly; include age range for each.)

Adult education program (Describe briefly.)

Adult groups/organizations (Briefly describe ministry purpose of each group; use separate sheet if necessary.)

Name	Frequency of Meeting	Attendance

Describe one event or experience over the last year that has significantly contributed to the spiritual life of the congregation.

BUILDING INFORMATION

Buildings: Please describe church-owned or rented buildings and their purposes.

Are your buildings adequate for your present program? Yes ____ No ____ If no, please explain:

Do you plan any capital expenditure during the next five years? If yes, please explain briefly:

Is there a mortgage indebtedness? Yes ____ No ____ Amount: \$ _____

How longstanding? _____ Annual rate of repayment _____

Pastor's study is: in church ____ in parsonage ____
not provided ____ other ____ (please explain)

STAFF INFORMATION

List all paid staff in addition to the pastor.

_____	Full-time ____	Part-time ____
_____	Full-time ____	Part-time ____
_____	Full-time ____	Part-time ____
_____	Full-time ____	Part-time ____
_____	Full-time ____	Part-time ____

CONSISTORY INFORMATION

Membership: what method is used in selecting members?

List age, gender, and occupation of each current consistory member.

CONGREGATION INFORMATION

In our congregation:

few	many	most	
___	___	___	have had twelve years of formal education
___	___	___	have had some education beyond high school
___	___	___	have a college degree
___	___	___	have a graduate degree

In our congregation (Number in order for each of the three categories; for example, if most people are farmers or business people, but the majority are farmers, put a number one (1) under “most” for farmers and a number two (2) under “most” for business people.):

few	many	most	
___	___	___	are scientists and engineers
___	___	___	are farmers
___	___	___	are business people
___	___	___	are students and teachers
___	___	___	are industrial workers
___	___	___	are office workers
___	___	___	are _____

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF MINISTER

Choose up to six of the following Christian ministry activities that you consider to be most important as you look to the immediate future of your congregation. (Number them in order of importance.)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Church administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Small groups |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral calling | <input type="checkbox"/> Ministry to families |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's work | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff administration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth ministry | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual leadership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adult education | <input type="checkbox"/> One-on-one evangelism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preaching | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership growth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community involvement | <input type="checkbox"/> Conducting worship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral counseling | |

What specific ministry gifts do you need in your next pastor in relation to these activities?

Special training/experience desired (Describe briefly.)

Languages

Should your pastor be fluent in any language other than English? Yes No

If yes, please indicate language and importance:

Language: _____

Helpful Essential Must be primary language

COMPENSATION, BENEFITS, AND MINISTRY EXPENSES

The salary we are prepared to offer our new pastor is \$ _____

The average annual increase to our pastor over the past three years was \$ _____

Is a parsonage provided? Yes No

If so, is it on site with the church? Yes No

If the parsonage is not on site with the church, how far from the church is it located?

Parsonage style:

Split-level	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ranch	<input type="checkbox"/>
Two-story	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (describe)	_____
Number of bedrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	Number of bathrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>

What plans, if any, are in place for the renovation and/or redecorating of the parsonage?

The benefits/business expenses we will provide our pastor (Please check those provided or give amount, as requested.):

- Pension
- Major medical insurance
- Life insurance
- Dental insurance
- Unemployment insurance
- Disability insurance
- Provision for sabbatical
- Other (specify: _____)

_____	Annual vacation (number of weeks)
\$ _____	Housing allowance*
\$ _____	Travel reimbursement
\$ _____	Social Security (amount)
\$ _____	Book allowance (amount)
\$ _____	Continuing education allowance (amount)
\$ _____	Total

*Is a minister's housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage a negotiable option?

Yes ____ No ____

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Community served

- _____ Rural, under 2,500
- _____ Town, 2,500-9,999
- _____ Small city, 10,000-49,999
- _____ Metropolitan – suburban, 50,000+
- _____ Metropolitan – inner city, 50,000+
- _____ Metropolitan – urban, 50,000+

Cooperative ministry: In what ways have you cooperated with other churches in your community during the past year?

What makes your church uniquely attractive to people in your community?

Community involvement: In what community programs or projects have you participated (as an organization, not as individuals) during the past year?

Describe changes currently occurring in the community in which your congregation ministers, and identify ways God is acting among you to meet these new challenges.

Which denominations or religions are present within three miles (in rural areas, within the county) where your church is located?

Outreach: What percentage of the people who live within a mile of your church are unchurched, and what is your strategy to reach unchurched people in your community?

The income level of the people in our congregation tends to be:

- _____ about average for our community
- _____ somewhat below the rest of the community
- _____ somewhat higher than the rest of the community

Describe your community and school system:

OTHER INFORMATION

Record of last three pastors:

Name	Dates of service
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Are there any particular ministers' profiles you wish to have sent? (Up to five profiles will be sent at a time. You may request replacements.)

Please consider the following factors, which we believe require consideration when profiles are sent to us:

Vice President of Consistory

Classis Supervisor

Appendix 8

SAMPLE LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATE

[Church name and address]

[Recipient's name and address]

[Date]

Dear Pastor _____,

The Office for Ministry Services of the Reformed Church in America has sent us your profile as a potential candidate for our church. Upon review of the profile, our search committee would like to consider you, among others, as a potential candidate for the position of pastor at Second Reformed Church.

I have enclosed an informational packet about the church and our community that we hope will be helpful as you consider our request. If you have questions about the information provided, please feel free to contact me.

To keep our process moving forward in a timely manner, please respond to this inquiry by December 1. If I have not heard from you by that date, I will contact you by phone to learn of your response.

Sincerely yours,

Donna Andrews
Search Committee Chairperson

Appendix 9

CANDIDATE REFERENCE CHECKLIST

Checklist for a check of references by telephone.

1. Explain your reason for calling, tell who suggested his/her name as a reference, and ask for help in making a good choice.
2. You may wish to use some or all of the following questions. As you listen to the answers, check the items that apply.

a. How well do you know [the candidate]?

- Knows minister's work well
- Knows something of minister's work
- Knows personally, but not much about work

In what relationship?

- Member of candidate's congregation (present/past)
- Member of candidate's consistory
- Colleague in ministry
- Friend of candidate
- Seminary professor
- National or regional synod staff
- Other: _____

b. In what areas of ministry does the candidate work best?

- Good preacher
- Good pastor
- Effective counselor
- Good organizer, administrator
- Gets people to work together well
- Works well with young people
- Good teacher
- Other: _____

c. How well does [the candidate] work in the other areas of ministry I've mentioned?

- Does everything well
- Not very effective at: _____

d. Name one or two areas that you would like to see [the candidate] develop or improve.

e. What does [the candidate] tend to emphasize in ministry?

f. Describe an ideal congregation or ministry for [the candidate].

g. Is there anything else you think we should know about him/her?

3. Reflect on the conversation after you hang up.

a. How much weight do you give this person's assessment?

___ a lot

___ some

___ not much

b. What was the level of enthusiasm in support of this candidate?

___ high

___ moderate

___ low

c. Did anything in the conversation surprise you, make you wonder, or arouse some reason for caution in you?

___ yes

___ no

If yes, what?

d. Are there any qualities or qualifications your congregation requires in a minister that were mentioned with reservations or not at all? (Note: You may want to double-check these items with other references.)

Appendix 10

CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

Before an interview takes place, committee members should ask themselves what they wish to know once the interview is completed. Although a list of possible questions is given below, different concerns are important with different congregations. If the committee decides something is important, a question should be worked out beforehand that will help the candidate reveal views on that subject. That question may then be added to those provided in the structured interview.

Interviews are often ineffective for one of the following reasons: committee members do too much of the talking; they are too quick to make judgments based on limited data; the way questions are asked “telegraphs” which response will be considered most (or least) favorably; the interview gets bogged down in trivial questions and leaves more important matters unexplored.

To avoid these pitfalls, the committee should commit itself to permitting the candidate to do 85 percent of the talking. Follow-up questions that ask for more information should simply request the candidate to “say a little more about that” if an answer is not yet clear, or take their lead from something the candidate has already said that can help achieve this objective.

Hasty conclusions can be avoided if follow-up questions avoid signaling what it is hoped the candidate did or did not mean. A technique for doing this is to rephrase the candidate’s answer and ask if this is what was meant or simply to encourage more detail with a friendly, “Tell us more.”

The best way to make sure the interview delivers as much relevant data as possible is to structure it by including a list of questions that **must** be asked before the interview is over. It is not necessary to go through these in exactly the order given nor to interrupt the natural flow of the conversation if it leads in other directions (which may turn out to be useful), but the chairperson should be responsible for seeing that the complete list of predetermined questions has been covered with each candidate. Only in this way can committee members make a fair comparison of the views of several candidates.

Four important areas to explore are:

1. What the candidate does best and enjoys most.
2. What the candidate considers most important in the ministry and wants to do most.
3. What kind of person the candidate is; his or her particular strengths and possible weaknesses.
4. The knowledge, experience, and conviction the candidate brings to the ministry.

If committee members can leave an interview with a sense that they have some clear ideas about the candidate in each of these areas, they probably are equipped to make comparisons. As at other points in the pastoral search, one of the best questions for committee members to ask themselves after an interview is over is, “Would this minister fit here?” It may not be possible to explain why you respond one way or another. Human judgments are highly complex, but when they are based on sufficient data, it is best to trust overall impressions or feelings, particularly if experience has taught you that they are usually right.

Finally, be alert to responses that surprise you. Surprises are almost always significant and should be discussed.

Questions that might be included in a structured interview*:

1. Please tell us about the ministry you are in right now.
2. As you look back, what has happened that you feel best about?
3. What in your present situation is disappointing to you?
4. If you were to stay there another five years, what would you like to see happen?
5. From what you have learned about our church, is there anything that seems particularly challenging?
6. How would you describe your methods of leadership?
7. What in the ministry do you consider to be your specialty?
8. How did you come to choose the ministry as a vocation?
9. As you look back over your life, where do you see yourself making critical choices?
10. How have your own faith and your theological views changed since you entered college? Since you entered the ministry?
11. What are your views on _____ ? (Choose any theological or social issues that are important in your congregation.)
12. Describe the process you go through when you are preparing a sermon.
13. What is your preferred practice with regard to pastoral calling? What is your objective? What do you do? What makes you decide to make a call?
14. What emphasis do you place on pastoral counseling? Please describe your training and experience in this area.
15. What role does your family play in your practice of ministry?
16. What issues do you see as the most important ones facing our denomination now?
17. How do you understand the role of the minister in church administration?
18. What approaches to a congregation's financial stewardship do you prefer?
19. If you were to become the pastor of this church, what are some of the things you would try to do during your first year?
20. How do you maintain your own spiritual, emotional, and physical health?

*Add questions your committee decides are particularly important.

Interview Rating Sheet for [name of candidate]._____

- ___ Fully meets my requirements; I have no reservations.
- ___ Generally meets my requirements; I have minor reservations.
- ___ Generally meets my requirements; I have moderate reservations.
- ___ Generally okay, but I have one or more major reservations.
- ___ Fails to meet my requirements.

Principal strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Possible weaknesses:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Appendix 11

INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

Name of candidate: _____ Date of interview: _____

Name of evaluator: _____

Administrative Skills:	Strong				Weak
Delegation of responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
Motivation of people	1	2	3	4	5
Has and shares visions and goals	1	2	3	4	5
Personnel management skills	1	2	3	4	5
Overall program leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5
Interpersonal skills	1	2	3	4	5
Organizational skills	1	2	3	4	5
Role in stewardship	1	2	3	4	5
Financial awareness and leadership	1	2	3	4	5
Overall administrative experience	1	2	3	4	5

Pastoral Care:	Strong				Weak
Comfortable to talk with	1	2	3	4	5
Available during important times	1	2	3	4	5
Involvement during church activities	1	2	3	4	5
Counseling/pastoring	1	2	3	4	5
Visitation	1	2	3	4	5
Care of elderly	1	2	3	4	5
Active with children	1	2	3	4	5
Knows his/her own limits	1	2	3	4	5
Care of self	1	2	3	4	5
Ideas and enthusiasm for growth	1	2	3	4	5
Christian education	1	2	3	4	5
Overall pastoral care	1	2	3	4	5

Sunday Worship:	Strong				Weak
Use of innovative services	1	2	3	4	5
Concern for different views	1	2	3	4	5
Political and social issues	1	2	3	4	5
Congregational participation	1	2	3	4	5
Children's participation	1	2	3	4	5
Prayers for people, world, community	1	2	3	4	5
Unity of theme in service	1	2	3	4	5
Overall Sunday worship	1	2	3	4	5

Your level of enthusiasm for this candidate: **High** **Good** **Acceptable** **Low**

• Your greatest concern about this candidate: _____

• The thing you like most about this candidate: _____

 Candidate's personality traits: _____

Appendix 12

WORSHIP LEADERSHIP CHECKLIST

THE PREACHER'S DELIVERY

<u>Sleepy</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Energetic</u>
<u>Tense/Tight</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Relaxed/Free</u>
<u>Distracting</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Compelling</u>

THE PRAYERS

<u>Unfeeling and cold</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Sensitive to real needs</u>
<u>Perfunctory or trite</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Deeply aware of people's lives</u>
<u>Chatty or rambling</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Sense of dignity or order</u>
<u>Brought no sense of God's Presence</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Brought me into contact with God</u>

THE CHOICE OF HYMNS

<u>Did not fit the service</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Helped integrate the service</u>
<u>Interfered with my worship</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Helped my worship</u>

THE SERVICE AS A WHOLE

<u>Interfered with my worship</u>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Helped my worship</u>
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WHEN I VISUALIZE THIS MINISTER IN OUR CHURCH, IT SEEMS THIS PERSON:

<u>Would never do</u>	1	2	3	4	<u>Might be okay</u>	5	6	7	8	9	10	<u>Is just right</u>
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