

PROSPECT SEARCH

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The ‘Prospect Search’ is the second step of our process in Pastoral Searches. The previous first step—the Sonar Search—consisted of networking with colleagues to lift up names of pastors who might match the needs and culture of a particular large church. No pastor is contacted during the sonar search; many won’t ever be. If in the opinion of the consultant a pastor might merit further consideration, they are invited to become a ‘prospect’ ... not yet a candidate.

The Difference Between a ‘prospect’ and a ‘candidate’

A ‘prospect’ is someone who (1) represents and displays the highest ideals of Jesus Christ and United Methodism; (2) has a high degree of skill set, character, and culture match which will likely match the church’s expressed needs. (3) The church and the consultant agree could likely become a candidate representing the right kind of pastor the church desires; (4) Who is prayerfully willing to engage with the church in a deeper way, and will confide in their bishop or DS an interest in exploring the possibility of becoming a candidate.

A ‘candidate’ is someone who in addition to the above, (1) meets the church’s requirements and is willing to enter into discernment about being the ‘right’ person to lead the church into the future; (2) Is willing and eager to fully engage in the discernment process, including agreeing to any church required background checks; (3) would be blessed by the resident bishop and his/her own bishop if from another Conference.

The following steps begin the ‘prospect’ search:

1. Consultant determines if a pastor should be further considered.
2. Consultant contacts the identified sonar search pastor about the client church; (a) explain how you got their name; (b) unless specifically asked not to by the referring pastor, you may share who suggested them. *Pastors are often affirmed that someone thinks so highly of them!* (c) Tells pastor you would like to ask two questions.
 - Offers to share information about the church and asks two questions.
 - One, can the pastor suggest possibilities for consideration.
 - Two, would the pastor want to be considered as a prospect. Stress we are not ready to settle on ‘candidates’ but are interested in ‘prospects’ that may ultimately become a candidate. Explain the difference and why we differentiate.
 - If the answer is ‘YES’ or ‘Possibly’ then proceed with follow up inquiry questions. If NO thank them for their time and for any other names they may have shared. (This approach protects pastors from rumors that might be detrimental to their current appointment: *“Yes, I was contacted by Church Difference Makers to see if I knew of any leads.”*)
 - Often the pastor will say they need to think and pray about it. Consultant will share timeline and when a response is needed...offer to share written information about the process and the difference between a prospect and a candidate.

3. Candidate confidentiality is our top priority! That includes prospects who may be exploring the possibility of becoming a candidate.
 - Rumors or speculation about a pastor's intentions can be detrimental to their current appointment...or their relationship with their bishop.
 - The following steps explain how we protect confidentiality:

How & when prospect information is shared with the church and the resident bishop

- If pastors choose to be considered a 'prospect' they will have conversation about the church and about themselves...and provide a resume to the consultant. The consultant will turn the resume into a 'profile' **with no identifiers** of who submitted, what church they are serving, or where the church is.
 - The consultant will devise the profile details by his/her opinion of what elements would be (a) strong match; (b) medium match; (c) unknown match ... to the church's needs, complexity and culture. An unknown match is not negative; just indicates more information is needed.
 - *Sample profiles from previous searches are available by request to demonstrate how this works.*
 - The church's SPR or Search committee will review all profiles presented by the consultant, and make one of three responses and prioritize them based on (1) We definitely would like to learn more about this person; (2) Let's hold off on that person, but we may be interested further; (c) Sounds like a good pastor but that doesn't sound like a match for us.
 - IF the church requests more information, I will contact the pastor and ask if their name, resume, and more information can be shared confidentially with the committee. If yes, the pastor and I will proceed; If no, I will assume the pastor does not feel confident declaring himself or herself as a candidate.
 - NOTE: Bishop to Bishop protocols deserve delicate and respectful timing when it comes to out-of-conference pastors who may become possibilities as a prospect or a candidate. When a resume is requested or received, the consultant will share the name with the resident bishop, but not the church. Bishops then may have further conversation which may influence the process.
4. Once pastors become prospects for a particular church, they will be kept up to date with all aspects of the search.
 - A pastor's identifiers will ONLY be shared with a church WITH their permission.
 - A pastor will ONLY be considered a CANDIDATE when they tell the consultant that is their desire AND after they have spoken with their DS and/or bishop.