

PASTORAL SEARCHES: THE CONSULTATIVE MODEL

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What is the Consultative Model of a Pastoral Search: When a church is facing a pastoral transition, the appointment of a new pastor is typically and effectively accomplished through the work of the bishop and cabinet, in consultation with the church's SPR. The long history of the Wesleyan heritage affirms the efficacy of this approach. There are specific times and situations however, when our company, Church Difference Makers, is asked to assist with identifying, recruiting, and presenting potential candidates to the church and to the cabinet.

In those situations, we help with:

- Assessing the church's current reality.
- Clarifying the church's needs going forward
- Discerning the church's desired qualities in their new pastor
- Identifying and assessing potential candidates' skill set and culture match
- Recruiting candidates based on the above for consideration by the Cabinet and SPR

While every church could benefit from Changeover Zone training (*preparing the church for a 'passing of the baton' when there is a pastoral transition,*) not every church is right for a consultant search... or needs one.

When to consider a pastoral search

Typically, larger churches with multiple staff, complex systems, and diverse membership benefit the most from a consultative model of pastoral searches.

- Bishops tend to contact us in situations where a church deemed mission-critical is facing severe trauma, conflict, or broken trust relationships with the 'system'.
- Churches tend to contact us when their current long-term pastor is retiring, and when the church displays a unique, complex culture that leadership perceives needs a wide pool of candidates to become the successor. We only accept work with the blessing of the bishop.

In either case our role is to partner with and assist the bishop and cabinet, not to replace them. Having served on a cabinet for seven years, I know the difficulties that cabinets must navigate and the importance of their work. So, we are committed to keeping all parties constantly up to date with the sequential stages of our work and follow all protocols the bishop expects.

The Sequential Steps of a Pastoral Search

Our process consists of three separate progressive steps: 1. Sonar Search; 2. Prospect Search; 3. Candidate Search. (*For detailed information see our Overview and specific documents*)

(1) a '**sonar search**' happens when the consultant begins networking with colleagues to lift up names of pastors who may possibly match the ministry needs of a particular size and complexity of church (2) Subsequently a **Prospect search** is done by consultant reflecting on sonar search names and needs of church, through UMC Data and other explorations. *Usually less than 50% of pastors named from the sonar search make it to the prospect search.* When we deem someone a possible prospect, we inform the resident bishop. If the prospect is from out-of-conference, the

bishop may contact the prospect's bishop for input and ok to continue with the prospect.

3. **Candidate search:** narrows down prospects by examining data, third party input, church values specs, and with the green light of the resident bishop. NOTE: A prospect ONLY becomes a candidate WHEN they (a) inform the consultant they would like to be considered as a candidate, (b) are invited by the Search Team to become a candidate, and (c) AFTER the resident bishop oks their candidacy. We expect the prospect-turned- candidate to have appropriate conversations with their DS and/or bishop.

Why Do Pastoral Search

A Pastoral Search done in the Consultative Model provides added value not only for the church, but the bishop and cabinet. Here are a few values:

1. Many churches cling to memories of being 'wronged' by the cabinet, at least in their perception: "What if's" and "Why us?" laments abound in some SPRs, passed down from generation to generation. Bishops tend to contact us about transitions where trust in the 'system' has eroded. The search model provides an approach where churches perceive they have more of a voice...while at the same time we are committed to teaching SPRs about the work of the cabinet system in a positive way.
2. Often in a church's "current reality" there are hidden landmines that stressed out, stretched thin DSs going through Conference and District realignments may not readily pick up on. From my years as both a large church pastor and an appointive cabinet I have seen how the attention of many DSs face the gravitational pull of 'putting out fires' among many of their churches. Our process expands the band width to dig deeper into the church's current reality and its needs in a new pastor.
3. Pastors strive to put top notch members on the SPR, often with HR backgrounds and/or experience in leading business and other corporate ventures. These members speak the language of consultants; and there seems to be a growing number of members who themselves are consultants in their respective fields. Utilizing a consultant makes sense to them and automatically lends itself to respecting the process, and feeling like they are a part of a professional approach to securing leadership.
4. The consultative model envisioned by church strategist, Gil Rendle in a report to the Council of Bishops is designed for larger churches with more complex systems. Even though DSs and bishops have a wealth of church experience and wisdom, often they do not have firsthand larger church pastoral experience. All of our trained consultants in Planned Succession & Pastoral Searches have been successful long-tenured large church pastors themselves. The 'been there done that' dynamic lends credibility to the SPR.
5. Our role is to partner with the bishop and cabinet, not to substitute for them. We are committed to following all the bishop's protocols and to consistently their value to churches with whom we work.

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