

A wooden pulpit with a book on top. The pulpit is made of light-colored wood and has a classic, ornate design. It features a wide, flat top surface where a book is placed. The body of the pulpit is supported by four legs, each with a decorative panel. The base is also wide and flat, matching the top surface. The entire pulpit is set against a plain white background.

# Pulpit Search

A Biblical and Practical Approach

Pastor Joseph Baxter

*To the Deacons or Search Committee:*

*This small booklet intends to serve small churches (or even larger ones) in their search for a pastor. Churches find themselves without a shepherd in any number of ways. We cannot contemplate here all the reasons a pastor might leave, but regardless of how it might have happened, it is my prayer that these few guidelines will help you as you move forward for God!*

*Yours in Christ,*

*Pastor Joseph Baxter*

## Take Encouragement

Foremost: Remember that God is in control. It may seem difficult to believe, but in the midst of all of this, God knows. He cares. And most importantly, His control is complete. You may reply upon the fact that the situation you face does not come as a surprise to Him. Secondly, you may also rely upon the fact that He cares more about your church body than any of your members, or dare we say, even yourself. Please consider the following foundational thoughts.

### You Are His Church

*Ephesians 3:21 – “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”*

Jesus Christ receives glory in His churches. He is intensely interested in you. It bears remembering that the Bible refers to the membership of your church – and not some random group of faceless strangers – as the Body, Building, and Bride of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The church of your membership, without any consideration of size or wealth, remains completely equal before God with any other church; be it past, present or future! A church is an independent assembly of baptized believers who have covenanted themselves together to fulfill the Great Commission.

The New Testament knows no “big churches” nor “small churches.” The Book of Acts and the Epistles tells us of churches with problems and persecutions but notice the curious lack of hierarchy or comparison between them in size!

Let this knowledge be a great consolation to you. Hold on to it tightly.

### You Have Access to God

*Hebrews 4:16 – “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”*

Your first and best recourse must be to God Himself. Without sugar-coating, this process will try your faith but may serve to increase it beyond your wildest expectations. David often poured his heart out to God in the Psalms.

Increase your prayer time. Be purposeful. Call on the membership to fast and pray.

The call of a pastor will set the course of your church for many years to come, either for better or worse. Human beings can never hope to control all of these factors and variables. In some ways, understanding the impossibility of the task removes the stress! Since we can't do it, we must wait upon God to do it for us.

And that means fervent prayer. Most of us cannot enter the throne room of Buckingham Palace and speak to the Sovereign of England. Few of us can stroll into the Oval Office

and converse with the President of the United States. Yet we have bold access to enter the Heavenly Throne of the Creator the Universe through prayer in Jesus's name.

Never fail to take all advantage of that precious access!

### You Are Not Alone

*Romans 11:4 – “But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.”*

Many churches feel a little “disconnected” when the pastor’s office sits vacant. This may be unavoidable, simply because the pastor naturally attended all the preachers’ meetings and similar fellowships. Therefore, the pastor may have been the only one who knew other pastors or had made connections with other churches.

Nonetheless, you are not alone. The Lord has many doctrinally-sound, Bible-preaching, and soul-winning churches laboring with God to spread the Gospel of light in this dark world. Reach out! A few sister churches, perhaps through no particular fault of their own, cannot help. A few will not help, perhaps through misunderstandings or even troubles of their own. A few sister churches may try to help.

A few caveats: Be careful! Use wisdom and discernment. Sadly, a few poorly motivated individuals may see you as “vulnerable” or a potential “feather” in their own cap. Wolves, both internal and external will be discussed at greater length in later sections of this guide. For now, allow the Lord to guide you and He will keep you safe from these. You are *His* church.

### *Remember When Healing:*

- 1. Only Jesus Christ has Biblical authority over your church.*
- 2. Jesus Christ receives glory in your church.*
- 3. You have access to the throne room of God.*

## Background

This short guide stems from the author's experience as the chairman of a board of deacons. It is fairly safe to say that no matter how a church finds itself without a pastor, the situation always comes as a shock. More shocking still, little written information could be found on the approach a church should employ when seeking God's Will for their next pastor.

Most churches have either by-laws or a church constitution (usually depending upon legal status as a corporation). Unfortunately, these documents often remain silent on the procedural aspects of calling a pastor. Most only speak to the policy of calling the pastor, such as the majority required and basic qualifications. Few organizational documents, if any, answer the question of "how to do it."

This guide distills the principles given by several pastors<sup>1</sup> known for training men in the ministry. Interestingly, these experienced preachers provided very similar advice to one another. The author's former church adopted their counsel and attempted to follow it to the letter.

God blessed in that situation. The previous pastor announced his resignation at the end of January. He worked out his thirty-day notice, as required according to that church's by-laws, leaving before the first of March. Because of God's Hand working, the new pastor candidate preached in view of a call in April. The church voted to extend the call at the beginning of June, which he wholeheartedly accepted.

This new pastor was a good man with excellent experience in the ministry yet completely unknown to anyone in the church. He had served over twenty years on a foreign mission field but forced home due to governmental religious oppression. At the time, this preacher could not understand why the Lord had moved him away from the burgeoning work. Now he knows.

The chess master plays without consulting the pieces.

For that church, a period of only four months elapsed without a pastor. Perhaps it goes without saying, but simply following this (or any) approach will not guarantee similar results. The approach almost has more to do with the security of the membership than it does with the results it yields.

The church in this example did not lose members during its search for a pastor, a consequence often experienced. A well-communicated procedure, such as this one, let the people know what to expect. They did not feel fearful of the unknown, out of touch or forgotten.

And that is very important.

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<sup>1</sup> Thank you to Pastor Jeffrey Ables of Berean Baptist (Springfield, MO), Pastor Rick Carter of Beth Haven Baptist (Oklahoma City, OK), and Pastor Roland Hammett of Lehigh Valley Baptist (Emmaus, PA). Your advice proved invaluable.

## Pastoral Qualifications

There are twenty-two qualifications found in Scripture that are required to pastor one of the Lord's churches. These can neither be negotiated away nor ignored.

<p><u>I Timothy 3:2</u> Must be blameless Must be the husband of one wife Must vigilant Must be sober Must be of good behavior Must be given to hospitality Must be apt to teach</p> <p><u>I Timothy 3:3</u> Must be not given to wine Must be no striker Must be not greedy of filthy lucre Must be patient Must be not a brawler Must be not covetous</p> <p><u>I Timothy 3:4</u> Must be one that "ruleth well his own house"</p> <p><u>I Timothy 3:6</u> Must be not a novice</p> <p><u>I Timothy 3:7</u> Must be of a good report of them which are without</p>	<p><u>Titus 1:7</u> Must be not self-willed Must be not soon angry</p> <p><u>Titus 1:8</u> Must be a lover of good men Must be just Must be holy Must be temperate</p>
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This guide includes sample Sunday School lessons on the Office of the Pastor as an attachment and written in the style of the late Pastor Leon Gray (Berean Baptist Church, Springfield, MO).

Consider teaching through these lessons in all adult and youth classes, or perhaps preaching these outlines for evening services. While many may already be familiar with the Biblical characteristics and requirements of a pastor, it will do no one harm to have a refresher course.

*Remember When Preparing:*

- 1. All qualifications must be found in the man to be considered.*
- 2. Your church must study to understand and be unified on all qualifications.*

## Maintenance Period

From the time the previous pastor announces his resignation (or in some cases, the church votes to remove the previous pastor), a period of maintenance begins.

Make this a time of healing and introspection.

### Decisions

*Hebrews 13:17 – “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”*

Emotions may run high and the church will be tempted to make changes or perhaps, in the case of a church that must remove a pastor, “right the wrongs” of years gone by. It could be that some members will bring up significant purchases that “we were planning on doing anyway” or other changes to existing practices. As Hebrews tells us, the pastor must make an account of his decisions before God. He is “on the hook” for it, if you will, and that responsibility counters his authority. If no one has to account to God for a decision, it may precede forward without due biblical consideration. In other words, selflessly inspect and ruthlessly scrutinize any decision where those deciding will not bear the ultimate responsibility for the consequences.

Resist the urge to make any significant changes.

Store up those plans and present them *respectfully* to the new pastor. Trust God and the heart of God’s man to help “shepherd” those decisions from a biblical perspective and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The church cannot know what special talents and experience with which the Lord has blessed their next pastor.

Hasty (or hobbyhorse) decisions taken in the maintenance period may delay or hinder some unexpected but exciting new ministry God plans for your church!

### Wolves

*Acts 20:29 & 30 – “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”*

When a pastor steps down, many new faces may appear, but perhaps also many familiar faces. Often times former members may begin attending again. We may not discount that these individuals may have had legitimate doctrinal differences with the former pastor. On the other hand, nature abhors a vacuum, and a church without a pastor may appear ripe for the picking to a power-hungry type.

Be wary!

It is true that your church is the Lord's church. It is also true that the devil hates it. Acts 20:31 provides the answer – "Therefore watch!"

Your organizational document (whether by-laws or constitution) should handle automatic removal from membership after a period of inactivity. The Christian Law Association (CLA) template includes such language, so that a member, if missing from attendance for a specified time (usually three or six months), will be automatically removed from the church membership rolls. The CLA template also includes a clause to inactivate the voting rights of a member after a one-month absence.

These two provisions, if already adopted by your church prior to the maintenance period, must be either strictly enforced or ignored entirely. To partially enforce these provisions invites division and potential litigation. That said, such provisions (in addition to the rigid adherence to the status quo detailed above) provide a church a significant weapon to use against the appearance of wolves.

Wolves are known by their "follow-ship" rather than their fellowship. They begin sentences with "people are coming to me" and "folks wanted me to bring this to you." They will refuse to say for who they allegedly speak.

Stand firm on your organizational documents. Stand firm on the Bible. Stand in unity. When faced with a brave stand on a firm foundation, a wolf might howl but will ultimately slink away.

## Fellowship

*Acts 2:46 – "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,"*

During the time of maintenance, it might be tempting to ignore church fellowships. Sometimes the wife of the former pastor planned such things and it simply goes undone. Seek ways to increase fellowship opportunities.

Consider having a low-key fellowship at least once a month or even more often. Call them a SNAC (Sunday Night After Church) or similar. These are not to be business meetings. They will have no agenda. They will have no decorations. Just coffee, tea, lemonade and a dessert or two brought by the ladies.

These fellowships provide a space for church members to spend time together. To call a pastor, the church must have unity.

The church needs singleness of heart.

## Pulpit Supply

A man with a caretaker spirit may be found as an interim pastor. Interims make no changes, as stated above, but serve primarily as pulpit supply. Large churches may name an assistant or associate pastor as interim (if that man does not wish to be a candidate). Interim pastors provide a sense of consistency for visitors and help with ministry tasks such as hospital visits.

Please be aware that some church members may expect an associate or assistant to simply take over as the next pastor. The pulpit committee<sup>2</sup> must discuss with each assistant or associate at the very first opportunity. These men may or may not wish to candidate, but a definitive answer must be reached.

- If none of these men have any desire to candidate, the pulpit committee must report that in no uncertain terms to the church. It is best if the staff members themselves speak. Leave no wiggle room, or an undercurrent of disunity may arise later. Additionally, this agreement allows one of these men to effectively interim, if the church wishes.
- If one (or more) of these men wish to be considered, the pulpit committee will have to decide how to respond, but the decision must remain confidential. These staff members should be cautioned beforehand to make their intentions known only to the pulpit committee. Then, should the committee decide to not pursue one or all, no other church members need ever know. If people learn of the decision, the staff member's effectiveness in the ministry may be hampered.

Be careful of misplaced expectations in these situations!

## Encouragement

Consider asking a few pastors, missionaries, and evangelists for encouragement. A few seasoned "friends" preaching encouragement to the church can be a great help. Explain carefully and perhaps repeatedly to the church that these preachers are not preaching in view of a call.

Because of travel distance and time (since it may be short notice), you may want to ask several preachers known and respected by the church to create a short video of encouragement. With modern smart phones<sup>3</sup>, a high-quality recording can be made in

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<sup>2</sup> The church's organizational documents should name a pulpit committee, but if not, three or more deacons can be used. More than five may become unwieldy. Smaller churches may need to nominate and hold a vote for three trustworthy individuals to fulfill this role, when no deacons exist. The word "committee" or "board" may have negative connotations in some churches – whatever name the church selects, the function remains the same.

<sup>3</sup> Ask them to please use landscape mode rather than portrait mode when recording video.

only a few minutes. Try to present one every Sunday morning at a time in the service of your choosing.

*Remember When Maintaining:*

- 1. Sheep without a shepherd may be at risk from wolves.*
- 2. An interim pastor should not make any significant changes.*
- 3. Take encouragement in the Lord and from sister churches.*

## Search Principles

The following principles should be considered and enacted by unanimous agreement within the pulpit committee. These are the “Rules of Conduct” by which the search will be prosecuted. Without these ground rules in place, the procedure discussed afterward will have no foundation upon which to stand.

While seemingly needless, do attempt to document pulpit committee meetings with some form of notes. These do not have to take the form of meeting minutes or possess any type of formality, but simply need to include the names of those present, the date, the decisions (especially if polled), and any action items produced. These notes may be used to provide support to the rest of the church body, should significant questions ever arise. Generally speaking, these notes should be discarded just prior to the arrival of the new pastor.

### Prayer

*Luke 18:1 – “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;”*

Bathe the selection process in prayer. The pulpit committee should schedule time, at least once per week to meet, with prayer being first and foremost on the agenda. All pastors surveyed responded with prayer as the first step, and at every step during the process.

The pulpit committee should spend a few weeks with prayer only. Praying over the church’s needs, praying over the biblical qualifications of a pastor, and praying over this (or some other) pastoral search approach.

*Consider purchasing and reading a little book called The Calvary Road by Roy Hession. This book outlines personal revival in clear terms.*

Please note that the Bible, even in the New Testament, speaks of prayer *with* fasting. Fasting is a calculated ruthlessness to the flesh in order to reap a spiritual gain. The principle stems from mortifying the flesh (Romans 8:13) and keeping it in subjection (I Corinthians 9:27). Jesus confirmed the validity of fasting (Matthew 17:21). If fasting, tell no one other than perhaps your spouse (as that may alter family mealtimes). Spend each meal in Scripture and prayer. Let each hunger pang be a call to prayer.

Please make prayer the most critical foundation. Perhaps above and beyond any other time you may have experienced during your Christian walk. Without prayer, the rest of this approach becomes meaningless. You must have God’s ear.

Your church is counting on you.

## Serial Process

*I Corinthians 1:12 – “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.”*

Commit from the very beginning to allow only one candidate to be considered at any one time. The committee may review many applicants and pray over many potential candidates but must only allow one to preach in view of a call to be followed by a speedy vote, whether yes or no.

Some churches bring in multiple men and then vote on all (i.e., a parallel process). This sounds wise from the secular or business perspective but becomes a popularity contest rather than a deeply spiritual exercise of faith. Members will struggle to remember both positive and negative points from a doctrinal standpoint and may make the selection on memorable characteristics – such as attractiveness or talent (I Samuel 16:7).

The “cattle call” style try-out of multiple candidates will create division among the body as well, following the lines of I Corinthians 1:12. The first hard decision the new pastor makes may cause murmurings, after all, *I voted for the other guy!*

Secondly, pursuing parallel candidates unfairly treats the candidates themselves. How can they pray effectively about your church under those conditions? Where else might they have candidate in the meantime in order to seek the ministry the Lord has given them? How will they explain to their children what happened?

Lastly, parallel candidacy minimizes trust in God and maximizes human reasoning. Worldly factors begin to worm their ways in to the decision process, such as comparisons in perceived salary requirements or even moving distance.

Trust God.

## Veto Power

All members of the pulpit committee should have veto power over any potential candidate. This only seems harsh at first, but if one of the few committee members cannot find peace, then that potential candidate should not be brought before the church at large.

A committee member does not have to provide a full explanation – and may not be able to do so various reasons, privacy included. Some indication should be given, however, if possible.

- Direct knowledge of a moral failing does not need to be discussed further, but the source must in fact *be* direct knowledge, not third-hand supposition.
- Doctrinal disqualifications must be discussed openly and cited against the church’s written Statement of Faith.

- Alternate styles of administration should not necessarily be grounds for disqualification as long as the church's standards of holiness (i.e. music, dress) are maintained.

Down-checks should not come from rumor or gossip. Accept no single accusation regardless the source – only information from two sources that agree completely (Deuteronomy 17:6) should be discussed. Please bear in mind that even two identical accusations do not *prove* truth, but the committee can at least consider the information.

Be wise. Be kind.

### Website Posting

Many websites exist with very good standards for doctrinal churches that also post for churches seeking pastors. Exercise caution and restraint! Before posting your church's information in dozens of places, consider the amount of effort needed to keep up with all of those postings. How many churches after finding a pastor will run across stray "job postings" months or even years later? Act purposefully, but only if the committee decides to post their church on one of these fine sites.

Naturally, direct recommendations from a trusted pastor of a fellowshiping church will provide the best potential candidates. Many Bible Colleges may keep a list of graduates that could serve as a secondary source of recommendations. Some churches, however, may not find themselves in the position to receive such recommendations (for various and valid reasons). Posting to a few websites may help broaden your reach, but it also will bring in many applicants who will not meet your qualifications.

The following communication rules should still apply. Posting on a website brings with it an obligation to respond to all serious inquiries.

### Communication

There are two types of communication that concern the committee, internal and external.

#### Internal Communications

The committee must carefully communicate to the church body internally. *Carefully* because the committee must studiously manage expectations. Do not over-promise. Furthermore, the church body need not know all committee business.

This guide recommends that a member of the committee speak to the church body every Sunday morning after the invitation closes. A committee member should speak, even in the absence of news to report. The church needs to hear from you. Announce purposefully from the pulpit only that information the

committee agreed to release. It will be helpful to write out the announcements beforehand.

Lastly, avoid hallway conversations with non-committee members (particularly a member who “knows a preacher”). While tempting, these discussions let some members in on the inner workings of the process and not others. This will not enhance unity in the church body. In fact, these types of conversations may in some unexpected way, spawn misconceptions and interfere with the pastor God wants to send your way!

### External Communications

Every man who applies deserves a speedy reply.

Keep track of all applicants, using a spreadsheet or notepad. Record the date the committee received the first contact, and the date the committee replied. The committee is under no obligation to consider every applicant, but a simple email or call goes a long way toward maintaining the church’s good name. At the earliest moment after the committee decides to move on from a particular applicant, that man and his family deserves to be notified.

*“We appreciate your interest in our church. At this time, the Lord has led us to consider other candidates. May God bless you in His ministry!”*

Any applicants the committee chooses as qualified (see Fig. 1) will receive a questionnaire. Some applicants will send a great amount of information, others will not, but all should complete a standard questionnaire. A sample questionnaire is attached to this guide.

Qualified applicants cannot become potential candidates until the committee both receives and reviews a completed questionnaire.

### Funding

From the moment the previous pastor leaves, set aside all funds devoted to his salary and allowances. These funds will be used for three things: pulpit supply, candidacy costs, and relocation costs.

- Any pulpit supply from a preacher who is not a member of the church should receive a love offering.
- If the church allows an assistant pastor to interim, a small salary increase may be in order due to the extra duties.
- Relocation costs will likely be exorbitant. It takes thousands of dollars to move a family even across a city. For reference, many corporate relocation packages fell between costs of \$10,000 and \$20,000 in 2018.

*Remember When Searching:*

- 1. Prayer is the most valuable and indispensable resource at your disposal.*
- 2. Consider one candidate at a time without exception.*
- 3. Be crisp in your communication with any potential candidates.*
- 4. Lay aside the former pastor's salary (if any) to fulfill pulpit search needs.*

# Search Procedure

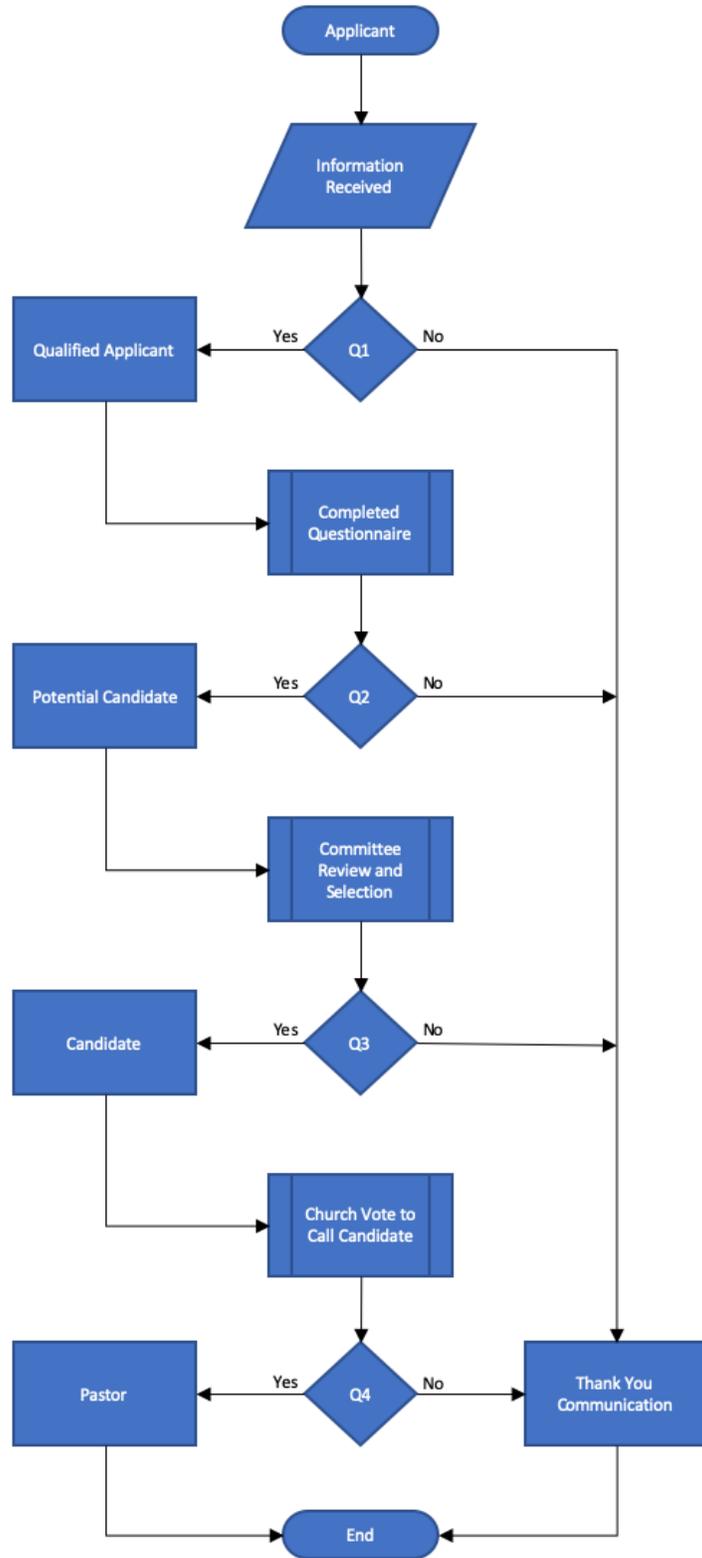


Figure 1 - Search Process

The flowchart (Figure 1) describes a four-question process. For those unfamiliar with flow charts, each one-way arrow connector “flows” into each “stop” in the process, much like a train pulls into a station. The diamond shapes indicate decision points. For the purposes of this guide, the applicants process through individually, so that different men may be at different stops from one another.

Each diamond asks a question that must receive an answer before continuing.

1. Does the Applicant meet the basic requirements to become a Qualified Applicant?
2. Is the Qualified Applicant doctrinally sound to become a Potential Candidate?
3. Is it God’s Will for the Potential Candidate to become a Pastoral Candidate?
4. Is this Pastoral Candidate God’s Man to pastor your Church?

All applicants, including the eventual pastor, will follow this process from question Q1 all the way through question Q4 until they reach the first “no” response. A negative decision to any of these four questions removes the man from consideration completely.

## Applications

The pastor of a church is a spiritual role. While some concepts from hiring in the professional world may be instructive (such as communication and checking references), the decision rests with God. While we often use the words “calling a pastor,” the fact remains: God calls the pastor, and the church simply confirms (agrees).

- Churches have no obligation to receive any external applicants.
- Churches have no obligation to consider any internal applicants.
- Churches have no obligation to consider multiple applicants.
- Churches have no obligation to follow any direct recommendations.

Therefore, the moment a church becomes confident of the Lord’s will, then let nothing stop them from voting to install a new pastor. Follow the Holy Spirit, asking the Lord for wisdom and especially patience<sup>4</sup>.

## Resumes or Biographies

Many churches have an aversion to the term “resume” because of the connection to the business world. This guide does not require the use of resumes or any particular format of biographical data, nor does this guide object to their use. Feel free to use whatever term the church prefers.

This pulpit search approach, however, depends upon a written or digital questionnaire. Only with a questionnaire will the committee receive structured information consistent

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<sup>4</sup> **Author’s Note:** When purchasing a new home or something similar, we often (mistakenly) feel that time is of the essence. Free yourself from hurry and wait upon the Lord. If you find your church in competition for a pastoral candidate against other churches, it seems all too doubtful that God is in it. Even if you win, chances are he won’t stick around for long.

between each applicant. Once again: The primary method by which an applicant becomes qualified is through committee review of their completed pastoral questionnaire.

### Receiving Information

A church may receive information in myriad ways. Without question, many of the best applicants will come as referrals from fellowshiping churches. A church known for training men in the ministry may have a man ready to pastor your church.

The committee must determine an adequate level of experience needed. For example, a larger church likely needs an experienced pastor for administrative reasons alone. A new or smaller church may grow along with a man who has faithfully executed his duties as an assistant pastor at another church. Please remember to use these guidelines as intended and not as cast in stone – allow God to work. If churches only called men with “experience” as pastors, we would run out in only a generation!

Often well-meaning members want to provide the committee with a preacher they know, maybe from a church where they once belonged. The committee may elect to receive that information or not. Whatever the committee decides, it must apply universally to all members. Be careful but also respectful when considering relatives and friends of church members.

### Email Groups

Most churches can establish email groups through their web host or domain registrar. If a church owns a custom web domain (i.e., [www.mychurchname.com](http://www.mychurchname.com)), the technology will usually allow mail forwarders.

If possible, create a new forwarder group, such as [pulpitsearch@mychurchname.com](mailto:pulpitsearch@mychurchname.com) and forward any emails to all members of your pulpit committee. The emails will simply arrive at whatever personal email address each committee member chooses. This works towards providing everyone the same information at the same time. If one committee member does not use email, printed copies may be created.

## Deductive Filters

We will use four questions as deductive filters. That means we will begin removing possibilities (deducting) as a way of separating many potential options from the one option where God directs. These questions line up with four concepts (The Four C’s) that speak when anyone attempts to determine the will of God.

- Canon – God’s Word is the all sufficient rule of our faith and practice.
- Comforter – God’s Holy Spirit guides, directs, and convicts.

- Counselors – Godly people who follow God and care for others .
- Circumstances – God’s doors, both open and closed, help light our path.

This approach applies knowledge from each concept to the pool of applicants in order to discover the heart of God for the next pastor of your church.

### Question 1: Is the Applicant Qualified? (Circumstances)

*Job 12:12 – “With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding.”*

The question of qualification centers more on preparation and availability than years of experience. A man deeply in debt may be unable to relocate to your city for obvious financial reasons, for instance, although this may not be known to the committee at this stage. A recent high school graduate with a heart on fire for ministry may also not yet be qualified to pastor a church of any size.

Scrutinize any close relationships to current church members and especially search committee members. Such relationships may not necessarily invalidate an applicant, but the decision and reasoning should be documented if moving forward.

If handed printed materials, ask that the same information be forwarded to the committee (using the email group, if possible).

The committee meeting agenda will now include an item to qualify candidates. Each meeting, all members will verify they have received information on new applicant. They will agree to look over the information (as needed) before meeting again to qualify or disqualify that applicant.

Add each name and contact to a spreadsheet or notepad. Document decision, reasoning and date your follow up email.

Actions:

- All Qualified Applicants receive a Doctrinal Questionnaire via email.
- All Disqualified Applicants receive a nicely-worded thank you letter, email, or call.

### Question 2: Is the Qualified Applicant Doctrinally Sound? (Canon)

*2 Timothy 2:2 – “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”*

The process has already filtered out a few individuals and thanked them for their interest. Every applicant that reaches Question 2 must complete a questionnaire. Some may object and respond that their resume or ministry package contains all of the pertinent details. It may – but that does not matter. If a man is unwilling to take the hour or two needed to complete your questionnaire, then will he be willing to take a trip to the

hospital at 3:00 AM with a dear church member? Is his heart in this process? These are important concerns, but do not need to be asked outright. Simply reply that your church's process uses this questionnaire for the purposes of consistency and also to avoid miscommunication.

Be nice but stand firm.

Feel free to send your church's statement of faith or point the applicant to your website (if detailed enough). This may save everyone immense amounts of effort.

### Customize the Questionnaire

Edit the sample questionnaire to match your church's statement of faith. Add questions as needed to meet specific needs. Do *not* ask questions of a man about what "his wife wears to bed" or anything that crosses similar lines of privacy and decorum. Some things are none of your business. Ask instead about his biblical views on dress standards.

There are two types of questions used: Open-ended and Close-ended. An open question asks, "How would you describe?" and has a free-form answer. A close-ended question drives to a specific point and will ask, "Do you believe X or Y?" and restricts the answers to those provided. Short answer questions are open-ended; multiple choice and true-false are closed. Both should be used to gain the best understanding.

It is a natural concern for committees to worry a man may misrepresent facts on a questionnaire. That *is* possible. Yet we only need to trust God with the details. And remember, the questionnaire represents only one step in the process. The Lord will ensure the truth will emerge!

The Questionnaire does not need to follow the statement of faith point-by-point. For instance, you may safely presume that a pastoral candidate for an independent fundamental Baptist church believes in "Article II – The Son of God" if trained and ordained by a church of like faith, order, and practice. The question of Bible versions used; however, you must firmly establish.

### Reviewing the Responses

A pulpit committee may feel somewhat unprepared to analyze the answers given by applicants on their questionnaires. Anyone would (and should) feel a little overwhelmed with the responsibility.

Pray. Consider Esther 4:14.

An old courtroom adage tells young lawyers, "Always know the answer before you ask the question." Apply that concept to your questionnaire – decide upon

the right answer before sending out the first one. Doing this will allow your reviews of the questionnaires to be consistent and objective.

Many good men will not believe like you. That doesn't mean they don't love the Lord. The committee should remain resolute. If he doesn't believe in accordance with the church, then he simply is not the man for you. If in the wording of the answer, it appears as though the man didn't quite understand, the committee may choose to ask clarifying questions.

- Don't "read in" to what the man has written.
- Don't imagine "motives" in what the man has written.
- Accept the man's word on the subject of what he believes.
- Remember that many good men will not believe like your church.

### Question 3: Is the Potential Candidate God's Will? (Comforter)

Any qualified applicant that completes a questionnaire fully acceptable to the committee may continue through the process to a small group of potential candidates. This pool of men should be kept small, ideally only one but at the most three.

The questionnaire asks for photographs and video or audio samples of the man preaching. These samples will take time and effort for the committee to prayerfully review. Preaching style certainly matters but should not become the dominant or only factor. Seek doctrinal truth in the preaching.

- Does it line up with the Word of God?
- What is the tone of the preaching?
- Does the preacher have the heart of a teacher – in other words, is he apt to teach?
- Is the preaching expository<sup>5</sup>?
- Does the preaching bring the listener to a place of decision – not for Salvation only, but also for the Saved to live more Christlike before God?
- Does the preaching model the Bible qualifications of a pastor?
- Avoid skyscraper<sup>6</sup> preachers.

Although it does not sound "spiritual," the committee should rank these potential candidates. The committee should meet and compare their rankings. The choice may then be obvious. Even if no clear choice emerges, the committee should vote on one (and only one) man to bring in as a candidate.

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<sup>5</sup> Expository preaching lets the Bible speak. The root word is "expose" and literally means to "open up" the Word for the listener's understanding. Generally, expository preaching will refer to one passage many times throughout the message and use additional Bible verses as highlights or support.

<sup>6</sup> Coined by Pastor Leon Gray – "Just one story after another."

Once the committee decides on the top candidate, they should schedule a call (or a visit, distance permitting) to ask additional questions.

- What is your evangelistic focus and/or methods?
- How have you handled conflict with members in the past?
- How have you handled conflict between members in the past?
- How do you maintain your daily walk with God?
- What are you praying about currently and why (if not too personal)?

Each committee member must have veto power on each potential candidate. A veto is a very powerful action – it is not moving a man lower in the ranking, so be careful. A *veto removes the man from consideration completely and prompts a thank you letter*. It is a final “no” to Question 3.

Anything less than a complete removal may be too tempting to use later when voting for a final candidate. Resist the urge to “save one” as a backup plan.

### Candidacy Plan

Plan to bring a candidate and his family to candidate for a full eight days, if possible. He will preach the normal service schedule Sunday to Sunday (including all adult Sunday School classes in joint session) but should also lead a Men’s Prayer meeting at some point during the week (perhaps for breakfast on Saturday). His wife should be asked to bring a devotion at a Ladies’ Fellowship or Tea, usually on Saturday afternoon.

Ask for families to volunteer to host the candidate and his family for weeknight dinners throughout the week. His family will want to get to know your church as much as you church will want to get to know them. It is recommended, however, to allow them to have their mornings and most lunch times to explore your area. Try not to schedule every waking moment.

If a full week becomes impossible, have him preach a special service on Friday night. The church can all meet for a Breakfast Fellowship on Saturday morning. After this breakfast, if room permits, the men and women can relocate to different areas for a devotion brought by the candidate (to the men) and the candidate’s wife to the ladies. On Sunday, the candidate should preach all services including a joint Sunday School with all adult classes and youth.

Evening services can be moved up to the afternoon on the final day with lunch on the grounds.

One afternoon between services, or one evening special service, have the man stand before the church body for questions. He should give his testimony of Salvation and describe his call to preach. It can be a good idea for the preacher’s wife to deliver her testimony briefly. She may stand down on the floor or even remain in her pew, if coming to the podium to speak during services makes her

uncomfortable.

### Expenses

Hosting a candidate will be expensive.

All travel costs and hotel should be completely covered by the church. A love offering should be provided. Use some of the pastoral fund set aside earlier for this purpose.

### Question 4: Is the Candidate God's Man? (Counselors)

The committee, on the Sunday prior to the arrival of the candidate, should caution the church not to discuss the preacher among themselves during his visit. All members should consciously withhold judgment until after the visit ends.

Fasting will greatly aid the church's unity during this week. The committee may challenge the church to fast of a single meal or a single day (as medically feasible for some), or perhaps a fast of all electronics and media for the entire week. These measures will refocus the body on the job of seeking the will of God, if received with a willing heart.

The church should vote the following Sunday, or one week later.

Before the vote, the committee should remind the church of the percentage required by the organizational documents to call a pastor.

Regardless of that percentage, if that vote passes, the church (the entire body) has called a pastor. The only room for discussion happened *before* the vote. There can be no space to be the "loyal opposition" or to remember a negative vote. The body has spoken. The vote is complete. The church must be unified!

Immediately after the vote, the committee must call the candidate and inform him of the decision, whether positive or negative. He will be waiting to hear from you.

He may accept immediately or may ask for a short time. A day or two should be acceptable, but a week or longer may indicate something amiss.

### Salary Concerns

If the church is large enough to warrant, consider purchasing a Pastoral Salary report. Several sites<sup>7</sup> produce these surveys and can help a committee know they are in the right range, based upon zip code, church size, and education level.

A smaller church or mission work may not need a report like this. Bi-vocational pastors already understand the difficulties involved. Just do your best and be upfront.

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<sup>7</sup> One such site is <https://www.churchlawandtax.com/salary/> Your mileage may vary.

### Moving Expenses

Will be a matter of great stress on the candidate and his wife. Please provide as best you can for this expense. Call around for moving companies to provide a bid. Come to the conversation armed with facts to help set these fears at ease.

Once the candidate accepts the call, he is your pastor. Support him. Love him. Pray for him and his family. Let him go to work!

### Attachment 1 – Sunday School Lessons

The genius of Pastor Leon Gray's Sunday School, besides the fact that all adult and youth classes had the same lesson each week, was the one-page type-written lessons. In this day of booklets and seemingly endless "resources," the one-page lessons required the teacher to first digest and then develop thoughts.

These lessons were to a large extent derived from Robert Sargent's Church Polity material (Oak Harbor Washington) and any similarities found are used by permission.

## THE OFFICE OF PASTOR #1

PHIL. 1:1 - The Bible gives the nature, qualifications, and duties of the only two officers (Pastor and Deacon) of a New Testament Church (an organized body of baptized believers).

- I. BIBLE TERMS FOR A PASTOR
  - a. Bishop (episcopos) "Overseer" - Duty - 1 TITUS 1:7
  - b. Elder (presbuteros) "Ruler" - Dignity - 1 PET. 5:1,2&4
  - c. Pastor (poimen) "Shepherd" - Design - 1 PET. 5:4
  - d. Baptists use the term pastor because of misuse elsewhere
  - e. Contrast ACTS 20:17&28
    - i. Terms interchangeable for the same office
    - ii. Terms demonstrate different aspects of the office
  - f. All point to one thing: Orderly Leadership - TITUS 1:5
  
- II. BIBLE PURPOSE FOR A PASTOR
  - a. Caretaker (overseer) for flock - 1 PET. 2:25, 5:4
  - b. Jesus is the Chief Shepard, pastor is "under-shepherd"
  - c. A Pastor is under direction and authority of Christ
  - d. Pastors are a gift to a church from God EPH. 4:11-16
    - i. For bringing members to spiritual maturity
    - ii. God calls men into the ministry
    - iii. A church recognizes God's call and ordains
    - iv. The Holy Spirit places them ACTS 13:1-4
  
- III. BIBLE DUTIES FOR A PASTOR
  - a. Three-fold responsibility to a Church
  - b. Lead - Do the work of an Elder HEB. 13:7,17,24
    - i. By Example - 1 PET. 5:3b
    - ii. By Oversight - 1 PET. 5:2
    - iii. Doesn't "just happen" - Taking oversight...
    - iv. Strong leadership equals a strong church
    - v. Not a dictator - 1 PET. 5.3a, MATT. 20:26-28
  - c. Feed - Do the work of a Shepherd ACTS 20:28
    - i. Apt to Teach - 1 TIM. 3:2
    - ii. Labor - 1 TIM. 5:17
    - iii. Study - 2 TIM. 2:15
    - iv. Preach - 2 TIM. 4:2
    - v. Train - 2 TIM. 2:2
    - vi. Evangelize - 2 TIM. 4:5
  - d. Heed - Do the work of a Bishop TITUS 2:15
    - i. Take heed of himself - ACTS 20:28
    - ii. Take heed of the whole church - ACTS 20:28
    - iii. Watch for religious wolves - ACTS 20:29
    - iv. Watch for dividers and heretics - ACTS 20:30
    - v. Watch for the souls of his flock - HEB. 13:17
    - vi. Stop the mouths of unruly / vain - TITUS 1:10,11
    - vii. Pray and visit the sick - JAMES 5:14

## THE OFFICE OF PASTOR #2

PHIL. 1:1 - The Bible gives the nature, qualifications, and duties of the only two officers (Pastor and Deacon) of a New Testament Church (an organized body of baptized believers).

1 TIM. 3:1-7 and TITUS 1:6-9 detail the spiritual qualifications for a pastor according to the Bible in the New Testament

- I. PASTORS MUST BE BLAMELESS 1 TIM. 3:2 / TITUS 1:6&7
  - a. The ministry must not be blamed 2 COR. 6:3&4
  - b. Blameless in his family TITUS 1:6
  - c. Titus connects this requirement to stewardship TITUS 1:7, thereby confirming he is a faithful man 2 COR. 4:1&2
  
- II. PASTORS MUST BE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE 1 TIM. 3:2 / TITUS 1:6
  - a. One wife - not at a time, but alive MARK 10:2-12
    - i. Bad premise: "tempting him" (vs. 2)
    - ii. He said, "But from the beginning..." (vs. 6)
    - iii. No more two, but one (vs. 8)
    - iv. Let not man (including yourself) put asunder (vs. 9)
    - v. In case we were still confused (vs. 11-12)
  - b. Marriage maturity measures spiritual maturity ("elder")
  - c. Marriage under the subject of blamelessness in both
  - d. Remember: All have sinned, God will forgive, all can serve-but God restricts this office only to those never divorced
  
- III. PASTORS MUST BE VIGILANT 1 TIM. 3:2 / TITUS 1:9
  - a. On the alert, on guard, watchful EZE. 3:17-21
    - i. He has a burden, and it will be required of him
    - ii. He must give no uncertain sound 1 COR. 14:8
  - b. He must rely on God PSA. 127:1
  
- IV. PASTORS MUST BE SOBER 1 TIM. 3:2 / TITUS 1:8
  - a. "Not allowing control from external or irrational things."
  - b. Balanced in his emotional make up JAMES 1:8
    - i. Not drunk, but also not angry, conniving, reckless
  - c. Serious-minded for he will be doing serious work
  
- V. PASTORS MUST BE OF GOOD BEHAVIOR 1 TIM. 3:2
  - a. In personal conduct (as a Man of God)
    - i. Appearance, manners, and speech 1 THESS. 2:10
    - ii. Not disorderly 2 THESS. 3:7
  - b. In ecclesiastical conduct (in the church)
    - i. How to lead in well-behaved manner 1 TIM 3:14-16
    - ii. Do things decently and in-order 1 COR. 14:40

### THE OFFICE OF PASTOR #3

EPH. 4:11-12 - The Bible tells us that a pastor is God's Gift to a Church. He is accountable to God for the direction of a church. Gifts should be met with gratitude and thankfulness. Not only to the pastor, but to God.

- I. GIVEN TO HOSPITALITY 1 TIM. 3:2 / TITUS 1:6&7
  - a. This is the natural outflow of brotherly love HEB. 13:1&2
  - b. A practical open-heartedness (but not a door mat or naive)
  - c. Actively seeking every opportunity to be a blessing
  
- II. PASTORS MUST BE APT TO TEACH 1 TIM. 3:2 / TITUS 1:6
  - a. He must have the ability to communicate God's Word
    - i. In a way that feeds and nourishes the flock
    - ii. In a way that serves to "perfect the saints"
  - b. The teaching should be:
    - i. Authoritative - 1 TIM. 4:11; TITUS 2:15
    - ii. Affirmative - 1 TIM. 6:2g
    - iii. Appropriate - 2 TIM. 2:25
  
- III. PASTORS MUST NOT BE GIVEN TO WINE 1 TIM. 3:2 / TITUS 1:9
  - a. A total abstainer from all alcoholic beverages
    - i. To obey God's Word PROV. 20:1, 23:29-35
    - ii. To set a godly example to others
    - iii. To maintain control of himself!
      - a. Notice how we are not to be out of control
      - b. Anger, lust, and drunken!
  - b. Not to include medicine (i.e., cough syrup) 1 TIM. 5:23
  
- IV. PASTORS MUST NOT BE A STRIKER 1 TIM. 3:2 / TITUS 1:8
  - a. Refers to physical attack ("to smite")
  - b. A pastor must never resort to violence (physical or verbal)
  - c. Mildness and restraint
    - i. Christ with the money changers? ROM. 12:19
    - ii. "Give place unto wrath" - get out of God's way
    - iii. "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord"
  
- V. PASTORS MUST NOT BE GREEDY OF FILTHY LUCRE 1 TIM. 3:2
  - a. Ill-gotten gain - thieves are not qualified!
  - b. Nothing to do with excellent personal stewardship!
    - i. Be happy if the man of God is doing well!
    - ii. He doesn't need to drive an '89 Honda Accord
  - c. Elders must never use the position for personal enrichment
    - i. Strong-arming members to use his construction company
    - ii. Or taking rolls of toilet paper from the church
  - d. Absolutely trustworthy in finances, in fact and in appearance

## Office of the Pastor Lesson 4

## Office of the Pastor Lesson 5

## Attachment 2 – Pastoral Questionnaire Template

Cut and paste the following questions onto church letterhead or with a church logo. This form can be made in Adobe Acrobat with fillable fields if desired or left as a simple Microsoft Word document. Alternately, a “hidden” webpage may be built with these questions which automatically sends to the pulpit search email address, if the technical skill is available.

### Personal

1. Please provide a brief testimony of your Salvation.
2. Please provide a brief testimony from your wife of her Salvation.
3. Have you or your wife ever been married before? (If yes, please explain.)
4. Please briefly explain why you are considering leaving your current church.

### Church

1. What is your position on church truth?
  - Local Only – All Baptized believers are only members of one local body.
  - Universal Only – All Saved individuals are only members of the universal body.
  - Both – A universal and local church exist simultaneously.
2. Please explain your position on both the act and purpose of baptism.
3. When accepting candidates for membership, a church should:
  - Accept only baptism performed under the authority of a Baptist church of like faith and practice.
  - Accept most baptism performed by Baptist or “Baptistic” churches.
  - Accept any baptism performed by immersion following Salvation.
  - Accept any baptism.

4. What is your position on those who may partake of the Lord's Supper?
  - Open – Available freely to any Christian
  - Close – Available to members of other churches of like faith
  - Closed – Available only to the membership of the administering church
  
5. What elements do you believe are Scriptural in the observance of the Lord's Supper?
  - Unleavened bread and alcoholic wine
  - Unleavened bread and grape juice
  
6. Please provide your position on church discipline.
  
7. Do you believe that "the church" has permanently replaced "Israel" in any way?

## Bible

1. What version of the Bible do you preach and teach from? Why?
  
2. Do you study from any other version of the Bible? If so, why?

## Salvation

1. Please explain the purpose and place of repentance in Salvation.
  
2. Do you agree with the following statement: "God elects only some people for Salvation"?
  - Yes
  - No

3. Do you agree with the following statement: "Once a person trusts Christ, Salvation cannot be lost"?

Yes

No

## Doctrinal

1. Please briefly describe the role of secular government in the work of a church.

2. Please briefly describe your philosophy of missions.

3. What is your position on the return of Christ?

Premillennial

Postmillennial

Amillennial

4. Which of the following best describes your beliefs on the Genesis account of Creation:

Six literal 24-hour days

Gap theory

Day-Age theory

Theistic evolution

## Ministry

1. Please provide a brief explanation of God's call on your life.

2. Please contrast the differences between pastoral and church authority.

3. What would best characterize your style of music for personal and ministry use?
  - Traditional
  - Contemporary
  - Blended (Please explain)
  
4. Please explain your style of leadership.
  
5. Please highlight your plans to evangelize in the following realms:
  - a. Locally
  - b. Regionally
  - c. Nationally
  - d. Globally
  
6. Please describe your position on giving to missions. Does your family currently give?
  
7. Please provide examples of your financial stewardship regarding church work.

## Training

1. Have you been ordained to the ministry of the Gospel?
  - Yes, on the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ in the year \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ church.
  - No

2. Provide a list all Bible Colleges, Institutes, and/or Seminaries attended with dates. Please add more rows as needed.

Name of Institution	City, State	Date	Course of Study	Completion (Yes / No)

## Reference and Biographical

1. Please provide three ministry references, including only Pastors, Evangelists, and Missionaries (currently on the field or furlough). Provide contact details of your current or most recent pastor.

	Name	Church	Telephone	Email
Current Pastor				
Reference #2				
Reference #3				

2. Please attach or link a recent family photo.

Completed

3. Please attach or link two (2) audio or video samples of preaching. Ideally, these messages will be from regularly scheduled services rather than a special occasion.

Completed

## Signature

By completing and submitting this questionnaire, you testify that all answers are truthful.

Signature

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Printed Name

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Date

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