

Pastoral Search Committee (PSC) Desirable Qualifications

Most articles and discussions about pastoral searches emphasize the importance of the right men and women being on the PSC—some call it the single most important factor in successfully calling the right pastor. What qualifications should a church be looking for in PSC members?

1. *Word-Centered:* They don't just believe the Bible, but the defining truth of their lives is that they profess the Living Word as their Lord and are devoted to the written Word. Being Word-centered is foundational to making good decisions. Regular time in the Word of God renews the mind and wisdom—the skill for right living—is developed through having the mind renewed by Scripture.

Ro 12:2 — Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect;

Phil 1:9-11 — **9** And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, **10** so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God

They need to understand Scripture well—how to rightly handle the word of truth (2 Tim 2:15)—and prioritize what Scripture prioritizes in looking for a pastor. Being Word-centered is critical for evaluating candidates against biblical qualifications and standards

Being Word-centered ensures a committee that is capable of evaluating a candidate on the basis of his ability to preach the Word

2. *Prayer-Centered:* A PSC member must be committed to prayer individually and as part of the committee. They need to be continually laying their work, thoughts, and decisions before God, seeking his provision and not their own solutions.
3. *Puts the good of the church ahead of other considerations.* This is also the recipe for unity. Unity is not achieving the lowest common denominator. In this context it is based on giving priority to achieving our church's core commitments—our philosophy of ministry
4. *One who can commit to and live up to the requirements of time and work and their share of the homework— see the section below on what the PSC will do*
5. *One who is familiar with and holds to the Westminster Confession and the catechisms*
6. *One who is familiar with and holds to what it is to be Presbyterian*

7. *One who is an active and involved member of the church, who has been a member long enough to know the church, and who agrees with the church's philosophy of ministry*
8. *One who exhibits and exercises discretion in their conversation and work*

What Will the PSC do?

The job of the PSC is to find a senior pastor for our church. This can be like a combination of being a researcher and a detective, a quality control technician, and a judge. Their task is to look for a man of God, clearly called by God to the ministry rather than one who has made a job and career of it, who

- a. clearly communicates the gospel through expositional preaching. One whose theology is biblically sound and sound in doctrine.
- b. pastors a church that takes membership seriously, encourages, challenges, and lifts one another, supports one another, and shares one another's sorrows and joys
- c. pastors a prayerful church
- d. pastors a church that welcomes non-believers and clearly presents the truth of the gospel to them
- e. pastors a church that isn't lost in the surrounding culture
- f. Is able to lead and be husband and father to a family consistent with biblical principles

Doubtless the committee will develop other desirable qualities and traits as well

Members of the PSC can expect:

- a. A period of learning to work together and how to operate as a committee
- b. Frequent meetings—for much of the search, probably weekly
- c. To develop a short history of the church to use in item d.
- d. To develop a professional looking brochure/booklet that describes our church, our beliefs, a bit about New Braunfels, our piece of Texas, and South Texas Presbytery. This will be provided electronically to candidates
- e. To develop objective standards to use in evaluating resumes and sermons and learning to use those standards effectively
- f. Reviewing many, many resumes
- g. Listening to and evaluating many, many sermons. This may well be the most tedious task for committee members but is absolutely crucial to determine if the sermons are expositional, gospel-centered, theologically and doctrinally sound, and able to be applied. It seems that too many committees find themselves

hearing “I didn’t have time to listen to the whole thing” or “I didn’t have time to listen to much of it but what I heard was good, bad or not sure.”

- h. As the list narrows down:
 - There will be interviews with the short list candidate or candidates. There are two parts to this task—first coming up with substantive questions for the candidates and second, critically evaluating their responses to the questions
 - There will be the need for at least some members to travel to see and hear the short list candidate or candidates preach on their home ground and observe their church—this is necessary to distinguish between those who interview well and those who pastor well
 - And finally, setting up the visit to our church, the topic we wish him to preach on (we don’t want him to preach one of his greatest hits, but to preach on something relevant to us)
- i. At the end of all that, it’s possible the committee may decided the short list doesn’t have a finalist, or the finalist just isn’t right. And then the committee could expect to go back a few steps.

Challenges for the PSC

- a. Prayerlessness within the committee and the church
- b. Missing too many meetings—how many is too many?
- c. Tedium leading to
 - Failure to follow through
 - Failure to exercise due diligence in reviewing sermons, references, etc.
 - Discouragement (see item e)
- d. Impatience within the committee or within the church leading to a rushed decision
- e. Spiritual attack
- f. Failure to adequately communicate with the church
- g. Failure of the Session to adequately budget for the PSC’s work
- h. Allowing positive or negative experiences with past or current pastors to be the defining priority for calling the next pastor