

ONE EXCELLENT WAY TO CHOOSE A SEARCH COMMITTEE

The process is time intensive. It does seem to produce good results and a high degree of respect and trust for both the new search committee and the board.

1. The board and perhaps the Nominating Committee divide up all the households in the congregation and place a call to every single household. Set a date for completing calls.
2. Each household should be told that it is critical to have input from everyone in the congregation in order to put together an effective Ministerial Search Committee. Questions to consider when selecting Search Committee members are:
 - Who can represent the whole congregation well (which would include looking out for the needs of children) and not just a piece or “faction” of the church? Who would have “no axe to grind” and who can serve the entire congregation?
 - Who in the congregation works well with others?
 - Who knows the history and culture of the church, whether old or newer to the congregation, and is grounded in our faith tradition?
 - Who can speak to a potential minister about our congregation on its best and worst days, about its strengths and weaknesses?

After thinking about these questions, who in the congregation would have your trust in working on our common behalf on our Search Committee?

The board/nominating committee member should take down the names of the persons listed for the last question.

[Note: If the caller reaches voice-mail or an answering device, a message with those questions will be left and the member will be invited to call back with their response. No follow-up phone calls need be made; if you want to weigh in, you have the opportunity to do so by phoning back.]

3. Someone else on the board, a good data manager, collects all the suggested names from the callers and makes a spread sheet, noting how many times very person suggested has been named. (The whole board need not see all this data).
4. The data manager reports to the Board the top 12-14 names. *(It's best to do the list where there is a natural break in the numbers. For example, the top 13 people got mentioned more than 20 times. Person number 14 on the list was mentioned 16 times. The next three were mentioned 14 times. The natural break is after person number 13.)*
5. Board members call this short list to see if these people are interested in running and agree to give up any other leadership position they hold if chosen for the Search Committee.
6. A written ballot is prepared. The names are listed alphabetically. The voting happens at a congregational meeting.

7. Written statements from all candidates stating why they want to be on the committee should be posted along with pictures, if possible.
8. The vote happens. At the end of the meeting the Board or Nominating Committee meets in executive session and counts ballots. The top 4 are elected. The board then appoints 3 others from the names on the ballot. *(The appointments are important. This improves the odds of diversity on the search committee and not just the seven elders dearly loved by the congregation. The broader the demographic the better, especially in regards to age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, areas of participation in the congregation).*
9. The Board/Nominating Committee announces the search committee, never telling anyone who was elected and who was appointed (including to the search committee.)
10. The next Sunday the search committee should be introduced with some fanfare. There might even be a small commissioning moment in the service and/or a taking of some vows to serve the congregation.

Follow all steps carefully and thoroughly. Such measures will produce the best results. To date, congregations that have followed this process with deliberateness and integrity have reported having a search committee that is respected, trusted, and representative by and to the congregation.