

# Who Should Be On Your Pastor Search Committee?

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One of the first questions we get from churches when we start a senior pastor search is, “Who is supposed to be on our pastor search committee?”

It’s an important question, because the pastor search committee carries a heavy and sacred responsibility as they seek the Lord on behalf of the congregation about who He is calling to be the church’s next pastor.

Before deciding who should be on your pastor search committee, you must determine the size of the committee.

## **How many people should the pastor search committee include?**

In *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*, William Vanderbloemen says, “The suggested size range for a pastor search committee is **seven** to eleven people. Make sure the committee is an odd number of people, to prevent any stalemates when taking any votes.”

We’ve seen churches with as little as two people on the committee up to as many as thirty. With too little people, the committee risks underrepresenting the thoughts of the congregation at large. With too many people on the committee, the committee risks a longer search process and a greater likelihood of conflict among the members.

Once your church has determined how many people will be on the search committee, it’s time to begin discerning who should be on the committee.

Here are a few pointers William Vanderbloemen gives in Chapter 4 of *Search: The Pastoral Search Committee Handbook*.

## **Include diversity but not just for diversity’s sake.**

It’s more important to select people with spiritual depth that have the church’s best interest at heart.

The conventional wisdom of choosing the members to serve on your pastor search committee is to get people who represent the entire body of the church—every demographic, gender, ministry age group, etc.

The intention of this conventional wisdom is to include everyone who you believe needs to have a voice in the decision, but we’ve seen that this approach often doesn’t work.

When a church takes this approach, then each of the members may strive to be the voice of their specific demographic and its agenda, resulting in many different ideas of what to look for in their next pastor—even with the best of intentions.

Instead of trying to represent every group of the church (who might each be mostly concerned with their age group, ministry, or demographic in the church’s future), find people for your pastor search committee who have in mind the best interests of the church as a whole and who have broad enough perspective to see beyond their own personal preferences and needs.

So yes, perspective diversity should be a priority for your search committee, but do not forget that the members of the pastor search committee should have spiritual depth, a broad vision for the church and its mission, and who truly want what's best for the church and not what's best for them.

### **Avoid the church curmudgeon.**

Unfortunately, most churches have a committee curmudgeon - the person who always seems to find their way onto a committee and has a negative opinion about everything. They tend to be a complainer and like to pick fights over little changes. A quick browse of this parody twitter account called Church Curmudgeon will show you what I'm talking about.

Many churches make the mistake of putting this person on the committee thinking, "If we give them a voice in the decision, they won't complain about it after the person they chose is here."

While this may seem logical at first, it's a quick way to torpedo your pastor search process. This type of person can bog down the entire process. It's vitally important to choose people who are agenda-free, who can set aside what they personally want in their next pastor, and think about the big picture of the whole church.

### **Select people with leadership experience.**

While many of your pastor search committee members have never hired a pastor before, it is helpful to the process if they have leadership experience. Seek people who have a track record of hard work and leadership success. Leadership is extremely difficult, especially in a ministry setting. Pastor search committee members who understand this typically have greater discernment when interviewing candidates, as they are looking for a leader of leaders as opposed to an impressive resume.

### **Select spiritually mature Christ-followers who prayerfully discern how God is leading.**

Most importantly, select committee members who are actively seeking the Lord about who God is calling as the church's next pastor. This aligns with the point above about agenda-free people. The pastor search process should be covered with prayer from start to finish, so select people who are prayer warriors and seek the Lord's guidance above all else.