

Congregational Harmony

*A Manual
For
Deacons and Church Workers*

By David A. Norris

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Recommended only for churches which are locally
governed with the aid of representative leaders
controlled by the congregation.

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Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to focus on ways that Bible-believing congregations can work in harmony and avoid much of the destructive strife that plagues churches.

Knowledge of the strife in churches seems so universal and accepted that it almost would lead us to believe that it is a necessary part of church life, but this is not true. Both the Bible conservatives and the liberals have church problems, but their solutions may be different, depending on the structure of their church government. Many of the Bible conservative congregations are organized into independent churches. They survived the trend toward liberalism in large part by virtue of the fact that they were independent and not subject to outside management. It is very important that locally governed churches make a special effort to avoid needless strife and be prepared to handle it locally when it comes with a minimum of damage. The other churches can frequently handle their problems best by passing them on to some non-local authority to which they are in submission.

For Christians to live in harmony is very important. The Bible is explicit about the purpose of and the advantages in doing things via the local church. The local Bible church is the channel for our efforts, in order to receive a maximum multiplying effect in the service of our Lord and Savior and Creator, in evangelism, in spiritual maturing of Christians, and in missionary outreach. This rightly receives the attention of much of our Christian literature.

This booklet has been compiled largely from experiences of an independent fundamental Baptist deacon board. Some of the lessons learned were learned the hard way. The purpose of this booklet is to share with others ways to promote harmony and to avoid divisive contentions that can swell up from minor issues and impair the important God-given ministry of the church. There are, of course, many problems that leaders within the church will encounter for which the only guideline is a cautious search of the Scriptures, prayer, and waiting upon wisdom and direction from the Lord. With reference to the subject generally, there seems to be

very little reading material for deacons or a similarly designated group of leaders within the church, who are the human keys to a harmonious, spiritually prosperous, and growing church. For this reason the deacon board functions elaborated on in this booklet are directed to a rather narrowness of purpose: promoting harmony in the church.

This manual is addressed mainly to Christians - those who have already acknowledged that they are sinners (Eccls. 7:20; Rom. 3:10, 23), have recognized that they cannot save themselves (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8,9) and, in true repentance, have asked Christ to be their Savior from sin (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24).

If you have not received Christ as your Savior, you are not “at peace” with God. You are (Rom. 5:6,10) in need of being reconciled to Him (II Cor. 5:20b). You need to acknowledge your sin and trust Christ as your Savior. You need to come to Jesus Christ, the only true Source of lasting peace (Eph. 2:14).

But the Bible indicates that Christians, even though they have believed in and received Christ for salvation, still sin (I John: 8-10). Many Christians hold hatred, fear, resentment, jealousy, and malice toward others. As a result, fellowship with these persons and the Lord is broken, joy is lost, and God’s peace is not enjoyed. Confession of sin (I John 1:9) and forsaking of one’s sinful ways in obedience to the Lord and His Word (Prov. 28:13) are necessary if the Christian is to enjoy God’s peace (Gal. 5:22, Rom. 15:33).

Chapter 1 - Background for Church Policy

The codification of Scriptures on this subject is beyond the intent of this booklet. We touch only briefly upon three basic Bible teachings: carnal man, church leaders, and common sense according to Scriptures.

Carnal Man

The carnal or selfish nature of man with his volatile tendencies is an element in every church. World history is a reflection of man generally, and history is dominated by strife, wars, and continual problems in civic affairs and business, as well as in church life. The Bible points out that the best of people, when out of fellowship with God, can get off on a tangent, and what do we have? We have murmuring, feuding, splitting of friendships, and loss of trust.

I Corinthians 3:1-3: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”

Romans 7: 14-17: “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.”

Acts 6: 1: “And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because of their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.”

Church Leaders

Deacons compose a board of select members (from a congregation) who are hopefully spiritually mature, not volatile, to help in the administration of church affairs, including the minimizing and the preventing of problems.

Acts 6: 3: “Wherefore, brethren, look we out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom ye may appoint over this business.”

It is important that all deacon nominees are selected from those in the congregation who are spiritually aright with God.

I Corinthians 2: 15: “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

Galatians 5: 22-26: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Common Sense According to Scriptures

In view of men’s tendencies, the use of common sense and good planning cannot be overemphasized. The Scriptures refer to this in many ways that pertain.

I Corinthians 2:15: “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, ...”

I Corinthians 14: 40: “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Titus 1:5: “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.”

Chapter II - A Most Powerful Force in Human Affairs

The power of love:

*I Corinthians 13: 1-8a: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.
And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing.
And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.
Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.*

*Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;
Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;
Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.
Love never faileth.”*

The question is not whether the pastor, the deacons, or other church members will make mistakes. All make mistakes; D.L. Moody and C.H. Spurgeon made mistakes. The question is this: will we display the fruits of a spiritual person and work to smooth it out and improve things in the future, or will we be a carnal person and magnify it and make it worse? The statement has been made that the job of a newspaper editor is to take a molehill and make a mountain out of it. This statement is unfair when applied to all news copywriters, but it is, unfortunately, true of some Christians and newspaper personnel as well.

The power of God’s love, when applied to the lives of church members, is the greatest single remedy for church problems. We need to be constantly reminded and to remind one another to be kindhearted and to be conscious of the need of this power in all church matters. If we yield to carnality, we lose the wonderful fruits of the Spirit and the power of love that make for a thriving church and happy Christians.

God’s Word is quite specific and broad when instructing on the subject of charity of love.

Patience.....Love suffereth long
Kindness.....And is kind
Generosity.....Love envieth not
HumilityLove Vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up
Courtesy.....Doth not behave itself unseemly
Unselfishness.....Seeketh not her own
Good Temper.....Is not easily provoked
Guilelessness.....Thinketh no evil
Sincerity.....Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth

A prime responsibility of deacons and other church leaders is to be bearers of love and to be alert to individual instances where in a humble way they should emphasize the practice of charity among others. I Peter 4:8 says love covers a multitude of sins. The talebearer has no place in

God's favor. Since all, literally all, Christians make mistakes, it is God's power, and His alone, that will bring success and progress to the church ministry. If we know of something that would hinder or hurt the reputation of one of God's children, it should be buried and never, except in the process of board review for discipline or personal counseling, be reported to anyone else!!!

Chapter 13 of 1st Corinthians comes down hard on anyone who soft peddles the command and the need of the church members working in the power of God's love, in stating "...Though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Certainly Christian martyrdom is one of the greatest of all sacrifices, we would all agree, and yet God's Word says if we should perform such a service and not have love, we are nothing.

Guilelessness and sincerity cannot be dismissed lightly. Guilelessness is the grace for suspicious people. To possess it is a great secret of personal influence. Progress comes when we believe in people in spite of their weakness and encourage them for the better rather than allow things to degenerate in an atmosphere of suspicion.

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." This is a hard truth and to fail to see and live it, destroys fellowship with God and service to man. It includes more strictly the self-restraint, which refuses to make capital out of others' faults. Real charity or love delights not in exposing the weakness of others, but "covereth all things." Even the disciplinary action thrust upon the deacon board must be motivated and administered in love.

Chapter III - Deacon Selection and Requirements

The importance of selecting deacons from the more mature and sensible men in the church is obvious, but the method of selection may not be so obvious.

- A. Because of the fact that the people who are doing the bulk of the church work are most likely to know who is qualified and who is not qualified, it is advisable that a select nominating committee composed of active church workers finalize the slate of candidates for the congregation. Some churches have a nominating committee composed of two deacons, two trustees, and two members from the congregation as a whole, selected by their respective group for this

- purpose. The congregation should be strongly encourages, if not required, to make their nominations in advance to the nominating committee because last minute nominations from the floor run the risk of getting a candidate who is unqualified or unwilling to serve.
- B. Before new church members are considered as deacons, they should be proven by exposure to the congregation in lesser capacities for at least a year. As in every phase of our society, a few enter our churches with very impressive credentials, but are not qualified for leadership; and there are a few who literally prey on the unsuspecting - who are living in sin and, who in positions of church leadership, do great harm.
 - C. The qualifications for deacons are laid out in Acts 6 and I Timothy 3; their qualifications should be based upon spirituality, loyalty, and desire to work. Selection based upon community prestige, financial success, etc., of candidates is a mistake.

Chapter IV - Deacon Responsibilities

- A. Duties. Following is a partial list of deacons' duties, some of which may or may not fit a particular church situation.
 - 1. Visit shut-ins of the church.
 - 2. Serve as an advisory board. However, final authority is vested in church members - deacons only advise. This is a humble position.
 - 3. Serve as pastor's helpers.
 - 4. Serve as personal workers: at the invitation following the pastor's message, at visitation, and in everyday witnessing, with the ability and desire to lead others to Christ.
 - 5. Counsel, at the request of the pastor and board, with carnal Christians, troublemakers, faultfinders, and those who have an unforgiving spirit.
 - 6. Assist the pastor in the oversight of the entire church program - on all committees, etc.
- B. Deacons' meetings
 - 1. Meetings should always be scheduled regularly and should always include prayer.
 - 2. The meeting addenda should always be prepared in advance.

3. Larger church boards can benefit by having subcommittees work in specific areas and report back with recommendations to the entire board.
4. After the board reaches decisions, these must be supported by all members of the board. This is an elementary principle that should never be violated. Questions under consideration should be thoroughly discussed, including all advantages and disadvantages that seem significant to each and every deacon. In this way, hopefully, not only will the decision be the best one, but also when every deacon contributes his ideas, the board will have an overview of the different ideas and concerns that could be expected from the congregation as a whole. After all the opinions have been aired and a decision made on a recommendation to make to the congregation, every single deacon, no matter what his opinion was during the decision-making process, must support the decision both privately and publicly. Violating this flaunts all the principles of order and common sense and destroys the deacon board as an instrument for leadership and harmony in the church.
5. Deacons' business does not go beyond the meeting to wives or to anyone else.

C. Local Church and deacons

1. Teamwork is essential. Great churches have no stars. Preaching and teaching and other duties are divided, lay leadership is accented, and Christ is given the Headship.
2. The pastor's position in the church.
 - a. The pastor serves as "shepherd" or church leader. Ezekiel 34, I Peter 5, I Timothy 3.
 - b. The pastor is in God's vineyard to cultivate it. He is responsible to God for the spiritual welfare of His people.
 - c. Pastors do not always have personalities pleasing to us, nor do they always do their work in ways, which we prefer. However, we are admonished to "... Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (I Thess. 5:13)
3. The pastor is a person.
 - a. Sheep need tending, but so do shepherds. Acts 14:15: "We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from

these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein.”

- b. God does not expect pastors to behave better than other Christians. All Christians, preachers and laymen ought to behave in a manner that draws respect, but we all fail sometimes. The miracle is that God enables us to love, forgive, and support one another.
- c. The pastor is at a disadvantage, being somewhat isolated from laymen’s experiences and everyday attitudes, and therefore thinks differently than laymen.

D. Deacons - the pastor’s helpers

- 1. Artificial status to pastors is harmful, so avoid this.
 - a. A good pastor is a man with good motives and who tries, but he is not perfect.
 - b. To magnify the pastor by giving him an artificial status is bad. It exposes him to the temptation of pride, can isolate him from the team-level fellowship needed in a great church, and can cause the people to judge him by a harsher standard than they place on themselves.
 - c. The pastor needs love, prayer, understanding, and fellowship, without being expected to give up his independence as a pastor.
- 2. Deacons - the pastor’s antennae
 - a. Deacons should be eyes and ears for the pastor and the board and be sensitive to any indications of developing problems or needs within the church.
 - b. Deacons should not keep any information or criticisms of significance from the pastor, but should advise him in a considerate and loving manner.
 - c. Wise pastors seek deacons’ advice on hard decisions, and wise deacons give advice without expecting the pastor to do as they advise.
- 3. Deacons - the pastor’s shield
 - a. A church family, like a family, is loyal to one another, and deacons owe a particular loyalty to the pastor. Errors are counseled on a person-to person basis. Deacons never criticize the pastor, other deacons, or church workers publicly!!! Criticism of the pastor by others should be muted to the best of the deacons’ ability. See “Communicating As Christians,”

Heartland Press, 1616 Grand Avenue, Ames, Iowa 50010.

- b. Deacons should understand the vulnerability of any human being in the pastor's job. Deacons should understand the terrible, destructive power of people who are constantly criticizing and faultfinding. These people usually add to the tragedy and end up destroying their own homes by not giving their children a firm base on which to grow.
 - c. If some individual or committee, e.g., music committee, should grow in power and authority and reduce, for example, the music director to a slave and the pastor to a figurehead, the deacons, after prayerful counsel, not the pastor should perform the surgery or see that adequate adjustments are made. Such surgery usually involves carnal Christians who will be bitter. Deacons are easier to replace, come the next church election and it is better to have the individual or committee upset with the deacons rather than with the pastor.
- E. Deacons and music. Music, perhaps more than anything else, can have a stimulating and helpful, or depressing and harmful effect on the pastor and/or the congregation.
- 1. Pastor and deacons should see that the pastor is the pastor of the music as well as the other programs of the church.
 - a. The purpose of the music is to prepare the pastor and the congregation for the preaching of the Word of God. All those participating in the music program should understand this most important aspect of the church service.
 - b. The music director should be able to carry out the music program on his own, but he must have the capacity and disposition to serve with the approval of and make changes upon the suggestion of the pastor.
 - c. The music committee should include a deacon and other members who, though not necessarily professional musicians, have a deep concern for the church policy on music as well as a good music program.

- d. Pastoral guidance could include going through the songbook and approving songs, for the director's benefit, which are acceptable for congregational singing.

Chapter V - Pastor's Vacation

- A. Paid vacation is very important. The length varies, but how hard the pastor works should be an influencing factor. It should compare favorably with other professions.
Example: Federal employees' vacation schedule (five day work week):
 - 1-3 years employment ... 13 days yearly
 - 3-15 years employment...20 days yearly
 - 15 + years employment...26 days yearly
 - 8 paid holidays
 - 13 days sick leave per year - accumulative; those not used carry over
to next year.
- B. It is good if the vacation includes some genuine rest and time spent with the entire family. The pastor and family should not come back to the church activities exhausted.

Chapter VI - Outreach Beyond the Local Church

- A. Pastor and the traveling choir, etc.
 - 1. Exchange of talent and ideas between churches and church organizations is helpful and stimulating.
 - 2. The pastor should keep the deacons informed on the details of outside opportunities which he feels deserve his and the church's support.
 - 3. Pastors should not accept double compensation from two employers without their both knowing about it.
 - 4. A pastor can gain much support and understanding by providing replacements when taking outside assignments on

local church time and considering their financial needs the same as he considers his own.

Chapter VII - Thoughts for the Pastor

It is important as pastor to understand that in the final analysis *the tertiary force for progress lies in the membership as a whole*, and he should, therefore, seek God's help and try constantly to avoid needless actions that could destroy people's confidence in his leadership. When confidence wanes some of the congregation begin to see their pastor as a less spiritual man than when he first arrived. In reality he is just as spiritual and just as good a preacher, but some of the congregation may begin to tune this out.

It may be well on occasion to remind the congregation as a pastor that you are not perfect and you are doing your best but need their understanding, prayers, and help. As parents we have cultivated this attitude with our children. Reminding them we are not perfect, that we are doing our best as parents, but in a very real sense they are in God's hands does this. In this way, without relenting in any way in our duty as earthly parents, they respect us for our honesty and see in finality they are responsible to God, the perfect Father.

The isolation and other natural tendencies sometimes felt by the pastor give the temptation felt by all to tell things which, if heard by critical ears, would be passed on to others and cause great loss of support within the congregation. Pastors should be especially cautious about criticizing other pastors of like faith. Since no one is perfect such criticism rendered carelessly tends to boomerang and reduce confidence all around.

The support of a loving, forgiving, understanding deacon board is very beneficial, but does not compare with the support of a congregation that sees their pastor as a man with a pure heart, sincerely working as their undershepherd.

Chapter VIII - Business Meetings and Deacons

- A. Review ground rules with the congregation at least yearly.
Preventive medicine is much better than the cure.

1. Insist on kindness at all times to persons and issues involved in business meetings.
 - a. God commands it and makes it possible.
 - b. The power of the church is in love and forbearance.
 - c. Rudeness and harsh words exhibit an unchristian spirit and destroy the atmosphere conducive to enjoyable worship and fellowship.
2. It should be known that deacons are readily accessible personally to any who have suggestions or criticisms.
3. All should realize they have a right to speak in opposition to the proposal under consideration during the discussion of the proposal.
4. The principle of divine order should be followed and the husband, not the wife, should be the spokesman, on any issue that could possibly be controversial.

I Corinthians 14: 34,35: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

I Timothy 2:12: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

B. Prepare thoroughly for business meetings.

1. The pastor should be present at deacons’ and business meetings.
2. The board should thoughtfully analyze all possible alternatives.
 - a. Many church troubles are caused by a lack of thoughtlessness and proper planning on the part of the pastor and the deacons. Sources and types of objections to recommendations, as well as benefits, should be considered.
 - b. Use outside expert advice when needed.
3. Notice should be given to the membership on big decisions prior to the business meeting.
 - a. Always inform the people with recommendations some two or three weeks prior to the business meeting. An informed membership is a trusting membership.

- b. Hold a hearing in advance of the business meeting for the church membership to comment on crucial recommendations, e.g., missionary budget, building plan, etc.
 - 4. A board spokesman should anticipate the types of questions that will be asked at the meeting and prepare his answers in advance.
- C. The business meeting.
 - 1. All who want to speak should be given the opportunity.
 - 2. A spokesman should never display his temper.
 - a. A spokesman who retaliates is often seen and penalized in the mind of meeting participants rather than the tormentors or thoughtless critics.
 - b. A kind and gracious spirit glorifies God and the local church ministry.
 - 3. Opposition should never be encouraged. The goal is to hear out those who want to be heard and move to a decision supported by a strong majority.
 - 4. Some decisions receiving only marginal support should be reconsidered. A spokesman could ask the church to table important decisions involving purchases, etc., when the church is almost equally divided, “Since the vote has been so close, I would like to entertain a motion that we rescind the action just taken, place the matter in the hands of the board of deacons, trustees, etc., for further study, in order that they might bring back a more suitable recommendation at our next business meeting.” The purchase of a house or songbooks is not as important as unity in the church. (Ephesians 4:3.)

Chapter IX - Pulpit Committee and Its Work

Congregations that select and call their own pastor are able to secure special blessings of God through self-government, but this calls for considerable care and responsibility of every adult individual in the church membership. The decision is most important because of the

long-term impact in the ministry of both the pastor and the church.

The goal of the Pulpit Committee should be to find God's man for the church. This requires working with the congregation in a way that is agreeable to the congregation in the procedures used and the candidate called. God "...gave some (churches) apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:11-12a).

A. Prayer. I Thessalonians 5:17, James 1:5-6, Acts 6:1-4; Acts 13:1-3.

1. The deacons or Pulpit committee should constantly bathe their proceedings in prayer.
2. The congregation should be called upon to give special emphasis in their prayers that God's will for a pastor might be known. This could include a special Day of Prayer at the outset and continual reminders to the congregation through the bulletin and from the pulpit.

B. The congregation and Pulpit Committee

1. Congregational Resolve.

As the Pulpit committee considers the best procedure to use in getting a new pastor, it is important that some consideration be given the question, "Is the congregation ready spiritually and mentally to call a pastor?" Sometimes events preceding the need of a new pastor will leave some members in the congregation looking at each other instead of being resolved to work in a positive manner as a part of the church team. Until the congregation is settled down before God, there is a real danger that the efforts to get a new pastor will abort or, if successful, the ministry of the new pastor may be adversely affected due to the lack of support.

2. Those who care, share.

An all-important factor throughout the pastor-calling process is communications. Pulpit Committees who understand this and who care, share. There is no end to the apprehensions that may exist within the congregation. Are the deacons going to work this way or that in getting a new pastor? Are the deacons going to recommend a candidate too quickly? Are they going to delay too long? Church members who want to put God's will first and see their responsibility to

work and support the pastor with a good attitude should share ideas, which they think are significant, with the Pulpit Committee. Two-way communications can clear up or minimize apprehensions and the Pulpit Committee should be sure that the congregation is informed and their ideas sought in advance. Decisions on the procedures and timing can be improved through an assessment and consideration of the mood of the congregation. Support of the congregation can be maximized by:

- a. Inviting the church members to come to a specially set meeting for the purpose of getting ideas on possible candidates, things that concern them, ideas on procedures to use, etc.
- b. Tentatively agreeing as a Board on the method of getting and calling a pastor, then presenting the plan to the church and encouraging any member to attend the next deacons' meeting to make suggestions.
- c. Informing the congregation throughout the various stages of the process. Do not proceed to the next stage unless and until you have the support of the congregation. Allow the time needed for God's Word to work in hearts and the Spirit, with God's love, to restore fellowship where strained.
- d. Avoid giving the impression as a Pulpit Committee that you are trying to sell a candidate by adding speculative laurels to him. Use the considered testimony of others who have good judgment and who know, if deemed wise.

C. Prospecting

1. Define what you are looking for in a pastor.
Evaluate as a Board the weaknesses and strengths within the church and just what type of pastoral emphasis and abilities would best complement future progress.
2. Selecting potential candidates. "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 11:14).
 - a. Seek recommendations from sound church association leaders whose judgment is respected and who have many contacts and would not, because of their position or commitment, be a candidate. Contact

these men without collaboration and ask them to consider the church and the need and to suggest two or three men they think would be the best possible candidates.

3. Screening Prospects.

Secure a number of names of potential candidates and give consideration to those most frequently recommended. The opinion of leaders outside the church, added to what is known within the Pulpit Committee, should help to reduce the list to what seems to be the best five or six possibilities.

D. Procedure

1. Agree on the procedure to use that seems best for the congregation in getting acquainted with and calling a candidate. Advise the congregation of the procedure and give them the reasons this appears to be the best alternative. Seek ideas from the congregation in advance that may improve the way it is done. Two of the most common procedures are:
 - a. To expose and recommend one man at a time to the congregation. I believe this to be the best method, particularly if prospecting and screening are well done and the congregation agrees that this is the best approach.
 - b. To present two or three candidates and see which one seems most popular with the congregation. I do not normally suggest this because it may be hard on the candidates who are rejected and hurt their present ministry. Often, the best man may not be willing to be considered through such a procedure. There is further disadvantage because popularity cannot be a safe measure unless the congregation gets considerable exposure to each candidate and this takes some months to accomplish.
2. Communicate directly with the prospective candidate. Invite the consideration of the best man until a possible candidate is secured and follow through with a two-way communication. You may invite the man to come to the church as a pulpit supply. If reaction is favorable, the Pulpit Committee can invite him back again to be considered by the congregation as a candidate.

E. Is he God's man? Do the candidate and the church fit together?

The earlier screening process should have answered the basic questions - is he doctrinally sound; does he have a good family situation; is he a practical man with whom the congregation will prosper spiritually and become active in service? What are his study habits, ideas on counseling, etc.?

Sometime prior to the time the man comes as a candidate, it is advisable that some of the Pulpit Committee visit the man's present church and home to verify and get impressions of the work being accomplished there. It is good to seek his counsel on the best way to explain your presence in the church. Although a Pulpit Committee visit may enhance his ministry there, care should be taken so his ministry will not be hurt. Comments from others who have been in the home should be sought as well. It would be wise to obtain a credit report through the local credit bureau - one measure of his personal business habits.

When the prospect comes the first time to fill the pulpit or as a candidate, he probably will have many questions. He will want to get as complete a picture as possible of the church, its potential, its problems, the community, etc. The church members should know well in advance that the pulpit supply might be called back at a later date as a candidate. They should be encouraged to attend as he fills the pulpit. The Board or Pulpit Committee as a whole should have a thorough get-acquainted-session with the candidate and his wife. Eating together and other social activities offer good opportunities for this. If possible the visit might cover two or three days, including a potluck, social gathering with all the officers and teachers of the church, etc. The training union could be set aside for all the church to hear a brief message on the family and the home from the possible candidate, and then open up the meeting for questions from any of the church members.

Care should be taken that the schedule leaves no impression upon the congregation of trying to oversell the man or favoring members with his presence. Some prospects will favor staying in a home; some prefer a motel provided by the church.

Some member of the Pulpit Committee may be delegated the task of showing the prospect and his wife the community. This is a good time to gather personal information, salary considerations, challenges and problems in the local church, and the candidate's present church.

Realizing that God has chosen to use the church with fallible men and women is to contemplate one of the greatest proofs there is of God's power. The pastor-congregation relationship, like a happy family, needs to be a relationship of love: first, love of God and second, between the members. "And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14).

There is security and strength in the relationship because there is love and all the participants are good forgivers. Shortcomings are dealt with using understanding and communication and all concerned grow spiritually, mentally, and in effectiveness as a part of a team serving God. It is not automatic - it takes work and a conscious understanding of the process whereby we bring glory to God through forgiving, growing and constantly striving to do better as a church team.

Every effort should be made to see that the man gets sufficient exposure before the church, in order that the Pulpit Committee will have ample evidence that he may be the right man before he is even considered officially as a candidate. Do the people like his personality; will the congregation work together and go forward under his preaching? Personal exposure by itself would be insufficient to make such an important decision. Testimony of others about the candidate's past ministry is very important. Is his level of development consistent with the challenge in your church?

F. Candidate Comes

When the man comes as a candidate, most of the work by the Pulpit Committee has been done. The congregation should have at least a two or three-week notice of the day when the man will conduct the services as a candidate. The congregational vote on the candidate should follow as soon as practical. If the call is extended, normally the candidate will want to know what the vote was before he makes the final decision in his own mind as to God's will in the matter. The votes should be by ballot.

G. When a pastor leaves

When a pastor leaves a church, the departure should be dealt with tenderly and with love. This goes a long way in assuring God's blessing when calling a new pastor.

Conclusion

In quoting Dr. Paul R. Jackson, “The church is a group ruled by its own majority vote. Neither the pastor nor the deacons can rule the church. This is clear from Matthew 18:17 where the church is the final authority in discipline. It is also evident from Acts 15 where the ‘whole church’ determined the vital decision on true doctrine. The church has divinely provided officers and leaders, but the Lord has chosen to rest the final power in the entire group, subject to His own headship.

“It is evident, therefore, that the Lord has designed the church with internal, interlocking powers and responsibilities. The church is to be subject to the pastor. Yet the pastor is subject to the church, in another sense, for he is called by them and may be disciplined by them.

“There is no problem here except for those who will not be subject to the Head of the church. It is not difficult for a Bible-taught church to be subject to the overseer or pastor that God has sent. Neither is it difficult for a faithful pastor to be sensitive to the will of God’s people. What a lovely and delightful relationship exists between pastor, deacons, and people when all are subject to Christ the Head.

“It is vital that this happy relationship should always be evident in each church. When there is jealousy, bitterness, self-seeking and strife, and testimony of the Lord suffers, saints and sinners are caused to stumble, and the church loses its power to be a blessing because the Holy Spirit is grieved. Pastor and people must both recognize that the honor of the Lord and the welfare of His church must take precedence over personal differences. Let us suffer wrong. Let us ‘lose face.’ But the Lord must not be dishonored, His church be divided, or sinners be offended.”

Any group involved in decision making will make mistakes. A congregation respects,, however, the Board that faces up to its mistakes with corrections and treats its tormentors with sincere Christian love. This goes a long way toward minimizing the bad impressions new Christians or others might get when trouble comes.

The policies outlined in this booklet have been found to be very helpful. I pray sincerely that God may use some of these ideas to help you in your effort to be a more effective church leader for His glory.

David A. Norris