

Strategic Planning Questions for Churches Seeking Pastors

The Questions To Clarify Church Life

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As a church enters the search process, either for transitional leadership or for the next called and installed pastor, it is necessary for the congregation to reflect on who they are today, and where they want to go tomorrow. We often believe the congregation has changed little in the past few years. Yet thinking introspectively about membership, dreams, programs, past history and changes that might need to be implemented will often shape the type of leadership needed in the future. The following questions are intended to stimulate that thinking so that the congregation and the next pastor have a sense of the church's vision for the future and where it sees itself in the community and neighborhood.

1. What demographics of age, race, sex, and education describe your neighborhood and the community you serve? How will this demographic information shape the next five years of your ministry? How might this same information shape your search for your next installed pastor?
2. Describe the culture of your congregation and how is your congregation different from churches or other denominations in your neighborhood?
3. What areas of outreach are important to your church and in what areas have you been active? As you think about outreach, which segment of your community is likely to respond most readily? What characteristics does your congregation have that can change your community?
4. What is your new typical member like and is that different from current membership? How do you assimilate these new members?
5. Why do people join your congregation and why don't people join your congregation?
6. Which parts of your church life are calling cards for your congregation?
 - a. Which of your congregation's programs need to be ended or changed?
 - b. What activities (classes, studies, ministries, etc.) would you like to explore as new opportunities for your church?

7. What do you anticipate will be areas of growth and challenge for your congregation in the next few years?
8. What issues of faith are engaging your congregation?
 - a. What excites people theologically?
 - b. What are members of your congregation “tired” of? Why?
9. What has been your most energetic dispute and how was it handled?
10. What is the role of the pastor? For example:
 - a. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of your last called pastor?
 - b. How did your last pastor divide time among things like worship, teaching, pastoral care, administration, and church growth?
 - c. Can you describe the strengths of your ideal pastor?
 - d. Have you considered diversity in your search?
11. Describe the relationship among current staff, session and congregation. How would you like these relationships to change?
12. How is your congregation different from other Presbyterian churches?
13. What are your church’s financial strengths and weaknesses? Please provide copies of the last three year’s Treasurer’s Reports, including financial balance sheets and Profit & Loss statements for those years. Also include a discussion of any significant debt impacting the church.