

Questions To Ask The Church Board

By George Stahnke 06/30/2006

In times of leadership transition both the church board and the ministry candidate have questions that need to be asked. Historically it has been the selection committee or the church board that asked all the questions of the applicant. This one-sided approach is ill advised and has been a primary cause of disappointment and pain for all involved.

It is equally important for the candidate to ask his questions and gather sufficient data from the selection committee and/or church board. This will enable the candidate and his family to make an informed decision about their future. Candid discussions regarding matters of character, history, doctrine, finances, implied and specific responsibilities, etc., are critically important in making the right decision. All parties involved have expectations of each other that will either be met with enthusiastic satisfaction or dismal frustration.

I would suggest that the following questions be asked. The information you receive will give you a clear indication as to the demeanor of those you will be interacting with. You will also gain clarity about potential areas of conflict and needed areas of adjustment.

Proverbs 4:7 (AMP) *The beginning of Wisdom is: get Wisdom (skillful and godly Wisdom)! [For skillful and godly Wisdom is the principal thing.] And with all you have gotten, **get understanding (discernment, comprehension, and interpretation).***

1. Secure and carefully read the following church documents:
 - a. Vision and purpose statement
Are you in agreement? How much freedom, if any, will you have to influence the vision and purpose of the church if you see the need for adjustment?
 - b. Constitution and Bylaws
Are you in agreement? Can you function freely within the stated guidelines? When were they last revised? Do they need to be updated to reflect the current legal climate? Will you have the freedom to make suggestions?
 - c. Doctrinal statement (*usually included in the above*)
Are you in agreement with the stated beliefs of the church and can you defend them?
 - d. Employee handbook (details regarding work schedule, vacation, sick leave, health benefits, etc.)
 - e. Check the Secretary of State's web site and see if the church is truly a legal entity. I know of one congregation, due to missed paperwork over one of the address changes wasn't legal for several years.

2. Ask for a written job description to include clearly defined protocols and lines of authority. If and offer is made by the church and accepted, the negotiations should be concluded with a

RENEWAL MINISTRIES

of Colorado Springs

written contract that includes the details agreed upon by all parties. Such details would include your work schedule, compensation and benefit package and terms of employment. The employment contract should be signed, dated and witnessed. This protects both you and the church if disputes arise in the future.

3. Ask for a detailed organizational chart of the ministry showing all departments and their leaders.
4. Ask for a brief bio on the existing leadership team including their time in service.
5. Ask for a comparative financial report showing income and expense totals over the last five years. Has there been a decline in income, and if so, why? I'd also ask for a general breakdown of both income and expenses. How much comes from tithes vs. other income sources, and what are those sources? The same for expenses, salary vs. building vs. giving outside the ministry vs. other areas.
6. What organizations or other ministries does this ministry have ties to? How substantial are those ties? (*i.e., a covering organization on paper only or an active relationship; or a parent ministry that pulls the strings or can overrule or even have a strong, unofficial influence.*)
7. Ask about turnover in the congregation. Is it growing or shrinking? Of those who left, did they move away? Go to a different church? Leave the faith? Of those coming in, are they new converts or just church transplants?
8. How much turnover has there been in the pastoral staff in the life of the ministry and why?
9. How much turnover has there been by department in the last 24 months and why?
10. Have there been any forced terminations? If so what were the circumstances?
 - a. What process was used in ministering to the person terminated and the congregation to facilitate healing?
 - b. To what degree was reconciliation achieved?
11. Ask for the contact information for the person that filled the position you are applying for and if you can contact them.
12. What are the ministries ten strongest points?
13. What are the ministries five weakest points?
14. I would also ask about the expectations the church has regarding your family. Will they allow your spouse to serve as the Lord leads or do they want your spouse to lead a specific group or to be involved in a particular program? Trust me they do have expectations regarding your family. Failure to get clarity on this issue can result in relational difficulty with the church and in your marriage.

RENEWAL MINISTRIES

of Colorado Springs

15. The church expects an open disclosure of the prospective minister's faith walk. Similarly you should ask for the opportunity to hear of the faith walk from the leadership team you will be working with. This would include elders, deacons and board members. This will give you the opportunity to hear what God is doing in their individual lives as well as what God is doing with the team as a whole.

I would like to close by stating that silence on your part regarding any point in the discussion will be seen as agreement. If you are unsure of anything or need additional understanding, ask clarifying questions. If you are in disagreement, try to negotiate an acceptable compromise. Please don't be silent regarding your concerns!

Throughout the process it is assumed that you and your family are in prayer and open discussion with each other. Finally, the decision to move forward should be unanimous out of mutual love and respect for each family member.

Amos 3:3 (NIV) *Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?*

Remember, there must be clarity before there can be agreement!

I want to acknowledge suggestions given by Pastor Hite, Pastor Kelly and Lee Stewart.
Thank you for your wisdom and insight.

Copyright © June 2006 George M. Stahnke