



Pastoral and Ministry Placement Manual

Introduction

Serving in vocational ministry is both a rewarding and challenging calling. The pastors and ministry leaders in CBOQ are essential to the health and ongoing effectiveness of our churches and Christian ministries.

Recruiting and retaining great leaders is one of the key indicators of a healthy organization. CBOQ can only be as healthy as the shared commitment and strength of our churches and ministries. Churches and ministries are enhanced in their health and effectiveness when led by ministry leaders with a strong sense of call who are well equipped and properly placed.

The staff of CBOQ considers it essential that we continue to have a strong focus in resourcing and supporting churches and leaders in the recruitment and placement phase of ministry. This manual is a part of a much larger strategy in the support and encouragement of vocational ministry leaders through the ministry placement process.

There are four different groups of ministry leaders who are likely to utilize this manual:

- a. those who are graduating from school and brand new to ministry.
- b. those who are presently serving in a congregation and contemplating a move.
- c. those who have for whatever reason left a congregation and find themselves expectedly or unexpectedly in ministry transition.
- d. those who are moving into ministry as a second career.

Each of these groups of people has different needs and expectations in regards to the support that they will seek from CBOQ.

It is essential for the candidate seeking placement to understand that as a family of churches CBOQ acts *associationally*. This means that there is no centralized placement system or authoritative hierarchy within our structure when it comes to the placement of pastors. CBOQ can equip, resource, encourage and support both churches and pastors in the placement process, but only from a coaching or a facilitation role.

Our CBOQ team members desire to act as co-travelers, but are not authorized like some other denominations or organizations to place or hire pastors in local churches. We believe that this process is the responsibility and mandate of the local church, in relationship with ministry candidates through prayerful selection.

This manual is designed to be one aspect of the help available for vocational ministry leaders seeking placement in a CBOQ church or ministry.

Placement and Search Procedures within CBOQ

The search for a ministry placement is inherently spiritual. While Christians in every occupation should have a sense of God's call upon their lives and vocation, it is certainly true that there is a unique context to vocational Christian ministry.

A local church pastorate is far more than a job. It requires the pastor and her/his family joining a church community. It requires a bond at the level of vision and values between a person and a congregation, and best occurs in an environment of prayerful discernment. The proper, prayerful placement of a pastoral leader in a local church is a dynamic process involving the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit, the prayerful discernment of both the pastor and the congregation with sound practices learned from the field of human resources and occupational placement.

Pastors enter the search process for a variety of reasons. Regardless of why you find yourself in search mode, CBOQ hopes to be a support, encouragement and guide for you. We believe that effective placement will maximize your gifts, bring the greatest level of joy to you, and be of greatest benefit to a local congregation.

For those new to ministry, the search process is an exciting time of beginnings. This manual will help you to understand the first steps towards placement, such as writing an effective résumé and Ministry Information Profile (a CBOQ placement tool), and beginning to connect with local ministries seeking a pastor.

For those who are seasoned leaders within CBOQ, this is certainly not the first time that you have gone through this process, but likely a number of years have gone by since your last placement, and the process may have changed. We know that good guidelines and effective steps can also be of benefit to you.

There is no centralized placement procedure within CBOQ. As an association of churches, CBOQ staff members encourage and facilitate the interdependent relationships between churches, but do not act as an agent for churches or pastors. It is the responsibility of Pastoral Search Committees to lead congregations toward suitable ministry leaders, and the responsibility of ministry leaders prayerfully to seek suitable placements within local congregations.

This manual will provide information for thoughtful reflection and training in the skill of developing yourself as a candidate for ministry. The staff of CBOQ desires to prayerfully walk with you through this time of transition.

Resources for the Task

Many ministry leaders experience anxiety through the placement process. Churches that rely on volunteers in the selection process can take much longer than a candidate would desire or expect within other employment contexts. The information provided by local churches can be inadequate, and often for the pastor who finds themselves without a church, there may not seem to be an overwhelming number of suitable options for ministry placement.

One way in which CBOQ has attempted to help both candidates and churches is through the creation of two manuals – this manual for pastors, and a manual entitled “Procedure Manual for Pastoral Search Teams”. Both manuals can be helpful reading for the ministry leader in transition to better understand the process from both perspectives and to gain a sense of the timelines within which Pastoral Search Committees are encouraged to work.

CBOQ Resources that are available to support you during this time:

- CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team is a resource for you as a leader. They will also walk closely with churches seeking pastors and is often a very helpful resource for the leader in transition who is researching ministry openings and church dynamics.
- CBOQ Director of Administration can assist you with administrative issues regarding benefits, taxes, employment law, etc.
- The local Association Ministry Committee can assist you in assessing your present strengths in ministry leadership and support you personally through times of anxiety.
- Contacting the CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team by phone or email early in the process will be a source of encouragement, information and guidance as one navigates the search and candidacy process. Pastoral candidates are welcome to contact the CBOQ at various points in the process, and some find it helpful to schedule regular telephone coaching calls to keep themselves focused and encouraged, and to keep abreast of current open pastoral positions in CBOQ.

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Ministry Placement Checklist

There are two important manuals that have been created to assist pastors and churches in the ministry placement process. We recommend that pastors orient themselves to both of these manuals, to best prepare themselves, and understand the process that CBOQ recommends to local churches.

- a. This document: The Pastoral Placement Manual
- b. The document created to assist Pastoral Search Committees entitled: Procedure Manual for Pastoral Search Teams available at baptist.ca

This simple checklist is an abbreviation of what is to follow in this manual. It is designed to give you a quick summary of important steps and procedures in the process of ministry placement in CBOQ:

- ✓ Ask God to guide you through the process of ministry placement
- ✓ Check your emotional resources
- ✓ Become a student of yourself
- ✓ Write or refresh your résumé
- ✓ Contact referees seeking their permission and input
- ✓ Visit CBOQ website: “careers” icon on the homepage
- ✓ Post your Ministry Information Profile (MIP) on CBOQ website
- ✓ Contact CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team
- ✓ Network with peers, friends and associates and conduct further research
- ✓ Contact specific churches that are seeking a ministry leader that may potentially match your self-study exercise assessments, and the guidance provided to you from others
- ✓ Interview with a local congregation
- ✓ Candidate with a local congregation
- ✓ Create a Letter of Agreement
- ✓ Moving On...Leaving Well

Ministry “Capacity” and Placement in CBOQ

Leadership development among our ministry leaders is of significant priority. In recent years with the growth of diversity in ministry settings, the context of ministry has been highlighted to be of even greater significance than ever before in the effectiveness of a ministry leader. Similarly, giftedness and ministry capacities play an important role in the successful placement of a ministry leader.

Not every ministry leader is designed for every ministry context. Chaplains, counselors and para-church leaders have discovered this reality, but it is just as true among local church congregations. The range of contextual elements within local congregational life is now extremely diverse. Theological and denominational distinctives that once might have been significant in the minds of ministry leaders have often been marginalized, while some would suggest that worship, other issues of leadership style, missional stance, or even new approaches to communication have been elevated.

Every leader has a unique capacity. The word capacity suggests the metaphor of a jug or container. Each person has been designed by God as unique and distinct. Like a specific container, ministry leaders are designed uniquely. It is paramount to the placement process that a ministry leader gain clear self-awareness and assessment as to the container that God has made him/her to be.

Similarly, churches reflect different kinds of capacity. The capacity of the ministry leader required by a particular church is nuanced by its location, culture and size, but can change from leader to leader based on current realities including the context of the people and the purpose of the church. CBOQ can work effectively with local churches to help them to assess their present ministry health, context and future dreams.

Diversity among ministry leaders and churches is a blessing by God that allows us to effectively serve within diverse contexts to reach diverse people. However, within such diversity, comes importance of the person seeking ministry placement becoming astute with regard to personal “capacity” and then, with assistance and prayer, seeking a ministry context aligned with that leader’s unique capacity.

There is no “one size fits all” leader today, nor are there “one size fits all” congregations. It is imperative that ministry leaders know who God has created and gifted them to be, in the contexts where they can most effectively minister.

Unique fit includes background, experiences, age, ethnicity, theological convictions, leadership style, personality, competencies, gifts, skills, education, etc. All of these, both subjective and objective traits, play an important role in the process of ministry selection.

Not all people have been called to professional ministry; not all people are equipped to lead effectively within the church. God has gifted some for leadership in the church, while others He has gifted others for different purposes. (Ephesians 4:11,12 “It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”)

Personal Assessment Questions that may help you identify your giftedness and capacity for ministry:

In what ways has God gifted you to serve?

What are the aspects of your unique fit that will help you determine effective ministry contexts?

What are your ministry passions?

What are your weaknesses? Where do you need development, or have “shadows”?

These questions will help the ministry candidate to gain a greater self-awareness that helps in the placement process – acting as filters in context and ministry placement. CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team can offer various other approaches to self-awareness in this process.

Core competencies of spiritual leaders in healthy CBOQ churches:

A former CBOQ Director and pastor, Darren DeGraaf researched “core competencies of spiritually healthy church leaders” to assist in the equipping and development of all our ministry leaders, and to help in the selection of new leaders. The following list briefly outlines essential core competencies that are necessary in every effective ministry leader:

1. **Calling:** Do you have a clear sense that God has called you to serve within a professional ministry context? Ministry leadership requires deep commitment, and the effective use of many gifts. It is difficult. Only a deep sense of call can give a foundation for effective longevity in ministry. Every Christian is called to serve both within the church and their community. Is your calling distinct to the role of full time Christian ministry?
2. **Connection to Christ:** Do you have an ongoing, mature relationship with Jesus Christ? Every Christian has the joy of nurturing a relationship with Christ, but the effective ministry leader has an ongoing deep, mature, consistent and growing relationship with Jesus. The Christian leader nurtures, protects and preserves a relationship with God – at all costs. Are you pursuing Godliness?
3. **Character:** Do you have the necessary integrity of life to be a leader in Christ’s Church? Every Christian is called to a life of integrity and of Christian character, but the biblical and professional requirements for character in ministry are both high and clear. Are you willing to be held to a higher account as a leader? Are you willing honestly to assess your own integrity, and to pay the price that character requires?
4. **Compassion:** Do you have godly compassion for people? Ministry leadership is much more than researching a good sermon and managing committees. Ministry leadership requires one to enter into the lives of the people in their congregation and community and to love them deeply. Are you willing to identify with your people – for their problems to become your problems –to act as an intercessor and champion for the people God has called you to serve? Do you have strong interpersonal skills and do you passionately pursue growth through both empathy and communication skills?
5. **Clarity:** Do you have a clear and compelling vision of a preferred future for God’s people? How does this vision fit with the vision of the local church you are considering for placement? Are you allowing God’s Word and the Spirit’s presence to fill you with vision? Are you clear and thoughtful in a consistent biblical worldview? Do you exhibit conviction of character and thought in your daily life? Are you a person of clarity in your calling, in God’s leading in your life and for the community you will serve?
6. **Courage:** Do you have the courage to lead effectively? Church leadership is difficult and inherently people-oriented. Ministry leadership is the privilege of partnering with the Holy Spirit in the work of life transformation. Life transformation requires the courage to speak into the lives of individuals, couples, families and congregations. Ministry leadership requires the courage to be a spiritual leader in the community, and to address issues of spiritual significance in the lives of congregants and community members. Ministry leadership requires the courage to train and equip people to teach the word of God, and to speak into the lives of both those who walk with Christ, and those who do not yet follow him. Are you willing and able to act with such courage?

7. **Competency:** Do you have the competency required to lead effectively in the local church? Pastoral ministry requires significant competencies, gifts and skills that must be present and continually developed for successful ministry. Many people enjoy ministry and are called to serve as volunteers within the local church. Some are called to serve as professional ministry leaders – equipping, communicating, serving, managing, and leading with competence and credibility. Even if you are just beginning in formal ministry, have you been affirmed in your giftedness? Have you had the opportunity to equip people in ministry skills to communicate effectively in small, medium and large groups, to manage teams and committees? Have you demonstrated your ability to lead?
8. **Capacity:** Have you seriously evaluated the gifts and abilities that God has given you, and do you have a healthy self-assessment of your current level of influence, competence and capabilities? Some ministry leaders are given both a passion and depth of capacity in specialized ministry – music, youth, administration, teaching, etc. Other leaders are given passion and breadth of capacity in leadership within many different areas. Similarly some ministry leaders are given the capacity to lead well within the more intimate settings of small churches and organizations, while others are able to lead larger organizations and churches, regional entities, or even national and international ministries. Self-awareness is a critical element of intentional success. Have you carefully self-assessed your God-given capacities to ensure that you are neither seeking responsibilities beyond your capacity nor neglecting the particular ability that God has given to you?
9. **Community:** Are you committed towards the development of a community of people? Do you join and walk with others to share similar passions and ethos towards the development of intentional Christian fellowship? Have you a desire to invite others into Christian community? Are you willing to model authenticity and give yourself fully to your congregation?

ACTION: As a leader in transition, it would be helpful for your own self-assessment to walk yourself carefully and prayerfully through each of these competencies and answer the questions asked within each.

How do your answers to the above help to guide and shape your future?

How do they help you to gain a clearer perspective of your own life and ministry?

What areas touched a nerve? Will this move you towards added development or work in your own life?

Resources and Questions for those considering a move:

Before you Move:

Some who are reading this manual are presently ministering within a local church. Within local church ministry there will be both healthy and unhealthy times to reflect upon a ministry transition. Because of the significant strain of pastoral ministry, it is common for ministry leaders to question their call at various times, to experience doubt and discouragement, and to contemplate the possibility of “greener grass” in other ministry contexts.

In the book, *Before You Move*, author John Cionca offers valuable research and support to the Ministry Leader considering a ministry move. This book has been found to be very helpful to CBOQ pastors in their considerations. Cionca identifies five “red flags” that warn against a premature move:

1. Restlessness alone is not a reason to move

Restlessness can be divinely aroused, but is often situational. Often those in ministry have optimistic expectations of impact and transformation that do not translate into reality with the speed or intensity expected or desired. Therefore, internal restlessness or discontent needs to be carefully evaluated. Relational conflicts often severely impact our ability to evaluate the current situation. But the reality is that frustrations will follow us into other ministry contexts, and that all ministry contexts have unique difficulties and roadblocks. Sometimes restlessness or discontent are signs that personal work is required, or that further development of core competencies would be beneficial.

2. Perfect congregations do not exist

Because ministry is people intensive every congregation comes with its own challenges and complications. Added to this and the increasing possibility that a ministry leader will experience at least one forced termination in his/her career, it becomes easier to see why many pastoral leaders grow frustrated, or experience feelings of resignation within the local church. This leads some to perhaps wrongly, consider para-church ministry as a better alternative, to leave the profession prematurely or to grow cynical and bitter through the years. All careers come with frustrations, but any who work with people will agree that a perfect workplace does not exist, and it is unlikely that any pastor would suggest that their current congregation is perfect. Indeed some ministry placements are not a good fit, and some congregations are less healthy than others, but doubt, frustration and disappointment is a reality in almost all pastoral ministries. One must be careful to distinguish between common disappointments, doubts and frustrations from a present poor ministry fit, or an unhealthy context.

3. Decisions made in the absence of objective data are potentially disastrous

Effective pastoral leaders regularly evaluate their personal ministry direction, and seek objective feedback from family, peers, and congregants. While it can be intimidating, and some congregations will not utilize the tools effectively, a regular pastoral review process can be extremely helpful for both the pastor and the congregation. Similar to a dental visit, a pastoral review process acts like a check-up, often resolving potential problems and providing ongoing venues for conversation about

the ministry fit. Similarly, ministry peers and denominational staff can provide objective input about your present placement and the benefits or pitfalls of a ministry move. Family members should also be consulted about their own feelings and experiences, and their sense of ongoing ministry fit.

4. Selective Perception Limits our understanding of Reality

All of us see the world through personal lenses, and from our unique perspectives. Two people seeing the same event may describe it completely differently. This root of most conflicts is a routine reality. (For example, we see this played out between an umpire and a ballplayer, or between a husband and a wife.) Psychologists talk about “fundamental attribution error”. The common reality that humans often employ what is known as a dispositional rather than a situational view of others. In other words – “I acted poorly because I was tired, but when you act poorly it is because of who you are.” Such biased thinking leads us to make subjective and incomplete observations about ourselves. Proverbs 15:22 says, “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed.” The ministry leader who is contemplating a move or struggling with their current situation should find ways to intersect with others who can help them expand their view of the situation as well as their own self-understanding. The wise leader will access denominational and peer networks to grow perspective and test personal perceptions.

5. Evaluative Criteria are Guidelines, Not Mandates

There are many evaluative resources available to individuals facing a major decision. The S.W.O.T. analysis (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is a common way to quickly outline the pros and cons of any decision. However, there is no ultimate or exact formula for determining the rightness of a move. Family considerations, health, environmental factors, age, capacity, culture, etc., are all realities within the framework of the decisions we will make. Therefore, it is important for the person contemplating a transition to carefully evaluate many options, to seek the input of family, friends, peers and leaders. Ultimately, prayerfulness and the guidance of the Holy Spirit is essential. As you evaluate the criteria for your transition, don’t box yourself into a corner based on criteria that is meant to serve as a resource guideline, not a mandate.

For more information on these issues and other aspects of transitions in ministry, for those who are presently in a ministry context, see:

John R. Cionca: *Before You Move: A guide to making transitions in ministry.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications. 2004.

Steps in Transitions and Church Placement:

Step 1 Prayerfully seek the Lord's guidance and direction for your life.

Because vocational ministry is critical within the church, it is essential that those who seek to lead local church ministries, do so with a prayerful attitude, wholly submitted to the work and leading of the Holy Spirit. Church leadership is a complex and challenging task. 21st century churches require godly men and women of character and giftedness and skill. Every congregation, even within the CBOQ family is unique – requiring that our ministry leaders be carefully placed within a congregation where they can uniquely contribute to the work of the kingdom. Such a subjective and spiritual connection requires that our congregations, search committees, and ministry leaders all prayerfully seek the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit through this exciting time. Prayerfulness is the first step in an effective placement process, while the next steps will provide for diligent preparation and utilization of tools that can helpfully enhance the placement process.

Step 2 Check your emotional resources

After reviewing the “before you move” checklist, it is important for you to carefully, and in consultation with family, friends and advisors to check your emotional resources. If you are drained, bitter, frustrated, angry, hurt, exhausted, defensive or insensitive, search committees are going to quickly ascertain that there is emotional baggage that will preclude you from consideration. CBOQ has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that provides short term counseling services free of charge for our ministry staff including those who are in transition. It is recommended that you enter the search process with as little “baggage” as possible – an open mind, a prayerful spirit and a sense of anticipation to where God will lead. CBOQ's EAP can be accessed through Shepell-fgi at 1-800-387-4765.

Ministry searches are often long and frustrating. Some in career placement have said that ministry movement is one of the most difficult moves in the professional world. There are a number of reasons why ministry searches are difficult and lengthy:

- a. The search committee is normally comprised of lay volunteers who gather as often as they are able, and rely on the volunteer work that happens between meetings to move them forward. When a committee only meets every two weeks, or monthly, even the most efficient committee will appear slow moving to the candidate who has sent in a résumé and is expecting a response.
- b. The search committee is normally comprised of good people with a variety of backgrounds, but usually with limited human resource experience or expertise. As a result those who might be expecting a “professional human resources” response will often be disappointed.
- c. The search committee is often also charged with determining some sort of criteria that the entire church will endorse, and this exercise can be painfully slow from the perspective of the candidate, and often occurs simultaneously with résumé collection, slowing the ability of the committee to hone in on specific résumés based on agreed upon criteria.
- d. Search committees may have objective standards, but may also have many subjective or personal standards based on biases, past experiences, etc. Therefore it seems to be the case that in ministry, men have an easier time being placed than women, married people are easier to place than single people, and experienced individuals are easier to place than inexperienced ones. From your own experience you may have other subjective criteria regarding temperament, etc.

- e. Search committees are often inundated with dozens of résumés from candidates from across the region, and sometimes around the world. Processing this many résumés of varying quality, length and perspective can be a time consuming and daunting task.
- f. Search committees often develop a short-list of candidates, but then process this list one individual at a time – resulting sometimes in months of interviewing and conversations before a candidate who might be “third on the list” gets a response from their résumé submission.
- g. There are healthy objective criteria that might also impact the search for ministry placement. The job description might not match a particular candidate’s experience. The culture of the church might be vastly different than the culture of the candidate (i.e. the church is very formal and traditional, the candidate very relaxed and contemporary), or the skill sets and gifts desired may not match the gifting or skill sets of the applicant.

All of these reasons and many more play into the difficult aspect of ministry placement. The listed reasons above only apply to the difficulty that a candidate experiences when waiting on churches – churches have their own list of difficulties when dealing with candidates. For this reason it is very important that the potential or present ministry candidate ensure that there are plenty of emotional resources available prior to beginning the potentially long and frustrating process of ministry search.

Step 3 Become a student of yourself

God has created each of us to be unique. The better we understand our uniqueness and the qualities that come together to make us who we are, the better we are able to present a complete picture of ourselves to others, and assess what is a right fit for us in ministry.

Each of us has a unique mode of action. Arthur Miller says it this way:

You possess a mode of action, a distinct ‘way’ of operating when you are at your most productive and most fulfilled. You have repeatedly used certain abilities; concentrated on certain subjects or objects; required certain structure, visibility, standards, outcome and conditions; functioned in a certain relationship with others; and achieved a certain pay-off of precious personal significance (quoted in *Before You Move* – John R. Cionca)

Again CBOQ’s EAP program is an excellent starting place for the personnel presently in a ministry with CBOQ to learn more about themselves through the career centre. Diagnostic tests like Myers-Briggs Type Inventory, Kolbe, TJTA, True Colours, DISC, or Ministry Match can all be helpful for the pastor to come to a better understanding of oneself. Your local library or bookstore will also have significant resources to assist you; many on-line resources can help.

Doing this work will sometimes produce surprising results. For example, it is quite common that in a process of self-discovery that a ministry leader uncovers areas of real strengths that they have neglected or forgotten, and areas of weakness that could be sharpened or removed through further training, counseling, etc. This process has the effect of changing the person’s perspectives and attitudes – sometimes to the point that they realize that a ministry move is not the right next step, but that a reinvigorated approach to their present ministry setting with a new attitude and perspective will yield health, and impact.

One very important part of self-assessment is a careful personal review of the 9 Core Competencies for ministry leaders in CBOQ. Take some time to work through the Core Competencies, taking notes, and prayerfully seeking honest self-reflection through the process. You will be encouraged, redirected and sometimes confronted with the reality of the need to sharpen skills or gain new understanding, information or skill-sets.

Step 4 Write or refresh your résumé and ready it for distribution

For those desiring to be placed within CBOQ, we have created a standardized Résumé Template entitled Ministry Information Profile (MIP). This document is an extended résumé that allows local churches within our Convention significantly more information about candidates than would normally be provided in a standard business résumé.

The MIP is available online, and the CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team would be glad to walk with you through the successful completion of your résumé, MIP and appropriate cover letters.

Step 5 Contact referees seeking their permission and input

A standard healthy résumé contains a number of referees available for the church seeking a pastor to contact. Sometimes because of confidentiality some referees are withheld (e.g. one's direct boss, the present deacons' board or a present employer), but providing a list of referees is an important aspect of a good résumé. The references provided should be carefully considered in context to the position of interest. For instance, it is helpful if the references might be known to the potential search committee members, or respected by them.

Any person who is listed as a reference on your résumé should have granted permission beforehand. It is a helpful and informative process to call your references and to ask them both their permission to be a reference, and their input regarding your present ministry search. The conversations that ensue are instructive for the person considering placement within a CBOQ ministry. Take time not just to seek permission but also to seek the input of these people and to hear from them in terms of their advice, their perspectives on your ministry capacity, and even from a networking perspective (they may know of open ministry locations that would be a great fit for you!)

Step 6 Visit CBOQ website, “Ministry Opportunities” board (baptist.ca, through the “Ministry Opportunities” icon)

CBOQ Ministry Opportunities board on our website is available to anyone at any time to view. CBOQ churches which contact CBOQ and fill out the appropriate forms can post their ministry openings in this location. Potential candidates who find an opening to be of interest are welcome to contact churches directly and to send their résumé (MIP) directly to the Pastoral Search Committee. As a CBOQ leadership team, we work diligently to ensure that all our churches who are seeking pastoral leaders post their positions on our website. We desire that this process be open and transparent, with equal access to any potential ministry candidates.

This is a great starting place to review open positions across CBOQ within a wide diversity of churches. Normally there are many churches across CBOQ with a variety of openings – from associate pastor, to youth pastor, to solo pastor in big and small churches, with a great diversity of ethnic representation, and sometimes language requirements, too.

Because of the great diversity of ministry openings, it is important that the candidate have a clear self-assessment and understanding of the kind of church they are seeking. It is not helpful to simply blitz the entire list with a generic cover letter and résumé, hoping one will call back.

Step 7 Post your Résumé (MIP) on CBOQ website password-protected résumé database

For those ministry leaders who are accredited with CBOQ or another CBM convention (CABC, CBWC) or any church family associated with the Baptist World Alliance, we have made available a résumé posting board that is available only by password to churches seeking ministry personnel. Churches with access commit to handle this information in a strictly confidential manner, not divulging any names they have seen on this site to anyone other than their search team.

CBOQ accredited personnel can simply provide the CBOQ with their MIP which will be posted. Those who are a part of the BWA but not CBOQ must provide an MIP.

Step 8 Contact the CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team to let them know of your desire for placement or transition within CBOQ

By contacting CBOQ offices you make it known to our CBOQ staff that you are presently seeking, or contemplating seeking a ministry placement or transition within CBOQ. They will provide confidential support to the person who requires discretion and can provide tips and insights for all ministry candidates regarding the current availability and upcoming availability.

The CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team is committed to supporting, encouraging and resourcing those who desire to be placed as ministry personnel within CBOQ churches or ministries. The CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team will walk with a potential candidate to help him/her to understand the placement process, and to provide resources for the individual to present oneself effectively, and to understand the best environments for the individual's personality, giftedness and passion. Coaching can include a single phone call, or ongoing support and encouragement to ministry personnel seeking placement. The CBOQ Church Life and Leadership Team can also answer questions about specific ministry openings or refer you to those who can provide that input.

Step 9 Network with peers, friends and associates across CBOQ and conduct further research regarding specific ministry openings

There is no doubt regarding the importance of networking in the placement process. By networking with others across CBOQ you can gain valuable information regarding churches that are presently seeking staff, or who may soon be ready to seek new staff members. Connecting with people lets them know that you are seeking ministry placement allowing them to pray for you, consider options on your behalf, or put in a good word at an opportune time.

Websites, networking and seeking information directly from the church or ministry are all helpful steps in gaining greater understanding of various ministries and their culture, context and search process.

Step 10 Contact specific churches that are seeking a ministry leader that may potentially match your self-study exercise assessments and the guidance provided by others

While a number of CBOQ churches do regularly consult the résumé database, there is no substitution to the hard work of learning about potential available ministry positions, researching the church and the community, and contemplating the logistics of a family move, and a new ministry context.

When CBOQ staff do make a recommendation, it is very clear that the responsibility and privilege remains with both the local church and the individual submitting their name for consideration. CBOQ churches are prepared to receive résumés, primarily from our pastors and leaders across CBOQ, but including résumés from around the world.

While CBOQ may at times recommend a person to a church, or a church to a person, the process is intentionally open to allow equitable access for all who desire prayerfully to submit their name for consideration.

It is wise for the candidate carefully to research a specific ministry opening, including the demographics, culture and context of the congregation and to write a cover letter to include with a résumé (MIP) that outlines why you as a candidate are a potentially strong fit for the ministry opening to which you are applying. This is not a quick process, and in the research and development phases, a candidate will often discover that many of the ministry openings do not fit within the criteria established for ministry placement. At this stage it is important for the candidate to seek outside counsel from family members, peers, ministry associates, referees, and CBOQ staff to further align their focus towards appropriate ministry openings.

Implied in the above paragraph is also the strong guidance that a ministry candidate not simply randomly distribute résumés to every church or ministry seeking a candidate. This diffuse approach to the job search is far less effective and may also result in additional work for both search committees and candidates who are clearly not a strong or appropriate match.

Step 11 Interview with a local congregation

When a local church search committee first contacts you there are a number of different approaches they might take to get to know you. While their primary concern is to learn about you, and you should be helpful in that regard, the interviewing process is also a very important time for you to get to know the ministry position, the church and the community in which you might be serving.

Many new to ministry, and some who are growing impatient with the lengthiness of a particular transition might fail to take the necessary time carefully to assess the suitability of a ministry position. While in the short term, this might mean a quicker route to gainful employment, it is potentially devastating for the person seeking to be well-placed and successful in ministry. A healthy long-term relationship between a pastor and congregation needs to begin with as much honesty and awareness as possible.

Because ministry placement is similar to a “dating relationship,” it is critical that both the church and the ministry leader carefully assess the other party and prayerfully seek discernment in the interviewing process. It is of critical importance that you as a ministry leader ask appropriate and probing questions, to assess your suitability for ministry within that context. The church might come to decide that you are the one for them, but you must similarly decide that they are the ones for you!

In human resources practice there is a well-known practice called “behavioural interviewing”. Behavioural interviewing is based on the premise, “the best predictor of future success is past behaviour”. This means that great questions will often include these words, “Tell me about a time when...” The team interviewing you might ask, “Tell us about a time when you had a conflict with another person, and how you handled that conflict”. By using a real-life story from your past, they are able to get to know more about you, and to hear a real example of how you respond.

Many of us are used to philosophizing about ourselves and our ministries. It is far easier to say something like, “It is very important that conflict be dealt with quickly and effectively” and much

harder when the question is phrased in such a way that you must give an example of a time when you dealt with conflict.

The early work that you did on the “core competencies” will provide you in many cases with a thoughtful response to many questions and allow you to speak with clarity about your strengths and growth areas.

While the search committee is doing their job (good or bad) of interviewing you, it is important for you to also have a chance to interview them. At some point you will want to ask behavioural questions of the deacons, and search committee, and any other congregants who you have a chance to interact with. Some helpful examples of how to phrase a behavioural question are found here:

Tell me about a time when this church was really making a difference in the community?
Tell me about a time when you had a difficult situation with a pastor. How did the pastor handle the situation and how did you handle the situation? Was the situation handled in the way you would have preferred? Would you respond similarly if a difficulty arose in the future?

It is also helpful to ask questions that allow you to understand how the congregants see their church:

How would you describe your present openness to the community? How has this been confirmed recently?
How would you describe the current level of impact you are having in this community? Can you tell me about a particular project (or person)?
Would you describe this as a church where people are growing to be more like Jesus? How so? Why not? (Again, maybe ask about a particular person – even an example from the search committee membership.)

Questions like “how?” and “what?” are great questions that don’t allow people to philosophize, but rather keeps things practical, and in many ways behavioural. Ask open-ended questions that don’t require a simple “yes” or “no” answer.

There are far more questions than we have space for in this manual, but there are some objective things that every potential ministry leader should become aware of regarding a ministry setting...here is a list of important areas and items that the potential ministry should ask or learn about:

- ❖ The church’s Mission or Purpose Statement
- ❖ A self study or consultants report (e.g. a previous Natural Church Development study)
- ❖ Pastoral profile and job description
- ❖ Covenants, affirmations and Constitution
- ❖ Governance structure
- ❖ History of the church (Canadian Baptist Archives)
- ❖ Community demographics (lots of information could be gathered here)
- ❖ Attendance patterns
- ❖ A budget history (including last year’s budget and the present budget)
- ❖ Description of programming
- ❖ Description of facilities and policies around their usage
- ❖ Key theological, ethical or social issues in the life of the congregation (any past divisions or controversies concerning these, or ones that may be on the horizon)
- ❖ Anticipated changes and plans in facilities, in programming, in vision, in staff, etc.
- ❖ Your spouse’s expectations
- ❖ Enrichment and continuing education provisions
- ❖ Salary range

- ❖ Pastoral track record (who has come before, how long have they stayed, why?)
- ❖ Living arrangements (manse, expectations for use of home, distance from church)
- ❖ References (yes, why not ask to check references for the church – prior pastors, or others in the community who might be able to give a “peer report”)

In one sense, the way you interact with the search team will demonstrate the way you will lead, should you be called as a ministry leader in the congregation. The questions you pose, the direction you give to the process, the clarity you elicit – all of these show how you will work with teams in the congregation. Let them see who you are as a pastoral leader, recognizing that often even the search team needs to be helped with good input and direction.

Word of wisdom: Some eager young pastors feel the need to find out the salary at a very early stage. When the search committee first asks the question, “Do you have any questions of us?” be prepared to ask behavioural questions that help you to understand more about them. In fact, a good interviewer knows that the questions asked of her/him are as important (maybe more so) than the answers given to them – so ask great questions! Remember, that unless there is a good fit, the salary figures don’t matter anyway. Beyond that, if there is a good fit, and both sides are desirous to move things forward, then often the salary can be negotiated at the appropriate time.

Be Prepared: Many search committees today will seek to have a DVD of your preaching given to them, sometimes even before an interview. It is helpful for you to arrange some way to be prepared for this request. Can you have someone record you periodically? This practice is helpful for your own self-assessment, but also provides a small library for your use, if such a request is made. For the young leader – keep those recordings from seminary! They might come in very handy!

More wisdom: Are you married? Find ways to involve your spouse appropriately in the interview process. For those who are traveling to be with a congregation, ask to bring your spouse along. They will not likely be in the interviews, but will likely be treated with kind hospitality. They can use these times to do their own investigative questioning, and to hone their own intuition. The word of wisdom: listen carefully to your spouse’s “vibes”, intuition and reactions.

Step 12 Candidate with a local congregation

This is one of the most important aspects of the process, and probably for many the most intimidating. In some ways it is a curious tradition. The candidate often spends a weekend with the congregation, engaging in various formal and informal times to get acquainted and answer questions, usually preaching on a Sunday morning, and then sometime shortly after, a congregational vote is held to determine whether a call will be extended.

Historically this has often been referred to as “preaching for a call,” a term that suggests that the result depends solely on one sermon! While one hopes that much more will be assessed than merely that one sermon, it is true that this is a vital part of the process, as it is a key moment when the congregation will hear what is truly in your heart. Prayerfully seek the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, and carefully prepare a message that God lays on your heart to communicate to the congregation when you are given the chance.

While the sermon you preach is an important consideration for congregation members, many will be looking to “intuit” or learn more about you in the personal interactions they have with you informally during a visit at the church. Your handshake, appearance, level of engagement, eye-contact, voice tone, and many other elements of you, and your spouse, will be appraised carefully! Be yourself, but be on your best behaviour! And just like during the interviewing stage, while the

congregation is forming an opinion about your suitability as their leader, you are also given a valuable window to get to know them, and to assess the culture of the church – from friendliness, prevailing attitudes, etc. Look for opportunities to ask great but caring questions of parishioners. One example might be: “What is it that you love about this church?”

Step 13 Create a letter of agreement

If the interviewing process went well, and the candidating experience was well received, the congregation will have a vote. If they have felt positively led by the Holy Spirit as a result of your time together, a call to ministry will be extended to you.

In preparation for this eventuality, feel free to clarify when the congregational vote will happen, and when you might expect to hear back from the search committee or other congregational leader. Once you have received a notification of a call, it is important that you prayerfully review the letter of call and the many implications of the information contained within the letter.

The congregation will likely have a specific majority required to extend a call. Often this number is a 2/3 or 3/4 majority. It is reasonable for you to know what the vote percentage was, and any explanations the committee may offer as to their sense of any opposition. Upon learning the results, assess if you feel this is a sufficient majority for you to accept the call. While you may have received enough to satisfy a constitution, you may not feel you have a solid enough mandate to lead effectively. Weigh this information as you pray through your decision.

It is possible that this is the first point at which you learn of the salary being offered. Ministry leaders are often reticent to ask for information or express their needs when it comes to salary considerations. Our spiritual language is never more pronounced than when salary is being considered: “The Lord will provide”, “I trust that the church will be led by God to offer a fair salary” etc. For many in vocational ministry, the words “negotiate” and “employment contract” are not well received, well understood, or an area of comfort. Many may in fact consider it to be very unspiritual to concern themselves with such matters. Regardless of how a ministry candidate may feel about this concept, the employment contract and its negotiation at the earliest of stages are very important.

There are many considerations when evaluating an employment contract, far more than can be discussed in this manual. If at this point you desire assistance from CBOQ, feel free to contact the Director of Administration who serves as a specialist in employment policies and regulations and can provide wisdom to both churches and ministry personnel in regards to the employment contract.

A few other helpful resources:

CBOQ annually publishes a “Minimum Salary Guideline” for our churches. This worksheet is designed to help in the salary considerations for our ministry leaders and pastors. By downloading this sheet you can gain a better understanding of the recommendations made by CBOQ in regards to financial remuneration and other considerations such as educational allowances, study leave, book allowances, mileage, etc. It is available at www.baptist.ca, from the “Churches” drop-down menu, clicking on “Church Operations” and then clicking “Personnel”. Then under the heading “Personnel Resources for Church Boards” you’ll find “Salary Guidelines” for the current year.

Research the cost of living and local economy of the area surrounding the church. www.mls.ca is a nationwide real estate listing website that can help you to research a wide array of housing options in the area. Contacting a local school board can be a helpful way to access the salary grid for local teachers. You may also want to consider the standard of living for the congregation.

Don't be afraid to request a meeting with the people responsible for the details of the letter of call to discuss how they came to certain decisions, and what the range of possibilities might be. Sometimes extenuating circumstances create a temporary situation (e.g. a large estate has provided a short term infusion of funds, or opposite – a large roof repair has led to a short term depletion of funds), or past situations might be different from yours (e.g. the previous pastor was married to a surgeon and therefore never even contemplated the fairness of their salary, or let it be known that they did not need a competitive or fair salary).

Church cultures can vary greatly from church to church. Some churches may provide a relatively small salary, but a beautiful manse, regular gifts of meat from local farms, and free car repairs, child care, and home renovations. Other churches may provide a relatively generous salary, but none of the other intangible gifts and hospitality. It is important for you carefully to review and discuss with the leaders of the church issues such as salary, living arrangements, educational provisions, vacation and study leave and all aspects of the employment contract at this stage. Such conversations while sometimes uncomfortable are far better to occur at this stage, rather than later when a conflict or miscommunication has occurred.

Performance Assessment

More and more congregations and ministry leaders are interested in learning about performance assessments and their place in vocational ministry. The concerns are obvious – how do you measure spiritual growth? Are we a baptizing factory, or a greenhouse for the nurturing of spiritual health? At first glance, these concerns are all valid. Furthermore, it is quite common for church deacons' boards or leadership teams to contemplate the development of a performance assessment system at the absolute wrong time. When is this? At the point that there is conflict or disappointment with a ministry leader is sometimes the moment at which a performance assessment is suggested. At this point, it may be more of a weapon, or a "covering the bases" type of scenario, rather than a helpful tool for ongoing dialogue and shared ministry effectiveness.

The recommendation of CBOQ is that a church and a ministry leader agree to the concept of annual reviews at the point of signing a letter of agreement. Furthermore, performance assessment grids can be created with help from CBOQ at this early stage of ministry, understanding that such a grid is dynamic and apt to change significantly in the first year, and less so as the ministry leader settles into the culture and position. A job description is the most critical component of a performance assessment grid. Without a job description it is impossible for an effective grid to be created.

Several tools for creating job descriptions and regular evaluation processes are contained in another CBOQ document entitled "Building Sound HR Practices: A workbook for your church." It is available at www.baptist.ca, from the "Churches" drop-down menu, clicking on "Church Operations" and then clicking "Personnel". Then under the heading "Personnel Resources for Church Boards" you'll find "Building Sound HR Practices: A workbook for your church".

Step 14 Moving On...Leaving Well

After accepting a call to ministry, the transitioning ministry leader is faced with the important responsibility of effectively communicating to the church his/her upcoming transition, and developing a clear exit plan.

The primary task of the ministry leader is to "equip the people of God for works of service". As a result, the outgoing ministry leader should have a strong sense that their time of ministry has come to a close, and that the congregation is well prepared for the next stage in their journey. The role of the ministry leader at this stage is to AFFIRM and RELEASE.

Unfortunately, the reality is that often a ministry leader has unfinished business, strained relationships and possibly even been asked to resign or fired. Even in these situations, it is important for the departing ministry leader to AFFIRM the congregation, and to RELEASE them to the next stage in their journey.

In healthy environments it may be natural for the ministry leader to want to remain involved in the ministry and help find a successor. For churches where a clear and identified succession plan has been put in place, this will certainly be important, but for most ministry contexts, it will no longer be the role of the departing ministry leader to participate with the next stages in journey for the congregation. Certainly, a ministry leader should provide counsel for transitional steps and accept invitations to voice opinions, but this must all be clearly done from the perspective of outgoing “consultant” rather than an ongoing member of the team.

The most helpful thing that a departing pastor can do is to orient the church leadership to the people and resources of CBOQ. The Church Life and Leadership Team is well equipped to walk a leadership team through the steps of forming a search committee, revisioning, and refocus. The Director of Administration is a great resource to assist a church in all the “employment” details that need to be finalized.

Who should be informed first?

Out of respect for the leadership team, in almost every context it will be wise for a transitioning pastor to communicate with them first. Such communication may come as a surprise, but many transitioning leaders have discovered that the “surprise” announcement is not such a surprise at all, as those closest to the ministry leader might have been involved confidentially, or they will have noticed even a subtle change of heart. Of course it is quite likely that some of the leaders will have been contacted by a search committee to provide reference checks.

Some important work is required to occur between the ministry leader and leadership team. A well-thought-out plan should include transitional items such as: length of notice given (e.g. while law requires two weeks, many letters of agreement will seek much longer terms – two months is often common), vacation or other aspects of “time earned”, and other logistical items including but not limited to office separation (What belongs to the pastor? What belongs to the church?), benefits and pension, manse, etc.

This work will not likely be accomplished at the time that the ministry leader first announces his/her transition. Therefore, it is important that another meeting be set up, quite quickly to work through such issues. This meeting might take place with a smaller group such as a human resources committee, or a smaller committee of the board.

A well-timed exit strategy requires wisdom. If a leadership team meeting is scheduled for a Monday night, a follow up meeting can happen later in the week, before the following Sunday when the entire congregation will gather again. It might be wise and prudent for a leadership team to work with the ministry leader to create a unified and strong exit strategy, even if it requires keeping the news of the resignation confidential through a Sunday gathering, so as to be more completely prepared for the following week.

A letter to the congregation, whether mailed or read publicly should always focus on the positive. The future of a ministry leader and a congregation begins with a healthy meeting between lay leaders and the ministry leader, and is followed by a strong and positive letter to the congregation. Even in the event of dismissal, a letter that focuses on the positive, while painful, is always better than a

vindictive, angry or accusatory note. Remember also, your words and actions will follow you. If you are transitioning within CBOQ, bonds exist between even the most remote churches.

A note about Ethics

Separating oneself from the relationships that have been developed over time in a local congregation is difficult. This is one reason why a gracious but clear RELEASE between pastor and congregation must occur. Because you are a ministry leader, you will have influence, even authority, in the lives of congregational members. It is important that there is a clear RELEASE and separation between the ministry leader and congregation. This is almost always difficult, particularly in the case of retiring pastors who may strongly desire to stay in the community and be actively involved in the church. A transitioning pastor must abandon their role of authority and influence to allow a congregation to grieve, to process, and eventually to align themselves under the leadership and influence of another.

If one thing is certain - the incoming ministry leader will be different than you. It will be tempting for congregants to call you, to seek your input, or to “bounce ideas off of you.” Departing ministry leaders must separate themselves from ministry influence and authority. This will likely mean a time of transition for friendships within the congregation. Influence and authority includes your opinion, intercession, and even involvement in significant events. A past pastor should always seek deliberate permission from the new pastor or the lay leadership of a church before participating in any significant events, like a baptism, wedding or funeral. It might make perfect sense for the past pastor to be involved given relationships and longevity, but such involvement must also come with the permission of the new leadership team.

Tips for Increasing Your Effectiveness in Ministry and in the Placement process

1. Take personal care

Personal disciplines include spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual fitness. By paying attention to our spiritual fitness we will increase our connection to Christ, our prayerfulness, patience and spiritual vitality.

By paying attention to our emotional fitness we will increase our connection to others – family, friends, but also search committees, and grow stronger in terms of our emotional responses to stress, frustration, or even happy circumstances. Many people can have tremendous IQ (intellectual quotient) but low EQ (emotional intelligence).

By paying attention to our physical fitness, we will increase our vitality and health. We will discover we have more energy, stamina, and greater vitality in our relationships, creativity, work habits, etc.

By paying attention to our intellectual fitness, we will become life-long learners who keep current on contemporary practices, trends and learning. As a communicator, leader, manager, cultural exegete, our ongoing learning and intellectual development is essential.

You may have heard the quote, “The medium is the message” – sometimes we might have a very strong message, but the medium (i.e., “me”) needs the work. Work on character development, or our personal fitness, is essential for every follower of Jesus Christ, but is extremely relevant during the ministry placement process.

2. Stay current

Pastors often invest heavily in their training as they enter ministry through Bible College, University and Seminary, but can then be tempted to ease off on the learning as the pressures and stresses of church, home and life press in.

Those who spend time in recruitment and placement talk a great deal about the reality that those who do not keep current in recent developments in their field are working on “borrowed time”. Certainly the message of the gospel remains the same (though ongoing research does add nuance and depth even to our primary message), but how we communicate that message, or the work of ecclesiology is always developing and growing.

Baptist churches continue to learn and adapt even central tenets of our ecclesiology. Therefore, it is essential that the current leader be a life-long learner who stays current with best practices in ministry, preaching, leadership and communication.

Seminars, conferences, workshops, books, audio recordings, web resources and many other courses and resources are available for ongoing study and personal development.

3. Stay active

It is common for the person who is contemplating a move to distance themselves emotionally from their current ministry placement. While it might seem to be a personal or subtle change, it is often

evident to those you are presently called to serve and can be discovered through the background

process by a search committee. The best candidates for ministry (or any profession) are those who are already happily invested in their work and ministry. Keep focused, even if you know your time is coming to an end. Many people have found wisdom in setting an end date if even in your own mind – so that there is focus and closure. Setting a date too far into the future is not helpful for the ministry you are presently serving, nor does it help you, even though it might appear as a safe bet.

For those in transition or without present ministry placement – actively engage in the search process, but do not be afraid to find other work in the interim. Working in the marketplace can teach many valuable lessons and allow for relational connections very different from those in the average congregation. The active person is often an enthusiastic person, and this attitude will be perceived by the search committees and churches with whom you have contact.

4. Grow your skill set

Develop fundamental skills during this time of transition. Public communication is one of the most important skill sets for a local church pastor and is something that can be constantly honed and improved. One way to improve is to preach regularly. A second is intentionally learning new styles, techniques or communication skills. Seminars, books and conferences can be very helpful.

For those in a time of transition – find and join a local Toastmasters Club. The relational connections will be refreshing and encouraging and the skills learned in communicating in many different contexts and styles very helpful.

Today's ministry leader must not only be an adept communicator, and shepherd, but also a leader and manager. Growing these skills are essential ongoing development projects.

For many the most useful skills that can be learned for ministry include our ability to relate to others, navigate conflict, eliminate anger and hostility, and grow in our confidence and authority.

5. Connect with a wide network of people

Sometimes, we can have all the right skills, the right heart, good emotional intelligence, and a deeply felt conviction that God has plans to use us, but still not find the right opportunities. One important aspect of any job search is networking. For some networking is easy or even comes naturally, while for others it is painful or feels forced. Regardless, networking is an important reality in the search for successful ministry placement. Connecting with CBOQ staff is one important way to stay networked and informed. Connecting with peers in ministry positions far and wide is also important. Finally, though we don't want to encourage our great leaders to leave CBOQ family, there are times when it is important to network outside of our CBOQ family – across Canada, internationally, or inter-denominationally. Without being pushy or manipulative, it is important to find venues to intentionally connect with the people who might be seeking ministry personnel. One common networking tool is to register for valuable conferences, seminars and workshops. Volunteering is another important networking tool. In fact, it is becoming more and more common in large churches to hire from within. Leaders will tell stories that people moved to the city and found alternative employment while serving as a volunteer – prayerfully expecting that eventually a position would come available. Volunteering in cross-regional ministry initiatives or at the Convention level exposes you to a greater number of people – and therefore opportunities!

Career Transitions, Retooling and Employee Assistance

Career counseling and the work of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) are beneficial tools for candidates at any time. However, there comes a certain point when frustration levels are rising, and personal finances reach almost critical or beyond critical levels. It is at this point that a candidate must actively seek out career counselors and Employee Assistance. Our CBOQ EAP can be accessed through Shepell-fgi at 1-800-387-4765.

After searching fruitlessly for months or years, there comes a point when assessment must turn a corner. The time comes when a candidate must seriously ask themselves, their peers, family members and others whom they respect why the right opportunity has not presented itself.

Common reasons that come into play for the person who has been seeking include:

- a. **“EQ”:** Research indicates that a lack of Emotional Intelligence (sometimes called “EQ”) actually rates as the number one most common reason for dismissal of a ministry leader. Far exceeding moral failure, or a weak skill set is the inability of a ministry leader to handle conflict, navigate relationships and build healthy communication links to lay leaders, the congregation and community.

Coaching, counseling and mentoring can all have significant impact in the development of “EQ”.

-For leaders who struggle with hostility, defensiveness or anger, it can be hard to even discover how others perceive us because of their fear to share honestly. Seek out people who love you, who you respect, and who have the courage to speak the truth – and listen intently! Then develop an intentional plan to significantly reduce your “toxicity”.

- Similarly for those who are told they are cool, aloof or withdrawn – it is not sufficient to say, “I’m just an introvert”. It is important to learn how to embrace people, to draw close to others and to engage.

If these are EQ abilities you just will never achieve – pastoral ministry will continue to be a challenge.

- b. **Skill Set:** Significant gaps in important skills can have a devastating effect on successful placement. A wide range of important skills – such as preaching, communication, leadership, developing vision, pastoral care, networking, etc., all play a part. Sometimes these skills cannot be enhanced to the level required to lead a ministry successfully.
- c. **Unrealistic expectations:** Some of us are legends in our own minds! Unfortunately, that is the only place that we are legendary. It is important through the work of self-assessment and through intentional interactions with others, whom we respect, to come to an honest assessment of our skills, emotional strength, competencies and abilities. This brings us back to the issue of “capacity”. God’s unique design in my life also impacts where I will best be used by Him. Many pastoral leaders imagine themselves as the senior pastor of large churches, but statistics tell us that this is not likely to be the normative expectation even for the highly gifted. Sometimes our salary expectations are significantly different than the norm. Unrealistic expectations can be diverse and plentiful, so it is important to regularly check our expectations with others who love and respect us (including, but also beyond our spouse!)

- d. **Realities (or biases) beyond our control.** It is difficult to say this in CBOQ but statistics continue to reveal that biases exist in ministry placement. These biases include: gender, marital status, appearance, age (too old or too young), and possibly even ethnicity.

CBOQ is committed to helping all gifted, “core competent” ministry leaders to find placement in our churches, regardless of gender, marital status, age, appearance, disabilities or ethnicity. We encourage all of our churches to understand the Human Rights Codes that have been established in Ontario and Quebec and carefully to review those codes within the context of the church. There are provisions within the code for particular biases when warranted (e.g. a gender-based ministry, or a religious conviction regarding marital status, sexual orientation, etc.), but many biases or preferences are not in line with Human Rights Codes or more importantly biblical standards.

It is difficult in ministry because of the mystery of call for someone to come objectively alongside a candidate and suggest that they might not be called to ministry. Similarly, it is sometimes difficult for the coach, mentor or consultant to help a person who summarily refuses to consider their call, or the circumstances surrounding their employment.

God calls every follower of Jesus Christ to serve in ministry, and some with gifts of ministry leadership (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor/teacher) will be called to serve exclusively within the church context. However, there are many examples, including the apostle Paul in the New Testament, of people who have a definite call to ministry who were also “Tentmakers”. Sometimes a part-time job will lead to full-time work, or sometimes church planting or “turn-around” church ministry will require temporary even long-term marketplace employment. Statistics reveal that this is likely a growing trend in the 21st century, along with the common reality of the need for dual income homes.

There is also the reality that some people will not be able to find a ministry placement, temporarily or long-term. This person must make the difficult and painful decision to retool and begin the work of a career transition. Within the marketplace it is becoming far more common for people to hold a number of vastly different jobs in very different industries. It is also possible that such retooling will in fact better equip a candidate for future ministry. While difficult, it is important for the candidate who has been frustrated in their search attempts to seek out a career counselor who can walk with them and help them process this potential reality.

CONCLUSION

Serving in vocational ministry leadership is both a great privilege and deep responsibility. Taking time prayerfully to find the right fit between a congregation and a ministry leader is one of the best investments of time that can ever be made. There is an old proverb: “The best time to plant an oak tree was 40 years ago, the next best time is now!” During a time of transition a ministry, leaders are forced to evaluate their own lives and ministry and to begin the exciting but apprehensive process of seeking God’s calling for the next step in their lives. Doing the hard work of self-evaluation, asking hard questions of peers, family, friends and mentors, equipping oneself effectively with strategic resources for the journey, and carefully and prayerfully assessing and dialoging with prospective congregations is essential to effective and healthy ongoing ministry. Transition requires a heightened commitment to prayer, to open reception of assistance and guidance, and often to great lengths of patience. God’s grace to you as you walk through this process!



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