

Appendix F

Important notes on Assistant/Associate Pastors

Your congregation may have more than one pastor on staff. When the Senior or Lead Pastor role is vacant, there are several important considerations that the call committee and governing body need to be aware of.

First, there may be pressure from the congregation to simply “promote” an Assistant or Associate Pastor into the senior pastor position. Not only is this an inadvisable practice, but it completely discounts the nature of the Divine Call as described above. The calling process is a critical opportunity for the congregation to seek the Holy Spirit’s leading, do its due diligence in self-study and discovering its mission and ministry for the next season, and come to a unified, God-pleasing conclusion on who should lead the congregation. While the Assistant or Associate may be whom God has chosen, this can never be a simple assumption. It is always strongly recommended that the congregation undertake the whole call process.

Second, Assistants or Associates should be asked as the call process begins whether they want to be considered for senior pastor role. It is not uncommon at all for Assistants/Associates to decline to be considered for a variety of reasons. Whatever the reasons, this question should be clearly asked, and then it should be clearly communicated to the congregation if they decline consideration.

Finally, if the Assistant or Associate does want to be considered as a candidate, they should be the first candidate the call committee evaluates in comparison to the profile generated out of your self-study. Interviews should take place according to the process you planned for external candidates. If the call committee determines the Assistant or Associate meets all requirements of your profile and feels there is no need to look at other candidates and that he should be recommended to the congregation, the congregation should vote on whether to call the Assistant or Associate.

On the other hand, if the call committee determines that the Assistant or Associate does not align with the stated profile, before proceeding further the Assistant or Associate should be privately informed of the call committee’s decision. The Assistant or Associate should then be requested to remove his name from further consideration, and this should be communicated to the congregation.

The sensitive handling of situations as described above is very important to congregational unity and ongoing ministry. Calling a Transitional Interim Minister is a very wise and highly recommended option to help navigate these types of situations. Your circuit visitor, regional vice president, and district president are also important resources to call upon for guidance.