

# The Real Reasons Your Search Process is Taking Too Long

I wish I had objective data on the length of time between pastors. I can say anecdotally the time is much longer than it used to be. A whole lot longer.

To be clear, I know we cannot presume on the call of God. I get that. But, all things considered, more and more churches are struggling because they are going longer periods of time without a pastor. Attendance often declines. Budget giving often declines. Morale often declines.

So why are search committees and appointment processes (I will refer to all search entities as search committees for simplicity) taking so much longer? I see six clear reasons.

1. **There are no longer ready-made networks to provide a steady supply of pastors for churches.** Denominations and other networks could provide a list of names in the past, many of whom could fit most churches in that network. Today, churches are different more than uniform. Communities are more diverse. The “denominationally-groomed-and-ready” pastor just does not exist today.
2. **Search committees are often poorly equipped to find pastors.** They typically do not know the right places to go and the right people to ask. They don’t have time to devote to seeking applicants and culling through resumes. Most don’t know the profile of a best qualified applicant.
3. **Search committees often still use old paradigms.** Advertise in denominational or network publications. Wait for a flood of resumes to arrive with mostly unqualified candidates. Go to a candidate’s church to hear a sermon. Go through resumes one by one in an excruciatingly slow and painful process. Wait. Wait. Wait.
4. **Many search committees don’t use a search firm.** I’ve heard all the reasons not to do so. Some think it costs too much. But most churches save a lot of money and time using a search firm. For example, during prolonged interim periods church giving usually declines—which can lead to financial struggles. Other churches think the search firm chooses the pastors for them. No, the search firm finds qualified candidates for the church to choose
5. **Search committees often represent a cross section of the church rather than the most qualified members.** I understand the sentiment to have every group in the church represented. Unfortunately, such representation is not often commensurate with qualification. And an unqualified search committee is most often a slow search committee.
6. **Some search committees and churches don’t think it is spiritual to find a new pastor too quickly.** In most cases, a church should be able to get a new pastor in six months or less. God is really able to work that punctually. There is nothing inherently spiritual about taking a year or two years or more finding a new pastor. In fact, in many cases it is really bad stewardship to take that long.

Many churches are simply taking too long to find a new pastor.

As a consequence, many congregations are struggling without a leader to guide them.

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