

Why Do Call Committees Work with Confidentiality?

The selection of a new pastor is of interest to every member of a congregation. We hope to have deep spiritual and emotional ties with our pastor. Entrusting this to a select few is not an easy thing to do. Our feelings are compounded when the call committee must work with confidentiality, for it seems almost “secretive.” But there are three important reasons why call committees must work with confidentiality.

- 1. To preserve the current ministry of the pastor being considered.** Call committees do not share the name or locations of pastors being considered because to do so may damage the effectiveness of the pastor’s current ministry. When a congregation hears that its pastor is interviewing for another call, members become distressed. They lose focus on their work and worry about the future. They may feel betrayed by the pastor and shut the pastor out of their hearts. They may feel pressure to make the pastor happier. The pastor can become a “lame duck.” Yet, it may be months or years before the pastor actually receives a call. By keeping confidentiality, congregations avoid damaging current ministry.
- 2. To protect the families or friends of pastors being considered.** Call committees do not share the name or locations of pastors being considered, for when the word reaches their community it may disrupt the spouse’s employment and promotion, the children’s sense of security, or the friendships upon which the pastor depends.
- 3. To allow the call committee members to “talk out” the decision.** In some ways, the best call committees are like a “jury room,” where each member can speak openly and freely, and the group moves toward a consensus. Remember when the disciples reported, “It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us . . .”? This discussion can be short-changed if call committee members are acting “in public.”

You will help your call committee do its work by (1) praying for the committee members daily, (2) letting the committee members know of your support and perspectives without pressuring them for confidential information, and (3) listening carefully with your heart when the call committee presents a thorough report and recommendation at the appropriate time.