



# FIEC

Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches



## **A GUIDE FOR THE SELECTION PANEL OF A SENIOR PASTOR IN AN FIEC CHURCH**

# A GUIDE FOR THE SELECTION PANEL OF A SENIOR PASTOR IN AN FIEC CHURCH

One of the most significant Christian ministries undertaken by a church member is to be asked to serve on the selection panel for new senior pastor of that church. It is an expression of Christian fellowship. It is also an opportunity to serve the church. Humble dedication is required.

Your church constitution will have instructions as to how to appoint a selection panel. Regardless of how this is done, panel members should be able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the Christian faith and possess the ability to identify and interview a candidate. This is a different process to recruiting employees in the business world. There are some similarities, but the differences are significant and vital.

Once activated, the selection panel should remain in place until the task is accomplished and the senior pastor's position is filled. It is unwise to reconstitute the panel during the process. Members should stay in place until the process is complete.

## THE SELECTION PANEL SHOULD:

- Comprise a minimum of 3 members to a maximum of 6 members or as the constitution directs;
- Pray regularly;
- Consist of persons who can 'read' people and who can ask incisive questions;
- It is strongly recommended that godly women are invited to be involved in the selection process. Wise and godly women will bring invaluable insights into understanding candidates, their ministries and families;\*
- Not have both husband/wife couples as members;
- Have an FIEC pastor, or FIEC member from outside the congregation. This is recommended as a member church of FIEC. This person could be brought into the group via Zoom if they cannot attend in person;
- Consult widely with other FIEC members and, if applicable, the church's board of reference or review panel;
- Be ready to give at least 2-3 hours of your time weekly (prayer, consulting, interviews).

\* Your church will need to structure the panel in a way that is compatible with your church's constitution.

## STEP 1 - GETTING READY

The Bible should shape our understanding of church and ministry. It must also inform our employment decisions. What priorities are you looking for in a future pastor/leader?

Work through the following passages:

**Matthew 28:19-20** - How will "make disciples of all nations" shape decisions about suitable men?

**Ephesians 4:11-14** - How is "a mature man" produced?

**1 Corinthians 13** - How would a pastor/leader promote this?

**1 Timothy 3:1-7** - Note the character required in the Christian leader.

**2 Timothy 2:1-10**

Use the passages to work out:

- What should be a core 'driver'?
- How a pastor should apportion his time and energy?
- What should be his view of those who are 'lost'?
- What gifts, characteristics or abilities are essential?
- If a pastor is driven by a gospel heart and a love for the saints? How would you expect your senior pastor to demonstrate the intention expressed in 2 Timothy 2: 2?

## STEP 2 - HR TOOLKIT, JOB DESCRIPTION & ADVERTISING

### 1. FIEC HR Toolkit

FIEC has recently introduced an HR Toolkit for churches to access information on employment matters including recruitment, onboarding, induction and more. The information in the HR Toolkit looks at the matter from a senior pastor's perspective, but the tools and advice provided will help you as a selection panel in your search for a new senior pastor. To access it, go to: [www.fiec.org.au/churchpastor-login](http://www.fiec.org.au/churchpastor-login) and sign up for an account. Once your account has been approved by FIEC you will receive an email confirmation and you can then login to the HR Toolkit.

### 2. Job description/selection criteria and remuneration

You may have been provided with a job description and selection criteria (or essential requirements) for the senior pastor by the church elders or leadership team. If not, you will need to consult with them in the writing of both. As the selection criteria will form the basis of how you determine the suitability of applicants for the position, it is important to spend time on getting this right. The passages and questions from Step 1 will help with this task, as will the 6 Cs that can be found in Step 4, but key to this will be your church's Gospel Vision and distinctives. For more on this, refer to the document, ['Your Church's Gospel Vision and Selecting Your Next Senior Pastor' - click here.](#)

The selection panel will need to produce a briefing document (like a prospectus) for potential applicants which will highlight the distinctive features of your church and a summary of the position description and selection criteria. [Click here for a recent example from Wagga Wagga Evangelical Church.](#)

In conjunction with the church's treasurer you will need to determine a remuneration package to be offered. Information and advice on this can be found in the FIEC HR Toolkit.

### 3. Advertising the position

In addition to word of mouth, the position can be advertised in a number of places online for free:

- The FIEC website has a ['Ministry Opportunities'](#) page that gets a lot of visits. You can post your job here and there is no cost in doing so. FIEC will also post it on various social media platforms. This ensures that there is good exposure amongst FIEC churches.
- [Eternity Jobs](#) is a good option with a wide readership and is also free.

It would be worth asking around for other places to advertise the position (local theological colleges, etc.)

## STEP 3 - ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS

### 1. Initial enquiries

Depending upon how you word your advertisement, initial enquiries will come in as either an email asking for more information or as a copy of the enquirer's CV.

- Email enquiry - have one of the panel delegated to call them back and have a conversation about the position, who they are, their qualifications and background and take notes. A report can then be brought back to the panel for discussion and a decision made as to whether to go further.
- CV - the panel can look at each CV and quickly determine if there is any merit in going any further with them.

Once the panel has agreed that an enquirer merits further consideration, you can invite them to apply and fill in a pastor's questionnaire. A copy of the FIEC pastor assessment questionnaire is in the list of documents at the end of this guide. You can adapt it for your own purposes. It is a substantial document which will give the panel considerable insight into the character, convictions and competencies (etc.) of the applicant. A request for the names of referees and their contact details is included at the end of the questionnaire.

When someone applies you need a thorough 360 degree picture of this man. Employing the wrong man just means a world of pain for everyone involved.

## 2. Before the interview

Always carefully follow through on reference checks. Contact the people he has given as referees. See the Reference Request (see the list of documents at the end of this guide) and either send them the form or call them (preferred option) and use the questions listed on the form. Also make sure you contact people who have worked with this man in ministry - as his boss, peers, or those he has led. Ask the awkward questions (see the Reference Request form for possible questions) and always ask about family life.

**IMPORTANT!** If he is married then interview the man and his wife. If his wife isn't 100% behind him he won't be able to do the job. This doesn't mean that she is being interviewed to be the unpaid women's pastor in the church, but that she needs to be supportive of him taking this position, and keen to be an active member of the new church should he be offered the position. See Step 4b below for more on this.

## STEP 4 - THE INTERVIEW

Simply put, what do you want in a candidate? In order to determine the suitability, or otherwise, of a future senior pastor, some necessary characteristics have been set out in the following sections. In each category the key issue being investigated is highlighted. It is then followed by suggested questions to help draw out the issue and give the selection panel some idea of the candidate's suitability.

The necessary characteristics and gifts have been split into six different categories as follows:

### 1. CHARACTER

#### Key issues:

Godly character in a pastor is of utmost importance. A pastor's character is not revealed in his stated values but in his personal behaviour, in how he relates to; his family, his church, his community. Assessing a candidate's character is not just a matter of what he has been like in the past but what patterns of behaviour are present that will sustain and grow his character into the future.

A real issue for Christian pastors is that they are both Christians and pastors. This means that their identity (who they are) can be tied up in their work (what they do). Their identity, purpose and sense of self-worth can become grounded in what they do (senior pastor) rather than in who they are (John Smith). Experience has shown that imbalance in this area can lead to poor ministry outcomes for the pastor, his family and his church. To get a real gauge on a pastor's character it is important to dig below the surface of stated values to patterns of behaviour in relating to others. The following questions seek to do that.

#### Possible questions for CHARACTER:

- Who has God used to shape your Christian life? (e.g. mentor or coach?)
- How much have you pushed back at God's 'shaping' of you?
- What helps you stay on track in the following areas: Alcohol? Porn? Entertainment?
- How significant is your diary in your life?
- What have you learned about yourself as a result of being in ministry?
- How would you describe yourself to an adult stranger?
- What brings you joy and when did you first discover that?
- As a married couple have you both been faithful throughout your marriage?
- How has the ministry 'lifestyle' impacted on your marriage and family?
- How many close friends do you have with whom you share personal joys/struggles?
- How do you determine the 'regular giving' portion of your household budget?
- Is there any incident in your life, should it become known, that would disqualify you from ministry or bring disrepute on Jesus and the church?

## 2. CONVICTION

### Key issues:

How enthusiastic and passionate is he for Jesus? How and where has he deepened his theological understanding? How did he come to his current theological position? Many of our friends stumble and fall away, so why is he still a Christian?

There are many theological challenges. How comfortable is he with being complementarian and restricting the pulpit to male preachers? How did he come to the reformed, evangelical and complementarian position?

How does the candidate have strong convictions graciously and lovingly? How has he developed a vision for the lost? When did he 'feel' the urgency to see the lost saved?

### Possible questions for CONVICTION:

- How convinced are you of the realities of heaven and hell?
- How did you become a Christian and why are still a Christian?
- How do you describe your theological position? How did you come to this position?
- How would you define complementarianism and why are you committed to it?
- How would you see men and women in church life week by week?
- Who is your favourite theologian and why?
- What do you see as the Biblical meaning of 'church'?
- What doctrines do you believe are essential (non-negotiable)?
- What beliefs or positions do you believe are desirable (but not essential)?
- How comfortable are you with the FIEC Statement of Faith ([see here](#))?

## 3. COMPETENCY

### Key issues:

How a does this man process and use his knowledge, skills, gifts, and abilities to successfully perform the critical tasks pertaining to his role? It's not just being 'friendly' or 'nice'.

The clarity with which ideas are conveyed and how staff relationships are managed can be a minefield for the inexperienced. Leading a mixed team (staff and volunteers) and establishing clear pathways is more than being a team captain. Difficult relationships have to be handled productively and wisely (not just by handing out resignation forms).

Giftedness and charisma need to be present if he wants to take people along with him. But you don't want Superman!

### Possible questions for COMPETENCY:

- No one has 'all' gifts but which are your strongest?
- How would you describe the role of senior pastor?
- How many tabs are usually open on your computer at one time?
- Are you a multi-tasker or do you finish one task before picking up another?
- What are the signs that you're pushing yourself too hard?
- In your previous/current ministry job how did you apportion your week/day?
- How intentional are you with respect to personal witnessing?
- How has your preaching preparation and style changed over the last 5-7 years or since you finished Theological/Bible College?
- How disciplined are you in handling your inbox and emails?
- In ministry what do you find a joy and what do you find a drag?

## 4. COMMUNICATOR

### Key issue:

The central ministry of the senior pastor is preaching and teaching. If he is weak as a speaker, this will weaken the whole church. This is not an emphasis on oratory or the use of clever words or expressions. This refers to his commitment to, and passion for, expounding the word of God systematically while recognising and connecting with the culture and composition of the congregation.

He will need the ability to understand the biblical text, identify the maturity or otherwise of the congregation, and express deep truths simply, without compromise. He is praying for changed minds, heart and lives. He will need to preach for changed lives.

Every member of the selection panel should listen to a number of the 'short listed' applicant's sermons online. If possible and with appropriate discretion and confidentiality, it may be possible to watch him preach live.

No one can be a good communicator if they don't listen to people.

### Possible questions for COMMUNICATOR:

- Communication involves listening. How do people rate your listening skills?
- Share an example of a sermon series you have done from either OT and NT. Why did you construct it that way?
- When you're preaching what are you trying to do?
- What were some of the hardest sermons you have had to preach?
- What steps do you follow when preparing a sermon?
- How often do you use commentaries or other resources?
- How would you describe the features of a good/bad sermon?
- When do you prepare your sermons?
- Which preachers (living and dead) do you find particularly helpful?
- How much effort do you put into training preachers/speakers?

## 5. CAPACITY

### Key issue:

Capacity is about the man's energy and resilience to keep doing the job, not just week on week, but for the years ahead..

A person who can preach a great biblical sermon may have the ability to teach. But, if he takes so long to produce that 'cracker' sermon that he can only do it once every 3 or 4 weeks, then he might not have the capacity to take a role involving full time preaching!

Ministry is more like a marathon than a sprint. Does he have the emotional and physical reserves to keep going? Does he have the discipline and self-care habits required for the long haul?

It goes beyond work rate, into resilience. e.g. the 'hard-working farmer' of 2 Timothy 2:6.

### Possible questions for CAPACITY:

- What would be an example of the 'normal' rhythm for your week?
- How good are you at managing your time?
- How many hours per week do you usually work?
- What have you learnt about yourself while working in ministry?
- How hard is it for you to persevere in ministry?
- What is the general condition of your physical health? Any problems?
- What activities do you find emotionally or physically refreshing?
- What things are most draining for you in ministry work?
- How good are you at maintaining a proper day off each week?

## 6. CHEMISTRY

### Key issues:

How self-aware is this man? Is he self-centred or other person centred? Culturally is he a good fit? Would he click sufficiently with the eldership or leadership of your church? How much would he grate on the other key person(s) in the existing team? Is he a team player? Is he chess or dodge-ball?

### Possible questions for CHEMISTRY:

- Think of a confrontation you had with a peer, or an elder, or a church member...
  - Why did it occur?
  - How did you handle it?
  - Why did you handle it that way?
- What is your approach to handling personal criticism?
- How would you help strengthen staff or congregational unity?
- How would you respond if a colleague continually cut you off when you're talking?
- How would you respond to a person who was 'gaslighting' you or a staff member?
- How hard is it for you to avoid harshly criticising others?
- 'The fruit of the Spirit' (Galatians 5:22-23) - which one do you have to work on most earnestly?

## STEP 4b - WHEN THE CANDIDATE IS ONE OF A COUPLE

A pastor's wife is an important person. She is not an addition or an attachment. She is his 'helper', his 'partner', no doubt the mother of his children. She will hear every sermon he will preach. She will be on view to members of the congregation. For good or ill, every woman in the church will notice how she relates to others and how she handles her children. It's life in a gold-fish bowl.

With sensitivity and care the following questions could be put to her. Her thoughts and ideas are important. She will become a member of the church and a sister-in-Christ. Hopefully she will be considering how she can make a contribution alongside the other Christian women in the church.

### Possible questions for his wife:

- What are your concerns about this possible change in your husband's ministry?
- What concerns do you have regarding your family?
- What would you like to bring to this church?
- What ministries would you like to be involved in?
- What are some of your joys in your current church?
- In what ways do you see yourself as supporting your husband in this job?
- How could we help you if your family made the move to this job?

## STEP 5 - BEFORE YOU OFFER THE POSITION

### FIEC:

Given that your senior pastor is your church's link to FIEC, it is important to confirm that the applicant would be acceptable as a FIEC Church Representative before appointing him to the position of senior pastor. This is why it was recommended earlier in this document that the selection panel should include an FIEC representative. Please talk to the FIEC National Director, Al Stewart - [al.stewart@fiec.org.au](mailto:al.stewart@fiec.org.au).

### YOUR CHURCH:

With a likely candidate, get him to visit, to preach to the congregation and meet people.

You will also need to discuss with your church's secretary what are the requirements of your church's constitution on the appointment of a new senior pastor and if there is the need for a vote from the church's partners/members.

Make sure you keep consulting the FIEC HR Toolkit which can help with issues around remuneration, letters of offer and contracts. Any questions regarding these matters, contact the FIEC Operations Manager, Dean Ingham - dean.ingham@fiec.org.au.

### **UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS:**

It is important to communicate quickly with the unsuccessful applicants and if requested, offer feedback on why they were unsuccessful. See the 'Talking Points - Unsuccessful Applicant' document at the end of this guide.

## **STEP 6 - MAKING THE OFFER**

Once you have decided who you will offer the position to, call them to let them know and then follow it up with a formal letter of offer by email.

The FIEC HR Toolkit will help you consider everything your church needs to do to prepare for the onboarding of a new pastor.

Congratulations, you have completed your job as a Selection Panel. Don't forget to continue to pray for the new senior pastor and his family as they prepare to move and settle in and for the church as it transitions to new leadership.

## **SUMMARY OF JOBS FOR PANEL MEMBERS**

- Who will be note-taker/secretary for the panel?
- Who chairs meetings?
- Who takes responsibility for the job description/selection criteria/briefing?
- Who engages with the church treasurer regarding the remuneration package?
- Who arranges advertising for the position?
- Who calls initial enquirers and reports back to the panel?
- Who connects with referees and reports back on those conversations?
- Who connects with previous church/contacts and reports back on those conversations?
- Who arranges the interviews with the applicant/s?
- Who collects links to the applicant's online sermons? (all SP members should listen)
- Who handles each of the 6 C's (above) when it comes to the interview/s?
- Who meets with wife or with them as a couple?
- Who communicates with unsuccessful applicants?
- Who communicates with the successful applicant?

## **BOOKS, VIDEOS & ARTICLES THAT WILL BE HELPFUL:**

### **Books:**

- [Zeal Without Burnout](#) - Christopher Ash
- [The Book Your Pastor Wishes You Would Read](#) - Christopher Ash
- [Lead](#) - Paul Tripp
- [Emotional Vampires](#) - Dr Al Bernstein

### **Videos:**

The Pastor's Heart:

- [Personality Traits](#)
- [Rosters Are Contrary To The Gospel Says Rhett Harris](#)
- [Assessing Leaders](#)
- [Endurance In Ministry Through Family Systems](#)

Church Answers:

- [The Seven Traits of a Healthy Church Leader](#)



## Articles:

Steve McAlpine:

- [Which core team member do you need to know best before you plant?](#)

## DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN THIS GUIDE:

- [Your Church's Gospel Vision and Selecting Your Next Senior Pastor](#)
- [Senior pastor questionnaire - FIEC Assessment](#) - adapt for your own requirements
- [Reference Request](#) - pdf
- [Reference Request](#) - docx
- [Talking Points - Unsuccessful Applicant](#)

**The FIEC staff team are always happy to be consulted by selection panels.**

National Director: Al Stewart - 0412 781 777 / [al.stewart@fiec.org.au](mailto:al.stewart@fiec.org.au)

Chaplain: Bruce Bennett - 0427 015 123 / [bruce@fiec.org.au](mailto:bruce@fiec.org.au)

Women's Network Coordinator: Ruth Sheath - 0415 965 025 / [ruth.sheath@fiec.org.au](mailto:ruth.sheath@fiec.org.au)

Operations Manager: Dean Ingham - 0431 203 616 / [dean.ingham@fiec.org.au](mailto:dean.ingham@fiec.org.au)





# FIEC

Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches

PO Box 5170 Lyneham ACT 2602

[www.fiec.org.au](http://www.fiec.org.au)

[info@fiec.org.au](mailto:info@fiec.org.au)