

CALLING AN EXECUTIVE MINISTER

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Introduction

This manual is intended to guide a Region through the transitional phase of leadership following an Executive Minister's departure. These pages will assist the region's leadership in securing leadership for an interim executive minister if needed, as well as suggest a process and resource materials for guiding a search committee through the discernment process for calling the region's next Executive Minister. This manual was developed through the Office of the General Secretary. In addition to this guide, the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries is also available to facilitate each phase of the transitional process.

Once a Region becomes aware that it is entering into a transitional phase of leadership it should send notification to the Associate General secretary for Regional Ministries by mail (American Baptist Churches, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851) or by telephone (610/768-2341) setting forth the particulars of the departure so that he/she can begin to provide staff support to the region.

The region will also want to plan and carry out a celebrative farewell to the present Executive Minister. It is wise to facilitate the effective closure of one ministry as an initial step in preparation for moving into the region's future.

The Region's official documents, including their Constitution, Bylaws, Rules of Procedure, and Staff Policy handbooks often provide specific detailed information regarding the selection of an interim as well as the next Executive Minister. Guidelines contained in these documents should be followed carefully.

Each portion of the transitional phase of discerning new leadership for the region comes with its own set of challenges as well as rewards and is a tremendous opportunity for the region to advance their mission and vision that God has given in new and creative ways.

The Interim Executive Minister

Most regions call an Interim Executive Minister to provide guidance while the search is being conducted for a new Executive Minister. This not only helps the region to continue with its work, but releases the pressure on the Search Committee and allows them to do their work carefully. Official Region documents may outline which group (such as the Executive Minister Search Committee, the Executive Committee, or the entire Region Board) is responsible for calling an Interim Executive Minister, although some Region's documents are silent on this issue. The most common group charged with this decision is the Region's Executive Committee. The Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries can provide help with the process and can recommend a potential Interim Executive Minister. History has shown that a clear, up front understanding that the Interim Executive Minister may not be a candidate for the Office of Executive Minister will prevent great heartaches and even some divisions.

The work of the Search Committee will normally take from 12-18 months to complete. If the

Region desires to have a single person fulfill the interim position, this time period should be discussed when negotiating with a potential interim Executive Minister.

Some potential Interim Executive Ministers prefer to work 75-80% of the time allowing for some return home trips. In any case the anticipated duties of the Interim Executive Minister should be clarified. Once the priorities have been set, the time given to the region can be negotiated in hours, segments, days, or weeks of time.

The interim period carries with it a unique set of leadership opportunities. Suggested tasks for the work of an *Executive Minister* are listed in the document {*Expectations-EM*} and tasks more specific to the role of an *Interim Executive Minister* can be found on the Interim Ministries website.

Some Regions decide to form the Executive Minister Search Committee while the present Executive Minister is still serving, hoping to call a new Executive Minister about the time that the present Executive Minister departs. Regions desiring to do this should allow at least one year for the Search Committee to complete its work.

Selecting the Search Committee

Few tasks are more important in the life of a region than the selection of the appropriate persons to serve on the Executive Minister Search Committee. The results of their work will help shape the region for years to come. Search Committee members should be persons with good judgment, who work well with a committee, who know the history, ministry, and organization of the Region and American Baptists. They also should have high commitment to the Region and the ABC/USA. They should have good interpersonal relationship skills in order to represent the region well to potential candidates. Finally, they should have a sense of humor, patience, highly developed sense of fairness, and the time to work at this important task.

Potential search committee members should be selected according to the Region's official guidelines. The President of the Region should take the responsibility to check the selection procedures. Some guidelines dictate specific groups to be represented on the Search Committee. Other guidelines are much less detailed. One rule of thumb is that the Search Committee should be "as small as possible" but "as large as necessary to represent all of the voices in the Region." Typically, these voices should represent the region's ethnicity, clergy-lay voices, male-female voices, age groups, geography, and church size.

In addition to the care that is given to the selection of the Search Committee, there needs to be an orderly process of the election of the Executive Minister including who does the electing, by what majority, and upon what kinds of notification. If these provisions are not in place it would be most helpful if the President of the region would initiate the process to modify current governing documents and then to activate the process for adoption of the modifications. Feel free to contact the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries if help is needed with these revisions.

It may take a year or longer from the time of the resignation of one Executive Minister to the calling of another. If the Committee does its work well there will be a long-lasting sense of satisfaction.

A job description that can be used in recruiting Search Committee members can be found in the {*Job Desc*} document in this manual.

Search Committee Assistance

Serving on the Executive Minister Search Committee is one of the most important assignments that can be given a person in an American Baptist Region. Once this invitation is accepted, a number of questions may come immediately to mind.

- * What is the role of an Executive Minister Search Committee?
- * How does a committee go about finding the right person God would have serve as Executive Minister?
- * What are the understandings and expectations about ministry common to American Baptists in this process?

These and many other questions come to mind when a person begins this important task. Therefore, the purpose of this manual is to give you the benefit of the experiences of search committees in other Regions and to acquaint you with the resources that can be of assistance. You will find that the material here will help as you search for prospective candidates, screen those who express interest in serving your Region, and finally present a candidate to your Region Board.

As you work together you will be looking carefully at your Region - as it is now and what you want it to be. This is an important juncture in the life of the Region. The way the Region's ministry and mission are perceived will be important to understand as you seek new leadership.

All thirty-three Regions of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. have covenanted together to define relationships among denominational organizations and to better coordinate our mission efforts. One of the Statements of Agreements that is a part of THE COVENANT OF RELATIONSHIPS AND ITS AGREEMENTS AMONG THE GENERAL, NATIONAL, AND REGIONAL BOARDS OF THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES provides that the General Secretary of the ABC/USA or his/her designee will staff the Executive Minister Search Committee of a Region seeking an Executive Minister. The staff services are similar to those furnished by an Executive Minister or Area Minister for a Pastoral Search Committee of a local congregation.

Therefore, as you pursue the task of selecting a candidate, you will want to be in continuing

close contact with the General Secretary or his/her designee, who is at the time the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries. He/she will provide your Search Committee with information and resources needed during the months that you will be working together. These include securing American Baptist Personnel Services (ABPS) profiles for all prospective candidates whose profile is up to date. Recognizing that the work of your Committee is significant to the life of your Region and to the larger American Baptist family, considerable time and attention will be given to your search process. You should feel free to call upon the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries when questions arise or when help is needed.

A Discernment Process

Regions, the congregations that are a part of them, and individuals providing leadership all seek God's will in carrying out our common mission. In this search process we will once again be seeking to know and to respond to God's will. The Search Committee Process is first and foremost a discernment process. Your efforts will be supported by prayer from throughout the Region and among the American Baptist family as we seek God's person to serve as Executive Minister. Prospective candidates will also be seeking prayerfully God's call as they continue in their pilgrimage of witness and service. The Executive Minister Search Committee will be the instrument through which God's call will be heard and implemented in forging a new partnership of Executive Minister and Region.

Important Guidelines

1. The Executive Minister Search Committee has been charged with the responsibility to recommend an Executive Minister. It is of utmost importance to maintain an attitude of prayer for God's guidance. Pray for and with each other for the process and for the persons affected by it. Be open to the leading of God's Spirit. This is a deeply spiritual and salient process.
2. The Committee has sole responsibility for this task and it must make certain that no other persons or groups usurp this responsibility.
3. The Search Committee is to be guided by God's Spirit to identify the person whose gifts, skills and experience are needed by your Region without regard to age, race, gender, physical status or marital situation. Throughout history God has surprised us with leaders whom we may have originally dismissed.
4. Personal qualities of Christian commitment and character are essential to this role. Also be certain of the person's commitment to the local church, the Region and the ABC/USA. This person is being called to lead one of thirty-three American Baptist Regions.
5. The work and deliberation of the Committee must be done in strict confidence. Candid discussion of the candidates, their references and profiles is essential but must be confined to the meeting rooms. Confidentiality pertains to family members and even the closest of friends.

6. The Committee will be the first representatives of the Region that a prospective candidate will meet. To them, you will be the Region. It is important, therefore, that you be knowledgeable about the Region and the role of the Executive Minister. The prospective candidate will want to learn as much about the Region and its leadership role as you will want to learn about them.

7. Your Executive Minister represents you in a variety of settings, including the wider ABC family and ecumenical gatherings. He/She will serve with regional committees and councils, as a Regional Secretary of the ABC/USA, participate in denominational councils (Regional Executive Ministers Council and General Executive Council) and special task forces, often function as a trustee or board member of an American Baptist institution and provide other leadership as time and schedule permit. Consider the person's ability to reflect the best of this Region to others as well as their ability to reflect the best of ABC and God's Church to the Region.

8. The Search Committee members should continue to function until an Executive Minister is elected and installed, even if vacating a position in the Region that originally gained the person access to the Search Committee.

9. If a member of the Committee becomes a candidate, that person must leave the Committee. If you are currently serving on the Search Committee are simply waiting to be nominated to decide, consider yourself nominated and make your decision immediately regarding whether or not you would consider being a candidate.

Schedule of Meetings and Process

1. FIRST TASKS – PREPARATION FOR THE ANNOUNCEMENT

- 1.1 If the Search Committee has been assigned the responsibility for selecting an Interim, set in place a process for receiving and reviewing names, and selecting an interim.
- 1.2 Decide what type of input needs to be gathered from the region in order to draft the position description and build ownership of the process with the constituencies of the Region. The input may include both qualitative and quantitative data. Some Regions choose to host listening sessions across the Region to gain a sense of the feelings among the constituents about the qualities needed in their Executive Minister, the nature of relationships among the various elements within the Region, and relevance of the ministries in which the Region is engaged. If they are considered germane, the questions of who will conduct the hearings, how, where and when should be determined. Other Regions conduct surveys to gather such input. Sample surveys are included in this manual.

- 1.3 Consider what input is needed from staff and Region Board members regarding gifts, skills and experience needed in the new Executive Minister. Have members of the Search Committee meet with these groups if needed.
- 1.4 Determine who will receive and process the nominations and applications. Arrange to secure an American Baptist Personnel Services (ABPS) profile for each prospective candidate. Copies of the letters of interest with profiles should be sent to all committee members for study prior to the meeting in which the original list of names is narrowed for consideration.
- 1.5 With input from the constituents and ministry partners, prepare a region profile that includes the elements below as appropriate:
 - a. Background and history of the organization
 - b. Current focus of the organization
 - c. Constituents and stakeholders
 - d. Ministry partners
 - e. Primary assets
 - f. Critical leadership issues
- 1.6 With input from the constituents and ministry partners, prepare a position announcement that includes the elements below as appropriate:
 - a. Key responsibilities of the leader
 - b. Desired skills, characteristics, and competencies
 - c. Ideal preparation and experience
- 1.7 If there are changes necessary in the Region's official documents to facilitate the changes that the Search Committee thinks are needed, set in motion the political process for making amendments.
- 1.8 Assure that funds necessary for the activities of the Search Committee will be made available. Decide who will supply the funds and how these funds will be administered and accounted for at the close of the search. Guidelines for preparing a Search Committee budget are included in this manual.
- 1.9 When the above information is in hand, plan to solicit names of prospective candidates. Sources may include the Ministry Opportunities Listing, American Baptist Personnel Services, executive ministers of all Regions, executive directors of national ABC organizations, presidents of American Baptist seminaries, members of the Region Board, and pastors and lay leaders of the Region.
- 1.10 Prepare a letter requesting nominations of prospective candidates and mail it to selected persons and groups {Sample Letter Q-1}. Include a copy of the Job Description and Region Profile. Publicize the Position Description along with the deadline for receiving nominations and applications. The deadline for receiving

applications should be approximately two weeks after the deadline for nominations. A letter should go to those individuals nominated to ask if they are willing to be considered {Sample Letter Q-3}. Others may apply directly by sending in a letter of interest and ABPS profile. Only those who submit a letter of interest will be considered by the committee.

- 1.12 Acknowledge receipt of every nomination and application {Sample Letter Q-5}.
- 1.13 Learn to read an American Baptist Personnel Services profile so that this tool can be used effectively in evaluating candidates. Instructions for reading ABPS profiles are included in this manual.
- 1.14 Using the information gathered, the Committee will fill out an ABPS Form 10 to search through American Baptist Personnel Services for potential candidates for Executive Minister. A letter should go to these individuals to ask if they are willing to be considered {Sample Letter Q-2}.
- 1.15 Inform the Region constituency about your progress. Share with them who is on the committee and the process you are using. Do not share who is being considered.
- 1.16 When the position announcement and region profile are complete, prepare to advertise the position to prospective candidates. Samples of each are in this manual. Development of the Region/Executive Minister Agreement should also be assigned at this time, although completion of it is not required prior to the position announcement being distributed.
- 1.17 Read THE ROLE OF AN EXECUTIVE MINISTER IN THE AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES and DIRECTOR OF PROMOTION.

2. SECOND TASKS – NARROWING THE LIST.

- 2.1 When the letters of interest and profiles from all sources come to the committee it will be time to begin the winnowing process. The person receiving the profiles and letters of interest should copy all materials received and forward them to the committee in advance of the face to face meeting.
- 2.2 With the profiles in hand from the list of the candidates who have submitted a letter of application and those who were nominated or who come from the ABPS Search and who have indicated interest, committee members should begin identifying persons into one of three categories (1) persons whom they would like to consider further, (2) persons whom they might consider, (3) and persons who should not be considered further. The narrowed list should include as many names as possible among the various members' #1 group, but should not include any persons whom one or more members of the committee believe are not appropriate for the position.

- 2.3 If the narrowed list includes more than four names, the Committee will then need to determine what additional information is needed in order to further narrow the list of prospective candidates. Typically, this will result in a “homework assignment” that will be requested of each candidate and a deadline set for the return of that information. Sample homework assignments are included in this manual.
- 2.4 Write to each candidate on the list requesting affirmation of their continuing interest in the position and requesting completion of the homework assignment.
- 2.5 Send a letter releasing others from consideration. {Sample Letter Q-10}

3. THIRD TASKS – DECIDING WHOM TO INTERVIEW

- 3.1 With copies of the information received from all candidates, the members of the Committee will study the materials anticipating narrowing the list further, hopefully to a list of 2-3 individuals whom will be interviewed.
- 3.2 Review the written replies to the homework assignments.
- 3.3 Determine the process to reduce the list of prospective candidates to 2-3 persons. Ranking and paired weighting may be methods employed during the interviewing process.
- 3.4 Prepare and send a letter of thanks to those released from consideration {Sample Letter Q-10}.

4. FOURTH TASKS – SETTING UP THE INTERVIEWS

- 4.1 Write a letter to request written references and to request a signed release from each candidate. Adapt the sample telephone reference form as needed for phoning the references. Send a separate reference check form to each candidate’s Executive Minister. It is usually best for one person on the Search Committee to contact all of the references for a particular candidate.
- 4.2 At this point, it may also be helpful to send additional information about the Region to the potential candidates. These materials may include copies of the region newsletter, pastor’s packet, annual budget, constitution, bylaws, rules of procedure, policy manuals, staff lists, Chamber of Commerce materials about the community where the new Executive Minister will live, and other items that will help the candidate to better know the region.
- 4.3 In setting up the interviews, each candidate should be asked to indicate if there are additional questions they would like answered before they could become a serious

candidate.

- 4.4 Decide on the time slots and place for the face-to-face interviews.
- 4.5 Develop interview questions for the candidates. Sample interview questions are contained in this manual.
- 4.6 Contact the candidates selected for interviewing by telephone to decide the time and place for the interviews and to make necessary arrangements for transportation and housing. It is best to give the person furthest away the first choice of interview times. Send letters to the candidates to be interviewed confirming the arrangements {Sample Letter Q-12}, enclosing an ABC/USA expense voucher to effect reimbursement by the Office of the General Secretary for all expenses related to coming for the interview. This reimbursement process assures confidentiality from Region personnel.
- 4.7 Determine the compensation, start date desired, moving expenses, etc., to be incorporated in the Region/Executive Minister Agreement and prepare the initial draft of the Agreement. Have the information available during the interview in order to answer questions raised by the candidates.

5. FIFTH TASKS – CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEWS

- 5.1 Plan transportation for the candidates to the site of the interviews. Select a venue that is private and comfortable and make the physical arrangements as informal as possible. Make beverages available for the candidates and Committee members.
- 5.2 Allow 2 ½ hours for each interview and at least ½ hour to debrief in between each interview. The discussion will be guided by using predetermined questions. Committee members may be assigned specific questions or sections of questions. Time should be allowed for the candidates also to ask questions and to dialogue with the Committee. Sample questions are included in these guidelines.
- 5.3 After each interview, discuss what was heard, the feeling levels of members and the consistency of the interview responses with learnings from other sources.
- 5.4 Decide on a process to determine which candidate to recommend. If possible, the Committee's decision should be done by consensus. You are seeking God's "Aha!"
- 5.5 If necessary, schedule additional meetings to determine the candidate to recommend. Do not feel bound by the time constraints as scheduled for this meeting.
- 5.6 Strive for a “consensus decision” in which every member of the Search Committee

can fully support one person as the Region's next Executive Minister. Once that has been achieved, release the other candidates by phone and come to an agreement with the candidate selected regarding the Region/Executive Minister Agreement.

- 5.7 Depending upon the process required by the region and/or the Committee's decision, options exist in the presentation process. A recommendation needs to be developed to fit the Region's procedures or in the absence of such it should be the decision of the Committee. Prepare a biographical summary, including a picture and a rationale for the Committee's selection, to be used along with the profile and the Region/Minister Agreement.
- 5.8 In some regions the Committee will wish to present the candidate to the staff for conversation and receive feedback (not decision making) prior to their recommendation. If this is the process, as small an amount of elapsed time as possible should occur before the next step.
- 5.9 Make arrangements for the candidate, and in some cases the candidate's spouse, to be present at the Board meeting (and at meetings surrounding the Board meeting if this is the region's procedure).

6. SIXTH TASKS - REGION BOARD MEETING.

- 6.1 Utilize a regular meeting of the board, or call a special meeting if necessary. Discuss with the Region President or presiding officer how to arrange the needed agenda time.
- 6.2 Have the candidate available. It is also appropriate to invite the spouse to be present for the board meeting, but the spouse should not take part in the proceedings. Present the recommendation to the Region Board in a positive, affirming manner and in the language which will be in the minutes setting forth the full conditions of the call. Share the process followed by the Committee in selecting the candidate. Introduce the candidate formally to the board.
- 6.3 Have the candidate share a devotional or make a statement and allow the Region Board members to ask questions. Have a suggested time limit for discussion, but do not be too rigid with the time limit. Excuse the candidate from the meeting following discussion with the candidate. Plan for a Committee member or a Region staff person to visit with the candidate during the voting process. A person from the Search Committee should be available to answer any questions the Board wants to address to them.
- 6.4 The Region Board will vote on the recommendation of the Executive Minister Search Committee in accordance with the Region constitution and bylaws.

- 6.5 Immediately after the election, the Region President and the Search Committee Chairperson will meet with the candidate to extend the "call" and to request that the candidate respond to the Board.
- 6.6 In the unusual event that the candidate is not present, contact him or her by telephone to report the action of the Region Board. Ask for acceptance on the telephone and request a written reply as soon as possible but no later than ten days.
- 6.7 Finalize the Region/Executive Minister Agreement. Provide copies for the Executive Minister Elect, the Region files and the Office of the General Secretary.

7. SEVENTH TASKS – ANNOUNCING THE DECISION

- 7.1 Be clear about the starting date of the new Executive Minister.
- 7.2 Announce the action of the Region Board to the Region's constituency and in the appropriate publications of the Region. Send a press release to the ABC Office of Communication. Be certain that the candidate has resigned from his/her present position before this is done.
- 7.3 Put the new Executive Minister on the Region mailing list and send the new email address to ABCUSA.
- 7.4 Arrange for the moving expenses of the new Executive Minister. (In some cases interim accommodations may need to be provided prior to actually moving.)
- 7.5 Arrange an Installation Service for the new Executive Minister. The Search Committee should help plan the Installation Service. Destroy all profile materials related to the search.
- 7.6 Consider inviting the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries to conduct a regional board training seminar at a future board meeting.
- 7.7 Dismiss the Search Committee with appropriate appreciation and recognition.
- 7.8 At the first anniversary, plan a dinner for members of the Search Committee and their spouses with the Executive Minister and his/her spouse to celebrate the new and growing relationship. Plan to reminisce a bit.

Installation Service

An Installation Service should be held within two to four months after the Executive Minister

takes office. This may be held during the Regional Annual/Biennial Meeting or other appropriate time. Sample Installation Services can be obtained by contacting the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries.

This is a time of celebration for the region and a wonderful occasion for worship. When designing the service of installation remember to include on the guest list the president of the region, the General Secretary of the ABC/USA and/or the Associate General Secretary for Regional Ministries, Executive Ministers of nearby regions, presidents of American Baptist institutions to which the region relates, members of the region board, presidents of regional auxiliary organizations, representatives from the region serving on national boards, pastors and lay leaders of region churches, ecumenical judicatory executives, and family and personal friends of the Executive Minister and spouse.

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