

What People Are Saying About *Ask...Seek...Knock*

"Ken Moberg has put together a very, very helpful resource to guide a church and the search committee through a church health producing process of seeking a pastor. This resource has been long overdue and much needed for all Free Churches."

Ves Sheely

Superintendent, New England District, EFCA

"I highly recommend this great resource for any church going through the search process. This book provides a church with resources they need to walk through the transition and search process. The book is both comprehensive and practical in leading a church and search committee through each phase of the search process."

Jeff Powell

Allegheny District Superintendent, EFCA

"Superintendent Ken Moberg has done the homework needed to prepare this excellent step by step guide for pastoral transitions. As pastoral transitions are make or break times for the local church, this book is a helpful guide that I will use in our Intermountain West District. I trust you will find it helpful and part of God's answer to prayer in helping you get organized as a church pastoral committee so you as a congregation will know how to proceed towards either a pastoral candidate or an interim pastor. The book is well conceived and will be a great help in these critical times when wisdom will define the moment as well as the future of your church. I wholeheartedly endorse this excellent tool for your use."

Pastor Rich Carlson

Superintendent, Intermountain West District, EFCA

"This book is a tremendous resource. It is an easy-to-use, comprehensive treasury of practical advice and helpful materials. The church that heeds its counsel will be blessed for years to come."

Daryl Thompson,

Superintendent, Northern Plains District, EFCA

Ask...Seek...Knock

A Step-By-Step Guide for Pastoral Transitions

Dr. Ken Moberg
Superintendent, Forest Lakes District – EFCA

Preface

Churches, like the individuals in them, have defining moments – crossroad moments – that not only determine direction, but also lead to countless other intersections down the road that could only be arrived at by traveling that one path. The path you choose will determine, by God’s grace, all the opportunities and hazards that you will encounter as you travel it. Think about what would have happened if your mother had married that *other* fellow, and you’ll understand what I mean!

The pastoral transition is one such defining moment for a church. As such, it is a road that needs to be traveled carefully. It is a critical time in the life of a church – what you do now will be felt for years to come. It is also a very teachable moment – a time of learning from the successes and failures of your last chapter of ministry.

My goal in writing this book is to share lessons learned over more than eight years as a District Superintendent, during which time I have helped over forty churches conduct senior pastor searches, and many more with other staff positions. Among the tasks that are my responsibility in this position, there is none I consider more important than guiding the pastoral transition. If we navigate this passage right, we bless the church for years to come.

The book you’re reading is basically a “how to” manual that lays out practical steps, tells why they’re important, and shares the tools and best practices I’ve found or developed along the way. The resources referred to in this book are provided on the Tools CD, and can be downloaded and modified to meet the church’s need. I’ve designed the book and CD to be a constantly evolving resource, which is why we duplicate both of them in-house. Doing it this way allows us to revise them without having to republish them. Each edition will hopefully be better than the one before it.

In my role as Superintendent, I have three “Key Result Areas” that frame my goals for each year. They are:

- *Build a team* (the staff and board I’m privileged to work with),
- *Grow a family* (the network of churches of the Forest Lakes District, that can accomplish so much more together than we can alone), and
- *Lead a movement* (our share in the EFCA movement of glorifying God by multiplying healthy churches among all people).

It’s an honor to be involved with all three, and so I dedicate this book to the team, the family, and the movement.

To God be the glory!

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Tools (on CD)

A. Beginnings Tools

- Should Your Church Consider an Interim Pastor?
- Letters of Testimony from Churches
- Effective Use of the Interim Period
- Five Transitional Tasks of an Interim Pastor
- Intentionality Grid
- Detailed sequence of search process

B. Ask Tools

- Exit interview with outgoing pastor
- Key questions for church leaders and search team
- Sample Congregational Survey

C. Seek Tools

- Search Team Covenant
- Articles for Search Team
- Sample Position Description
- MinisterConnection overview
- Ministry Match Definition Booklet
- Reverse Ministry Match
- Pastoral Profile
- Networking
 - Networking letter
 - Recommendation form
- Sample letters
 - Cover letter for church packet
 - Sample Status of Search Letter
 - Sample Sign-off Letter

D. Knock Tools

- Candidate Evaluation worksheets
- Practice interview format
- Behavioral Interviews
- Reference Checks
- Legal History
- Personal visit checklist
- Sample candidating schedule
- Sample candidate brochure

E. Wrapping Up Tools

- Sample letters
 - Sample Letter of call
 - Sample Welcome Letter

Chapter One: Overview

Ask, Seek, Knock: A Step-By-Step Guide for Pastoral Transitions

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8

Introduction

The key word to define the pastoral search process is *discernment* – discerning who the church has come to be, where it is going, and who God will provide to shepherd the flock in the next chapter of its ministry. In discerning Israel's next king, Samuel had to keep in mind that "the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

Jesus' words in Matthew 7:7-8 provide an appropriate framework for the process of discerning God's leading in the search for a pastor. The church begins by asking important questions about the church's identity, mission and vision, so that it will be able to identify the man God is sending to lead it. The church then goes through a process of seeking that man, through helpful tools that have been developed to aid in the search. Finally, the church narrows the field as it knocks on doors of potential candidates to discern which one God has chosen to shepherd the flock.

The overarching metaphor for the process is that of courtship. Desiring an enduring union of pastor and people, the church needs to take some time to understand its own uniqueness before looking at candidates, just as a discerning young person would want to understand himself or herself before considering a life partner. With that sort of insight into the church, it is then ready to begin to explore the field of potential candidates, and ultimately to narrow the focus to the one God is calling to serve as pastor.

I. Ask

In the pastoral search process, you need first to understand your own uniqueness as a church. What is the context in which God has called and shaped you? What experiences have you had, and what lessons have you learned along the way? Where is God leading you in your next chapter of ministry? Once you have those important understandings in hand, you can begin to look for the man God would bring to help take you there.

In this book, we will cover these *key questions* you need to raise in the “Ask” phase of the pastoral transition:

- Where have we come from?
- Where are we now?
- Where is God taking us next?
- What kind of man will we need to get there?

II. Seek

The genius of Eharmony.com is that it links people who have an understanding of who they are and what they’re looking for. On that website, people fill out a personal profile that tells about themselves, and they answer simple questions about what they’d ideally like in a mate. The website can then screen for issues of age, race, faith, interests, and many other factors on the basis of what a person lists as important. Part of the success of this computer dating service is that it matches people on the basis of their objective description of their situation and desires, before ever meeting the other person. In the placement process, it is important to search as objectively as possible as well. Fall in love with your pastor later – screen carefully now.

In this book, we will cover two *key resources* that can best help you in the “Seek” phase of the pastoral transition:

- MinisterConnection, the web-based placement service of the EFCA, and
- Networking

III. Knock

No one ever fully knows his or her spouse at the point of proposal of marriage. But by that time, one has become certain that this person is God’s choice for them. How is that certainty arrived at? How does someone move relationally from having a network of friends to finding a life partner? Seeing that person in a variety of settings helps, as does gaining an understanding of the family he or she was raised in, as well as the testimony of people who’ve known that person for years. In the pastoral search process, there are clear steps that can and should be taken to help a church narrow the field and gain the certainty that it is looking for as it seeks to discern God’s man for long-term ministry success.

In this book, we will cover these *key tasks* you need to perform in the “Knock” phase of the pastoral transition:

- Narrowing the field
- Interviewing
- Reference checking
- Candidating
- Wrapping up