

## PNC Points to Ponder – a theological overview

Come to peace with the fact that no one will bring everything your congregation needs -- or wants -- in a pastor. Instead, look for mature leaders (spiritually and emotionally) who demonstrate a love for both Jesus Christ and people.

Great preaching is important, AND preaching is not everything. A great preacher who cannot lead a session, foster mature relationships, or be actively present in the community, will not move your congregation to a deeper – and wider -- place Christian witness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By contrast, an average preacher who loves people deeply, models collaborative, mission-focused ministry, and equips the saints — all while loving Jesus — will go a long way toward maturing your congregation for its worship and witness. Hold preaching in context with other gifts and skills.

Solo pastors must wear a great many hats on any given day while staying connected to a great many people. Often, you are looking for a competent *generalist* who can “stand in one place” amid myriad relationships, competing interests, and differing ideas, while self-starting across a range of daily/weekly activities.

Ask about what pastors think, because ideas about God matter to us as Reformed believers. Ask more questions about specific ministry behaviors in previous ministry settings, because actions speak louder than words. “What have you done? What has borne fruit? What do you hope to do differently here? Where have you failed but learned? What have you not yet tried? How do you equip the saints for ministry? With whom have you worked collaboratively in community or presbytery?”

Ask them to talk about Jesus. Nothing or no one is more at the center of our shared faith, and yet no subject is more neglected in pastoral interviews. You deserve to know how well your preacher knows, loves, teaches, and equips folks to follow Jesus.

The neglected element in many Presbyterian pastorates is the work of "equipping of the saints for the work of ministry," especially ordained Deacons and Ruling Elders who share in the leadership of the flock with a pastor. Find out what your candidate has done -- or would be willing to do -- to build up the ministry of the session and deacons, who in turn are called to build up the ministry of the congregation.

Always call every reference, even if you assume that your candidate has only chosen references that will speak well of them. You never know what you will learn. Ask each reference: would you welcome this person as your pastor? How have you seen Jesus Christ in this person? Five years from now, what will we wish we had known about this person today? If you were us, what questions would you ask?

Ordained ministry sometimes attracts lazy persons who resist hard work. A key ingredient in fruitful ministry is a strong work ethic and the ability to self-manage one's time and talents. The challenge you face is that much of the real data for determining someone's work ethic is hidden behind the scenes. Ask about behaviors, sacrifices, and determination. Ask references how hard this person will work with/for you. Ask what level of sacrifice or stress it would take to undermine their sense of call to lead the church of Jesus in his ministry.

Keep your prospects and serious candidates up to date on what you are doing and thinking. Well written short emails will suffice. Nothing is more frustrating to good candidates than feeling as though one has been left in the dark for too long about the process.

Remember that your Committee on Ministry and your Executive Presbyter are here to help.

