

Appendix E

Questions

To ask a Core Group Looking for a Church Planter

Just as the search committee (or core group) is going to be thorough, the potential church planter needs to be thorough, as well. Asking is critical.

Here is a list of strategic questions.

1. How would you describe the church you envision being planted? Does the core group tend to define the new church by past church experiences, or is it excited about a vision for the future? Do the core values look outward?
2. Why was the core group gathered? Was the core group born out of a split with a previous church? (If so, a spirit of fighting might continue to be present.)
3. What is this core group's purpose? Have they defined a mission? Does it have a strategy already in place? (If so, there may be conflict with the church planter at these points.)
4. What should be the new church's unique role in this community? What would set this potential church apart from other churches in terms of character and culture? What specific people groups would it reach out to, or what specific ministries would it operate that no other church in the community does?
5. How would they describe what they have in mind in regard to an atmosphere of
 - Worship
 - Small group Bible studies
 - Board meetings
 - Special EventsDo members of the core group agree, or do they give opposite answers?
6. What ministry initiatives would they desire to see launched in the first five years? (If none, you may be encountering a less than proactive approach to ministry)
7. If you knew you couldn't fail, what would your dreams be for this new church? (If the core group doesn't have any dreams, it's not likely that many in the future congregation will have any.)
8. Do you have a desire for growth? How open are they to your plans for church development? Are they willing to pay the price for this church to grow?

9. What role do you think laypersons should play in the development of a strong, growing congregation? Everyone will affirm the role of laity, but assumptions about hospital visitation, decision making, budgeting, and vision will vary.
10. What is it that sparked your interest in me as a candidate? Why do you think I would be a good church planter for this mission? (The answers should shed light on their expectations.)
11. What were the strengths and weaknesses of previous pastors you've had? Do they speak of their pastors critically or appreciatively? Core groups often react to the weaknesses of their previous pastors by looking for the opposite, but their expectations have probably been shaped significantly by their previous pastors.
12. What has been the tenure of previous pastors in churches in which you've been members? If the core group has experienced a pattern of short pastorates, they might have the same expectations of you.
13. How does this core group view pastors it had in former churches? Are they viewed as professionals, as ministers who've been trained and called by God? Are they viewed like hired help? Are they understaffed, overstaffed, properly staffed?
14. What is the true structure for responsibility? In the Presbyterian system, we have the Book of Church Order that deals with this issue. However, core groups may have a different understanding. To whom do I answer? And who answers to me? What is the supervisory chain? What are your expectations of staff members you might have in the future? Discuss your leadership style and how you expect differences to be resolved.
15. Will the pastor be given freedom in the future to shape a ministry team that is sympathetic to his vision?
16. What are your expectations of my family? Do they expect a spouse to be at every church event? Has the pastor's spouse traditionally taken on certain responsibilities in churches you've known in the past? If my children attend a youth group at a neighboring church, would that be a problem?
17. Does the core group have ideas about the importance of reviewing the pastor's salary package each year? An adjustment, at least for cost of living increases, is standard.

(Adapted from "29 Questions to Ask the Pulpit Committee" by Ginger E. McFarland, Leadership Journal, Summer 1998)