

JOURNEY CHURCH

General Board Lead Pastor Candidate Discernment Process

Purpose: Our goal is not merely to hire a leader, but to prayerfully discern whom God is calling to shepherd Journey Church. Throughout this process, we seek unity, wisdom, humility, and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

This process has been developed to provide intentional opportunities for prayer, discernment, evaluation, and unity while ensuring every candidate is treated with dignity, confidentiality, and biblical care.

At a Glance:

IDENTIFY	DISCERN	ASSESS	RECOMMEND	AFFIRM
Candidate Recommendation	Interview #1	Ministry Review	Candidate Weekend	Congregational Vote
Initial Contact	Questionnaire	Board Evaluation	Congregational Prayer	
	Interview #2	On-Site Interview	Board Recommendation	
	Prayer & Fasting Throughout	Reference & Background Review		

Phase 1: Initial Identification

Candidate Recommendation

Potential candidates may be recommended through:

- Board members
- Trusted ministry leaders
- Search contacts

Each recommendation will receive an initial review to determine whether the candidate appears to meet the biblical qualifications for pastoral leadership as outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 1 Timothy 3:1-7 (NLT) “This is a trustworthy saying: “If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position.” So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church? A church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause

him to fall. Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap."

Titus 1:6-9 (NLT) "An elder must live a blameless life. He must be faithful to his wife, and his children must be believers who don't have a reputation for being wild or rebellious. A church leader is a manager of God's household, so he must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or dishonest with money. Rather, he must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life. He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong."

Initial Contact

A confidential conversation is held to determine:

- Genuine interest
- Availability and timing
- Initial sense of God's leading
- Basic alignment with Journey Church

This initial conversation helps determine whether both the candidate and Journey Church should continue into a more intentional season of discernment.

Phase 2: Initial Discernment

Interview #1 – Vision & Calling

Purpose: To determine overall alignment, calling, and relational chemistry.

Discussion Topics

- Personal testimony and calling
- Ministry philosophy
- Vision for the local church
- Leadership style
- Character and integrity
- Family support for ministry
- Previous ministry experience
- Digital presence and social media influence
- Initial relational chemistry

Prayer & Fasting

Following the interview, the board intentionally pauses before moving forward.

Rather than simply gathering additional information, this time is devoted to prayer, reflection, and, as appropriate, fasting, seeking God's wisdom and direction regarding the next step in the process.

Phase 3: Personal & Ministry Assessment

Written Questionnaire

Candidates complete a written questionnaire covering areas including:

- Family life
- Spiritual disciplines
- Personal history
- Personality
- Strengths and areas for growth
- Hobbies and interests

The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather foundational information in advance, allowing future interviews to focus on meaningful conversation, discernment, and deeper understanding rather than basic fact gathering.

Prayer & Fasting

Before proceeding to the next phase, the board again pauses for intentional prayer and personal reflection, asking the Lord for wisdom, unity, and clarity as the discernment process continues.

Phase 4: Leadership Discernment

Interview #2 – Leadership (Video Conference)

Purpose: To gain a deeper understanding of the candidate's leadership philosophy, organizational capacity, and overall fit for leading Journey Church.

Discussion Topics

- Vision casting
- Organizational leadership and executive ease
- Developing leaders
- Discipleship philosophy
- Staff culture

- Conflict resolution
- Decision-making
- Building and maintaining a healthy church culture
- Opportunity for the candidate to ask questions

This interview is intended to move beyond introductory conversations and explore how the candidate leads people, develops teams, navigates challenges, and shepherds an organization over the long term.

Prayer & Fasting

Following the interview, the board once again pauses before moving forward.

This intentional season of prayer allows board members to reflect individually and together, seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance rather than relying solely on experience, credentials, or first impressions.

Phase 5: Ministry Evaluation

Ministry Review

The board conducts a thorough evaluation of the candidate's ministry by reviewing materials that provide insight into both public ministry and leadership effectiveness.

This review may include:

- Sermons and teaching
- Public communication
- Online content
- Written materials
- Reputation within previous or current ministries

The goal is to gain a fuller picture of the candidate's consistency, theological convictions, communication style, leadership influence, and overall ministry philosophy.

Individual Board Evaluation

Each board member independently evaluates the candidate in several key areas before discussing observations together.

Evaluation includes:

- Vision
- Family health
- Discipleship
- Leadership

Board members are encouraged to prayerfully reflect on these areas individually before coming together for discussion. During this conversation, differing perspectives are welcomed with humility, while remaining attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and pursuing unity throughout the discernment process.

Phase 6: In-Person Discernment

Interview #3 – On Site

Purpose: To prayerfully discern relational fit and provide an opportunity for the candidate and board to experience one another in a more natural and personal setting.

The on-site visit may include:

- Extended board interview
- Meals together
- Informal conversations
- Meeting staff and selected key ministry leaders
- Tour of the community
- Time with the candidate's spouse, when applicable

Throughout the visit, the board is not only evaluating leadership abilities but also observing relational dynamics, humility, authenticity, and compatibility with Journey Church's culture and mission. Likewise, this visit allows the candidate and spouse to prayerfully discern whether Journey Church is where God may be calling them to serve.

Prayer & Fasting

Following the on-site visit, the board intentionally pauses once more for prayer and reflection. This season provides space for thoughtful consideration before entering the final stages of evaluation and recommendation.

Phase 7: Due Diligence & Discernment

Reference & Background Review

An independent organization conducts appropriate due diligence to help verify the candidate's qualifications and ministry history.

This review may include:

- Personal references
- Ministry references
- Peer references

- Background check
- Credential verification
- Financial and legal review, as appropriate

The purpose of this process is not merely to identify concerns, but to affirm integrity, establish credibility, and provide additional confidence as the board continues its discernment.

Board Discernment & Recommendation

After completing interviews, evaluations, reference reviews, and seasons of prayer, the board gathers for intentional discussion and discernment.

The board prayerfully considers the collective observations from each phase of the process, seeking substantial consensus regarding whether to recommend the candidate to Journey Church. Throughout this conversation, the board remains committed to listening carefully to one another while seeking unity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The goal is not simply agreement, but faithful discernment of God's direction for Journey Church.

Phase 8: Congregational Discernment

Candidate Weekend

Following the board's recommendation, the candidate is invited to Journey Church for a second visit designed to allow both the congregation and the candidate additional opportunities for discernment.

During the Candidate Weekend, the candidate will:

- Preach during weekend services
- Meet members of the congregation
- Interact with the full staff and key ministry leaders
- Participate in question-and-answer opportunities, as appropriate

This weekend allows the congregation to hear the candidate's heart, observe their teaching, and begin discerning whether God may be leading them to serve as Journey Church's next Lead Pastor. Likewise, it provides the candidate and their family another opportunity to prayerfully consider whether Journey Church is the place where God is calling them to serve.

Prayer & Fasting

Following the Candidate Weekend, both the board and congregation are encouraged to intentionally seek God's wisdom through prayer and, as appropriate, fasting.

This period is not intended to be one of speculation or campaigning, but of quiet discernment, asking the Lord to bring unity, wisdom, and peace before any vote is taken.

Phase 9: Final Discernment

Congregational Vote

The candidate is presented at a congregational business meeting approximately two to three weeks, or another reasonable timeframe, following the Candidate Weekend.

This intentional period between the Candidate Weekend and the congregational vote provides adequate time for:

- Personal prayer and reflection
- Congregational discernment
- Thoughtful consideration
- Board preparation
- Candidate reflection

At the business meeting, members of Journey Church vote in accordance with the church's bylaws regarding the recommendation of the General Board.

Regardless of the outcome, the process seeks to honor Christ, protect the unity of the church, and care well for the candidate and their family.

Guiding Principles Throughout the Process

Throughout every phase of this process, the General Board remains committed to the following principles:

- We will seek God's direction first.
- Prayer and fasting are intentionally woven throughout the process because the calling of a Lead Pastor is ultimately a matter of spiritual discernment, not simply organizational decision-making.
- We will treat every candidate with dignity.
- Each individual and family will be treated with honor, respect, confidentiality, and pastoral care throughout every stage of the process.
- We value character above charisma.
- Leadership ability is important, but biblical character, humility, integrity, and spiritual maturity remain the primary qualifications for pastoral ministry.
- We weigh calling alongside competency.

- Experience, gifting, and leadership capacity are carefully considered, while recognizing that God's calling is equally essential in discerning the right shepherd for Journey Church.
- We pursue unity without compromising conviction.

Healthy discussion, differing perspectives, and thoughtful evaluation are welcomed. The board seeks substantial consensus while remaining attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and faithful to biblical convictions. We trust God with the outcome.

The goal is not simply to identify the most outwardly gifted candidate, but to faithfully discern whom God is calling to shepherd Journey Church.

Conclusion

The General Board enters this process with humility, recognizing that apart from the Lord's wisdom, no amount of planning or evaluation is sufficient.

We therefore commit ourselves to continual prayer, dependence upon the Holy Spirit, and faithful obedience to God's leading, trusting that He is already preparing the next shepherd for Journey Church.