

STEP 6

IN-PERSON INTERVIEWS

You are doing great! Keep praying! Now is the time to schedule in-person interviews. We recommend you interview no more than three candidates. This will save your church money and time. This step is reserved for those candidates who each member of your PNC could actually foresee nominating.

Inform your three top candidates that they are finalists. Also contact the others, thank them for their time, and pray for them. (Don't forget that key phrase: "at this time.")

Finally, at this point you will want to reach out to your MPT and have them interview your finalists to ensure that, if you nominate them, they will be approved by your presbytery. Listen and trust your MPT at this step. If they strongly encourage you not to continue with someone, then we highly recommend that you listen to their guidance.

As you prepare for the in-person interviews, we advise the following:

Invite the candidate's spouse (if married) and children (if applicable). Make sure that you let them know you will pay for their lodging and travel expenses. If your resources are limited, then make sure to provide housing in a comfortable situation for the candidate (and family). Will you include the spouse in any of the interviews? ECO recommends including the spouse in at least one interview and a meal with the PNC. During the other times, when the spouse is not included, you should consider whether you want to make plans for the spouse or simply give them free time to explore the area on their own. It may also be helpful to also ask the candidate and their spouse what they would prefer.

For example, you could require both to be in one interview, but then give alternate options for the pastor's spouse that includes being part of additional interviews. Also, if children are coming, how will you care for them? Please work ahead of time with the candidate and the spouse to address these questions.

Make a detailed schedule for the candidate that includes:

- Meals
- Interviews
- Informal gatherings
- Worship times
- Touring the facilities
- Touring the community and housing market
- Intentional "down-time" for candidate (and family) to rest (and reconnect).



[Here is a sample schedule that you might consider using for a candidating weekend.](#)

You should plan on introducing your finalists to the session and staff. Doing so is primarily for the benefit of the finalists. Meeting these key leaders will greatly enhance their ability to discern a call with your church. Remind staff and session members that they are not making the decision.

You should have already watched or listened to several sermons by each candidate. If you feel it necessary to see them preach in person as well, you are certainly allowed to do so. The best option is to visit the candidates in their current churches with their prior approval. We do not recommend having the candidate preach to just the PNC. You will not get an accurate feel for their ability to communicate to a congregation. Trust that the sermons you have listened to or watched, the interviews, and the references have given you ample information to make a wise decision. Trust God and trust your process.

UPDATE YOUR SESSION, STAFF, AND CONGREGATION.

Now would be a good time to update your session, staff, and congregation on where the PNC is in the pastoral search process. We have created a visual timeline/checklist that your session can use for its own internal purposes or you can use it as a way to update your session, staff or congregation. View the timeline/checklist [here](#).

