

Background Checks

In addition to carefully checking references, a committee should do a thorough background check on a candidate, his wife, and any children of the age of majority still living with him before making a final decision to present him to the church. A thorough background check includes:

- Nationwide criminal background check. There are several levels available. LifeWay Christian Resources (www.LifeWay.com) and MinistrySafe (www.MinistrySafe.com) are excellent resources to use for the background checks.
- Separate check of the Registered Sex Offender's Registry in his previous domiciles. (www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety/sex-offender-registry)
- Credit Report – sadly pastors are not considered to be excellent credit risks. Fiscal irresponsibility is a disqualification for pastors. NOTE: there may be a valid reason for a previous bankruptcy or outstanding/unresolved debts. Give the candidate an opportunity to provide an explanation (preferably in writing) and prayerfully make a determination how to proceed.
- Social Media posts – much can be learned about a candidate through his social media activity. Explore his posts over a period of years – this can take considerable time – but it's worth the effort. Include facebook[®], Instagram[®], Snapchat[®], Twitter[®], blog posts, message boards, etc. Ask for a list of any accounts he has and connect with him, if required.
 - Are his posts appropriate for a Christian leader?
 - Does he hide being a Christian? Is there a reason for this?
 - How does he speak about his wife and family?
 - How does he speak about his current or previous churches?
 - Does he use *coarse* humor? Language?
 - How does he respond to those who are hurting/struggling – is he a bully?
 - What sites does he recommend and/or link to?

NOTE: discuss concerns with him – it is possible to be hacked and appear to post inappropriate things. These, however can and should be removed.

You will need signed release forms to do the criminal background check and to pull a credit report. Typically your local banker is able and willing to run the credit report if you present a valid release form.

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