

Nominating committees have the responsibility for drawing up a list of people to fill positions in an organization and submitting them to the members or the governing body for acceptance. In a church they identify and recruit potential leaders who can knowledgeable, faithfully and effectively minister in the position.

## History and Background

You won't find a history of nominating committees in your library. Throughout history, however, people have been sought who can lead others. From the earliest days of the church, the Pope was nominated by the College of Cardinals and elected to the papal office. In early New England, William Brewster was nominated to be the minister of the community about to set foot on a new land. While the methods of nominating differ, from elaborate detailed procedures to simply recognizing what has been happening, people through the ages have been called forth to fill positions in organizations. The nominating committee is one method used in the church as well as in other segments of society.

In the church there are several dynamics at work. People have both skills and needs that affect their ministry. The church has needs to be met. Planning ministry is not just the matching of skills and needs, but it

involves the recognition that God calls people to various forms of ministry. People on the nominating committee try to discover what God is calling church members to do on behalf of the church's mission.

## Common Practices

Most churches have nominating committees of one kind or another. Those nominating committees draw up names of people who will assume the offices or other positions in the life of the church for a certain time period. The nominating committee usually presents its slate of officers to the annual meeting for acceptance. Sometimes nominating committees are also responsible for filling vacancies that occur during the course of the year.

Very often, the nominating committee, as a constitutionally defined committee, is an integral part of the organizational structure of the church. Its task (as designated in the constitution or bylaws) is seeking out people who will fill certain positions, by approaching them and recruiting them for the positions. Then the committee presents a recommended list of nominees to the whole church or the governing board for acceptance or rejection. In some churches only one person is recommended for each position, while other churches value having more than one nomination for each position.

In some organizations--including some local churches--responsibility

for nominating is given to a task force which is accountable to the governing board of the church. In some special situations, the governing board or the annual meeting of the church may authorize the moderator or the chairperson of a particular committee to assume responsibility for nominating people for particular vacancies.

Sometimes, though not often, nominating committees have a larger responsibility for the development of leadership within the church. When this occurs, that committee is responsible for conceiving and carrying out an ongoing program of identifying and equipping people for leadership within the life of the church.

## Responsibilities

Responsibilities of nominating committees vary. You may have other responsibilities in addition to:

- Determining the extent of your responsibilities.
- Establishing clear and workable directions, goals and plans of action.
- Developing a budget for use by the committee.
- Helping the congregation understand and value your task.
- Remembering that you are enlisting people into the mission and ministry of your church.
- Contacting people in person rather than by telephone.

- Obtaining the best possible leadership by being aware of individuals' gifts and the church's needs.
- Allowing time for the nominating process, beginning soon after one annual meeting to prepare for the next.
- Evaluating your process.

## Suggested Procedures for the Nominating Committee

The nominating committee is a key committee because the effectiveness of every other committee or board depends upon how well this committee does its work. Following these procedures can help make your work effective:

- Be clear about the responsibilities and talents that are required for each office. A position description for each position should outline these.
- Determine the gifts of the members.
- Seek to match people with positions that call forth the particular gifts which they offer. This may call for candid and confidential conversations among the nominating committee members.
- Meet with potential nominees to describe the positions and their responsibilities and the reason the candidates have been chosen. Don't be apologetic or ask favors.

# Nominating Committee Member

- Answer any questions candidly.
- Secure the consent of the person to place his or her name in nomination.
- Express thanks and congratulations to each nominee.

## Skills and Attributes Needed

- Ability to listen.
- Familiarity with the organization and structure of the church.
- Knowledge of church members and their abilities.
- Appreciation of people and their gifts.
- Ability to work with other people.
- Understanding of why people volunteer.
- Conviction about the ministry of each member.
- Commitment to the church's mission and ministry.
- Willingness to learn.
- Comfort in inviting people to undertake a task and accept responsibility.
- Confidentiality.

## Ways to Increase Skills, Knowledge and Effectiveness

- Review your church's constitution to understand your task and to discover if there is a need for the nominating committee to take on

tasks related to development of leaders.

- Attend workshops sponsored by your association or conference.
- Interview members of nominating committees from other churches, especially those with effective leadership development programs. Your conference staff may be aware of churches you could contact.
- Ask groups and organizations in the church how the nominating committee could be helpful to them.
- Review the membership list of the church with your pastor to identify potential new leaders.
- Develop a talent bank identifying members' skills and interests.

## Issues Facing the Church

- The tasks of leadership development and support are ongoing, yet in many churches no one is consciously and intentionally carrying them out. How can the church best provide for identifying potential leaders, helping them develop their skills and provide training and support for them?
- When the nominating committee's goal is seen as filling slots, often people's skills and abilities don't count as much as their willingness to serve. How can the matching of abilities and needs be understood as the goal of the committee?

- The role of the pastor in the nominating process is sometimes unclear. Should the pastor have an opportunity to identify potential leaders? Should she or he have an active part in the naming of people for particular positions? Is it appropriate for the pastor to indicate interest in or advocacy for someone to be nominated?
- The ministry of the laity involves carrying out ministry in the community beyond the local church. What is the role of the nominating committee in identifying and recruiting people for volunteer positions in the wider community? How can the nominating committee become informed about people's current volunteer and other roles?
- There is increasing concern and publicity about child and sexual abuse occurring in the programs of local churches (nurseries, nursery schools, church school, youth fellowship, camping). The church is responsible for taking reasonable steps to insure that adults who work in these programs do not have a history of abusive behavior in their background. What steps are you taking to screen persons selected for these important roles?

## Questions

- Remember the last time you were recruited as a nominee. How did you feel? Can you discover any

insights about nominating others from your experience?

- When does your nominating committee begin its work? Could your work be improved if you allowed more time for the process?
- How is the nominating committee valued by your church? Does it appear to be a necessary evil, or is it seen as a key committee to the life and mission of the church? How might it become more valued if it isn't now?