**We interviewed two white, young, single ministers (one male, one female) the following questions about the pastoral search process:**

* **What attracted you to apply to one church over another church?**
* **What did you appreciate about the church profiles that you read?**
* **How did you hear about the call that you are currently serving in?**
* **What were your favorite interview questions or things that you’re really glad you got to talk about?**
* **Is there any advice you would give to a recent graduate who is looking for a church?**
* **Is there any advice you would give to a church looking for a new long-term minister?**

**Here are answers from Rev. Jenni Yeski, pastor at Fonda Reformed Church, in Fonda, NY.**

***What attracted you to apply to one church over another church?***A lot for me dealt with what the church was looking for. The more details that the church could provide made it easier for me to determine if this church was going to be a possible fit. Location was probably the biggest factor, given that I knew of certain areas that I wanted to live in and what those towns would have to offer. One church I was interested in when I came to visit did not just show me around, but also provided me with information about different things that the town and the area had to offer- including school districts and museums and town events.

***What did you appreciate about the church profiles that you read?***I appreciated churches who talked about their mission and were they hoped to go as a church. To read about the areas in their ministry that were important to them helped me see if we shared the same passions in mission

***How did you hear about the call that you are currently serving in?***There were several ways that I heard about this particular call. First, the senior pastor that I was previously serving with pointed it out to me. Secondly, I sought it out on the RCA website. Third, a friend of mine told me to apply. And finally the head of the search committee sought me out, emailed me and asked for my profile. This was a big selling point.

***What were your favorite interview questions or things that you’re really glad you got to talk about?***Conflict. How do I handle it and deal with it. It’s wise that a church recognize that conflict has and will happen and ask how their would-be pastor will walk with them through that.

***Is there any advice you would give to a recent graduate who is looking for a church?***Be sure to ask what the church is going to do to help mentor you and grow with you as a new pastor. Ask how they will continue to support you as you go forth into ministry together. Ask about different opportunities in the area that you might be interested in- recreational, educational, social, etc. Ask about conflict and communication in the church; what as gone on in the past and how they have handled conflict and how the church communicates as a body of believers when conflict is present. Talk about expectations and desires they have for the pastor. Where do you they want to grow and what are their expectations of the pastor to be responsible for that growth. Ask about if a pastor is married, what are the expectations of the pastor’s partner and children. If you do have a spouse who doesn’t want to actively be involved with the church, make that clear up front. Remember to pray hard and seek God’s guidance in determining if this is where you were meant to be. Don’t choose a place just because it is the only one you’ve gotten a call from. Make sure it is right for you and your family. Take time to decide what you need in a church and if the church will provide it. Accept that there is no perfect  church, just like there is no perfect pastor.

***Is there any advice you would give to a church looking for a new long-term minister?***You need to decide how you area going to support this pastor. Be honest about the things that are going well and the challenges you are facing currently. Don’t let the challenges be a surprise to the candidate if/when they accept a call. Recognize it will take over a year for them to fully get into their role at your church and make adjustments to the new position and place. Your congregation will need this time to adjust to the new pastor as well. Pray. Pray that God leads you into a good relationship with whomever God is calling for your church. Let God lead you. Take your time in this process, but don’t be looking to find the “perfect” pastor. There is no such thing, just like there is no perfect church.

**Here are answers from Rev. Garret Szantner, pastor at Lynnwood Reformed Church in Schenectady, NY.**

***What attracted you to apply to one church over another church?***

 This is a good question because up until now I did not realize I first looked at  churches to see if our preliminary requirements matched: I was looking for a full-  time, ordained  position, and either a lead or associate pastorate. Once I realized  a  church and I aligned  in those expectations then I moved on to discern, ‘what  draws  me to this church and is  this a good fit?’ I think one thing that attracted me to  churches was a statement about how they approach scripture. I could tell  when  churches simply wanted me to be a pastor that affirmed what they already had  learned, but I wanted to be at a place where learning about scripture is a  journey where we treasure what we have learned and are expectant for how God  might speak to us anew. I think another thing was a loving description of their church’s character. I know that churches like to state what they do, but I want to know their spirit as a community. Churches that attracted me were ones who were able and bold enough to name themselves as generous in money, time, and welcome of people; or possessing a deep conviction to be present with the outcast. Lastly, I would say attractive churches were those who not just gave statistics about the community they inhabited, but told me what they loved about it. I was attracted to a place that loved the journey of scripture, their own life as a people of God, and the place God gave them to minister.

***What did you appreciate about church profiles that you read?***

I appreciated as much information about the church and community as possible. I compare the process of finding a call to dating. It is not a perfect metaphor, but it works well enough. I was trying to get to know these people; I wanted to know their history, descriptions of who they are now, who they thought God was leading them to be, and how I was supposed to fit in as a pastoral guide for that journey.

***How did you hear about the call you are currently serving in?***

I was having breakfast with Abby Norton-Levering at General Synod in 2011 and talking about ministry in the Northeast. At the end of the meal she said, ‘there is a church in New York’s Capital Region called Lynnwood Reformed Church. They are a good church. I am going to forward you their profile when I get back home.’ Thank you, Abby.

***What were some of your favorite interview questions, or things that you were glad that you got to talk about?***

My favorite questions were case studies. For example, when the church asked me to describe a time in ministry when I thought I did something well and when something did not go so well. Another example was the church giving an example of something they were facing and asked me how I would respond. I loved these sorts of questions because it moved the interview away from the feel of an interrogation into moments with the potential for myself and search committee to do some collaborative work on how to approach ministry. I thought it was good because myself and the search team talking and working through a problem is representative of how myself and a consistory would work through a problem.

***Is there any advice you would give a recent graduate who is looking for a church?***

Apply early and often. And continue to apply to churches even if you are far along with a particular church. There is only so much you can know about a church by reading their profile. The interview process will then not only make it clear whether the church is a fit, but it will give you experience for other interviews to come. And do not fear, but only believe that God is preparing you for a people who God loves.

***Is there any advice you would give a church who is looking for a new long-term minister?***

Do not fear, only believe that God loves you and is preparing a person to lead you. Be sure to do the tough, introspective work on behalf of the congregation of where you are at. Be sure to know who you are as a people: what you love, where you need to grow, and what strengths you have. And (as you are the one directing the interview) conduct the interview as a collaborative conversation where you learn about one another and do some imaginative work together about where God might lead you if you were brought together.