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Hiring a Staff Member

Parker Manuel · Lead pastor, Pinewood Church, Boulder · 20+ years in ministry

Check every name, pronoun and detail before you use this.

Start here

A hire is one of the biggest decisions a church makes. It costs money, it shapes your culture, and it is hard to undo. This kit slows you down at the front so you can move with confidence at the end. Work through it in this order:

1. **Decide the role and write it down** using Resource 1. Do this before you think about a person.
2. **Write down what you are hiring into** using Resource 2. A new staff member joins a culture, not just a job.
3. **Find people and interview them** using Resource 3.
4. **Make the offer** using Resource 4.
5. **Plan the first 90 days** using Resource 5, before their first day.

Five resources:

1. Decide the Role and Write It Down
2. Know What You Are Hiring Into
3. Finding People and Interviewing
4. The Offer
5. The First 90 Days

Decide the Role and Write It Down

Before you write anything

Answer these on one page. If you cannot, you are not ready to hire.

- What is not getting done right now, and what is it costing the church?
- Could a volunteer leader carry this? Have you asked?
- Is this a job, or is it three jobs?
- What will be different one year from now if this hire goes well?
- Who will this person answer to, and does that person have time to lead them?
- Can the church carry this role for at least a year if giving stays flat?

Opportunity, responsibility, accountability

"Then provide clarity on their new responsibilities. Empowerment is built on clarity and trust."

"At Pinewood, we are committed to knowing what we are doing, but also being aware of what we're not doing. Both are crucial"

The handbook ties this to Luke 12:48. A written role is how you give clarity. It tells the new person what is theirs, and it tells them what is not.

The parts of a job description

Every staff job description has the same parts, in this order:

1. **Header.** Ministry area, job title, start date, status (full time or part time), location, supervisor.
2. **Purpose.** One sentence. Why this role exists.
3. **Experience and knowledge required.** A short list.
4. **Essential functions.** Grouped under a few plain headings, not one long list.
5. **Supervisory responsibilities.** Who they lead.
6. **Pastoral responsibilities.** What care they carry, if any.
7. **Metrics for success.** How you will both know it is working.
8. **Time investment.** Hours per week and where those hours go.
9. **Signature and date.**

Keep it to two pages. The signature matters. It means you both read the same page and agreed to it.

A sample to copy

This is a director-level role that cares for people from their first visit to their first leadership role. Change it to fit yours.

Job title: [title]

Ministry area: [area]

Start date: [date]

Status: [full time or part time]

Location: [location]

Supervisor: [role, not a name]

Purpose

To develop leaders, systems, and processes that ensure individuals are engaged in their next steps, from first-time visitors to team leaders, while embodying [church name]'s culture, vision, and values.

Experience and knowledge required

- Proven experience in leadership development, leading leaders, and overseeing departments.
- Strong leadership and team management skills.
- Ability to build relationships to assess, advise, and direct individuals toward their next steps.
- Proficient in recruiting, equipping, and developing leaders to lead successful teams and small groups.
- Analytical skills to interpret and implement data-driven strategies.
- Commitment to [church name] culture, systems, and vision.

Essential functions

Leadership development

- Meet every two weeks with the leaders you oversee to provide coaching, vision, and support.
- Identify, recruit, and develop at least 2 new leaders annually.
- Provide consistent leadership coaching to strengthen team health and individual growth.

Vision casting

- Provide vision and leadership strategies for all teams in your area and communicate effectively with the Lead Pastor.
- Regularly evaluate and refine systems and processes to align with the church's mission and vision.

Team oversight

- Oversee and resource the team leads in your area.

- Delegate logistics and administrative tasks to team members to prioritize leadership development and vision casting.

Event leadership

- Act as the point of contact for your teams during major events, ensuring excellence in guest experience.
- Collaborate with other departments to anticipate and address event-related needs.

Onboarding and systems

- Refine onboarding processes for new members, ensuring clarity and alignment with church culture.
- Anticipate and address resource or staffing needs for team success.
- Personally connect with new people on Sundays and reach out to them during the week to assist them in taking their next steps.

Communication and planning

- Proactively communicate team needs, wins, and updates to the Lead Pastor in staff meetings or in one-on-one meetings.
- Anticipate future needs and align strategies with the church's ministry goals.

Team culture

- Encourage and challenge team leads through regular meetings and feedback.
- Host a team night once a year to build team culture, alignment, and morale.
- Pray for and spiritually support team members and leaders.

Budget management

- Develop and manage the area budget; ensure teams are staying within budget, tracking expenses, and planning expenditures effectively.

Supervisory responsibilities

- Oversee all staff and leaders assigned to the area.

Pastoral responsibilities

- Help care for people in the church when needs come up.
- Work with the small groups team on care situations and keep the right people informed.
- Be ready to step in for a crisis, a hospital visit, a funeral or a wedding when asked.
- Take your turn on call and pray with people at the altar on Sundays.

Metrics for success

- Onboard at least [number] new members monthly.
- Develop at least 2 new leaders annually.
- Maintain or improve team retention rates (goal: [number] percent or better).
- Participation in the newcomer class keeps pace with the church's growth goals.

Time investment

[number] hours per week, focusing on leadership development, team oversight, event preparation, and vision casting.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Writing your own metrics

The metrics block is the part most churches skip. Do not skip it.

- Pick three or four. More than that and nobody tracks them.
- Use numbers you already count.
- Make at least one about people developed, not tasks done.
- Agree on them before the start date, and put a date on when you will look at them together.

Check before you post

- Does the title match what you are asking for?
- Could the person do this in the hours you wrote down? Be honest.
- Is the supervisor a role that exists today?
- Whether a role is employee or contractor, hourly or salaried, or covered by the ministerial exception is a legal question. It varies by state. Check with an employment lawyer or your denomination before you post.

Know What You Are Hiring Into

Why this comes before the search

You can train a skill. It is much harder to change what someone values. So write down your culture before you meet a single candidate, and hand it to them early. A good candidate will read it and lean in. The wrong one will often take themselves out, which saves you both.

Below is how one church has written it down. Use it as a model for your own, not as your own.

Mission and creed

Mission: "Meet people where they are and point them to Jesus"

Creed: "Jesus is our message, our life. This is His church. Built on love and full of faith. We are here to serve and not be served. We are grateful, expectant, and ready. To God be the glory, forever and ever, Amen"

One vision

"Division begins when there are two different visions happening. We don't want to do a bunch of good ideas, we want to do a few God ideas."

Church values

- **Jesus Is Our Message.** "We are Jesus people, not religious people. Methods will come and go, yet our message will remain the same."
- **Connection Is Our Culture.** "We also believe that your connection determines your direction, therefore we are serious about connecting others to our community."
- **Generosity Is Our Privilege.** "We don't give out of obligation, but as an opportunity to invest in the Kingdom."
- **Worship Is Our Weapon.** "Worship is how we fight our battles."
- **Servant Leadership Is Our Calling.** "Every leader is a servant first. From the parking lot to the pulpit, everyone serves. Every role is different but they are all important."
- **Prayer Is Our Priority.** "Prayer is not a last resort, it's our first response."
- **Honor Is Our Commitment.** "We honor and care for those God has placed under us."
- **Excellence Is Our Pursuit.** We give our very best as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23). We work hard, and we have fun doing it.

Leadership values

Show Up. "So much of leadership is consistency and presence. When we show up in the highs and lows, we're telling our teams and church that this thing is priority."

Take Ownership. "Nothing just happens. We all have a part to play in Kingdom building. We should be quick to take responsibility and make problems our problem." "An owner doesn't fill a seat, they find the gaps and meet the needs of the organization as a whole."

Pursue Excellence. "It's impossible to make it better and stay the same." "We encourage every servant leader to make it 1% better every week. Progression over perfection."

Replace Yourself. "This thing doesn't grow unless you grow others. God-math is a math of multiplication, not addition."

Stay Healthy. "The ultimate goal of Pinewood is not growth, it is health. True health creates strength that sustains real growth."

Celebrate Constantly. "A critical spirit is born out of a negative attitude. We celebrate constantly realizing that the things God is doing is greater than the mistakes we are making. We see and believe the best in people and situations."

Work Together. "The Church is built, not by the talents and gifts of a few, but by the sacrifice and service of many. Doing things alone, in isolation and without the greater team is a pride driven response."

Protect Unity. There is no place for gossip in any form. When something is unclear or bothers us, we go to the person privately and get clarity. We refuse a critical spirit.

What we expect of every leader

1. If you will be absent on a Sunday, give at least two weeks' notice to the person you report to, unless it is an emergency.
2. Make the all-leader meeting a priority.
3. Be in a small group (a minimum number of times each season).
4. Complete the newcomer class.
5. Take part in a leadership evaluation in the off months between seasons.
6. Schedule your team in the church database at least two weeks ahead.
7. Turn in purchase requests at least two weeks ahead.
8. Prepare for and take part in the church's annual conference.
9. Prepare one team training each season.

10. Communicate in real time: the health of team members, urgent issues, deadlines and attendance.

11. Use a SWOT review to develop your team.

Write your own list. Ten or so lines, each one something you can see and check. A candidate should read it before the second interview.

Sayings we use

Short lines carry culture further than long documents. These are some a new staff member will hear in their first month:

- Leaders go first.
- Inspect what you expect.
- Delegate but do not dump.
- Leaders work with margin.
- Leaders over-communicate.
- Ask before you correct.
- Discussions are for decision makers.
- This is "our" team.
- If serving is beneath you, leadership is beyond you.
- We get to do this.
- Healthy things grow.
- Play the long game.
- Culture happens by design not default.
- Leave it better than you found it.

Make it yours

Before you post the role, have these on paper:

- Your mission in one sentence.
- Your values, each with one or two sentences of plain explanation.
- What you expect of every leader.
- Five to ten sayings your team already uses.

If you do not have them yet, write them first. It is slower. It is still the right order.

Finding People and Interviewing

Where to look

Start close and work outward.

1. **Inside your church.** Who is already doing part of this job as a volunteer?
2. **People your leaders know.** Ask your staff, elders and team leads for names.
3. **Your network.** Other pastors, your denomination, your church planting network.
4. **Public posting.** Last, not first.

We put the reason for looking inside first this way:

"There's always someone waiting to be empowered, it's our responsibility to ask and believe in others."

Hiring from inside the church

- You already know their character. That is worth a lot.
- You also risk a friendship and a church member if it goes badly. Say that out loud to them before you start.
- Run the same process you would run for a stranger. Do not skip steps because you like them.
- Decide ahead of time what happens to their volunteer role if they are not hired.

What to send a candidate first

- The job description (Resource 1).
- Your mission, values and leader expectations (Resource 2).
- Your statement of faith.
- A plain note on the steps, the timeline and who makes the final decision.

The steps

Decide ahead of time how many steps you will run and who is in each. A common shape:

1. **A short first call.** Twenty to thirty minutes. Their story, their call, why this role.
2. **A longer interview** with the person they will report to.
3. **A conversation with a few others:** a staff member, an elder, a volunteer they would lead.
4. **A working visit.** Let them see a Sunday and do a small piece of the real job.

5. References and checks.

6. A decision, made by the people you named at the start.

Have every interviewer write down what they saw before they talk to each other. It keeps the loudest voice from setting the verdict.

Before any interview: the legal note

Some questions are off limits in an interview, and which ones depends on your state and on whether the role is ministerial. The same is true of background checks and how you may use what they show. Check with an employment lawyer or your denomination before you interview anyone. Ask every candidate for the same role the same core questions.

Questions on calling and faith

- Tell me how you came to follow Jesus.
- How did you come to believe God was calling you to ministry?
- What does your time with God look like in an ordinary week?
- Read our statement of faith. Where do you agree most strongly? Is there anything you would say differently?
- Who knows you well enough to tell you hard things, and when did they last do it?

For pastoral roles, read 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-9 together and talk about them.

Questions on the leadership values

Our leader handbook gives each leadership value a question a leader asks themselves. Turned around, they become interview questions.

- **Show Up.** Tell me about a season when it was hard to be consistent and available. What did you do? What does showing up mentally, emotionally and physically look like for you?
- **Take Ownership.** Tell me about a problem that was not in your area that you made your problem. What happened?
- **Pursue Excellence.** Tell me about something you led that you made better over time. How did you get feedback on it?
- **Replace Yourself.** Who have you led on purpose? Where are they now? Who could do your current job because of you?
- **Stay Healthy.** How do you take care of yourself physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally? How do you rest?

- **Celebrate Constantly.** Tell me about the last time you stopped to celebrate what God was doing on your team. What did you do?
- **Work Together.** Tell me about something you tried to do alone and should not have. Whose gifts do you lean on?
- **Protect Unity.** Tell me about a time you had a problem with someone you worked with. Who did you talk to first, and what did you say?

What you are listening for

The handbook's practical responses give you a short list of what a yes sounds like:

- They follow through.
- They do not say "that's not my area."
- They take ownership of the bad things too.
- They make space for feedback and evaluation.
- They are always coaching someone.
- They ask their team questions and do not dictate.
- They choose collaboration over isolation.

Listen for "we" and "they" as much as "I". Listen for names of people they developed. Listen for how they talk about the last church they served.

The working visit

- Have them attend a Sunday as a guest first. Ask what they noticed.
- Give them one small, real piece of the job. Teach, lead a meeting, plan an event on paper.
- Let them meet the volunteers they would lead, without you in the room.
- If they are married, decide ahead of time how you include their spouse.

Afterward, ask your team the handbook's own review question:

"Each team makes a SWOT analysis after every event or gathering. This allows for healthy dialogue and quick feedback."

References and checks

- Call references. Do not email them.
- Ask each one: "Would you hire them again? What would you want me to know if you were in my seat?"

- Ask for one reference the candidate did not list, with their permission.
- Run background checks the same way for every finalist. The rules on consent and on how you may use the results vary by state. Check with an employment lawyer or your denomination first.
- Anyone who will work with children or students goes through your child safety process before they start. No exceptions for staff.

When the answer is no

- Tell them yourself, by phone, quickly.
- Be kind and be clear. Do not leave the door half open if it is closed.
- If they are in your church, follow up in person within a week.

The Offer

Before you make it

- The people who must approve the hire have approved it, in writing.
- The role is in the budget for at least a year.
- The job description is final.
- You have settled who the person reports to.

Setting the pay

This kit does not give pay figures. Yours depend on your city, your budget and the role.

- Start with what it costs to live where you are. Use the **Cost to Live Here** tool on this site.
- Look at what similar roles pay in churches your size and in your area. Ask your denomination or network for their data.
- Decide ahead of time who sets staff pay in your church and who reviews it.
- Housing allowance, overtime and how a role is classified are tax and legal matters. They vary by state. Check with an employment lawyer, your denomination or a church accountant before you put numbers in writing.

What the written offer covers

Put it on one or two pages:

- Job title and who they report to.
- Start date.
- Status: full time or part time, and expected hours.
- Pay and how often it is paid.
- Benefits, if any.
- Time off.
- The job description, attached.
- Anything the offer depends on, such as background checks.
- A date by which you need their answer.
- Signature lines for both of you.

Have an employment lawyer or your denomination review your offer letter before you use it the first time. Wording about at-will employment and similar terms varies by state.

The conversation

- Make the offer by phone or in person first. Then send it in writing the same day.
- Say why you want them. Be specific.
- Give them time to pray and talk with their family. Name the date you need to hear back.
- If they ask for something you cannot give, say so plainly.

If they are moving to take the job

- Decide ahead of time what help with moving you can offer, if any.
- Send them to the **Cost to Live Here** tool so they see real numbers for your city before they say yes.
- Connect their family with a few people in the church before they arrive.

Telling the church

- Tell the staff first, then leaders, then the church.
- Decide ahead of time how you introduce a new staff member on a Sunday.
- If someone inside the church applied and was not hired, talk with them before any announcement.

The First 90 Days

The goal

By day 90 the new person should know the culture, know their people, know what a win looks like, and have had one honest review. Plan it before day one and hand it to them in writing.

Before day one

- Signed job description and signed offer on file.
- Payroll and tax paperwork ready. Ask your accountant or payroll provider what your state requires.
- Email, accounts, keys and a place to work, all ready.
- A written schedule for the first week.
- One person named as their go-to for small questions.
- Their name shared with the staff and the leaders they will oversee.

Week one: teach the culture

Do not start with tasks. Start with who you are. Walk through Resource 2 together, out loud, with stories.

One of the church's sayings puts it this way:

"Caught not taught."

So let them catch it. Have them shadow you on a Sunday. Bring them to every meeting that week. Introduce them to people by name.

The weekly rhythm

"We believe that balance in life isn't attainable. But healthy rhythms are."

Most of the team works in a seven-day flow. It is not mandatory, but it helps give the week a shape:

- **Meeting Monday**
- **Tackle Tuesday**
- **Wrap-up Wednesday**
- **Thinking Thursday**
- **Friends and Family Friday**
- **Sabbath Saturday**

- **Serve Sunday**

Show a new hire your rhythm in the first week. Tell them which day is their day off and protect it.

The staff meeting

A timed weekly agenda, about an hour and a half:

1. Personal life: one thing you are thankful for, one challenge. 10 minutes.
2. SWOT of Sunday. 15 minutes.
3. Goals for the week. 30 minutes.
4. Goals for the month. 30 minutes.
5. Pray. 10 minutes.

Put the new person in this meeting from week one. Do not ask them to report yet. Ask them what they noticed.

How we hand things over

Delegate but do not dump. "Our job as leaders is to set team members up for a win, to trust them with little as they begin the journey. As they grow we continue to entrust them with more. Time proves commitment and responsibility."

Inspect what you expect. "When you give a task be sure to follow up with clear feedback. We are robbing team members of growing by not celebrating the wins and explaining what they could improve."

Ask before you correct. "No matter how much of the story you know, as a leader, always ask what happened before you correct."

Days 1 to 30: learn

- Meet one-on-one with every leader they will oversee. Listen more than talk.
- Attend everything once before changing anything.
- Read the culture documents and ask questions.
- Meet with their supervisor every week.
- End of the month: they bring a one-page SWOT of their area.

Days 31 to 60: own

- Take over the regular meetings and rhythms of their area.
- Agree on the numbers for each metric in their job description.

- Pick one thing to make better. One, not five.
- Name one or two people they will start developing.

Our word for this stage:

"We encourage every servant leader to make it 1% better every week. Progression over perfection."

Days 61 to 90: build

- Run their area without you in the room.
- Report on their metrics for the first time.
- Bring a plan for the next season.
- Sit down for the 90-day review.

The 90-day review

Leaders are held accountable to goals that are set every season, three times a year, and leadership evaluations happen in the off months between seasons. A 90-day review puts a new staff member into that same rhythm from the start.

Use the job description as the agenda:

1. **Honor first.** Name what they have done well, with examples.
2. **The metrics.** Where are we against each one?
3. **The leadership values.** Go through them one at a time. Ask them to rate themselves first.
4. **Their SWOT of their area.**
5. **What they need from you** that they are not getting.
6. **Goals for the next season.** Write them down.
7. **Pray together.**

Decide ahead of time what you will do if it is not working at 90 days. Say at the start that this review is coming and what it is for. If you think you may need to end someone's employment, talk with an employment lawyer or your denomination before you have that conversation.

The seasonal review after that

Once the first 90 days are done, a new staff member joins the same review every leader has. We call the months between seasons Prep Month. Each leader sits down with the person they report to for about an hour and a quarter:

1. **Introduction.** Say what the meeting is for. 2 minutes.

2. **Honor.** Thank them and name something specific. 5 minutes.
3. **Health.** How are they doing, and how is their team doing? 10 minutes.
4. **Last season.** Their SWOT of the season and how they did against their goals. 15 minutes.
5. **Growth.** Who is growing, who could lead next, and what the trends are. Are leaders being developed? If so, what is working? If not, why not? 15 minutes.
6. **Handbook and job description.** Read back through both. 5 minutes.
7. **Stay or step back.** Ask plainly whether they are committed to leading next season. 5 minutes.
8. **Goals for next season.** Write down what they will deliver. 15 minutes.
9. **Close.** Honor them and pray for them. 5 minutes.

Keep them healthy

"In order to maintain health and sustainability, we encourage all teams and leaders to set healthy rhythms in their weeks so that they come into Sunday feeling rested and ready to serve."

Ask a new staff member about their rest, their family and their own walk with Jesus in the first month, and keep asking. Take them with you on the staff retreat if you have one. You hired a person, not a position.