

**COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY POLICY ON
MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS WITH NEWLY ORDAINED PASTORS**

Albany Presbytery and the Committee on Ministry require all new calls to first time parish ministry to include attendance at the Early Ministry Institute (EMI). EMI requires Albany Presbytery, through the Committee on Ministry, to appoint a Mentor. The presbytery may also recommend mentors for other ministers. Follow-up that the mentoring is happening is the responsibility of the COM representative.

DEFINITION OF MENTOR

The mentor is an experienced parish pastor with demonstrable effectiveness and ability to share wisdom and concerns as appropriate. Through shared reflection, observation, confrontation and support on a regular basis, the mentor seeks to guide and motivate the new minister to grow in the skills and attributes of a parish pastor. The model of experienced and less experienced colleagues, and not that of supervisor, is to be followed. A person serving as a mentor shall:

- 1) Have a minimum of five years' experience in parish ministry since ordination and be actively engaged in parish ministry
- 2) Have demonstrated active, appropriate, and effective participation in the governing bodies above the session
- 3) Possess excellent interpersonal relational skills
- 4) Participate in annual training and support
- 5) Demonstrate effective ministry in at least the following areas of congregational life:
 - Administration
 - Moderating and/or leadership development
 - Developmental pastoral care
 - Comfort with normal diversity within a congregation
 - Stewardship
 - Volunteer recruitment, training, and support
 - Emergency and crisis pastoral ministry
 - Evangelism (as both membership growth and appropriate witness to the gospel in the community and the world)
 - Community leadership with an ecumenical openness

EXPECTATIONS OF MENTOR BY COM

- 1) Fits the mentor criteria
- 2) Agrees to serve for a three-year period
- 3) Listens
- 4) Develops a Learning Covenant of mutual expectations with the new pastor
- 5) Meets face-to-face with new pastor regularly, preferably once a month or three hours per quarter
- 6) Is available to new pastor when needed
- 7) Allows new pastor to set the meeting agenda, but intervenes when appropriate
- 8) Reports annually to the chair of the Pastoral Care Subcommittee of COM

EXPECTATIONS OF NEW PASTOR BY COM

- 1) Typically new to parish ministry
- 2) Initiates discussion on topics of concern
- 3) Develops Learning Goals and a Learning Covenant of mutual expectations with mentor
- 4) Meets face-to-face with mentor regularly, preferably once a month or three hours per quarter
- 5) Contacts mentor when needed
- 6) Takes responsibility for bringing needs to meetings
- 7) Completes work that both mentor and new pastor agree is to be done

STAGES IN A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

BEGINNING	This time will proceed with tentativeness, politeness, curiosity, and some anxiety. The new pastor will be the one most painfully conscious of the differences between you. The mentor will have the more difficult task of differentiating self from the new pastor and of maintaining the functional differences of each.
MID-STAGE	After some period of time together, vulnerability will seem less threatening, conversations will become easier. This equilibrium may be broken one or more times, and the relationship will be challenged and restructured.
ENDING	This will be of short duration, but because the term is fixed, the end will remain an ever-present reality, impacting the whole experience. Feedback and evaluation processes should be ongoing, but a summary which gathers learnings in a formal way will symbolize concretely the end of a special relationship.
CRISIS	This may or may not occur within the relationship. It can occur at any of the stages. A crisis is a time when a perception of significant problems related to one or the other parties makes the need for clear lines of accountability and confidentiality paramount. Clear understandings of the process to be followed when the mentor perceives a significant personal, professional, or spiritual problem which needs to be brought to the attention of others should be developed before a crisis exists.

SOME ISSUES OF EARLY MINISTRY

Issues of early parish ministry tend to cluster in three general areas: **PERSON**, **ROLE**, and **FAITH**. This list of issues is suggestive, not exhaustive; it can be used in several ways:

- as a framework for reflecting on ministry events
- for determining how to identify and analyze ministry dynamics
- to stimulate ideas which may become Learning Goals

PERSON

- How can I deal most effectively with anxiety about success, feelings of failure, disappointment, and rejection?
- What are some ways to deal with isolation and loneliness?
- How do I balance my need to please with the reality that I can't please everyone?
- How do I distinguish my dependencies from my legitimate support needs?
- How do I grow from feedback and criticism, especially hostile?
- How do I keep my significant relationships/marriage healthy?
- How can I become sufficiently aware of what is going on within me as well as my impact on others?
- How can I come to terms with being male/female?
- Don't forget to talk about the day-to-day "nitty gritty."

FAITH

- Where do my faith values differ from those in this congregation?
- How is God's creative activity in my life...in this congregation...being demonstrated?
- What helps me distinguish between law and gospel in session decisions?
- How can my spiritual disciplines impact this transition?
- How can I responsibly take risks that the gospel demands of me?
- When it is appropriate for me to address the social injustices I meet in this community?

ROLE

- How do I deal with power politics in the church?
- What are ways to minister in a specific socio-cultural setting that are different from my past experience?
- How do I handle relationships with other staff members, especially when I dislike them?
- What are the "tools of the trade" and how do I increase my competency?
- How do I understand a congregation's expectations and integrate those within a role that maintains my personal integrity?
- How can I continue to provide pastoral guidance when everything goes bad?
- How do I manage those times when my authority collides with another's?

A SAMPLE LEARNING COVENANT

- The Covenant should begin with a statement of what the new pastor hopes to learn through the mentor relationship. That statement might include addressing one or several issues of early ministry. Start small by writing one Learning Goal.
- Create columns. Write several objectives that could help you reach that goal and enter these in the first column of the Covenant. In the next column add specific learning tasks which also could help you reach your first goal. In the last column, enter other resources that could contribute towards your goal.
- Consider together self-observation tools you may want to use as a device for facilitating the action/reflection process in your Learning Covenant. These could be entered in the Covenant as a task, a resource, or an objective.
- Determine mutually how often you can realistically meet. Being together three hours quarterly is a recommendation, but whether that time is spent monthly, more often, or less often, depends on many factors unique to you both. Include in the covenant your agreement for when, where, and how long you will meet.
- During your mentoring conversations, use your Learning Covenant as a reference point from which to begin reflection.
- Review your progress on your Learning Goal. Add new goals, revise the old ones, complete or expand on these original goals as you feel led.
- Rehearse the actions, feelings, theological assumptions, and insights involved in events of your ministry.