

# Clergy Mentoring

A Manual for Commissioned Ministers,  
Local Pastors, and Clergy Mentors

**General Board of  
Higher Education and Ministry**

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**Division of Ordained Ministry  
The United Methodist Church**  
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# Contents

Greeting and Invitation . . . . .	5
The Ministry Preparation Resource Team . . . . .	5
What is Mentoring? . . . . .	6

## Section I: The Mentoring Relationship

In the Beginning . . . . .	8
Getting Acquainted . . . . .	8
Personal . . . . .	8
Professional . . . . .	9
Call . . . . .	9
Vocation . . . . .	11
Spiritual and Life Disciplines . . . . .	12
My Authority . . . . .	13
Cultural . . . . .	14
Forming a Covenant . . . . .	15
Sample Commitment Statement . . . . .	16

## Section II: The Mentoring Experience

Introduction . . . . .	17
Communicating Culture . . . . .	17
Creating Sacred Time Together . . . . .	18
Ministry Event . . . . .	18
Life Event . . . . .	18
Shared Experience . . . . .	18
Reflection Process . . . . .	19
Step One . . . . .	19
Step Two . . . . .	19
Model 1 . . . . .	19
Model 2 . . . . .	21
Step Three . . . . .	22
Step Four . . . . .	22
Step Five . . . . .	22
Step Six . . . . .	22
Site Visits . . . . .	22
Closing Sacred Time . . . . .	22

## Section III: Mentoring Local Pastors

Introduction . . . . .	23
The United Methodist Church Course of Study . . . . .	23

Requirements for Candidates  
Qualifying through the Course of Study . . . . . 24  
Local Pastor . . . . . 25  
Full-Time Local Pastors . . . . . 25  
Part-Time Local Pastors . . . . . 25  
Students . . . . . 25  
Course of Study Curriculum Overview . . . . . 26  
First Year . . . . . 27  
Second Year . . . . . 28  
Third Year . . . . . 29  
Fourth Year . . . . . 30  
Fifth Year . . . . . 31

**Section IV: Mentoring Clergy in Extension Ministries (Provisional Elders)  
and Service Appointments Beyond the Local Church  
(Provisional Deacons) . . . . . 33**

**Section V: Mentoring in Groups . . . . . 34**

**Section VI: Accountability Beyond the Mentoring Relationship**  
Supervision . . . . . 35  
Reporting . . . . . 35  
Feedback on the Mentoring Process . . . . . 36

**Resources**  
Listening Skills . . . . . 37  
Feedback . . . . . 38

# Greeting and Invitation

Welcome! This is a manual for commissioned ministers, local pastors, and their mentors. The Ministry Preparation Resource Team has been involved in the development of the practice of mentoring in The United Methodist Church since 1996. We have seen mentoring play an important role in the development of effective clergy leaders and are grateful to everyone who has helped to pioneer the mentoring ministry.

Mentoring has been normative in the life of the faith community from its beginning. The scriptures are filled with examples: Eli and Samuel, Ruth and Naomi, Deborah and Barak, Mary and Elizabeth, Jesus and the twelve disciples, and Barnabas and Paul.

We have heard many stories of how mentors have been instrumental in helping individuals discover who they are and how they are to be in God's service. Mentors play an essential role in the discovery and affirmation of our gifts for ministry and challenge us to grow in effectiveness. We rejoice in sharing this resource on clergy mentoring in The United Methodist Church.

In faithfulness,

The United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry

## ANNE'S STORY:

I began my second year in this appointment last July. When I first started, I thought the main thing I would have to learn were the nuts and bolts of ministry. True enough, I had lots to learn about what and how to do things. But the biggest thing I learned was about my exercise of authority. My mentor and I met regularly. I thought he would be a “fix-it” sort of person. I was disappointed when, at first, he turned my problems into self-reflective theological questions. About six months into the first year, I began to realize that I was the subject of learning. Now I'm more excited than nervous about my ministry. My call and the church's authorization of me take shape as I claim authority as a clergy-person. I still have a lot to learn about myself and about the nuts and bolts of ministry. And, as I continue to grow in ministry, I am glad to have a mentor who is a companion on this journey.

## What Is Mentoring?

### The Role of the Mentor

#### ¶349. Mentors

1. *Mentors shall be recommended by the cabinet, selected, trained, and held accountable by the Board of Ordained Ministry. There are two categories of mentor, each with distinct functions and responsibilities as follows:*

- a. *Candidacy mentors are clergy in full connection, associate members, or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study trained to provide counsel and guidance related to the candidacy process. Candidates will be assigned a candidacy mentor by the district committee on ordained ministry in consultation with the district superintendent (¶310). Candidacy mentors will work with the candidate until that candidate begins serving in an appointive ministry as a local pastor or a commissioned minister.*
- b. *Clergy mentors are clergy in full connection, associate members, or full-time local pastors who have completed the Course of Study trained to provide ongoing oversight and counsel with local pastors and provisional members pursuing ordained ministry. Local pastors will be assigned a clergy mentor by the district committee on ordained ministry in consultation with the district superintendent. Provisional members will be assigned a clergy mentor in full connection by the conference Board of Ordained Ministry in consultation with the district superintendent. A candidacy mentor may continue with the same person if trained to serve as a clergy mentor.*

2. *Mentoring occurs within a relationship where the mentor takes responsibility for creating a safe place for reflection and growth. An effective mentor has a mature faith, models effective ministry, and possesses the necessary skill to help individuals discern their call in ministry. Mentoring is a part of the preparation and growth for inquirers and candidates for ordained ministry, local pastors, and provisional members of an annual conference. Mentoring is distinct from the evaluative and supervisory process that is a part of preparation for ministry.*

3. *The conference Board of Ordained Ministry may assign one mentor to work either with one individual or with a group of local pastors and/or provisional members. Persons transferring from other denominations will also be assigned a clergy mentor (¶347.3.b).*

4. *Clergy mentoring begins when a person receives an appointment as a local pastor or as a commissioned minister entering provisional service.*

The United Methodist Church has two distinct uses of the word *mentor*. **Candidacy mentors** relate to those in the candidacy process. **Clergy mentors** relate to those in the first several years under appointment. Thus a local pastor is in relationship with a clergy mentor during the years spent in the Course of Study. A provisional member (commissioned ministers pursuing deacon's or elder's orders) has a clergy mentor during the years spent in provisional membership.

Those serving as clergy mentors are expected to exercise wisdom in helping create a safe place for reflection and growth. Clergy mentors should have the maturity of faith and the skills needed for shaping a relationship in which the licensed or commissioned clergy person can honestly reflect on gifts, call, and experiences.

Trust is one of the fundamental building blocks of a successful mentoring relationship. A key factor in its development is a shared understanding of the degree to which communication between mentors and mentees is considered confidential, both by the individuals themselves and by the structures of the annual conference. All participants in mentoring should be aware of the stated expectations and standards of the conference in regard to communication between mentors and mentees.

While clergy mentors are required to report about the local pastor or provisional member being mentored, the written report is shaped and shared in such a way that the integrity and safety of the mentor-mentee relationship can be maintained. (The mentee is the person being mentored; the mentor is the person guiding the mentee.) For more information about the reporting process, see page 35.

- Who has played this role in your own ministry?
- We encourage you to identify the mentoring relationships in your ministry.

To sum up:

1. Candidacy mentors relate to those in the candidacy process.
2. Clergy mentors relate to those in their first several years under appointment —
  - for local pastors, the years spent in the Course of Study
  - for provisional members, the years spent in provisional membership.

## What the Mentor Is Not

**The mentor is never . . .**

supervisor  
expert  
recorder  
snitch  
counselor  
mother  
fix-it person  
just a friend

The person who  
makes no mistakes does not  
usually make anything.

— Edward John Phelps

### ELENA'S STORY:

For me, the most moving part of being a clergy mentor is the spiritual dimension of the task. I get to sit with another person and consider how God is active in this person's life. Each person I have mentored has responded differently. But mentoring has helped all of them by providing a setting and relationship for intense reflection about their ministry and God's presence in it. I, too, have a relationship with a person who does this kind of listening and reflecting about my ministry. I don't think I could be a clergy mentor without also being mentored by someone.

## Section I: The Mentoring Relationship In the Beginning

Annual conferences, through Boards of Ordained Ministry and district Committees on Ministry, determine the process by which mentoring relationships are established. Specific assignments for provisional members are made by the Board of Ordained Ministry in consultation with the cabinet. Assignments for local pastors are made by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry and the district superintendent.

Mentoring may occur in one-on-one relationships and/or in group settings. This flexibility allows annual conference bodies to design a mentoring system responsive to their own unique culture, geography, and deployment needs.

Fix in me thy new creation.

— Charles Wesley

The first meeting between the mentor and mentee is critical and should take place in the context of an orientation/training event where both parties are present. Subsequent meetings and scheduled activities are determined mutually by the mentor and mentee. It is important for both to be clear about the basics of mentoring and to claim joint responsibility for shaping a positive relationship.

### Getting Acquainted

In the first few meetings, mentor and mentee should explore three dimensions of the relationship: personal, professional, and cultural. This lays the foundation for the entire experience.

#### Personal

Every one of us has a life story that has shaped who we are today. Through sharing our stories we come to know each other. Healthy mentoring relationships are grounded in trust, respect, and appreciation.

Take time to share life stories by listening to each other. (See resource on Listening Skills, p. 37.) Topics for conversation could include:

- family
- significant events
- joys
- sorrows
- influential people
- early church experiences
- favorite Bible stories and/or characters
- ministry settings



## Professional

The professional dimension involves sharing about vocation, spiritual disciplines, and authority.

### Call ¶301

1. *Ministry in the Christian church is derived from the ministry of Christ, who calls all persons to receive God's gift of salvation and follow in the way of love and service. The whole church receives and accepts this call, and all Christians participate in this continuing ministry (see ¶¶120–140).*

2. *Within the church community, there are persons whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and promise of future usefulness are affirmed by the community, and who respond to God's call by offering themselves as set-apart ministers, ordained and licensed (¶302).*

The call is a beckoning by God that requires a daily response. Responding to God's call involves grace, repentance, and discernment of the different types of call a person may experience. Speaking and reflecting on one's call is the foundation for vocation as clergy. In The United Methodist Church we distinguish between an inner call and an outer call:

- The *inner call* refers to what a person feels, perceives, and believes about God's activity and invitation in his or her life.
- The *outer call* has to do with the work of the church in becoming acquainted with God's movement in a person's life and then examining and validating this movement.

When there is agreement about a candidate's inner and outer calls, the church affirms this call by licensing the person as a local pastor and/or electing him or her to provisional membership. This person now acquires clergy status and serves as an agent of Christ in the annual conference within bounds of appointment by the bishop.

The mentoring relationship involves the mentor and mentee mutually sharing about their call. To stimulate your reflection and discussion, consider the following questions:

- How have you experienced Christ's call?
- How are you experiencing the call today?
- In what ways is Christ's call different than at an earlier time?
- How have others you know experienced Christ's call?
- How has their experience of the call affected you?

Here am I; send me!

— Isaiah 6:8

Do they desire nothing but God?

— *Discipline* ¶310

### **Wesley's Questions**

Wesley's historic questions form the core of the examination by the church of those who feel called to licensed or ordained ministry.

### **Wesley's Questions for the Examiners, ¶310**

*The candidate will consult with the pastor or equivalent in a ministry setting specified by the district committee on ordained ministry to request a meeting of the pastor-parish relations committee or equivalent body specified by the district committee on ordained ministry to consider the statement of call and to be interviewed in light of Wesley's historic questions:*

*1. Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire nothing but God? Are they holy in all manner of conversation?*

*2. Have they gifts, as well as evidence of God's grace, for the work? Have they a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?*

*3. Have they fruit? Have any been truly convinced of sin and converted to God, and are believers edified by their service?*

*As long as these marks occur in them, we believe they are called of God to serve. These we receive as sufficient proof that they are moved by the Holy Spirit.*

Reflect and discuss these questions.

## **Vocation**

*Vocation* is realizing God's call through a life of discipleship. A clergy person's call is embodied in specific roles, responsibilities, authorities, relationships, and skills. In The United Methodist Church, clergy carry out their vocation as part of a covenantal relationship within the annual conference. Within this community, vocation is never singular or isolated, even though there is a wide variety of specific vocations in which clergy engage.

As a local pastor or as a provisional member, the mentee's learning involves exploring the different aspects of vocation. With the help of the clergy mentor, the mentee gains clarity about the roles, responsibilities, authorities, relationships, and skills required to fulfill Christ's call to ministry.

To stimulate reflection and discussion between mentor and mentee, consider the following questions:

- How are you living out your call? How is God a part of your call?
- Drawing on daily life, name experiences that show evidence of your call.
- From what you see, hear, and experience, how does your call affect the lives of other people?
- What process do you use to reflect on your thoughts, feelings, actions, and Christ's call?
- Name your values, responsibilities, authorities, relationships, and skills.
- Name the places in your life where you struggle to live out your call.
- In summarizing your understanding of your vocation, what would you say is your mission?

... lead a life worthy of the calling  
to which you have been called.

— Ephesians 4:1

Let our intention herein be this,  
and this alone, to glorify God in heaven.

— John Wesley

## Spiritual and Life Disciplines

Christians affirm that God through Christ and the Holy Spirit is active in our lives. We take responsibility for shaping habits that help us grasp God's gracious presence. These habits can be called "spiritual disciplines" or "life disciplines." Through these disciplines we receive God's presence, and God shapes our vocation and ministry.

We encourage mentors and mentees to talk with each other about their experiences of the spiritual disciplines. Such sharing enriches both.

Use the following questions to explore and assess your sense of vocation and mission:

- What are you doing to nourish your vocation and mission?
- What are the private and public dimensions of nourishing your vocation?
- In what ways can God more fully enter your life?
- What is your understanding of spiritual formation? Write a spiritual autobiography.
- What are you reading in the area of spiritual development?
- With whom do you share your faith development and your sense of call?
- What are the barriers that keep you from sharing your faith development? What are the bridges that enable such sharing?
- With whom do you share your questions, doubts, joys, and concerns?
- What steps do you take to meet your needs as a whole person?
- Make a list of the spiritual disciplines you keep.
- Are there spiritual disciplines that you would like to add to your life? If so, make a list of these.
- What disciplines bring you the most comfort, peace, and joy?
- What disciplines frighten you? How might those fears change your life?

## **My Authority**

As an agent of Christ in the annual conference serving under appointment of a bishop, you express the ministry of the annual conference. Our authority as clergy begins with God's creation of us. This is affirmed in our baptism into Christ as we receive the Holy Spirit, face our death, and claim a resurrected life. This baptismal authority is amplified in our being licensed, commissioned, and ordained as clergy. We are given specific powers to exercise on behalf of the church. Such exercise of authority is always audacious, as we embody the presence of the risen Christ in our interaction with others.

Spiritual or life disciplines help us center on God's presence in our daily living, enabling us to exercise authority grounded in faith. As you discern the place of authority in your life, consider the following questions:

- What is the nature of your authority in the appointment you currently have?
- What is the source of your authority?
- With whom do you exercise authority? In what ways is authority shared?
- What are the limits to your authority?
- Does exercising the authority that comes with the clergy office make you uncomfortable? If so, why?
- Are you concerned that you might abuse the authority of your office? If so, name these concerns.
- Do you exercise authority consistent with the nature of your call?
- How does practicing the spiritual disciplines aid in your exercise of authority?
- If you fail to take care of yourself, you might be vulnerable to struggling in one of the following areas: sexuality, finances, popularity, power as control. Which of these areas presents the greatest potential danger for you?

**Take authority . . . in the church**

— United Methodist Ordinal

## Cultural

The dominant culture establishes the norms for acceptable behavior. Theology and morality are so firmly tied to cultural standards that it is often impossible to separate them. Those in the dominant culture sometimes view those people with different cultural patterns and values in negative ways, condemning these cultures both morally and theologically.

Even so, The United Methodist Church is a multicultural entity. As Christian communities continue to become increasingly multicultural, people in the dominant culture are having to identify their own life patterns and values as one of many cultural expressions, rather than as the social, moral, and theological norm for everyone.

This is true in mentoring relationships in the church, too. Mentor and mentee may share the same culture, or they may be from different cultures. It is important to recognize that theological reflection is immeasurably enriched when both mentor and mentee acknowledge cultural diversity.

Culture influences us in many ways. Exploration of these values and perceptions may include discussion of background and status issues such as:

- socio-economic
- rural/suburban/urban setting
- racial or ethnic identity
- education
- family structure
- gender
- age

Cultural influences are dynamic. Over time, they may change and should be explored whenever they emerge.

## Forming a Covenant

A covenant acts as a map for your work together. It sets the directions, boundaries, and objectives of this mentoring relationship. The formality of writing and signing a covenant expresses the sacred commitment you are making. It must contain a clear understanding of annual conference expectations for mentoring. The formal covenant fashioned for the mentoring process reflects the fact that the mentor and mentee share a sense of call, vocation, discipline, and authority. Covenants are three dimensional, involving the mentor, mentee, and God's presence.

1. Reflect with each other on one or two biblical covenants. What are the elements of the covenant? What does each party expect from each other? What does each party offer the other?

2. Discuss these basic issues of covenant formation.

- How can we build trust and honor boundaries?
- How can we make sure that sharing the journey of ministry remains more important than fixing specific problems?
- When necessary, how can the mentor “speak the truth in love” regarding effectiveness in ministry in such a way that the mentee is empowered to face the issues head on? There may be instances in which it becomes clear that pursuing ordained ministry is not in the mentee's best interest. In such cases, the mentor should carefully confront the mentee to explore again his or her call and gifts so as to steer the mentee toward an appropriate expression of ministry.
- If either or both of us no longer feel safe because our willingness to be vulnerable has been betrayed, how can we end the relationship in a respectful manner?

3. Consider these specific details for inclusion in your covenant. Many of these may be covered by annual conference guidelines.

- Overall plan for your journey
- Frequency and length of meetings, dates, times, and places
- Attendance expectations
- Preparation, content, and follow-up for mentoring sessions
- Report process
- Expectations of confidentiality
- Who takes initiative
- Leadership roles and responsibilities
- Expectation of written work (theological-biblical reflection)
- Learning goals (for persons enrolled in the Course of Study, the curriculum is part of the focus), resources to be used (materials, persons, events)
- Authority/accountability
- Involvement of laypeople in the mentoring process

Where you go, I will go . . .  
your people shall be my people.

— Ruth 1:16

**Closing Statement**

We, the undersigned, enter into a covenantal relationship and commit ourselves to fulfill the details of the covenant given above. It is our hope and prayer that in this process of sharing and mentoring we will learn from each other. We make this covenant in the name of Jesus Christ.

Mentor \_\_\_\_\_

Mentee \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The mentor and mentee should each retain a copy of the covenant.



# Section II: The Mentoring Experience

## Introduction

Mentoring is a supportive relationship in which experienced clergy mentors guide mentees in theological reflection. Any everyday event can become the basis for conversation about “who I am, my roles, and my words and actions.” The mentoring process is very different from relationships in which events become the agenda for judging clergy or for seeking solutions to problems. The mentor helps the provisional member or local pastor reflect about his or her authority, call, and the various roles the ministerial vocation requires.

## Communicating Culture

Every organization and institution has a unique culture that has been shaped by its history and values. Although The United Methodist Church is a connectional system, each annual conference has its own identity and way of operating. Some cultural dynamics may include:

- Appointment making
- Collegiality within the clergy community
- Understanding of effectiveness in ministry
- Nature of itineracy
- Stated values versus operating values
- Confidentiality in clergy relationships
- Expectations of participation in the connectional system

Change is inevitable, except  
from a vending machine.

One of the responsibilities of mentoring is to communicate the realities of annual conference culture to provisional members and local pastors — not to force conformity but to help mentees understand the culture they are entering. Developing an understanding of the conference culture is an ongoing process, not a one-time conversation.

### EDMOND'S STORY:

When the superintendent asked me to be a clergy mentor I thought I was being asked to play the role of an expert with a novice. What a surprise when the first person assigned to me was a stockbroker with years of leadership experience in the corporate world and the church. I knew then that I needed to change my thinking about the role of a clergy mentor. I began to understand that being a clergy mentor means that I am a partner who helps a person reflect about his or her new ministry. I don't have to be the expert in everything.

## Creating Sacred Time Together

When the mentor and mentee meet, they are sharing sacred time. Therefore, these sessions should be planned carefully and approached prayerfully. Remember that, in addition to the usual greetings and conversation, the purpose of the session is to engage in theological reflection upon a specific topic. The mentor is not the judge and jury. Instead, the mentor invites the mentee to share about the topic.

At times issues raised by the mentee will guide the conversation. At other times the mentor may raise important issues. In either case it is important to explore a variety of dimensions of the issue. There are usually more issues than there is time to discuss them; therefore, defining at the beginning of the time together the major issue to be discussed will help keep the conversation on track.

Both mentor and mentee should keep in mind that the primary focus of the meeting is their roles, authority, and relationships as clergy. This is neither a therapy session nor a nuts and bolts, problem-solving session. The mentor is neither exploring the psychological dynamics of the persons involved nor giving “expert” advice about how to fix a problem. Instead, the mentor assists the mentee in clarifying issues and options, helping the mentee to think about what it means to be a clergyperson. The discussion is not complete until there is theological reflection.

Suggested topics:

- ministry event
- life event
- shared experience
- site visit

### Ministry Event

A ministry event might be a conversation, phone call, meeting, worship service, or experience in prayer. Any part of an event—past or anticipated—in the life of the mentee may provide the basis for theological reflection. A ministry event can be shared in a variety of ways, including stream of consciousness, verbatim, or role playing. The purpose is to discover information that will help both persons to understand what happened in the ministry event. Questions such as the following may help to elicit the information:

- As mentee, what are the issues you see for yourself in this ministry event?
- As mentor, what are the issues you see for the mentee?

### Life Event

A life event is a personal experience outside of the mentee’s clergy role, i.e., family issue, health concern, etc.

### Shared Experience

This may include times of joint participation in a variety of settings, i.e., a retreat, continuing education event, book study, movie, etc.

## Reflection Process

### Step One:

*For the mentee:*

1. Describe an event (ministry, life, or shared experience) that you want to share with your mentor in order to gain deeper theological understanding, insight, and wisdom.
2. Write or type your description on the left-hand side of the sheet(s) of paper, allowing space for your mentor to respond with comments. You may choose one of two approaches:
  - narrative, free-flowing, “stream-of-consciousness” style
  - verbatim style

Theological reflection is for ministry what fertilizer is for farming.

### Step Two

The mentor and mentee will reflect on the event using one of the following models:

#### Model 1:

The reflective questions in this model are based on events and relationships in Jesus’ ministry. These questions should serve as aids in the reflection process and should not be used as a way to “test” the mentee. (This model was prepared by the Rev. Sylvia Russell of the Ministry Preparation Resource Team, and is used by permission.)

#### **Loving Others based on the Model of Jesus**

1. What are the needs, as you understand them, of each person and/or group in the situation?
2. How well did you listen to what was being communicated both verbally and nonverbally?
3. In what way(s) did your response in the event reflect the way Jesus loved others?
4. In light of the way Jesus loved others, are there other ways in which you might have responded in love to the others in this event?
5. What did you learn about yourself and about loving others from this event?

#### **Loving Self based on the Model of Jesus**

1. Describe the emotions you experienced during this event.
2. Did your response to this event relate to a predominant theme in your life?
3. What need in your life were you hoping this event would meet? Was this need met?
4. How did you take care of yourself through this event?
5. What did you learn about loving yourself from this event?

**Love based on the Model of Jesus, in the Context of this Situation**

1. What part did culture, gender, race, sexuality, and economics play in this event?
2. How were the dynamics of power and authority expressed in this event?
3. Were money issues involved in the event? If so, name them.
4. Name justice issues that were important in this event.
5. What did you learn about yourself and about love in the context of this situation?

**Reflections to Share During the Mentoring Time**

1. In what way(s) did you act out Jesus' love towards one another during this time together?
2. Share affirmations and statements of gratitude.
3. Complete the statement: "Today I learned \_\_\_\_\_."
4. Complete the statements: "I feel \_\_\_\_\_. I still need you to \_\_\_\_\_."
5. In what ways did those involved make use of scripture, tradition, experience, and reason?
6. How did this experience relate to your call, vocation, spiritual disciplines, and authority?

## Model 2:

The format and content of the four perspectives below are taken from material developed by the Intern Program of Perkins School of Theology, and are used by permission. Reflect on your event using the perspectives listed below in the order in which they appear. These questions are intended to serve as aids in the reflection process and should not be used as a way to “test” the mentee.

### **Pastoral Questions for Reflection**

1. How well did you identify and respond to the needs of the person(s) involved in the event?
2. Were you able to listen and hear what they were saying to you both verbally and nonverbally?
3. In what ways were you helpful?
4. Can you explain why you did what you did?
5. What did you learn from the event about your own pastoral identity and authority?

### **Personal Questions for Reflection**

1. How and why was this event significant for you personally?
2. How did you find yourself reacting on rational and emotional levels?
3. Did you find the event boring? Exciting? Frustrating?
4. What did you learn about yourself during the event?

### **Social Questions for Reflection**

1. How did your identity (culture, gender, race, ethnicity, class) affect this event?
2. What cultural issues emerged during the event?
3. What gender, racial, or ethnic issues were involved?
4. What class or economic issues were involved?
5. What were the power dynamics in this event?
6. What role did your own social location play in your behavior?
7. What social institutions or agencies were implicated in this event?

### **Theological Questions for Reflection**

1. What faith issues were involved in the event, both for you and for the other person(s)?
2. In what ways did you witness to your understanding of the gospel in the event?
3. What use did you make of scripture, the tradition of the church, your own experience and that of others in the Christian tradition, and your powers of reason?
4. How was God revealed in this event, both for you and for the other person(s) involved?
5. How does this ministry relate to your theological understanding of ministry as expressed in your learning covenant?
6. In what ways is/was God’s presence and activity evident in this event?

A clear conscience is usually  
a sign of bad memory.

### Step Three

The mentee provides the mentor with a copy of the reflection at least one week prior to their next meeting.

### Step Four

The mentor reads the reflection and makes notes.

### Step Five

In the meeting, the mentor and mentee review the reflection together. Then, the mentee listens as the mentor responds. The mentee writes the mentor's comments on his or her copy.

### Step Six

In ongoing dialogue, the mentor facilitates deeper reflection on the part of the mentee, focusing on the theological perspective.

### Site Visits

Visiting in each other's ministry setting adds an important dimension to the mentoring discussion. The physical environment/location has a significant impact on one's sense of self and tells a lot about us. Therefore, seeing the interaction of clergy with people in their appointment setting will enhance future conversations.

In preparing for site visits, the mentor and mentee must be clear about the purpose of the visit:

- to experience the physical setting
- to observe the person in a leadership role in his or her setting

It is not appropriate to meet with the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committee or the mentee's supervisor in the ministry setting. The information gathered during site visits should serve to add depth to the issues being discussed in the mentoring relationship. It should also be clear that this is separate from the Board of Ordained Ministry site visit and will not be reported upon to the BOM.

A site visit should be followed by a time in which the mentor and mentee are able to reflect together on the visit.

### Closing Sacred Time

Before ending the time together as mentee and mentor, share with each other how you have experienced the session. Quality time together includes

- affirming each other,
- acknowledging unfinished business,
- confirming the schedule for the next meeting, and
- praying for each other.

# Section III: Mentoring Local Pastors

## Introduction

*¶316.4: A local pastor shall be under the supervision of a district superintendent and shall be assigned a clergy mentor while in the Course of Study or in seminary (¶349).*

In addition to their other responsibilities, clergy mentors of local pastors review their mentee's work in the Course of Study and give counsel on matters of pastoral responsibility.

## The United Methodist Church Course of Study

The Course of Study is a basic theological education program of the Division of Ordained Ministry. It is provided for licensed local pastors who are unable to attend an approved seminary. Participants in the program should have completed candidacy for ordained ministry, the studies for license as a local pastor, and have been approved for license by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry.

The Course of Study is offered at regional Course of Study Schools each summer on the campuses of eight United Methodist theological seminaries. Most courses are offered in a two-week module that allows both full-time and part-time local pastors to attend. Many of the regional schools have extension centers for part-time local pastors only. The extension centers usually offer courses in a two- or three-weekend format, which allows bivocational local pastors to participate without taking extensive time away from their work or families. Students who are unable to attend any of these schools may, with the permission of the Board of Ordained Ministry, take up to one half of their courses through the correspondence curriculum provided by the Division of Ordained Ministry or online distance learning.

Students in the Course of Study are expected to take no more than four courses per conference year. This is to allow students to prepare adequately for classes at a Course of Study school and to have time to integrate their learning with the consultation of a clergy mentor. Students are discouraged from moving through the Course of Study at a pace too fast to allow for adequate preparation or integration of learning.

Local pastors who complete the requirements of the Course of Study may continue their preparation for conference membership and ordination as an elder through an Advanced Course of Study program. The *Discipline* requires that local pastors who seek ordination through advanced studies must:

1. be at least forty years of age;
2. complete a bachelor's degree from a college or university recognized by the University Senate, or in some instances, for missional purposes, a minimum of sixty (60) semester hours of bachelor of arts credit (see ¶324.3 for complete information);
3. complete the five-year Course of Study, up to one half of which may be taken by correspondence or online;

4. complete an Advanced Course of Study, consisting of 32 semester hours of graduate theological study (at a seminary recongnized by the University Senate) or its equivalent as determined by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, that shall include United Methodist history, doctrine, and polity (§324.6).

A candidate may request that work completed at a recognized school of theology be evaluated by the Division of Ordained Ministry for transfer to the Course of Study curriculum. The request for this evaluation should come from the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry, and grade reports or transcripts must be supplied.

No credit is recognized in the Course of Study for work completed on the undergraduate level unless the Board of Ordained Ministry requests that an exception be made. However, some graduate studies in counseling, business, and education may be applied to the Course of Study, as well as a basic unit of clinical pastoral education (CPE).

The Division of Ordained Ministry policy allows for up to three courses from a regionally accredited graduate program to be applied to the Advanced Course of Study. Graduate transcripts must be sent to the Division of Ordained Ministry for evaluation before such credit may be granted.

Seminary courses in United Methodist doctrine, polity, and history must be included in the thirty-two semester hours of graduate theological study required for conference membership and ordination as an elder. These courses may be taken at an approved school of theology or through the independent study program of the Division of Ordained Ministry.

## Requirements for Candidates Qualifying through the Course of Study

### License as a Local Pastor

The Studies for License as a Local Pastor are offered by annual conference Boards of Ordained Ministry according to guidelines developed by the Division of Ordained Ministry. The guidelines suggest a minimum total of eighty hours of study in four practical areas: Worship and Preaching, Church Administration, Christian Education, and Pastoral Care. Students who have completed one third of the work required for the M.Div. degree may be approved for license as a local pastor without completing the licensing studies provided through the annual conference.

A candidate for the license as local pastor is encouraged to use the resource *The Christian as Minister*.

In addition, they must have:

- graduated from an accredited high school or its equivalent.
- been a professing member in good standing of The United Methodist Church for a minimum of one year immediately preceding the application for candidacy, including a year of service in some form of congregational leadership.
- explored candidacy for ordained ministry with a candidacy mentor.
- received the recommendation of his or her local charge conference.
- completed the candidacy program with certification by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry (see §310.1-3 for complete information).



## **Local Pastor**

A local pastor is approved annually by the district Committee on Ordained Ministry and licensed by the bishop to perform the duties of a pastor (§340), including the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion. The authority is granted for one year at a time under the appointment of the bishop and cabinet and under the supervision of a clergy mentor. All local pastors must have been certified as candidates and have completed the Studies for License as a Local Pastor before they are eligible for appointment.

### *Full-Time Local Pastors (§318.1)*

1. devote their entire time to the charge to which they are appointed
2. receive in cash support per annum a sum equal to minimum base compensation established by the annual conference for full-time local pastors
3. shall complete four courses per year, unless they have completed the Course of Study
4. shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within eight years (§319.3)
5. are involved in continuing education after they have completed the Course of Study
6. are subject to annual conference review by their district committee, the cabinet, and the Board of Ordained Ministry (§319.2)
7. are clergy members of the annual conference while under appointment (§316.6)

### *Part-Time Local Pastors (§318.2)*

1. do not devote their entire time to the charge to which they are appointed
2. do not receive in cash support per annum a sum equal to minimum base compensation
3. shall complete two courses per year in the Course of Study until they have completed the curriculum
4. shall complete the Course of Study curriculum within twelve years (§319.3)
5. are subject to annual conference review by their district committee, cabinet, and Board of Ordained Ministry (§316.4-6)
6. are clergy members of the annual conference while under appointment (§316.6)

### *Students (§318.3)*

1. are enrolled as pretheological or theological students in a college, university, or school of theology listed by the University Senate
2. make appropriate progress in their educational program as determined by the Board of Ordained Ministry
3. are subject to annual conference review by the Board of Ordained Ministry
4. may be appointed as part-time or full-time local pastors

# COURSE OF STUDY BASIC FIVE-YEAR CURRICULUM

<b>Focus</b>	<b>Year One Foundation</b>	<b>Year Two</b>	<b>Year Three</b>	<b>Year Four</b>	<b>Year Five Integrative</b>
<b>Bible</b>	<b>121: Bible I: Introduction</b>	<b>221: Bible II: Torah &amp; Israel's History</b>	<b>321: Bible III: Gospels</b>	<b>421: Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms, &amp; Wisdom Lit.</b>	<b>521: Bible V: Acts, Epistles, &amp; Revelation</b>
<b>Theology</b>	<b>122: Theology Heritage I: Introducton</b>	<b>222: Theological Heritage II: Early Church</b>	<b>322: Theological Heritage III: Medieval to Reformation</b>	<b>422: Theological Heritage IV: Wesleyan Movement</b>	<b>522: Theology in the Contemporary Church</b>
<b>Congregational Life</b>	<b>123: Formation &amp; Discipleship</b>	<b>223: Worship &amp; Sacraments</b>	<b>323: Congregational Care</b>	<b>423: Mission</b>	<b>523: Evangelism</b>
<b>Pastorial Identity</b>	<b>124: Transformative Leadership</b>	<b>224: Administration &amp; Polity</b>	<b>324: Preaching</b>	<b>424: Ethics</b>	<b>524: Theological Reflection: Practice of Ministry</b>

## First Year

### **COS 121. Bible I: Introduction**

This course introduces biblical interpretation. Attention is given to the inspiration, formation, and function of the canon and to the development of a methodology of interpretation consistent with the nature of scripture. The importance of the Bible as a witness to the life and faith of ancient Israel and earliest Christianity will be emphasized.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate the place of scripture in the life of the congregation and the role of the pastor in interpretation.
2. Understand the inspiration and formation of the canon and its authority within the community of faith.
3. Understand and apply historical, literary, and theological approaches to various types of literature in scripture using Genesis, Hosea and Amos, Mark, and Philippians.
4. Develop a method of exegesis consistent with the nature and authority of the Bible.

### **COS 122. Theological Heritage I: Introduction**

This course introduces the student to theological reflection in the Wesleyan tradition. Basic terms, tasks, and methods of Christian theology will be introduced. Representative classical themes will be defined and illustrated. The course provides a foundation for further historical and theological study.

Students will be able to:

1. Examine their understanding of faith, sin, salvation, grace, and the place of doctrine in the life of the Church.
2. Use and understand classical theological terms and themes.
3. Critically consider the sources of theological reflection, including scripture, tradition, experience and reason.
4. Reflect theologically as a resource for pastoral ministry.

### **COS 123. Formation and Discipleship**

This course grounds the student in the theology and core practices of personal and congregational formation and discipleship.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a theological basis for the Wesleyan emphasis on spiritual disciplines and practice them as means of grace.
2. Explain and implement the General Rules and the practices of small groups in a congregation.
3. Educate and resource a congregation in the disciplines Christian formation.
4. Organize congregations to help people discern their callings and gifts for ministry.

**COS 124. Transformative Leadership**

This course forms the student's identity as pastoral leader and change agent in congregations, The United Methodist Church, and the world.

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and understand the attributes of good leaders, biblically and theologically.
2. Evaluate and strengthen their own identities and skills as pastoral leaders.
3. Explain and reflect on the nature of change in the local congregation and wider society.
4. Implement visioning, strategizing, and planning processes in their local congregations.

**SECOND YEAR****COS 221. Bible II: Torah, and Israel's History**

This course interprets the critical events, developing institutions, and traditions of Israel. Attention is given to the earliest covenants, to the Exodus, to the rise of the monarchy, and to other events, up to the eighth-century prophets.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a historical overview of the experience and faith of ancient Israel.
2. Exegete selected passages that illustrate crucial turning points in the history of Israel.
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.

**COS 222. Theological Heritage II: Early Church**

This course focuses on the history and theology of the Church through the first five centuries. Using primary sources, students will reflect on significant individuals, events, and the articulation of the Christian faith during this period.

Students will be able to:

1. Understand and articulate the doctrine of the Trinity and the historical debates in the early church around the person and nature of Christ.
2. Understand and articulate a doctrine of salvation in light of the controversies of the early church.
3. Understand the history and significance of the creeds and ecumenical councils.
4. Appropriate historical theology for pastoral ministry.

**COS 223. Worship and Sacraments**

This course examines worship within The United Methodist Church, including liturgy, sacraments, and special services. Attention will be given to the pastor's role as leader in worship.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a theology of worship consistent with the Wesleyan tradition, including reflection on the theology and rhythm of the Christian year.

2. Articulate a Wesleyan theology of the sacraments and be competent in their administration.
3. Interpret theologically the rite of Christian marriage and the rite of death and resurrection, and be able to lead such services well.
4. Construct a worship service and reflect theologically on the use of hymns, media, contemporary music, and lay leadership.

### **COS 224. Polity and Administration**

This course focuses on developing the student's competency as an administrator in a United Methodist congregation.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological understanding of polity.
2. Understand and explain the polity of The United Methodist Church, including conferencing, oversight, and discipline.
3. Articulate biblically and theologically the nature of stewardship.
4. Identify techniques and develop skills as effective administrators of local churches, including financial management.

## **THIRD YEAR**

### **COS 321. Bible III: Gospels**

This course focuses on the content and message of the Gospels, as well as the theological perspectives of the Gospel writers. The practice of exegesis will be emphasized.

Students will be able to:

1. Understand the origin, message, and purpose of each Gospel.
2. Exegete this form of literature.
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.

### **COS 322. Theological Heritage III: Medieval through the Reformation**

This course focuses on major movements and events beginning with the split between Eastern and Western forms of Christianity and continuing through the Reformation. Using primary sources, students will reflect on individuals, decisive events, and theological developments.

Students will be able to:

1. Understand major theological developments in medieval Christianity leading up to the reformation.
2. Distinguish the theological characteristics of Luther, Zwingli, the Anabaptists, Calvin, the English Reformation, and Puritanism.
3. Understand and articulate reformation era debates around justification, sanctification, the sacraments, and church unity.

**COS 323. Congregational Care**

This course introduces students to practices of congregational care and the pastor's responsibility in caregiving.

Students will be able to:

1. Implement and oversee appropriate types of care in varieties of settings, including prisons, hospitals, nursing facilities, and homes.
2. Organize caring ministries within the congregation.
3. Discern and implement appropriate boundaries, knowing when and to whom to refer people, and when and when not to share information.
4. Reflect on and practice skills of sensitive caregiving, using role play and analysis case studies.

**COS 324. Preaching**

This course focuses on preaching the gospel from the Old and New Testaments.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a theology of proclamation.
2. Exegete a variety of biblical passages for preaching.
3. Evaluate sermons for biblical integrity, theological soundness, internal logic, and delivery, and appropriate insights gained from the evaluation of their own sermons.
4. Develop plans for ordering and delivering sermons in their congregational and communal context.

**FOURTH YEAR****COS 421. Bible IV: Prophets, Psalms, and Wisdom Literature**

This course examines God's Word as expressed through Israel's prophets, selected Psalms, and selected passages from Wisdom literature.

Students will be able to:

1. Understand the origin, history, and use of these forms of biblical literature among God's people.
2. Exegete these forms of biblical literature.
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.

**COS 422. Theological Heritage IV: Wesleyan Movement**

This course covers the significant individuals, decisive events, and theology of the Methodist movement. Using categories of grace, faith, and holiness, students will appropriate the Wesleyan heritage.

Students will be able to:

1. Understand and reflect on the movements, major figures, and events that led to the eighteenth century revivals, especially the lives and ministries of John and Charles Wesley.
2. Understand and articulate the vision of holiness and the theology of grace as it shaped the Wesleys and the structures of the Methodist movement.

3. Identify and discuss significant theological and historical developments in American Methodism, including ordination and episcopacy.
4. Reflect theologically on their Wesleyan heritage and identity.

### **COS 423. Mission**

This course introduces the theology and scope of mission and the pastor's role in leading congregations in their mission as agents of God's transforming redemption.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological framework for Christian mission.
2. Explain the Wesleyan relationship of personal piety and social holiness.
3. Examine and reflect on unjust social realities and the response of the church locally and globally.
4. Analyze their ministry context and develop strategies for transforming mission.

### **COS 424. Ethics**

This course introduces the biblical and theological bases for Christian behavior, emphasizing the pastoral skills needed for moral leadership in the congregation and community.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical and theological basis for ethical thinking and moral behavior, and distinguish major approaches to ethical reasoning.
2. Comprehend the relationship between their personal stories, pastoral vocation, local contexts, and responsibility as moral leaders.
3. Develop a Christian framework for moral reason and action, and apply it to the use of power and the setting of boundaries in ministry.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with and make use of the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church as a resource for ethical reflection and action.

## **FIFTH YEAR**

### **COS 521. Bible V: Acts, Epistles, and Revelation**

This course focuses on the content and context of these writings and the theological emphases of their writers. In addition to Acts and Revelation, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Hebrews, James, and 1 John will receive special attention. Students will articulate a theology of scripture.

Students will be able to:

1. Distinguish these genres of biblical literature and understand the major theological themes in these writings.
2. Faithfully exegete these forms of biblical literature.
3. Apply exegesis to preaching, other pastoral responsibilities, and issues of the present day.
4. Articulate the unity and authority of Scripture as a whole.

**COS 522. Theology in the Contemporary Church**

This course covers significant individuals, movements, events, and theological developments from the nineteenth century to the present. Students will read selected primary sources.

Students will be able to:

1. Understand the origins and theological tenets of liberalism from the early 19th century to the present, including its influence on ecumenism and process theology.
2. Understand and distinguish reactions to liberalism, including Fundamentalism, Neo-Orthodoxy, and Evangelicalism.
3. Understand the historical development and theology of the Holiness Movement, Pentecostalism, and the Charismatic Movement.
4. Understand the origins and tenets of liberation and contextual theologies.

**COS 523. Evangelism**

This course introduces students to the theology and practices of evangelism as an expression of the mission of God.

Students will be able to:

1. Reflect on and articulate the meaning of the gospel and an understanding of the church as bearers of God's Word to the world.
2. Ground a theology of evangelism in scripture, the Gospel, and the mission of God.
3. Interpret the Wesleyan heritage of evangelism.
4. Reflect on and implement strategies and models for evangelism by the congregation.

**COS 524. Theological Reflection on the Practice of Ministry**

This course is the capstone to the student's basic course of study. Its focus is the integration of the biblical, theological, and practical aspects of ministry.

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a Trinitarian theology for the practice of ministry.
2. State clearly the nature and mission of the church and its relation to pastoral ministry.
3. Demonstrate the ability to reflect theologically.
4. Develop a plan for lifelong theological reading, reflection, and growth.



## Section IV: Mentoring Clergy in Extension Ministries (Provisional Elders) and Service Appointments Beyond the Local Church (Provisional Deacons)

Paragraph 327.4 of the *Book of Discipline* states that provisional members shall be supervised by the district superintendent under whom they are appointed, and shall be assigned a deacon or elder as a mentor.

Mentoring relationships for commissioned ministers appointed to extension ministries or service appointments beyond the local church within the annual conference will be established with the same care as those for clergy appointed to local churches. In establishing the mentoring relationship, attention must be devoted to the unique and distinctive pressures of secular and institutional settings. Mentors should remember that these appointments are important expressions of the church's ministry in the world.

When the commissioned minister is serving in a setting outside the bounds of the annual conference, the Board of Ordained Ministry may seek the assistance of the Board of Ordained Ministry in the annual conference in which the commissioned minister is serving to provide a meaningful mentoring experience. It is the responsibility of the commissioned minister to maintain the connection with his or her home conference.

Questions to explore in the context of mentoring someone in extension ministry or appointed beyond the local church (in addition to others in this resource):

- Reflect on how you live out your order's calling (be it elder's and local pastor's call to world, service, sacrament, and order; or deacon's call to word, service, compassion, and justice) in your ministry appointment.
- For deacons appointed beyond the local church: Reflect on your calling in your secondary appointment, and how you maintain healthy work/life balance in this context.
- Reflect on how you interpret your ministry to someone in the congregation where you worship.
- Reflect on ways you pursue collegial relationships of accountability and support.
- Reflect on ways that you keep your district superintendent and bishop apprised of your ministry.

Experience is a good teacher,  
but the bills are exorbitant.

## A LOCAL PASTOR'S STORY:

I was assigned to a small group (consisting of my peers) for mentoring.

As it turned out, it did not feel like we were peers; consequently, I felt uncomfortable.

How can I fit into such a group? I wondered. After a couple of meetings reflecting on ministry events, I discovered that we are in this together.

A safe place for reflection and growth.

— *Discipline* ¶349.2

## Section V: Mentoring in Groups

Another valid structure for clergy mentoring is the group setting. Mentors must have not only the skills for one-on-one mentoring but also the skills for facilitating group discussion. It is also important for the mentor to have a person that can help him or her to reflect on and learn from his or her leadership of the group. Theological reflection upon call, vocation, and practice of ministry forms the core of the experience.

1. *Group Covenant* — As with one-on-one mentoring, the group needs structure and direction. In addition to each participant's personal covenant statement, the group as a whole must write a covenant.

2. *Confidentiality within the Group* — The dynamics of confidentiality are more complicated in a group than in the one-on-one situation. It is essential that the group state its understanding of confidentiality in its covenant and hold members accountable.

3. *Spiritual Formation of the Group* — The disciplines of prayer, worship, and ritual practices for the group deserve attention and preparation. Responsibility for these disciplines should be shared by the whole group and not simply assumed by the mentor/facilitator.

4. *Meeting Frequency and Length* — Geography, ministry settings, and other specific conditions will influence the frequency and length of the group's meetings. Group members may communicate electronically with one another between face-to-face sessions.

5. *Group Expectations* — It is crucial that participants clearly understand the expectations that will govern the meetings. Use questions such as the following to establish expectations:

- How will leadership be shared?
- Who will design and lead worship times?
- How are topics selected and brought into the group?
- How will site visits be conducted?

In summary, the group is not primarily a support group, a therapy group, an educational seminar, or a fix-it group. The focus is *mentoring* through biblical-theological reflection. The mentor's role is to facilitate this process.

## Section VI:

# Accountability beyond the Mentoring Relationship

You are not isolated and alone in this mentoring relationship in The United Methodist Church. The relationship itself was assigned through your annual conference or district processes. The superintendent, Board of Ordained Ministry, and/or district Committee on Ordained Ministry has participated in establishing the mentoring ministry and making specific assignments. Your relationship is one of several in your district and annual conference.

### Supervision

Supervision is required in the connectional relationships of provisional members and local pastors. Provisional members are supervised by the district superintendent, the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee or employing agency. Local pastors are supervised by the district superintendent, the district Committee on Ordained Ministry and the Pastor/Staff Parish Relations Committee. **Mentoring is distinct from the evaluative and supervisory process (§1349.2). Mentors are not supervisors and do not participate in the evaluative process of the Board or District Committee.**

### Reporting

The Board of Ordained Ministry is responsible for developing an annual reporting process. This mentoring report is used to verify participation in the process. It is to be descriptive and nonevaluative in nature. If the mentor needs practice in distinguishing between descriptive and evaluative reporting, it is a good idea for the mentor to write a report and review it. Words and phrases that convey opinion, judgments, ratings, or advocacy are indicators of evaluative reporting. However, if the report simply reports events, agreements, or topics, the report is descriptive. When the Board of Ordained Ministry requires detailed descriptive reports, the following model may be helpful:

- The mentee writes a first draft of the report.
- The mentor reviews the report and makes amendments, if needed.
- If the report has no amendments, the mentee signs and submits the report.
- If the report is amended, the mentor returns the report to the mentee without signature.
- If the mentee disagrees with the report as amended, he or she makes further amendments and returns the report to the mentor for signature.
- If the mentor disagrees with the mentee's amendments, he or she repeats the process with the mentee until an agreement is reached.

**Basic principle:** Mentor and mentee will agree on and sign the report. The mentee will sign off last and submit the report to the appropriate annual conference and/or district officer.

A closed mouth gathers no feet.

Men are from earth. Women are from earth. Deal with it.

### **Feedback on the Mentoring Process**

Boards of Ordained Ministry may seek feedback on the mentoring process in order to determine its effectiveness. Information requested and shared should focus on the process and not upon the persons involved. From time to time surveys may be conducted or commissioned by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in order to collect data across the denomination.

### **Self-Evaluation**

Participants may choose to evaluate their mentoring relationship. Such evaluation should center upon the upholding of their covenant. The following questions may help:

- Can we name instances when we were particularly successful in upholding the covenant?
- Was the covenant ever broken? If so, when and how did this happen?
- Was the covenant ever restored? If so, when and how did this take place?

### **Yearly Cycle**

The clergy-mentoring relationship is intended to last for the mentee's entire period as commissioned minister or during his or her participation in the Course of Study. The nature of the United Methodist appointive system allows opportunities to annually celebrate, evaluate, and renew the covenant.

### **Interviews**

If the process in an annual conference requests that mentors be present at interviews, they should be silent observers. The purpose for observing the interview is to allow the mentor and mentee to reflect upon the process in a later session.

### **Closure**

It is inevitable that the clergy-mentoring relationship will reach closure at some point. This might happen because either the mentor or the mentee has received a change in appointment that makes continuing the mentoring relationship impossible. In such a case, another mentor will be assigned.

Closure also happens when the mentee completes the Course of Study or is elected to full-clergy membership and ordained. In other instances there is closure because the mentee leaves the clergy office and seeks another vocation. Whatever the cause for ending the mentoring relationship, it is important that both the mentor and the mentee pay attention to how to bring closure to the relationship. A final session provides an opportunity for the mentor and mentee to reflect together in conversation and prayer about the experiences and gifts that the relationship has made possible.

Plan to celebrate the mentoring relationship. Closure does not mean that a relationship and friendship cannot continue. It simply means that the formal, assigned dimension of the mentoring ministry has been completed.

Always remember you're unique, just like everyone else.

# Resources

## Listening Skills

Just as the love of God begins with hearing God's Word, so the beginning of love for each other begins with listening. Conversation becomes communion when we hear God's Word. The Hebrew root for "hear" and "listen" is *sama*, which appears 1,050 times in the Old Testament. To "hear" or "listen" implies a response to the Word. The response to hearing God is obedience.

In the New Testament, the Greek word means "to hear." In some cases, it means to hear from God's perspective, so that the hearer will know what to do. "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" (Luke 14:35)

True listening to another person is both a gift and a practiced skill. We think about four times faster than we speak, which means that often when listening to someone speak our mind wanders to fill in the gaps. How often in listening to someone else do you begin to think of what you want to say, even while the other person is still speaking? Do you sometimes appear to be listening to another person even though you are actually thinking of other things?

The practice of love includes active, reflective listening, such as when the listener repeats what has been heard. For instance, "Are you saying that. . .?" or "Are you feeling. . .?" or "I don't understand what you mean when you say. . ."

## Increase Your Listening Skills

- Spend at least fifteen minutes a day in focused meditation.
- Practice focusing on the other person's words.
- Try to eliminate distractions in the surrounding environment.
- Watch for visual helps and body language.
- Listen for vocal changes.
- Discern how your body feels as you listen to the other person.
- Ask questions.
- Paraphrase what you have heard, to test how well you have heard the other person's meaning.
- Write a summary of what the other person has said.

## Discard Poor Listening Habits

- Don't interrupt the other person.
- Don't engage in conversations on the side.
- Don't fail to give response or feedback.
- Don't correct the other person's grammar or word choice.
- Don't complete the other person's sentences.
- Don't show disinterest.
- Don't walk away or do other things while claiming to listen.
- Don't answer a question before it has been completed.
- Don't look at your watch or at the clock.
- Don't say you understand when you don't.
- Don't disagree with everything that is said.
- Don't abruptly change the subject.

Let anyone with ears  
to hear listen!

— Luke 14:35

You must understand this,  
 . . . let everyone be quick to  
 listen, slow to speak.

— James 1:19

## Feedback

The letter of James warns about the dangers of the tongue. Speaking can hide or distort as quickly as it can reveal and heal. Therefore, inviting, giving, or receiving feedback about a person's leadership can be a risky enterprise. This is why many clergy live with a sense of isolation while they minister in a sea of speaking.

The art and discipline of feedback calls those of us in the church to use words in a way that practices the love of Christian covenant. Again, this requires a life of prayer in which our listening for and speaking to God reflect our listening and speaking with one another.

When we are uncertain about ourselves or when we feel vulnerable, our speech is self-protective and/or defensive. In these times our speech may be voluminous or absent. It will not be used to share or reveal something about ourselves.

The ministry of feedback must be saturated in prayer. Knowing we are secure in God's love becomes the core from which we can invite and offer feedback. Holding ourselves and others in prayer is essential preparation for the ministry of feedback.

Feedback involves saying what you experience, observe, think, and feel about another person's leadership.

### Feedback IS

- plain speaking
- self-revealing on the part of the speaker
- humbly invited, humbly offered
- a gift invited and offered
- a dimension of covenant and love

### Feedback is NOT

- winning a point
- coercing another to do something
- passing rumors
- hiding behind what someone else is saying
- advocating a theological perspective
- defending oneself or others
- promoting scandal
- objective truth

Below is a checklist of important items for church leaders in asking for and receiving feedback. The list is not just for a mentoring relationship. *All* church leaders are part of feedback processes. The board chair, the church-school teacher, and the treasurer—no less than the pastor—are strengthened through their invitation for feedback from others.

In inviting feedback from others about your leadership:

- be specific about the kind of feedback you are seeking. (A general survey of your leadership is very different from specific feedback about a particular task you do in leadership.)
- make sure that the respondent understands what he or she is being asked to do.
- set the expectations you have for the feedback (that is, explain why you are asking).
- provide the tools necessary to structure the feedback (question sheets, rating scales, etc.)
- structure the feedback sessions carefully.
- make sure the physical setting allows for speaking and listening without interruption.
- be clear about the boundaries of confidentiality.
- avoid a confrontational dynamic.
- invite observations and/or experiences of your leadership that are specific to the area of focus.
- assume a positive motive and intention on the respondent's part.
- ask the respondent to be specific with instances and detail.
- remember that the respondent is speaking from his or her perspective.
- test the speaking and hearing for clarity of communication (that is, are you hearing what the respondent is intending to say?).
- invite questions for clarification.
- pay attention to your feelings, your breathing, and your physical situation.
- if needed, call for a break.
- divide the feedback itself and the conclusions from the feedback into two different sessions.

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