
The Journey Man or Woman: Sharing the Wisdom

Taking on the role of mentor for a Commissioned Pastor (CP) candidate or one who has already received a commission is a gift given to both the ministry being served by the mentee as well as the mentee themselves. The mentor blesses the work of the Church by helping The Presbytery of the Northwest Coast (NWCP) to equip commissioned pastors to serve with competence and joy. As a mentor, you are deeply appreciated and it is the goal of NWCP to help you find joy and satisfaction in the giving of this gift.

As NWCP, we have adopted the age-old practice of an apprentice learning from someone with experience and knowledge as we develop and support Commissioned Pastors. The program was designed based on a journey man or woman, an experienced Minister of Word and Sacrament, teaching, sharing, and supervising the development of one who has been called to serve the Church in a commissioned ministry. Both serve under the Master, Jesus Christ, the head of the Church.

The *Book of Order (BoO)* G-2.1004 requires that all Commissioned Pastor/Elders work “under the supervision of the presbytery.” It also states that “A minister of the Word and Sacrament shall be assigned as a mentor and supervisor.”

HISTORY

In 880 BCE, Homer introduced the concept of mentoring. According to his story, “*The Odyssey*,” before Odysseus left for Troy, he gave his son to Mentor, whom he charged with the care and education of the boy. The term mentor has come to mean one who undertakes the training and care of another. This method for training new professionals has been in practice in a variety of fields, including those preparing for the ministry.

Jesus also took on apprentices when he called the disciples. They spent their days observing, listening and then practicing to be the next group of spiritual teachers and mentors.

For many called into the ministry, this model of mentor/mentee is the best way for them to learn how to be good ministers of the gospel. It allows them to stay in their ministry context, meet family and other work responsibilities and learn in a rich environment from an experienced minister. Larry Osborne, head pastor of North Coast Church in Vista, California, put it this way; “In an apprentice model, you educate through teachable moments. You throw them in the water and stand on the edge of the pool. No one drowns in a good apprentice model.”

Describing the mentor as a lifeguard isn’t a bad picture as long as we remember that one of the main duties of a lifeguard is to teach swimming to those who don’t yet know how to swim!

An Introduction for Ministers of Word and Sacrament Supervising/Mentoring Commissioned Pastors

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Thomas Frank said “At its best, (the apprentice/journey man/woman or mentor relationship) is a connection with mentors who support you through loving accountability.”

We find this loving accountability modeled for us in Jesus’ interactions with the disciples. A favorite example of Jesus teaching is found in Luke 24:13-32 as he works with the two disciples he joined on the road to Emmaus. The two were confused and did not believe what they had been told by the women. In love, Jesus corrected them. Recognizing their need for review, he walked them back through the story and stayed with them until their eyes were opened and they were ready to go and share what they had learned.

During the CP development process, mentors work with a COM representative and the candidate to design a set of goals individualized for the candidate, in order to address competencies needed for effective ministry. Your role is very much one of teacher at that point. It is appropriate for you to take those goals and teach those skills. You might find yourself assigning reading or viewing of an online presentation. You will also want to discuss issues you are facing as well as your process for working through them.

It is highly desirable for you to model the competencies, taking the candidate on pastoral calls, planning worship services etc. and then lifeguarding while the candidate plans, conducts and teaches. This can be done through joint visits, recording sermons, reviewing plans and a variety of other means to encourage independence and competence. Don’t forget to train the candidate in administering the sacraments and officiating at weddings and funerals.

One useful planning tool is to take your schedule and make sure you address each type of activity in which you engage day to day. This includes personnel issues and volunteer recruitment and management. Let the candidate observe a Session meeting, with Sessions permission of course. As well, review the budgeting process and how you work with your Session on those issues.

How are you addressing your spiritual and physical health goals? Teach your CP candidate about those issues, being as transparent as you feel is appropriate. They will grow from both your successes and stumbles.

You should meet monthly. These meetings can take place by zoom or in person: even by phone if necessary.

One helpful way to conduct these meetings for candidates is to take one of the development goals to focus on each meeting, decide on the actions to be taken on that goal and then review the progress first thing the next meeting and move on to the next goal. You will also want to check in on what happened in the ministry that month and talk over any issues that may have arisen.

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For those who are mentoring/supervising someone who has already been commissioned, you will find yourself focusing on the issues we all face in ministry. Review the past month and discuss the highs and lows.

For all mentors, remember to keep encouraging wellness behavior in both the CP's physical and spiritual arenas. We can't minister well if we are not growing ourselves and you may find that these discussions aid you in your own goals for continued growth.

The relationship will probably change over time and it is not unexpected that you will find yourself coaching more as time goes on but those oversight goals we have will always be present in the relationship. We want to model faithfulness to the vows set forth in the *Book of Order*.

Once again, thank you for your service to the Presbytery as well as to the CP and the Church at large. May God richly bless this relationship as you share your gifts.