



# **Guidebook for Mentoring Teams**

**Office of Ministerial Formation  
Duke Divinity School**

## The Work of the Mentoring Team



Do you promise  
to instruct *this child*  
in the truth of God's word,  
in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;  
to pray for this child, to teach this child to pray;  
and to train *this one* in Christ's way by your example,  
through worship, and  
in the nurture of the church?  
**We do, and we ask God to help us.**

## Why a Mentoring Team?

A mentoring team's work is covenantal in nature. Recall how many times you have stood before God and the parent(s) of a little one being baptized and made promises like those above. Think of it, your pastoral intern was once the precious child for whom a congregation made promises. Your role is a significant part of the fulfillment of those promises! If you happen to be in a congregation that practices baptism after a profession of faith, think about it as your commitment to make disciples. It just so happens that you are discipling someone preparing to be a ministerial leader.

Theological education is best done by the whole church—not just the ordained clergy or Divinity School. It follows then that each teaching congregation or site should establish a team of persons who will commit themselves to working with students in ministry by engaging in intentional and routine practices of ministerial reflection and vocational formation.

Just as it is unrealistic to expect that divinity students can be educated for ministerial service simply by going to classes, it would also be unfair to think that a pastor is the only person that should mentor an intern in a broad range of ministerial activities. In fact, it would be denying teachings about the nature of the church. For example, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7,

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*

In responding to this call, you will join a team of persons, led by your pastor(s), who also have responded to this call to a ministry of participating in the formation of a soon-to-be-minister. Each of you will mentor a student in an area of your recognized giftedness. This could be one of the most deeply satisfying ministry commitments you have ever made.

## What does it look like?

Your congregation is providing a gift of inestimable worth to a divinity student: the place to practice ministry and spaces to reflect on that practice in partnership with pastor(s)/ministerial leader(s) and you.

In the drawing below you can picture yourself and your congregation on the **Y axis**. It portrays the *mentoring environment* that nurtures gifts and call. There are two key components. The first is the *hospitable space* that welcomes the learning-serving participation of your divinity student in all aspects of the church's ministry. This is critical to the formation of a person's ministerial identity. Consider this example. Most churches value good preaching. Imagine that your divinity intern is only allowed to

preach in his or her final year. How does this help this soon-to-be-minister develop what we believe to be an important ministry competency?

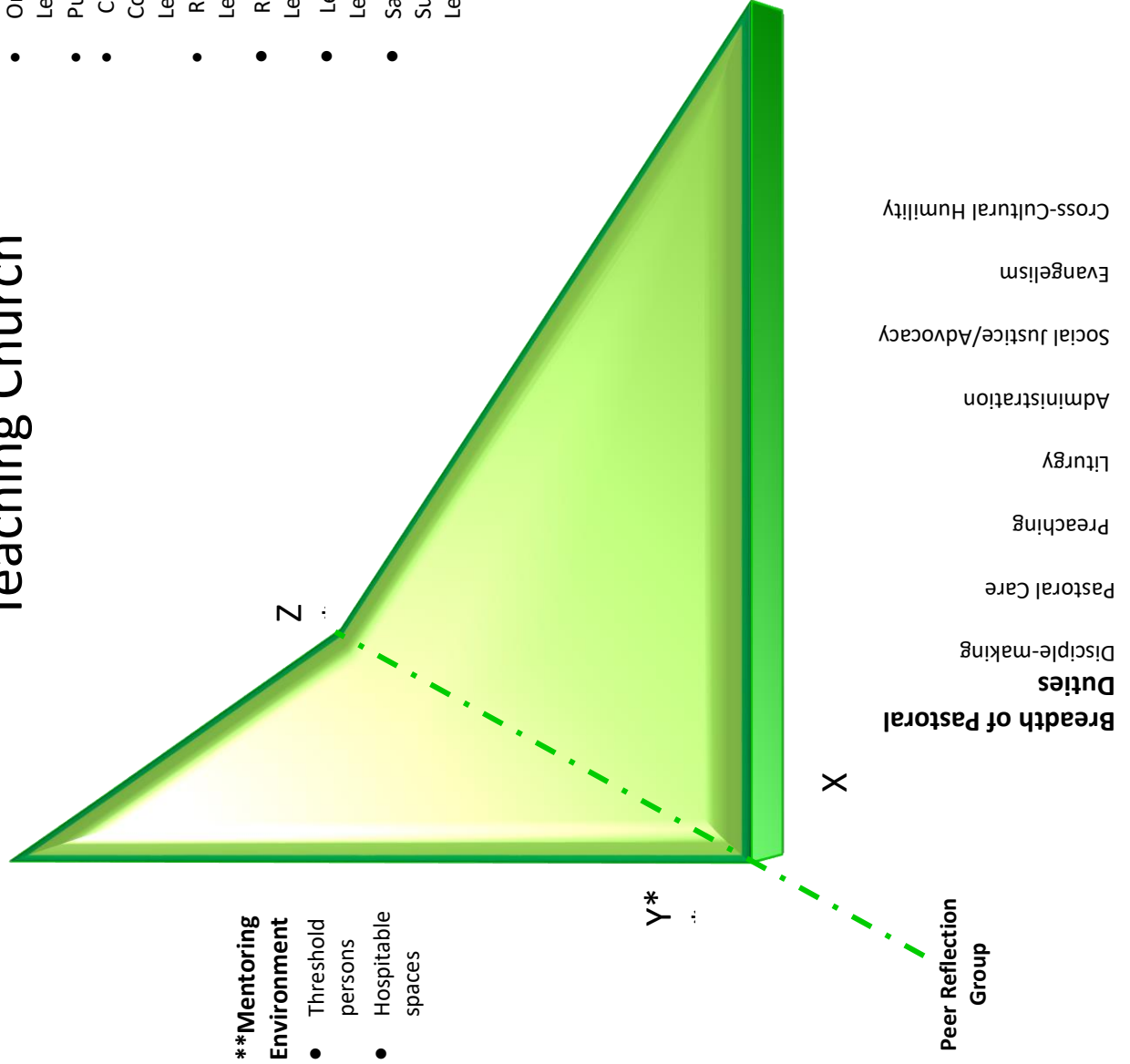
The second concept is *threshold persons*. These are trustworthy and transformational relationships with significant persons—threshold persons. It may be helpful to think of it this way. Your intern is on the threshold of discovery but they need a guide to show the way, support them in their efforts, and to reflect on their experience in order to learn and return to the activity with increased competency and confidence. You can be that person. (for further reflection on this concept see appendix 1)

The **X axis** represents the breadth of pastoral duties. It is not a comprehensive list. Your team has been called together around these areas of competence in order to create your own unique ministry of mentoring. You will have a limited time to invest in your intern so it will be both challenging and exhilarating. For example, perhaps you are the person on the team who will mentor the intern in the area of administration and management. You manage a non-profit organization and so come with a wealth of skills and experience. You can read together the chapter “Engaging in Church Administration” in the book *Engage: A Theological Field Education Toolkit*. You can then walk with your intern by designing hands-on experiences and schedule appropriate conversations with various leaders so that they gain basic level of competency in administration and management for a ministry context. Your intern will have the opportunity to explore additional areas of ministerial competency with other members of the Lay Mentoring Team and of course with their Supervisor-Mentor. With her/him they have carefully crafted a learning-serving covenant.

This leaves the **Z axis** which addresses leadership skills. Not only do ministers need to be skilled and smart in lots of interesting ways, they need to be apt leaders. Leadership is exercised personally and situationally. Leadership begins with a person who possesses keen self and social awareness. Leaders are secure in their identity and are therefore able to celebrate and receive from other’s giftedness cheerfully. This is important because good leadership has first learned the virtue of followership. A Christian leader is called and therefore follows the leader, Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd. “He goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice (John 10:4).” Appendix 2 describes in more detail each of the seven aspects of leadership listed here.

Each of these will be practiced in the exercise of ministerial leadership and are good beginning points in reflecting on ministry experience. For example, in considering a food pantry ministry a good question might be: “Who are the stakeholders?” In mapping this out in expanding concentric circles other churches or ministries in the neighborhood might be named. The intern would be exercising collaborative and connected leadership by communicating plans with other leaders and agency heads in the community and inviting their participation. She or he would be exercising organizational leadership by suggesting a structure that empowered those being served to serve and give leadership for the ministry. These are examples to underscore that any ministerial skill requires its twin—leadership—to be effective.

# Mentoring Model for Teaching Church



You'll notice that the **Z axis** extends outside the shaded portion of the diagram. This extension of the leadership axis is a reminder that all that you invest in your student will have a larger impact than you can imagine. All students on internship join together in facilitated peer groups and reflect on what they are learning. Often this is done in the form of discussing case studies that each write on leadership experiences that they have had. These peer reflection groups provide the opportunity for multiplying the learning benefit that your team has had with your intern.

## **What will we do?**

Practically speaking, there are a number of things that you can do to benefit your minister-in-formation. Your pastor or ministerial leader may already have number one planned.

1. You can welcome your intern publicly. This may seem obvious, but what better way to introduce your intern than to invite them to stand before the congregation on a Sunday morning and give a brief description of the intern's and the congregation's role in this special relationship. You might also ask the intern to introduce him or herself (and any family) and share a bit of his or her story of call.
2. You can establish a regular monthly meeting to review the overall experience and to reflect together on specific ministerial engagements. Remember that participating in these conversations requires that everything shared be held in strictest confidence. Learning goals can be reviewed at this time as well as encouragement and prayer offered. Since learning sometimes involves less than effective performances, after reflecting on the experience the intern should be encouraged to return to this activity and try again to test the results of reflection to see if in fact growth has occurred.
3. You can share your life and faith with her or him. This seems to have been Paul's way of relating to both churches and younger pastors (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Meals and friendship, along with your prayers will be deeply appreciated by your intern. Besides, experiencing your love for God and the church will hearten your soon-to-be pastor.

With regards to mentoring specifically, here are several things to keep in mind.

1. You are the expert. You are on the mentoring team because of recognized giftedness that you exercise for the good of the church and its mission. You also know more than you can say; that is, you possess a great deal of knowledge that your intern will access by asking lots of good questions and by inviting your constructive critique of his or her work.

2. Because of this you can break down an activity, like teaching a class, into its constitutive parts and coach your student towards competency in each. Sometimes this is described in a movement like this:
  - Watch me, discuss.
  - Watch me, help me, discuss.
  - I watch you, help you, discuss.
  - I watch you, discuss.
  - When ready, you can lead someone through this process! That's "equipping the saints."
  
3. You can give specific feedback. You are a mirror, reflecting your perception of ministry to the intern. You will offer your impressions of leadership skills such as communication, problem solving ability, planning, and relationship building. As a team and/or as an individual mentor you will reflect on sermons, organizational skills, teaching skills, etc. Share what you think went well, and what you think could be improved. Speak the truth in love, but speak the truth. Do not hold back vital information because you want to spare the intern's feelings. It's the uncomfortable feelings that need to be discussed. Your intern wants to hear the truth so he or she can grow.
  
4. You can take a cue from what interns say they appreciate about their supervisor-mentors. Here is what research that we've conducted among our students suggests are marks of a good mentor.
  - He listens and affirms well.
  - She is available and consistent.
  - She lets me bring questions that concern me.
  - He lets me try new things, even experiment.
  - They [pastoral staff] genuinely care about me.
  - He wants me to experience all aspects of ministry.
  - I was asked what I wanted to learn and was taken seriously.
  - He pays attention to both the professional and the personal identity stuff.
  - She pushes me to be self-reflective.
  - She offers encouraging and specific feedback.
  - He took me along and introduced me to everyone; I felt welcomed.
  - He challenges me to see alternative approaches to ministry.
  - He advocates for my well-being in the system.
  
5. On the other hand, you can encourage good behaviors and characteristics in your intern.
  - Setting realistic, but ambitious goals.
  - Willing to receive feedback.
  - Working collaboratively, not competitively.

- Patience.
  - Bearing a positive attitude.
  - Being authentic and genuine.
  - Relational.
  - Accepts ownership of responsibilities.
6. Dependability. Just as you expect the intern to be faithful to the covenant established with your site, you should be faithful to your commitments to the intern. Honor meeting times, whether as a team or as an individual mentor.
  7. Organize the team well. For a more relaxed atmosphere, try meetings that are hosted by team members in their homes. Set a time when the meetings will end. Communicate what is expected in the way of refreshments. Clarify how members will be informed about meeting times and places.
  8. Be courageous. Set aspirations high. Gracefully push your intern to challenge him or herself. Be the kind of leader-mentor they need in each instance.

You can see that being a mentor is work, but rewarding work!



## Appendix 1

### **\*\*Mentoring Environments**

#### **Mentoring**

Laurent Daloz, *et al*, defines mentoring as “a somewhat more experienced person of either gender who enables young adults to make the transition from the adolescent’s dependence upon (and resistance to) authority, to the adult’s ability to include him or herself in the arena of authority and responsibility.

#### **Threshold Persons**

Trustworthy and transformational relationships with significant persons—*threshold persons*—within a hospitable space foster maturity and nurture a capacity for commitment that endures in the midst of life’s complexity.

It may be helpful to think of it this way. Your mentee is on the threshold of discovery but they need a guide to show the way, or support them in their efforts, or to reflect on their experience in order to learn and return to the activity with greater competency and confidence. **You** can be that person.

Here are some examples:

- Loving parents who model a faith that works through tangible acts of love, mercy, justice and witness
- Welcoming and diverse neighbors, teachers and coaches that take a personal interest over time or at critical moments
- Mentors who challenge, support and inspire
- Kindred spirits who provide good company and invigorate vision

#### **Hospitable Spaces**

Here are some examples:

- A home where trust and healthy independence are nourished, hospitality is practiced, and the wider world is present
- A neighborhood where it is safe to explore.
- Intensive learning or work environments in which group interaction is cultivated, responsibility is learned from shared tasks and each person’s contribution are celebrated.
- Institutional environments (including churches and seminaries) that build community, foster a variety of forms of learning, cultivate a larger awareness and teach that it is possible to make a difference.

\*The concept of mentoring environments is explored in *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*, Laurent Parks Daloz, *et al*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1996.

## Appendix 2

### \*Leadership Elements

The measure of leadership is not the quality of the head, but the tone of the body. The signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers. Are the followers reaching their potential? Are they learning? Serving? Do they achieve the required results? Do they change with grace?

Max DePree, *Leadership is an Art*

- **Organizational Leadership:** Able to clearly describe collective goals so that each member understands any initiative's purpose and direction and is empowered to determine what to do and why. The leader is skillful in strategic planning and developing clear action plans in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- **Public Leadership:** Able to interact with, speak to, and provide leadership in the broader, non-congregational community.
- **Collaborative and Connected Leadership:** Able to cultivate congregations and ministries committed to God's work in the world by encouraging, equipping, empowering and celebrating members and their accomplishments. The leader is committed to be connected with peers and mentors for personal support and guidance, and seeks out multi-church/ministry partnerships.
- **Reconciling Leadership:** Able to effectively engage and resolve conflict and to reconcile conflicting parties.
- **Resourced Leadership:** Able to integrate Scripture, theology and tradition, local history and personal stories in addressing ongoing leadership challenges with pastoral imagination.
- **Learning Leadership:** Able to persistently engage in ongoing formal and informal learning through reading, writing, reflecting and conferencing with colleagues and peers. Capable of a self and social-awareness that benefits from feedback.
- **Sacred and Sustainable Leadership:** Able to engage in practices through a Rule of Life that grounds leadership in a deep spiritual rootedness that is life-giving, "like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season..."

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