

Mentoring at a Presbytery level Guidelines for Good Practice



**Board of Ministry
May 2022**

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Background

Over the last number of years, the Board of Ministry has legislated for mentoring to take place at a Presbytery level. There have been several documents and guidelines produced, and as thoughts and practices have developed, the Board want to consolidate the previous helpful material, and provide updated guidelines in this document.

Mentoring and Gospel coaching

The Free Church of Scotland is keen to encourage the ongoing mentoring support for ministers as well as training up some of its own leaders to become Gospel coaches.

While there are similarities, what are the differences between the two? Mentoring is a longer running relationship where a more experience minister is encouraged to meet regularly with a younger, or less experienced colleague, to disciple, encourage, advise and support. We want Presbyteries to value mentoring relationships within their bounds between Presbytery colleagues, where possible, as a powerful way of developing stronger spiritual relationship, support and accountability. We hope to structure mentoring in line with the focus for ministers in training and continual professional development (CPD) – namely – character, convictions and competence. These then become a helpful structure for aims and objectives.

In our context, Gospel coaching sets a helpful pattern for future mentoring, as it is undertaken by ministers who have undergone specific training, and it aims to promote intentional Gospel conversations with focused discussions about a leaders relational, personal, missional and spiritual life. The plan is to appoint coaches for church planters, newly ordained ministers and those who have participated in the development track. Additionally, as the number of trained coaches increases, coaches would be offered to ministers who request them for different stages in life and ministry such as new charges, changed family circumstances and approaching retirement. These coaches are appointed for a fixed period only and will provide intentional support during specific seasons or challenges of ministry.

The Board of Ministry and the Mission Board have a shared interest and involvement in the training and appointing of Gospel coaches.

Biblical foundations

The bible gives us a clear mandate to mentor (disciple) one another as believers:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28 v 19&20

All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3 v 16 and 17

They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer

Acts 2 v 42

Then they (the older women) can train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind...

Titus 2 v 4,5

Encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned...

Titus 2 v 7,8

"Since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. We pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light."

Colossians 1:9-12

Christ with the disciples is the most obvious expression of mentoring. His leadership, care, teaching, challenge, protection and prayer provide the perfect example for mentors to learn from.

1 Tim 4 v 7-16 is a reminder to us that Paul – without using the terminology – was a mentor to Timothy. He places emphasis on encouraging Timothy to manage his own learning, to maximise his usefulness, to develop his skills, to improve his performance and to set a good example to others in all of this.

Outworking of discipleship

Ministers will undoubtedly be discipling others – and in many cases, that will be as a mentor, even if it not formally recognised as such. They will be called upon to mentor auxiliary workers of all sorts: Sunday School teachers; youth, family, or addiction workers; etc. In some cases, this mentoring will take place outside the Congregation, perhaps where a minister or elder serves as a “line manager” for a Presbytery worker. Whatever the

relationship might be, mentoring takes place in the wider context of Christian discipleship. We must remember that our ultimate goal in this process is nurturing fellow followers of Jesus Christ. We also realise that discipleship never stops – it simply changes as we grow in the faith. However, the care and pastoral oversight of ministers can be neglected – ‘who pastors the pastor?’ Presbytery mentoring seeks to meet the need for ministers to be shepherded as disciples themselves.

Power of strong relationships

Strong relationships must be the bedrock of mentoring partnerships. If the relationship between mentors and mentees is not strong, the mentoring process can only be expected to happen at a very superficial level. Strong relationships take investment of time and self – the best mentors will pour themselves into nurturing their mentees. We should expect this from mentors. We already know this in how we pastor our congregations. If we don’t have good, healthy relationships with people in our congregations, we will not be the people they turn to when problems arise in their lives. The same holds true in ministerial mentoring.

Goals

The aim of the mentoring relationship is to provide an opportunity to provide:

- Recognising the areas of Character (of primary importance in the mentoring relationship) Convictions and Competence, and seeking to address these in an ongoing mentoring relationship.
- Providing Spiritual care
- Offering a listening ear
- The sharing of experience and thoughtful guidance in the family and working life of a minister
- Accountability and support around the CPD requirements

Awareness

It is important to be aware of the age and stage of the mentee and the specific issues that may need particular focus. Examples will include:

- Starting in a new pastorate.
- Family issues
- Health concerns – physical or mental (Stress, depression)
- Congregational tensions
- Leadership challenges
- Isolation
- Responsibilities in the wider denomination
- Tension among colleagues

It is important to remember that the role of the mentor is not to deal with, or provide solutions to, all the issues they may encounter, but rather to disciple, Support pray and, where appropriate, recognise the need for wider, more focused or specialist help.

Responsibilities

Presbytery

Each Presbytery should appoint a Mentoring Co-ordinator (MC) to take overall responsibility for ensuring that all ministers have a mentor (or coach) and understand what is involved. The MC should also be a member of the Presbytery Pastoral Team (PPT) as mentoring provision is part of the wider care package for ministers (see Care for Ministers policy document)

Mentors should be appointed with the following considerations in mind:

- Recognise and, where appropriate, make use of the strong relationships that already exist, between ministers within Presbytery.
- Where possible, ensure mentors live near enough to their mentees to actually make meeting face to face an easy option.
- A willingness on both parts to commit to making the relationship fruitful.

Mentor

A mentor is expected to:

- Read relevant documents and books that help develop mentoring gifts.
- In discussion with the MC, accept a mentoring role with a colleague.
- Invest in the relationship – be aware of developing the relationship around the themes of character, convictions and competence, and seek development in all of these areas.
- Agree to meet with mentee up to 6 times a year, recognising the need for flexibility, specific times of need, and personal sensitivities.
- Be flexible, and respond to emergencies, or hidden concerns that may unexpectedly become evident.
- Be aware of life events or new situations, opportunities or discouragements that a mentee might find challenging.
- Maintain a strict confidentiality
- Review progress at the end of year one – with mentee and MC.
- Be responsible for reviewing the CPD logbook of the mentee and forwarding details to the Board of Ministry

It is not envisaged that the mentoring relationship will be short term, and there is no specified length of relationship. This should be decided between the parties involved, bearing in mind, some will come to a natural conclusion, others might not work well or need freshened up with change.

A few helpful mentoring questions

Big Picture

What are the most important aims in ministry?

How are these aims guiding my regular ministry?

What primary means are needed to ensure you and your leadership are developing a healthy church

Goals

What are the primary goals as a church leader for the next year?

How do these goals reflect and address the needs of my congregation?

What obstacles do I need to overcome, with the leadership make progress with these goals?

What is your strategy in the next year to help you achieve these goals?

Character

What are the strengths of your ministry? Weaknesses?

What sins do you specifically struggle with?

Are you still finding delight and satisfaction in Christ – if not, why do you think that is?

How do you deal with failure?

What are the joys/challenges of married/family life?

How is your health?

How do you relax? (Do you take sufficient time off?)

Convictions

Where do you need to grow in your spiritual understanding?

What is your devotional life like? Prayer and the word.

What theological/pastoral/devotional books are you reading?

Do you have regular opportunities to meet up with unbelievers?

When did you last have the opportunity to share your faith outside of a church context?

Competence

Are there leadership issues you struggle with?

Discuss your preaching/pastoring – are you intentionally looking to develop in these areas? How?

How do you educate yourself on current moral, ethical or cultural issues?

How are your Kirk Session and Deacons Court meetings?

How do you delegate and use the gifts of others in the church?

Suggested books to read or use

Fresh Ideas for Discipleship & Nurture – leadership word

As Iron sharpens Iron by Howard & William Hendricks

The fine art of mentoring by Ted Engstrom

The Masterplan of Evangelism by Robert E Coleman

‘Topical Memory System – a comprehensive guide to Scripture memory and meditation’ – Navpress