

Getting Started

First Steps in Group Mentoring

“The pastor’s question is, ‘Who are these particular people, and how can I be with them in such a way that they can become what God is making them? My job is simply to be there, teaching, preaching Scripture as well as I can, and being honest with them, not doing anything to interfere with what the Spirit is shaping in them. Could God be doing something that I never thought of?’”

The Contemplative Pastor by Eugene Peterson

The First Meeting

Launching a New Group

Opening Worship

For many of your group members, this may be one of the few occasions that they themselves get to worship. This is also an opportunity to foster prayer practices or other spiritual disciplines. It is suggested that the facilitator be the most consistent worship leader. Think creatively and prepare intentionally for worship.

Brief Introductions

Participants take time to share their names, the setting where they serve and for how long and very briefly how they are doing physically, mentally, and/or spiritually. Agree upon a time frame up front. (e.g., each person share for 2 or 3 minutes. Time for longer introductions follows). Suggestions for ice breakers for the first meeting and other meetings are at the end.

Orientation and Creating a Covenant

The first meetings are an opportunity for each person to discuss what they hope and expect from this group and to create a group covenant. This is also an opportunity for the group to explore what it means to focus both on support and on learning. Questions to consider in creating a covenant and a sample covenant is below.

If possible, by the end of the second meeting, the group should review the covenant it has drafted and reach a common agreement. Having group members sign a written document underlines the commitment. On the basis of this covenant the group’s members can hold one another accountable to participation in the group.

Becoming a Group

Becoming a community of trust requires intentionality. Taking time for each person to tell something of his or her own story in ministry enables members to get to know and appreciate one another more fully, laying a foundation for collegial sharing and friendship.

Some groups have appreciated sharing the stories of their call to ministry. Others have invited members to choose a Scripture passage and explain how it informs their ministry.

By the second meeting, it is important that members also introduce the group to the settings where they serve. One facilitator urged the members of his group to present their congregations not “as a set of problems to be solved,” but as a community they have joined.

Preparing for the next meeting

Schedule the next meetings. We have discovered the groups that have the most consistent attendance establish a regular monthly meeting time, e.g., the first Thursday morning of each month, so that members can plan their lives accordingly.

Touch base on what will happen in the next meeting: continued introductions and developing the covenant, or identify a particular topic that the group members will explore together, or begin a practice of sharing case studies. Identify whose turn it will be.

Closing Evaluation and Prayer

Before closing ask, “What from this meeting do we want to be sure to continue in future meetings and what do we want to do differently?”

The facilitator offers a closing prayer or members may offer one another words of blessing.



Mentoring Group Covenant

Use this as a starting place for your group to define your shared expectations, values, and practices

Presence – We will attend each session in its entirety. We will thoughtfully, thoroughly, and prayerfully prepare. We will be attentive to our group and will use cell phones, laptops, etc. only to enhance participation. We will fully engage through sharing and listening. We will _____

Number/Format of meetings—We will meet _____ number of times. The primary meeting format will be (face to face, Skype, phone, etc.) _____

Participate with Hospitality – We will be welcoming and respectful to one another’s thoughts, feelings and beliefs. We will participate in conversations with honesty, passion, compassion and candidness. We will approach each session with the perspective that we have things to learn and things to share. We will practice mutuality in providing the physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual nourishment of group life. We will _____

Prayer – We will hold one another in prayer when together and apart. We will take the time to understand what is happening in one another’s lives. We will be open and flexible to the times when prayer is needed in the midst of our time together. We will _____

Practice Confidentiality – We understand that trust is vital for healthy community. We promise to hold one another’s sharings with great care. We will _____

We, the candidates, will not share any information outside the group. What is said in the group, stays in the group.

We, the mentors, understand that we do not have the same role. In addition to being a guide and a co-discerner, we also serve as a representative of the Church, and thereby, have a responsibility to God and the Church for who is ordained and licensed for pastoral ministry. We will not share details of a conversation or personal information without the candidate’s written permission and will work with the candidate to determine how information will best be shared. Only in cases that are reportable by law will we share without permission for the safety of the candidate or others.

Reviewing Covenant—We will review our covenant (monthly, quarterly, annually) _____
and be reminded of the commitments that we have made to each other. We will

Date: _____

Please make a copy of this Covenant for each member of the group.

Ice Breaker/Community Building

Suggestions for Group Formation

Introducing One Another

- Pair off to get to know your partner. Introduce your partner to the group. Focus on a favorite moment, as well as basic autobiographical information that is not related to ministry. Example: Describe a time during the last week when you felt particularly blessed by God? How are you encountering the Holy Spirit in your context right now? Where are you being challenged in this season of your life? What's something important that you want us to know about you?

Check-In from Next Element Consulting, copyright 2013

Allow people to choose when they contribute. Keep things brief and moving along. Check-ins are wonderful when they are sincere and brief. Don't allow someone to dominate. This check-in can be used each time you gather.

- *How are you doing* – Be brief, honest sharing about your state of being. Practice building trust by being open. Avoid lots of background detail.
- *One thing new and good* – Share with the group one thing that is both new and good that you experienced since last together. Keep it positive.
- *Special request* – Any special consideration for something that might distract you from your ability to fully participate?
- *Report out on homework, commitments, action steps* – Helps build accountability and follow-through
- *Self-care report* – What have you done since last meeting to take elegant care of you so that you are recharged and ready to serve?

Self-Awakening/Curious Questions/Icebreakers

- How would you share about your call in 5 minutes? (Possibly in pairs.)
- How would you explain the heart of your call in one minute?
- If you had 20 minutes to describe your call, what would you add?
- What are your hopes and expectations as you follow God's call in your life?
- If you were going to write a book about your journey, what is the title?