

Orientation to Ministry

Goals

- ✓ To introduce ministry candidates to group mentoring and to familiarize them with their district mentoring group peers and leaders.
- ✓ To explain the candidacy process and to answer candidates' questions about the process.
- ✓ To explain the ministry tracks of the United Methodist Church.
- ✓ To encourage candidates to begin to reflect on their callings and the influences that led them to pursue God's call to ministry.

ORIENTATION TO MINISTRY AGENDA

- 9:45-10 Gathering/connecting on Zoom
- 10am Welcome and Worship
- 10:30am Overview of Group Mentoring and Candidacy
- 11:00-11:15 – Short Break and Move to Breakout Groups (grab a snack)
- 11:15-12:30 Getting to know one another Breakout Groups
 - Basic Introductions and review the Covenant of Presence
 - Share the River of Life project they will have previously created.
 - Schedule for the following sessions
- 12:30-12:45 – Short Break and Move to Large Group
- 12:45-1:30 UMCares/Next Steps/dCOM
- 1:30-1:45 Closing Worship and Sending Forth

PRE-SUMMIT WORK

- Review the Christian as Minister Book (You should have read this with your Pastor)
- Read "Tips for first hearing another's story" (below)
 - Familiarize yourself with the Orientation to Ministry Website: www.nyac.com/orientationtoministry)

Watch the Call Story Videos

- Review Ministry Track Handouts
- Read the "Covenant of Presence" (Activity 1, details below)
- Create your River of Life (Activity 2, details below)

❖ If you do not already own a 2016 Book of Discipline you might consider purchasing one prior to beginning mentoring. We will be reading several sections, and it is available online for free, but not in a printable format.

“Tips for First Hearing of Another’s Story”

The Fund for Theological Education

- **Undivided Attention** Make eye contact with the storyteller and give him or her your full attention as if there was nothing else more important than listening to his/her story.
- **Holy Listening** Listen reverently as if you were in the presence of the Holy and witness the truth of this sacred story with no expectation of responding. Hold the space with your presence and receive the precious gift in this story.
- **Journaling** Journal after listening and consider: What feelings emerged as you shared your stories? Where did you identify with one another’s stories? How did this experience feel? What, if anything, might this experience suggest for you?
- **Follow Up Questions:**
 - The best questions are simple, brief and to the point.
 - Think of questions that you could not anticipate the answers to — questions that invite the storyteller into deeper self-reflection on his or her faith, gifts and sense of call.
 - Avoid asking questions with right or wrong answers. Instead, ask “how,” “what” or “why” questions. These questions focus inquiry, encourage reflection, touch a deeper meaning and generate curiosity.
 - Explore questions that invite images or metaphors because they can open things up in ways that more direct questions don’t.
 - Ask questions that help the storyteller to reflect on clarifying feelings, vivid images, passions, concerns, hopes and values as well as patterns and themes in his or her story.
 - Ask questions that help the storyteller explore his or her inner realities as well as the outward facts — what he or she loves, cares about or values.
 - Ask questions aimed at helping the storyteller remember the risks or challenges, choices and outcomes in their story.
 - Pace questions to allow some silence between the last answer and the next question. Questions that emerge too quickly often feel a little intrusive, cutting off the deep reflection that can help the storyteller.
 - Trust your intuition in asking questions. If you are not sure about a particular question, sit with it for a while and wait for clarity.
 - As you listen deeply to the storyteller, allow your questions to emerge from a place where your head and heart are open to the presence of the Holy.

Activity 1

John Wesley believed that covenant groups were vital and encouraged people to be actively engaged in a small group. The General Rules outlines his concept of those small groups and how they should function (<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/the-general-rules-of-the-methodist-church>). These groups provided an opportunity for spiritual growth and accountability. Your Mentoring Group will function like one of John Wesley's groups, in that you have both accountability and confidentiality, and you covenant to faithfully participate together.

Covenant of Presence

"A small circle of limited duration that is intentional about its process will have a deeper, more life-giving impact than a large, ongoing community that is shaped by the norms of conventional culture." —Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

Circle of Trust Touchstones for Safe and Trustworthy Space © Center for Courage & Renewal, founded by Parker J. Palmer. <http://www.couragerenewal.org/touchstones/>

- ***Give and receive welcome.*** People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.
- ***Be present as fully as possible.*** Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.
- ***What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.*** This is not a "share or die" event! Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.
- ***Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.*** Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a circle of trust does not mean interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.
- ***No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.*** This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.
- ***Learn to respond to others with honest, open questions.*** Do not respond with counsel or corrections. Using honest, open questions helps us "hear each other into deeper speech."
- ***When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.*** Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry. Ask yourself, "I wonder why they feel/think this way?" or "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?" Set aside judgment to listen to others—and to yourself—more deeply.
- ***Attend to your own inner teacher.*** We learn from others, of course. But as we explore poems, stories, questions and silence in a circle of trust, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, to your most important teacher.
- ***Trust and learn from the silence.*** Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.

- **Observe deep confidentiality.** Safety is built when we can trust that our words and stories will remain with the people with whom we choose to share, and are not repeated to others without our permission.
- **Know that it's possible** to leave the circle with whatever it was that you needed when you arrived, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.

Activity 2

River of Life: A Life Review Activity

Begin with a blank sheet of paper. Before you put anything on the paper, think briefly about the course of your whole life. If you were able to compare your life with a river, what would the river look like?

- When and where are the smooth, flowing waters – those times when events and relationships seem generally positive or there is a sense of ease about your life?
- When does the river take a sudden turn (and what caused the turn), change from smooth waters to rough, tumbling rapids or to an excited rush of water?
- Are there rocks or boulders falling into your river – unexpectedly landed there, changing its direction forever?
- Are there points at which it flows powerfully and purposefully or seems to slow to a trickle?

Instructions

Remember that no drawing can possibly capture all that shapes a person's journey. This is intended to be a beginning point for reflection and/or conversation, not a comprehensive depiction of your life!

A. Draw your river of life with its bends and turns, its smooth waters and rough spots, its strength/vitality, and its direction.

- Write in your approximate age, and/or dates, along the flow of your river.
- Identify on your drawing the various key “marker events” in your life – the boulders in the river, or places where the river changes course – that shape your story.
- If you were able to divide your life journey into sections, where would the section divisions occur? Give names to each of the sections of your life river.

B. Now think about the various people who have accompanied you along this river's journey.

- What relationships have been the most significant at different point in your life?
- Who has most shaped you?
- Have there been significant losses of relationship along the way?
- What groups or communities of people were most important?
- Record these key relationships and losses in the appropriate places on your river of life.
- *If you wish, you might also want to jot down some of the thoughts and feelings that go along with these relationships.*

C. As you look over the diagram of your life river, think about the different ways you have experienced and understood God across your life.

- Who or what was God to you at the different times depicted in your diagram?
- What caused you to feel closer to, or more distant from, God at these different times?
- What places or situations were encounters with the Sacred for you?
- Have you faced situations or experiences devoid of any sense of God/the Sacred?
- *Decide on a way to note these matters, with words and/or symbols, and place them into your river.*

D. In relation to your life's journey,

- Are there times of significant pain or suffering – yours or other's – that shape the flow of your life river?
- What has happened along the journey of your life that you associate with evil?
- *Add these elements to your river.*

E. Rivers do not exist in isolation but are always part of a larger ecology. So, too, is human life situated in a larger world.

- What was going on in the world – local, regional, and world events – that shaped the flow of your river?
- *Using words and/or symbols, place these events in the appropriate locations on your river.*

F. As you reflect on your river of life,

- What values, commitments, causes, or principles were most important to you at a given point in your life?
- Toward what goals, if any, were your primary energies directed – or, metaphorically speaking, what purposes and ends helped to shape the flow of life waters at a given time in your experience?
- *Note these on your river.*

Taking a Step Back

As you finish depicting your river of life, take a look over the whole diagram.

- Do its symbols and words seem to portray how you think and feel about the whole of your life?
- Is there some important element left out?
- *Make adjustments as needed.*