



Period of Discernment mentor training²⁰¹⁷

*listening, affirming and supporting
asking questions to clarify the issues and explore options*

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NRSV)

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.



Metaphors for mentoring

Questions for reflection – refer to the ‘tag cloud’ image on the cover page:

Which terms or metaphors for mentoring resonate for you?

Which metaphors jar, and why?

My experiences of mentoring

Briefly note & share your experience of mentoring, either as mentor or mentoree:



What makes a good mentor?

<i>A good mentor is ...</i>	<i>A good mentor does ...</i>
<i>A good mentor knows ...</i>	<i>A good mentor can ...</i>

Basic qualities of a mentor (Mallison, p. 64)

- Christ centred
- Passionate (about mentoring)
- Relational: develop rapport, actively listen, enjoy being with others, find ways to encourage
- Open and transparent
- Trusting and trustworthy
- Available
- Able to facilitate learning
- Competent/capable (in the area\ the mentoree wants to grow)
- Prayerful

Which of these presents the greatest challenge to you?

What are your areas of competency in life skills and/or ministry?

Share your challenges with one or two other people around you. What might you do to meet this challenge?

Main roles of a mentor (Mallison, p. 75)

- Discippler: practice the basics of Christian discipleship, and assist others to do so
- Spiritual guide: assist reflection on relationship to Christ, lifestyle, and care for others
- Coach: evaluate and enhance performance, help address barriers and blockages
- Counsellor: ask good questions, listen well, surface their own solutions, make referrals
- Teacher: assist formal learning (from resources) and informal learning (from experiences)
- Sponsor: introduce, network, recommend, endorse
- Pastor: serve, love, nourish, comfort, heal, encourage,
- Model: demonstrate in practice, not just words
- Encourager: find positive perspectives or outcomes, give hope

Which of these are you less comfortable with?

How might you exercise this role if the need arose? How would you know it was needed?

Discerning questions (Mallison, p. 124)

- Helpful questions to ask in mentoring sessions are open, not closed
- Reflective questions help to re-evaluate previous experiences, turn experience into learning
- Active listening involves setting the environment, body language, allowing the other to lead, giving feedback, responsive silence

Examples of open-ended reflective questions:

- *What makes you say that?*
- *Which of these presents the greatest challenge to you?*
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Components of an effective Period of Discernment:

1. **Mentor:** appointed by presbytery in consultation with participant
2. **Experience of ministry:** stretching beyond prior experiences, reflecting on gifts and service
3. **Biblical & theological study:** structured exploration and integration of theological foundations (and capacity to study at a tertiary or other appropriate level)
 - i. **Optional study in ministry & mission:** areas of interest and passion
4. **Spiritual formation:** growth in relationship with God, relational maturity and self-awareness
5. **Portfolio:** summary of activities and reflections for discerning conversations
 - i. **Journal:** reflections on challenges, questions,
 - ii. **Artistic creations:**

Responsibilities of the Mentor

The specific responsibilities of the mentor are to:

- guide the participant in developing a discernment plan;
- meet regularly with the participant (a minimum of two hours per month);
- monitor the implementation of the discernment plan;
- help the participant reflect theologically and integrate learning and ministry experiences;
- guide the participant in the development of their portfolio;
- keep the Presbytery informed about the progress of the participant throughout the Period of Discernment;
- notify the Presbytery that the participant is ready to present their portfolio, and engage with the participant and the Presbytery in the discernment of the ministry to which the participant feels called.

<http://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/446-period-of-discernment-guidelines#mentor>

We might also add ...

- Ensure the mentoree understands the Uniting Church expectations of leaders in the *Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice*, and the procedures around dealing with sexual misconduct or harassment – both for the management of appropriate boundaries within the mentoring relationship and in explorations and expressions of ministry.
When and how might this be discussed?

Do any of these responsibilities present a challenge for you?

How will you address any challenges which arise during your mentoring relationship?

Reflections from playing in role

What was most natural or comfortable? How might you build on these strengths?

What was most challenging or uncomfortable? What might you do about this?

What else did you observe?

Beginning well

What are the key things that will help you begin well?

- Meeting patterns & forms of prayer
- Topics & areas for focus
- Confidentiality, referrals
- Conversation with the local minister (if there is one)
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Concluding well

What are the key things that will help you conclude well?

- Coming to the end of a discernment plan
- 'Next steps' in discernment
- Portfolio presentation: supporter, advocate, ally or allay
- Cultural issues (e.g. shame) if discernment leads to 'deferral' or 'rejection'
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Resources for the Period of Discernment

The CTM website has links to various resources including the PoD information kit:

<http://ctm.uca.edu.au/layeducation/discernment/pod/>

'Your Resource for the Period of Discernment'

Presbyteries are encouraged to hold copies of ***"Your Resource for the Period of Discernment"***, a two-volume resource published by the Uniting Church Assembly. ***"Your Resource for the Period of Discernment"*** can be loaned to participants and mentors involved in the Period of Discernment, who may only need to borrow the resource for a couple of months.

Volume 1 includes some more detailed information about the same topics in the VicTas *Period of Discernment Information Kit*.

Volume 2 is now mostly available online, and includes a range of resource readings:

- [Guidelines for the period of discernment](#), Uniting Church Assembly (2008)
- [Report of the Task Group on the Review of Ministerial Education](#), Uniting Church Assembly (1997)
- [Code of ethics and ministry practice for Ministers in the Uniting Church in Australia](#), Uniting Church Assembly (2009)
- [Policy for dealing with a complaint of sexual misconduct](#) made against a member, adherent or volunteer of the Uniting Church in Australia and for providing a safe faith community, Uniting Church Assembly (1998)
- [Preparing a Personal Rule of Life](#), Rob Bos (1998)
- [Basis of Union](#) (1992 edition), Uniting Church Assembly (1992)
- [Ministry in the Uniting Church in Australia](#), Uniting Church National Assembly, 1991

Further resources for mentors^[# of copies held by Dalton McCaughey Library]

1. **Uniting Church VicTas PoD information kit and online resources** (including most of “Your Resource for the Period of Discernment”), see <http://ctm.uca.edu.au/lay-ministries/pod/>
2. **Uniting Church Assembly Period of Discernment information and guidelines:**
<http://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/446-period-of-discernment-guidelines>
3. **Uniting Church NSW.ACT Period of Discernment information:**
<http://ume.nswact.uca.org.au/period-of-discernment/>
4. **Uniting Church Queensland Period of Discernment information:**
<https://ucaqld.com.au/about-us/ministry-resources/period-of-discernment/>
5. **Uniting Church South Australia Period of Discernment information:**
<http://www.unitingcollege.org.au/study-pathways/courses/uniting-church-courses#periodofdiscernment>
6. **Uniting Church Western Australia Period of Discernment information:**
<http://unitingchurchwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/2014-Period-of-Discernment-booklet.pdf>
7. **John Mallison’s book Mentoring to develop disciples and leaders** (Scripture Union/OpenBook, 1998)^[1], esp. chapter 5, ‘Tools and Skills For Mentoring’. See his website for a rich list of resources: <http://www.johnmallison.com/mentoring.htm>
8. Cheryl Lawrie’s short booklets Me, a Mentor and The Ministry of Mentor (JBCE/Uniting Education, 1998)^[1, 1]
9. Farnham, Gill, McLean and Ward, Listening Hearts, Discerning Call in Community (Morehouse Publishing, 1999)
10. Keith R Anderson & Randy D Reese, Spiritual Mentoring, including Appendix One, ‘Clinton’s Mentoring Types’ from J. Robert Clinton (InterVarsity Press, 1999)
11. Edward C Sellner, Mentoring, The Ministry of Spiritual Kinship (Cowley, 2002)
12. Thomas H Green SJ, Weeds Among the Wheat, Discernment: Where Prayer & Action Meet (Ave Maria Press, 1998)^[3]
13. Ernest Larkin, Silent Presence: Discernment as Process and Problem (Dimension Books, 1981)^[1]
14. Tad Dunne, Spiritual mentoring: guiding people through spiritual exercises to life decisions (HarperSanFrancisco, 1991)^[1]
15. Sharon Daloz Parks, Big questions, worthy dreams: mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith (Jossey-Bass, 2000)^[1]
16. Susan Ford Wiltshire, Athena's disguises: mentors in everyday life (Westminster John Knox Press, 1998)^[1]
17. Paul C. Blacker, Spirituality and Mentoring [manuscript for Master of Ministry, 2002]^[1]
18. Search Institute’s Mentoring Resources: <http://www.searchinstitute.org/category/s/183.htm>
19. Faith Formation Learning Exchange (USA): <http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/>
20. National Mentoring Partnership (USA): <http://www.mentoring.org/>
 - a. Elements of Effective Mentoring, Fourth Edition: <http://www.mentoring.org/program-resources/elements-of-effective-practice-for-mentoring/>
 - b. National Mentoring Resource Center report on the research-based evidence behind each of the Standards found in the Elements:
<http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php/what-works-in-mentoring/elements-of-effective-practice-for-mentoring.html>