I. Guidelines for Mentors of Discerners/Licensed Ministers

Background

The Pacific Southwest District has an ongoing concern for leaders in ministry. Continuing in the tradition of calling people to ministry and providing counsel for them the PSWD has for many years had a mentoring program. Mentors are usually experienced ministers who are serving or have served as pastors of congregations. The mentoring relationship duties with the licensee ends if and when the licensee is commissioned or ordained. However the mentoring relationship can continue, and in fact is encouraged beyond commissioning or ordination if the relationship with the mentor is a helpful one and if both parties agree for it to continue.

The 2014 Ministerial Leadership paper of the Church of the Brethren has picked up on this practice and now expects all licensed ministers throughout the denomination to have a mentor, and to be part of a calling cohort. This revision of the 2009 paper seeks to bring PSWD understandings in line with the 2014 denominational paper.

Mentoring is not a new concept. Apprentice work provides a precedent that goes back hundreds of centuries. Mentoring a person who has been newly called to the ministry is not only teaching the content of the craft and helping the person become equipped for the task, it also entails helping the person evaluate his or her call and discovering how that call is to be carried out. The mentor will “walk with,” tutor, listen to, counsel, and share experiences with the licentiate. Mentoring is a relationship of learning, growing, and caring.

Qualifications – The mentor shall:

1. Be an ordained minister of the Church of the Brethren with at least five years of ministry experience. Exceptions to this are on a case to case basis.
2. Be a person who is mature, spiritually committed, and consecrated to Christian living in the home, church, and community.
3. Be a person who demonstrates a strong commitment to the ideals, polity, and program of the Church of the Brethren.
4. Have the ability to exercise mature judgment and to offer guidance and counsel.

Functions – The mentor shall:

1. Function as the lead member of the calling cohort for the discerner/licensed minister. While the discerner/licensee is responsible for initiating the at least quarterly meetings of the calling cohort, the mentor will provide appropriate encouragement and support for the meetings to take place.
2. Be on call to give requested counsel to the discerner/licensed minister when issues may arise in the course of ministry or the licensee’s educational preparation for ministry.

3. Continually check with the discerner/licensee on the status of the latter’s call and how the response to that call is progressing. The mentor may provide resources or information that will help the licensee understand the implications of a call to ministry.

4. Support the growth and disposition of the discerner/licensee
   a. Through regular prayer
   b. With notes, calls, meetings for encouragement
   c. By being a trusted friend who is able to keep confidences

5. Be accountable to the Ministry Commission of the PSWD and on behalf of the calling cohort, and if the discerner becomes a licensed minister make report from the calling cohort to the Nurturing and Credentialing Committee yearly. This yearly report will be an evaluation of the licensee’s progress in preparation for ministry.

6. Notify the District Executive Minister or the chair of the Ministry Commission if the relationship to the discerner/licensed minister is not satisfactory.

7. Encourage the licensed minister’s congregation to support and utilize the gifts of the licensee.

**District’s Responsibility to Mentors**

The District, through the Ministry Commission shall:

1. Appoint a mentor for a person who expresses a sense of calling to the set-apart ministry to serve as the district representative on the individual discerner’s calling cohort. This will begin a time of exploring call and discernment for calling, education, and direction of future ministry.

2. Provide a briefing session for each mentor regarding his/her functions and any pertinent background information about the individual discerner matched with the mentor. Further orientation will take place to responsibilities if the discerner becomes a licensed minister.

3. Be sensitive to the demands of the mentor role and express appropriate and periodic appreciation to those who serve as mentors.

4. Send to the mentor annual report forms and copies of other materials that go from the District Office to the licensed minister.

5. At the time the discerner indicates an interest in exploring ministry the Ministry Commission should introduce the calling cohort program and the role of the district appointed mentor, discuss its value and how the discerner could relate effectively to a mentor and the cohort. Further orientation will take place to responsibilities if the discerner becomes a licensed minister.

6. Have a member of the Ministry Commission who will give attention to the mentor program and processes.
II. Guidelines for Discerners/Licensed Ministers

The discerner/licensed minister shall:

1. Take the initiative to contact your mentor and calling cohort to arrange regular meetings.

2. Cooperate with the mentor in establishing successive contacts, including at least four calling cohort meeting times per calendar year.

3. Engage in studies appropriate for training in ministry in programs approved by or provided by the district.

4. Attend District Conference and other district events related to the growth and functions of the ministry.

5. Maintain a close relationship with the congregation in which he or she has been licensed and is a member.

6. Respond to invitations from his/her home congregation to participate in worship leadership and such other opportunities as may prepare him/her for ministry.

7. Update the Covenant of Accountability annually indicating your ministry plan with goals for preparation and practice of ministry and discuss the plan regularly with the mentor/calling cohort. After consultation about the plan with the mentor/calling cohort, the plan shall be submitted to the Nurturing and Credentialing Committee for review and for inclusion in the licensee’s ministry file.

8. Be a subscriber and regular reader of Messenger and other related Church of the Brethren publications.

9. Complete and return promptly the annual report form sent by the Ministry Commission or the Nurturing and Credentialing Committee.

10. Attend any meetings scheduled by the district for licensed ministers.

The District Shall:

1. Establish an active contact with the individual discerner by appointing a mentor immediately upon an individual’s expression of interest in exploring the call to ministry.

2. Provide for each applicant for licensing the two denominational ministry documents, Ministerial Leadership and Ethics in Ministry. Present as a gift to persons at the time of their licensing the minister’s manual, For All Who Minister.

3. Make financial assistance accessible, as available, for the licensed minister to pursue a district-approved educational path toward ministry.

4. Maintain a file on each licensed minister which should be passed to the new district should the licensee change official residence.

5. Provide for an appropriate service of licensing in the licensee’s home church when the licensing is approved.
6. Arrange for the Nurturing and Credentialing Committee to meet at least with the licensed minister at least once every three years for a face to face checkin (this may happen in person or via video conference).

The congregation shall:

1. Encourage individuals to explore the possibility of set-apart ministry in the church. Should a member express interest in exploring ministry help them contact the District Ministry Commission to begin the process of discernment, and be ready to appoint a member of the congregation to serve as their representative on the calling cohort.

2. Plan for the licensing service to be at a time when a large portion of the congregation can attend.

3. Provide ample opportunity for the licensed minister to participate in a wide variety of meaningful congregational activities, such as occasional preaching, leading worship, assisting in major services such as Love Feast, anointings, etc.

4. Give encouragement to the discerner and eventual licensee to achieve an adequate education for the set-apart ministry.

5. Be alert to the financial needs of the licensed minister in achieving educational goals and establish funds that could be available as grants or loans.

6. Provide at least annually for the licensee to attend an executive committee meeting or a meeting of the Ministry Commission for mutual sharing and dialogue.

7. Take action annually to recertify the call of the individual to be a licensed minister.