

SPIRITUAL GROWTH MENTOR/MENTOR COUPLE while under care of Pittsburgh  
Presbytery  
Commission on Preparation for Ministry  
Pittsburgh Presbytery

Greetings,

Preparation for ministry is, in many respects, a lifelong process; however, you are currently in the midst of a period of *concentrated* preparation. The Commission on Preparation for Ministry recognizes you face significant practical, academic, and ecclesiastical challenges, some of which are imposed by the Book of Order and administered by our commission. We do take seriously our responsibility to examine, shape, and with Presbytery, confirm your call to ministry. Because of this official role, you might be inclined to think of us simply as agents of Presbyterian decency and order, concerned more with law than with spirit. But our official function does not override our concern for your spiritual growth with God and in the practical aspects of ministry. In fact, we pray that the pressures of other preparation requirements will not dampen or deter your spiritual growth in its fullness.

A vital spirituality was probably an important factor when you began to consider professional ministry as a vocation. May that spiritual foundation be enhanced through this time of preparation. An effective ministry demands a spiritual life with depth and vigor. Paul reminded the Roman Christians (chapter 7, verse 6) that we serve "in the new life of the Spirit." And we encourage you to make spiritual growth a continuing priority.

Specifically, we are asking you to do *three* things:

1. Select and ask someone to serve as your spiritual growth mentor (*and* spiritual growth mentoring couple if married). Seek someone who will be objective and who will safeguard confidentiality, perhaps the person who inspired you to enter the ministry, a member of the seminary staff, or a trusted colleague in ministry whom you perceive to be markedly further along in their spiritual journey. The commission can suggest possible spiritual growth mentors that would be helpful to you. These persons are known by the commission to be capable, objective and committed to the spiritual growth of church leaders.
2. When you have found the person who agrees to be your spiritual growth mentor, please let us know. We will send them a letter explaining the program and our expectations. It is important that your relationship with a spiritual growth mentor be open, trusting and fruitful. Your conversations will be confidential. Your mentor will not be asked to report to the commission. The forms for your Annual Consultation (and the consultation itself) will afford you an opportunity to evaluate and report to your Care Team your progress in the area of spirituality.
3. Do reading and reflecting upon spiritual growth. We hope this will help you cultivate spiritual growth disciplines and habits that you will carry into a life of ministry.

Is this "just something else" you are being asked to do in the gauntlet of preparation? No, because your spiritual growth as a person with God and in the practical aspects of ministry is a key part of preparation for ministry. And you will likely be the greatest beneficiary of attention to growth "in the life of the Spirit." You may expect a solid spiritual life:

- to contribute to psychological and emotional well-being,
- to enhance your closest and most demanding relationships (such as with a spouse or with children),
- to assist you in ordering life goals and values,
- to lead to the healthy integration of your personal and professional life,

- to equip you for a leadership role: strengthening you for the task of building up other individuals and building the community in which you serve,
- to yield insights and encouragement for your own efforts to promote healing, wholeness, peace, and abundant life.

Furthermore, many have argued convincingly that a well-developed spiritual life will have practical benefits in time management and conflict management as well as preaching and teaching. In short, the antennae you erect for receiving God's grace and guidance may become also the instruments for broadcasting the "good news." The disciplines and fruit of your spiritual life will be felt throughout the Church for decades to come.

May your time of preparation be exciting, rewarding, and full of the Spirit of God! If you have any questions, please contact your Care Team.