

Section 6

Pastor/Mentor Guidelines and Information

A Guide to Pastoral Supervision
Pastor/Mentor Training

Pastor/Mentors should expect to receive downloaded copies of forms from their seminarians in a timely manner. These forms should be completed by the Pastor/Mentor and submitted by the seminarian to the student's TFE Seminar Leader or the Supervised Ministries Office by their due dates. All forms are available online: <https://www.palmerseminary.edu/student-life/supervised-ministries/theological-field-education>

A Guide to Pastoral Supervision

Welcome

Welcome new and returning Pastor/Mentors to Palmer Seminary's Theological Field Education (TFE) program! We are delighted that you have agreed to partner with Palmer Theological Seminary in the educational experience of preparing men and women for Christian ministry. It is our desire that your experience and that of your ministry constituency will be one in which you feel the joy of helping raise up leaders for the church, its agencies and institutions. Further, it is our hope that your experience with the TFE program will confirm your own sense of call and renew your enthusiasm for your leadership role in the Church of Jesus Christ.

Theological Field Education is the place in the seminary curriculum where academic theory is tested and tried. It is the place where students can be challenged to not only teach and preach their theology, but live it. It is the place where students can develop their gifts, discern their calling, and have the opportunity to be the Body of Christ in the world.

Theological Field Education is an opportunity to develop a relationship with a colleague of the future. We commend you to the educational task, believing you will be enriched by the experience.

For your fuller understanding of the expectations of TFE, we ask you to read the departmental policies in **Section 1** of this handbook. Section 1 includes:

- Selected academic policies of Palmer Theological Seminary
- The TFE Code of Ethics (repeated in this section)
- Policies about ministry site confirmation, Home Church Policy, Supervisory Personnel, and Full Disclosure
- Tips for finding a Pastor/Mentor and a TFE Site is found in Section 5

If you have any questions, please be in touch with the SMO. Again welcome to TFE at Palmer Seminary. May your experience be a blessing to you and for God's work among us.

Purpose

The supervisory relationship is an essential component of the internship. Meeting weekly for guidance, consultation and support, the Seminarian and the Pastor/Mentor develop a relationship of trust and accountability. In this relationship of teaching and learning, both seminarian and Pastor/Mentor become open to new understandings from each other. While the Pastor/Mentor functions as an experienced mentor and guide, the seminarian takes responsibility for her or his own growth.

The Supervisory Relationship

Effective supervision occurs in an interdependent relationship between the seminarian, the church or agency, and the Pastor/Mentor. Unlike the traditional authoritarian model of learning in which the teacher assumes primary responsibility for education, pastoral internships are opportunities for students to claim responsibility for their learning. The philosophy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire

illuminates the possibilities for growth through conscientization or problem -posing education. Hierarchical patterns of learning are replaced with dialogue and interactions of shared responsibility. Moving from dependence on the teacher, the student learns to engage in an interdependent relationship with the teacher in inquiry and mutual learning.

Describing effective supervision, teachers of supervision in psychotherapy, Rudolf Ekstein and Robert Wallerstein observe that “beyond their secure skill which they teach and beyond a need to proselytize, (supervisors) are capable of offering real choices to their students on the road toward mature professional self-actualization.” Competent supervisors are able to “identify fully with the process of teaching itself" rather than over-identifying with their students or pastoral interns. Pastoral interns are not viewed by their supervisors as "extensions of themselves." When supervisors are “eternal learners,” they help their interns “identify with their activity and their own process of constant growth” (Ekstein, R. and R.S. Wallerstein, *The Teaching and Learning of Psychotherapy*, Basic Books, NY, 1958, p. 80)

Acceptance is vital to the Theological Field Education environment. When seminarians are able to accept who they are personally and professionally, experiencing the accepting presence of the Pastor/Mentor and the laity, they are enabled to face who God is calling them to be. In an environment in which strengths can be recognized and anxiety and weakness can be faced, seminarians learn “how their being affects their capacity to embody loving acts toward others,” and to more fully “embrace the power of knowing that we are authentic sons and daughters of God” (Edgerton, W. Dow).

While pastoral supervision is accepting, it is not passive or permissive. As TFE Professor Lynn Rhodes points out, Pastor/Mentors “need to be straight forward about not being ‘therapist,’ ‘father,’ or ‘mother’ figure.” Seeking to “model adult relationships with a colleague,” Pastor/Mentors need to be honest about their own reactions and experiences. Since the Pastor/Mentor and congregation have covenanted to attend to the Seminarian's vocational development, they offer their skills and backgrounds, not because they can assume that they know more, but “because (they) listen with care, ask questions that open up new possibilities, and offer (their) experiences as they relate to (the Seminarian's) work and experiences.” Vital to the development of a ministry of mutuality and justice is learning the art of “attentive partnership” (Rhodes, Lynn “Supervision of Women in Parish Contexts” in *Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry*, Vol. 10, 1998. p. 206-7).

The process of self-examination is not limited to the seminarian. As the Pastor/Mentor and church/agency face their strengths and weaknesses within the context of faith, they learn to experience the depth of their lives and understand how to help others to embark on this journey. As a Pastor/Mentor shares, “the journey inward always leads outward into becoming more effective midwives for persons and their relationships to themselves, others, and God, so that we participate in the process of moving from alienation to reconciliation” (Edgerton, W. Dow).

Code of Ethics

It is expected that all the participants in TFE (seminarian, Pastor/Mentor, Site Team, Supervised Ministries' staff and TFE faculty) be committed to the standards of ethics of the Christian church, which promotes the dignity and worth of all persons. We are accountable for our ministry as expressed in relationship to parishioners, clients, members of the community, seminarians,

Pastor/Mentors, churches, agencies, and the seminary. Commitment to the following standards is expected in TFE internships.

- **Avoid discrimination** against or refusing pastoral assistance or educational opportunity to anyone on the basis of race, gender, religion, national origin, age or physical attributes
- **Do not engage** in any forms of harassment, abusive words, or actions, or exploitative coercion
- **In this context**, all forms of sexual behavior or harassment by Pastor/Mentor, seminarian, or parishioner/client are unethical, even when a parishioner or client invites or consents to such behavior. Sexual behavior includes, but is not limited to, seductive speech, gestures and behavior, and physical contact of a sexual nature. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, comments, gestures or physical contacts of a sexual nature
- **Confidentiality** of the parishioner, client, and seminarian is expected. Records are to be kept in a manner that assures security. Communication from Seminarian, parishioners and Pastor/Mentor are treated with professional confidence. Confidences are not disclosed except:
 - as mandated by law
 - to prevent a clear and immediate danger to someone
 - for purposes of supervision or consultation, or
 - by previously obtained written permission.
- **Pastor/Mentors**, Supervised Ministries' staff and TFE faculty do not engage in ongoing psychological counseling with Supervised Ministries' students
- **Seminarians** engage in ministry appropriate to their level of training and within the boundaries of their serving/learning covenants. They are not to engage in professional services beyond their training, level of experience and competence

Note: Seminarians are also responsible to uphold Conduct and Standards expectations as set forth in the PTS Student Handbook. Charges of violation of these ethical standards are to be reported to the Administrative Leadership Team, or the Director of Supervised Ministries. In the case of charges filed against the Director, they are to be reported to the Dean of Palmer Theological Seminary for evaluation.

Method of Supervision

Covenant

The seminarian, Pastor/Mentor and laity need to clearly communicate their goals of ministry. When Seminarians are enabled to appropriately formulate objectives and to evaluate their effectiveness in fulfilling their covenants, growth in developing readiness for ministry is facilitated. When there is lack of clarity and accountability in the negotiating and fulfilling of covenants, disruption and conflict in the process of learning and service often occur. Working on effective communication is important for the internship and the development of pastoral skills.

Responsibilities

The **Pastor/Mentor** agrees to:

- permit free expression of feelings without fear of reprisal;
- support seminarian during periods of discouragement;
- respond to seminarian's needs, while encouraging autonomy;
- stimulate further efforts at learning through interest in and recognition of what the seminarian does well;
- respect seminarian's boundaries;
- follow the norms of pastoral ethics
- name appropriate persons to the Site Team, if “on-site” with Team (see Site Team Information)
- encourage regular Site Team meeting, if “on-site” with Team
- work with the Site Team for appropriate closure and recognition of seminarian when the term of ministry is completed, if “on-site” with Team.
- The “Off-Site” Mentor agrees to meet with the Site Team to be clear of their availability in case there is need.

The **Seminarian** agrees to:

- fulfill covenant goals;
- be self-evaluative;
- seek consultation while growing in self-reliance;
- be supportive of the Pastor/Mentor's ministry;
- respect the Pastor/Mentor's boundaries;
- respect the values and traditions of the internship site;
- follow the norms of pastoral ethics.

Supervisory Conference

Setting regular, weekly conferences in a relaxed atmosphere that is free from interruptions facilitates the development of an effective learning and serving relationship. Structuring one-hour conferences, the seminarian and Pastor/Mentor address issues reported by the student. The Seminarian submits a brief report of a current experience or ministry issue in advance of the conference. This process encourages selective reflection upon one's ministry and informs agenda-setting for the conference. During the conference attention is given to the socio-emotional and task dimensions of the interactions. The relationship is facilitated by the responsiveness of both the Pastor/Mentor and seminarian, as they respect others' feelings, needs, concerns and perspectives.

Off-Site Mentors may make additional arrangements for communication and supervision with the student, including the use of technology. Each semester, the Off-Site Mentor shall meet face to face at least once with the seminarian and observe the seminarian in ministry performance.

Process of Supervision

- **Facts:** Seek clarification of what is unclear or unstated in report on ministry experience.
- **Feelings:** Identify the affective responses of both the receivers and givers of ministry.
- **Focus:** Explore the relationship between the insights from ministry experiences and the learnings from theological education.
- **Fantasy:** Identify ways to respond, given the limits of persons and situations.
- **Faith:** How does faith inform the Seminarian's ministry experience; and how does the experience inform his/her faith?

After supervisory conferences, the seminarian follows through on commitments and the Pastor/Mentor follows up on the results.

Assessment

Questions to ask in evaluating the process of supervision include:

- Are supervisory conferences providing educational experiences for professional growth and development?
- Is the setting relaxed, private and long enough?
- Was the preparation adequate?
- Is an appropriate supervisory relationship developing?
- Are the affective concerns as well as the facts addressed?
- Is there a consistent focus on the Seminarian's needs, rather than the Pastor/Mentor's needs?
- Did Pastor/Mentor and Seminarian listen to one another carefully; were helpful and supportive comments offered?
- Were areas for growth and action plans identified?
- Are boundaries of supervision being respected?

What other values have you identified for supervision that you want to discuss as you begin the supervisory relationship, and as you evaluate the process?

Note: See also Pastor/Mentor Assessment Forms included in Section 3. They can be downloaded in useable form from our website. See instructions and web address at the beginning of the section.

Retention of Student Records

The SMO maintains TFE records for four years following of the most recently completed Supervised Ministries course. Due to the limited nature of the retention of student records, we recommend that students maintain files of their TFE materials.

In light of the fact that judicatories and denominations may ask for recommendations based on these records, you as the Pastor/Mentor may want to consider writing a generic reference for your pastoral intern. The generic reference might include observations on the growth of the seminarian over the year under your care in TFE, his/her strengths, character traits, and what you observe of his/her professional gifts at this point in her/his journey. The generic reference may be given to the pastoral intern to keep in his/her TFE file.

Pastor/Mentor Training

Supervision is a crucial component in the preparation and continuing education of women and men for ministry. In its most basic sense it is the teaching and learning of ministry. Richard A. Bollinger of the Menninger Foundation said, pastoral supervision is an educational process in which a Pastor/Mentor and a seminarian/pastor agree to organize their relationship in a given setting of ministry in such a way as to effect changes in the seminarian as he/she does the work of ministry.

He stated three key elements of any supervisory relationship as **educational, self-reflective, and relational**. A good Pastor/Mentor must be a **reflective person**, a **confrontational** as well as **supportive person**, an **honest person**, a **differentiated person**, and a **person willing to learn from mistakes and experiences**.

Palmer Theological Seminary has designed a certification course for Pastor/Mentor and leaders. The course is entitled TFE 700 - The Ministry of Supervision which involves at least 6 contact hours earning 0.6 CEU's. All participating Pastor/Mentors are required to complete this course within the academic year in which they begin service.

After successful completion of TFE 700 you are recognized as a certified Pastor/Mentor. To maintain your certification status, you must attend the annual joint class meeting with TFE Seminar Leaders and your students during each of the years you provide supervision.

The cost of the certification course is \$50.00 (2020-21), which includes a textbook, printed materials, and lunch. We recognize the commitment our Pastor/Mentors make both in sharing their time and substance as they attend the training. Those who wish to mentor, but are unable to pay the fee, are asked to be in contact with the office.

Upon completion of this course you are entitled to:

- Enjoy library privileges during the year in which you have a Palmer Seminary TFE student
- Have your name listed as a certified supervisor in Palmer Theological Seminary publications, as available

Thank You

Palmer Theological Seminary is very grateful to the persons serving as Pastor/Mentors. The Supervised Ministries Office seeks to serve Pastor/Mentors by providing training opportunities and by conferring with Pastor/Mentors upon request in person or by phone (484-384-2950) about any matters of concern. Thank you for your essential role in the education of students in training for ministry.

