

DIACONAL MENTORING SESSIONS

SOCIAL MINISTRY YEAR

INTRODUCTORY SESSION FOR PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME

Session 1: Getting Acquainted

1. Introduce yourselves; talk about the ways in which you have been involved in the life of the church and what gives you energy and hope in this work. Reflect on how it feels to be part of/connected with the Centre for Christian Studies Program.
2. Decide when, where, how often you will meet and discuss a format for your meetings. Determine the focus for your next meeting. Set up an agreement or covenant that will guide your work.
3. What does the word “mentor” mean to each of you? How does your past experience influence the expectations that you bring to the role?
4. Discuss what you mean by the word “reflection.” What do you understand “theological reflection” to mean to each of you? How are these words related?

In order to generate discussion you may want to consider these interpretations:

Reflection: taking time to think back over experience, interpret what happened, compare it to the theories you know, identify learnings.

Theological Reflection: making meaning, relating issues or events to your understanding of God or life’s purpose, identifying what gives life, finding God’s presence or finding our role in acting with God; “Faith seeking understanding”(St. Anselm).

Questions could include:

- Who are we?: the nature of humanity (theological anthropology, sin, evil, place in creation, image of God, etc.)
- What is our task?: our vocation (missiology (nature of mission), ecclesiology (role of the church), eschatology (understanding of the realm of God), ministry, etc.)

REGULAR SESSIONS RELATED TO SOCIAL MINISTRY THEME

While we have suggested an order for these sessions, please determine what approach will work most effectively in your context. From time to time, you may want to focus on a particular session that addresses an issue that has emerged in the field placement. Re-arranging the order of the sessions will not be detrimental to the process. Please do not feel limited by the resources; they are offered to support the mentoring process.

Session 1: Sharing Learning Goals

1. Discuss the student’s goals for the field placement. (These will have been determined in consultation with the learning facilitator for the placement.)
2. Work together to determine your goals, as student and mentor, for the mentoring process. The guidelines for writing learning goals (provided in the CCS “Student Kit” available on the CCS website) may be helpful in this work. The goals for the mentor need to be related to the role of the mentor and to fostering the mentoring relationship. The mentor may have some learning goals of her/his own related to ministry that may be appropriate to share with the student.
3. Talk together about the student’s overall goals for the CCS ministry preparation program.
4. Explore more thoroughly the student’s hopes and fears related to this social ministry field placement.

Session 2: Faith Life Journey Related to Social Ministry

You will need to do some preparation for this session. You may want to draw a graph or a map or various symbols of your life experience in relation to a variety of social experiences (people with whom you have worked, places you have visited, experiences of marginalization you have had either personally or learned about from someone you know, experiences of other cultures and faith traditions over the years). You might also consider bringing pictures or symbols that relate to significant times of feeling God's presence or sensing God's absence in these experiences.

1. Try to create an atmosphere that is relaxed and comfortable. Allow a generous amount of time for each of you to tell the story of your faith from a social ministry perspective. Include reflections on the values and assumptions that were part of your childhood ethos and on how your values have changed since then. In what ways has your faith influenced these values over the years? What images of God have been strongest for you at different points in your life? How have your life experiences shaped your faith?
2. Share these experiences and identify the gifts and dilemmas these stories present for you.

Session 3: Biblical Images of Social Ministry and Diakonia

[Note: Mentors can get copies of the suggested readings from the students. Articles are included with their course readings, in a file called "Diaconal Mentoring Sessions".]

Exodus

(Using Warrior, Robert A. (R. S. Sugirtharajah ed). "Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians". *Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, and Ekblad, Bob. "Encountering God in Exodus and at Today's Margins". *Reading the Bible with the Damned*, 93-111.)

These two articles take very different points of view of the Exodus story.

1. What images and ideas stood out for you in these articles?
2. How do these authors contribute to your understanding of social ministry?
3. How does this reading influence your understanding of the diaconate?

Prophets

(Using Brueggemann, Walter. "Every City A Holy City: The Holy City in Jeopardy". *Disruptive Grace: Reflections on God, Scripture, and the Church*, 99-111.)

In this article, Walter Brueggeman discusses the themes from the three prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.

1. What images and ideas stood out for you in this article?
2. How does the social location of each of these prophets affect their message?
3. How does your social location affect you and your understanding of the diaconate?

Other Scriptural Connections

1. What other bible passages and/or stories inform your understanding of social ministry?
2. What other bible passages and/or stories inform your understanding of diaconal ministry?

Session 4: Exploration of Gifts for Social Ministry

(using Anne Bishop, *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People* "Step 5: Becoming an Ally" pages 109-122)

1. Begin the session by sharing some of the ideas and phrases that were significant for you from this chapter.
2. Which of the "how to"s stood out for you?
3. Identify some of the "gifts" you embody in the work of being an ally.
4. Identify some of the challenges.
5. How do you see yourself becoming an ally in your current field placement or place of ministry?

Session 5: The Place of Social Ministry in the Diaconate

(using the CCS Justice Stance Statement, Excerpts from the Service for The Ordination of a Deacon, Book of Alternative Services, Anglican Church of Canada, and Statement of Vision Diakonia of The United Church of Canada)

1. What ideas and phrases from these readings reflect your own understanding of social ministry?
2. What ideas and phrases challenge your understanding?
3. What in your minds is the place of social ministry in the church? The place of social ministry in the world?
4. Spend some time drafting a statement about social ministry that reflects your conversation.

Session 6: International Connections

(using the Justice and Diakonia, Just and Inclusive Communities, and Mission and Evangelism programmes of the World Council of Churches “Theological Perspectives on Diakonia in the Twenty First Century”)

1. Begin this session by sharing your response to the theological perspectives in this statement.
2. Discuss the first section, “Church, Mission and Diakonia.” How has the church’s history of mission impact your understanding of mission?
3. Discuss the second section, “The Diakonia of the Marginalised People.” How has your field placement/ministry setting influenced your understanding of marginalization?
4. Discuss the third section, “Diakonia for Transformation.” Where have you experienced transformation in your life? Your field placement/ministry setting?
5. Discuss the fourth section, “Challenges and Opportunities.” Where do you see challenges in your congregational settings? Denominationally? Internationally? Where do you see opportunities?

Final session of closure for the year

This session might be a part of the previous session or could be a special session of sharing time together over a meal as you debrief from the year’s experience of your time together as mentor and student

1. What have been some of the appreciations of your time together this past year?
2. What might you like to see done differently another year both in terms of
 - a. the actual session together?
 - b. the resource and outline for the sessions?
3. What have been some of your learning this past year in terms of
 - a. working together?
 - b. the work of social ministry?
4. What would be the advantages of continuing to work together for the coming year? The disadvantages?