

Ninety Day Companion

Background

The first ninety days or “start-up” is crucial for the new pastor. Past participants in leadership training programs have reported feeling “overwhelmed”, “inundated”, and “lost”. This seems to be the general experience regardless of whether a person is joining the presbytery to serve their first call or an experienced pastor moving to a new church. The purpose of the Ninety Day Companion is to provide the new pastor with a close pastor colleague relationship where questions can be asked and anxieties shared. All pastors new to the presbytery will be assigned a Ninety Day Companion. Upon request, other pastors will be assigned a Ninety Day Companion. The ninety-day period begins as soon as the person begins their call and concludes ninety days later. It is designed to assist with the period that includes their installation and initial orientation to the church. The companion serves as a resource for information and contact for the new pastor.

Selection of Companions:

Ninety Day Companions will be identified by the Committee on Ministry based on proven effectiveness in the role and their willingness to make the ninety-day relationship one of the priorities of their ministry during the assigned time. Companions will be recruited to represent the wide variety of congregation size, racial ethnic composition and staff position description. Companions are considered volunteers and will not receive a stipend. They will be asked to attend a presbytery annual gathering of companions. Every effort will be made to match the new church pastor with a Ninety Day Companion serving in a similar ministry setting.

Ideal Characteristics of a Companion

- Calm presence
- Able to see and celebrate gifts and strengths of the new pastor
- Proactive and reliable
- Understands the breadth of the church and the work of the presbytery
- Well differentiated
- Enjoys his or her ministry
- Demonstrates collegiality
- Minimum of 3 years service as a pastor
- Well versed in Presbytery and General Assembly dynamics and resources
- Knowledgeable of presbytery colleagues

Companion Duties

The Ninety Day Companion agrees to initiate at least weekly contact with the new pastor and to pray for their ministry daily.

Topics for Discussion Might Include:

- Building relationships with staff, entering and changing staff dynamics
- Church History/Dynamics
- Managing church budgets
- Working with the Session
- Managing time and establishing priorities
- Decision making within the church and managing change within the church
- Developing and sustaining relationships with other pastors Presbytery history and dynamics
- Dealing with congregational conflict and celebrations
- Coping with loneliness and other adjustments
- Any question regarding the function of the church and/or the role of the pastor
- Dealing with family/personal adjustments

Evaluation and Feedback

The Ninety Day Companion will initiate a closure conversation with pastor at the conclusion of the 90 days. An evaluation form measuring the effectiveness and help of the relationship will be sent to the pastor and the 90 day companion. Upon completion, it should be forwarded to the Committee on Ministry.