Ministerial Formation Certification Agency
Reformed Church in America
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A. ROLES OF A PASTOR-SPONSOR:

1. Exemplar: provide an inspirational role model to enhance, in a general way, the candidate's skills, attitudes and general ministry development.

2. Host: facilitate the candidate’s entrée into the RCA ministry by helping him/her to feel welcome and acquainted with the RCA family.

3. Encourager: help the candidate to mature as a person so that he/she grows towards full potential.

B. HELPFUL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PASTOR-SPONSOR:

1. Enthusiasm: inspires, envisions, and energizes.


3. Insightfulness: understand candidate’s needs.

4. Availableness: approachable, comfortable to be with, willing to provide time.

5. Confidentiality: share life reciprocally, sensitively, and with a sense of trust.

C. PATTERNS FOR THE PASTOR-SPONSOR TO PRACTICE:

1. Provide support:
   a. Affirm the validity of the candidate’s present experience.
   b. Actively engage with the candidate’s world – listen carefully so as to experience it.
   c. Express positive expectations – help the candidate to gain self confidence – show that you believe in him/her.
   d. Share yourself – reveal something of who you are.

2. Present a challenge:
   a. Introduce different ideas or interpretations.
   b. Heighten the standards for the candidate.
   c. Engage in discussions – develop different perspectives, different ways of viewing the situation or problem.
   d. Construct hypotheses of situations the candidate may encounter in ministry.

3. Create a vision:
   a. Model – a candidate is not to become ‘like’ the pastorsponsor, but to become more fully himself/herself ‘through’ the pastor-sponsor.
   b. Provide a mirror – extend the candidate’s self-awareness so as to see self in new ways. Provide feedback.
D. Desired Objectives of the Pastor-Sponsor/Candidate Relationship

1. Help the candidate to see what it is like to be a clergy person:
   Give information about clergy life; share the joys and pains of being a parish pastor; explain how a typical work week goes, how a pastor plans the work load, etc.

2. Help the candidate learn about the RCA from the vantage point of a parish pastor:
   Share practical insight about how the denomination functions and what the current issues are; take the candidate along to RCA gatherings, such as a congregational meeting, consistory meeting, and classis meeting. Give explanation on procedures.

3. Help the candidate to grow spiritually:
   Show how a pastor who “gives out” continually through counseling, preaching, and teaching can stay fresh; share ways whereby a pastor can maintain growth in his/her own faith pilgrimage.

4. Help the candidate to grow holistically as a person:
   All of us are in the state of becoming more whole as persons emotionally, relationally, and in our attitudes – and also in our care of our physical bodies, how we handle our finances, etc. Because ministry in large measure is incarnational, (i.e. it manifests and mirrors itself through us as persons), we need to support personal traits that foster ministry effectiveness and remediate those traits that hinder it.

5. Help the candidate through loving care and encouragement:
   The sharing of the concerns and fears of life as well as its joys can provide the basis for a helpful friendship. Share life together on an authentic level of honesty. Pray together and build a prayer partnership that continues between meetings.

E. Practical Considerations

1. Time involvement.
   It is generally felt that a two hour meeting once every two weeks is the minimum amount of time required to make the relationship effective. Of course, you and the candidate are free to be flexible in structuring your time together, perhaps sharing an afternoon in the park, or an evening at a sporting event on occasion. The relationship is intended to continue till ordination.

2. Relationship to ministry supervisor.
   The pastor-sponsor and the ministry supervisor usually are two different people. The former is a candidacy-long relationship; the latter usually is of shorter duration. The former’s relationship to the candidate is life centered and provides an orientation to clergy life in our denomination; the latter relates more specifically to the learning agreement of the supervised ministry. Where both roles are combined in one person, the ministry supervision is expanded to incorporate the elements of pastor-sponsorship.
3. Relationship to classis candidate care committee.
   In cases where the candidate resides near the classis and the are committee has appointed a pastor-sponsor, such a person can serve this role for both TEA and the classis. However, in those cases where the candidate resides at some distance from the classis and monthly visits are not feasible, the TEA pastor-sponsor is needed to provide a supplement to the classis relationship.

4. Relationship to Minister for Candidate Care and Certification (MCCC).
   The MCCC has specific responsibility for the certification process of the candidate. The pastor-sponsor relationship is part of that process. The MCCC provides over all supervision of the candidate’s (1) academic preparation, (2) spiritual formation, (3) ministry competence, (4) personal wholeness, and (5) denominational identity. The pastor-sponsor supplements the MCCC’s role particularly in the areas of spiritual formation, personal wholeness, and denominational identity.

   The MCCC serves as liaison to the pastor-sponsor. The pastor-sponsor will serve as a reference for the candidate in the certification process.