Candidacy Mentor Handbook

Dear candidacy mentor,

We thank God for your willingness to invest in future CRC leaders, and hope that you will be enriched through the process of mentoring a potential candidate for ministry in the CRCNA. Your work with this individual is a crucial piece of the candidacy process and the Candidacy Committee greatly values your voice and your partnership in our discernment process regarding this individual's ministerial readiness.

We hope the following information will give you clear guidance about your mentoring role and responsibilities, but please feel free to also reach out to the Director of Candidacy at any point for conversations as needed (candidacy@crcna.org, 616 224-5872 or 877 279-9994 Ext 2676).

This handbook contains the following sections:

Pages 2-3	Overview of Candidacy Mentorship
Pages 4-6	Areas of Focus for Mentor Meetings
Pages 7	Mentorship Resources
Pages 7-16	Personal Qualifications for Ministry

Overview of Candidacy Mentorship

Selection of a Mentor

- The mentor is selected by the potential candidate, in consultation with the Director of Candidacy and classis functionaries.
- The mentor should normally be an ordained CRC Minister of the Word, but others may be allowed as circumstances warrant.
- Ideally, the mentor will be from the same classis that is sponsoring the prospective candidate.

Responsibilities of a Mentor

1. Monthly mentor meetings

- The candidacy mentor meets with the mentee on a monthly basis (1 ½-2 hr session suggested). For EPMC participants, the mentorship spans the course of 18-24 months. For most CTS students, the candidacy mentorship spans 9-12 months (this is because CTS students may apply 1 year of their CTS vocational formation mentorship towards the candidacy mentorship requirement).
- The relationship is one of friendship and encouragement, and one in which grace-filled truth telling and honest input can be given relative to the prospective candidate's readiness for ordained ministry within the CRCNA.
- The "Areas of Focus" section of this document (pages 4-6) outlines the desired outcomes for candidacy and provides some suggested questions that you might use as talking points as you explore and assess these topics in your mentor conversations.

2. Mentor team connections

In conversation with the prospective candidate, assemble a "mentor committee" comprised of 2-4 persons you together designate/invite. The purpose of the "mentor committee" is to broaden the circle of encouragement, prayer and honest input to the prospective candidate (you will be asked to report the names of the committee members on your initial mentor report).

The following factors may be considered in selecting members for the committee:

- personal history with the prospective candidate.
- experience working in a ministry assignment with the prospective candidate.
- elder or leader in the church where the prospective candidate is a member
- others who are invested in the life and future ministry of the prospective candidate

The mentor committee (or circle of advisors) should offer their input to the mentor and prospective candidate at least three times over the course of each year. Some advisory groups will choose to have each advisor offer a report to the mentee and others may simply meet together as a group with the mentor and potential candidate. During their monthly meeting the mentor and mentee will review and discuss this input and the mentor should include any significant insights and processing of the feedback on the mentor report form.

3. Reporting

The mentor reports provide a window into your mentee's life, formation and growth. They are of great value to your classis CMLT and the Candidacy Committee as we together discern the individual's readiness for ministry of the Word in the CRCNA. They will be kept in a confidential file and are reviewed only by those engaged in the process of approving candidacy.

Note: The following forms can be found on the <u>forms and resources page</u> of the Candidacy website

- At the beginning of the mentorship, the mentor should fill out and submit the "initial mentor report" to the Candidacy Director and classis CMLT of classis
- Approximately every 4 months (3 times per year), the mentor should fill out the form labeled "mentor report" and submit it to the Candidacy Director and CMLT of classis.
- By March of the year of candidacy, the mentor should submit the "final mentor recommendation" to the Candidacy Director and CMLT of classis.

4. Facilitating connections for the potential candidate

 Connect the individual to the CMLT of his/her classis to initiate a relationship and request financial support if needed. The CMLT is also responsible for submitting 2 reports to the Candidacy Committee containing feedback on the individual's readiness for ministry so establishing this relationship is important.

Note: CMLT stands for "Classis Ministerial Leadership Team" but the name of this team can vary from classis to classis (ie. student fund committee", "classis candidacy committee", etc.)

• If your mentee does not already have relationships with pastors and leaders within the classis, you may consider connecting him/her in any ways you can. You might consider inviting your mentee to attend classis meetings with you to gain familiarity with the people and processes of your classis.

Areas of Focus for Mentor Meetings

When discerning "fitness for ministry in the CRCNA", the Candidacy Committee looks for the following outcomes in each candidacy applicant:

- 1. Connection and Commitment to the CRC
- 2. Ability to Embrace and Apply a Confessionally Reformed Hermeneutic
- 3. Spiritual/Emotional Readiness for Ministry
- 4. Demonstrated Competency in a Range of Ministries

The background and experience of each prospective candidate is unique, and through conversations with your mentee, you will be able to determine how heavily and how often you should focus on each of the above outcomes in your conversations. To assist you in structuring and planning these conversations, here are some questions that may help prompt good discussions.

1. Connection and Commitment to the CRC

- How connected do you feel to the CRC as a denomination? To the classis? To peers within the CRC? To your local CRC church community? How might I help you foster a deeper sense of connection?
- Have you read the position statements of the CRCNA on the crcna.org website? If so, are there any that you'd like to process with me?
- What do you observe about the culture of the CRC? What have you learned about the CRC denominational story that might have contributed to that culture?
- How will your growing understanding of the culture of the CRC inform your ministry presence and preaching?
- Tell me about your learnings from the CTS classes you are currently taking.
- Tell me about your reflections on any experiences you've had with classis.
- What are some of your reflections about any experiences you've had with denominational staff or ministries? Are you aware of the various ministries and resources available to CRC pastors and churches?

For mentees who are in the EPMC program:

- Has your EPMC Facilitation Team designed your individualized learning plan yet? (this should happen within a month of enrollment-ask them to share a copy with you).
- Have you taken your first/second EPMC trip yet? If so, tell me about your experience.
- What valuable mindsets or practices do you bring into the CRC from your other seminary/denomination?

■ What valuable mindsets/practices have you encountered in your experience with the denomination and CTS so far?

2. Embracing and Applying a Confessionally Reformed Hermeneutic

- How comfortable do you feel with Reformed doctrine and CRC practice?
 Are there areas that you are currently wrestling with? (Offer resources for study and arrange for the mentee to have more conversations with you or others about any topics they are wrestling with. Encourage the mentee to talk more in depth with their professors at CTS as well.).
- What do you understand about a "Reformed Hermeneutic"? How does that compare with other ways of studying and preaching the Bible that you are familiar with?
- What parts of the Creeds and Confessions speak to you?
- Which parts speak most directly to issues in our culture right now that you would like to address through preaching?
- Are there any statements that you feel confused or conflicted about?

3. Exhibiting Spiritual/Emotional Readiness for Ministry

This outcome should be a continued focus for all candidacy mentorships. Each meeting with your mentee will be an opportunity to listen deeply to them, encouraging them in any areas of emotional/spiritual struggle, and noticing their growth in self-awareness and spiritual maturity.

- The "Personal Qualifications for Ministry" section on pages 7-15 of this handbook is a very helpful resource for processing and discerning spiritual/emotional readiness. Consider providing your mentee with a copy of this document and then spending some time in your meetings processing and reflecting on each point.
- At some point, you will be asked by the Vocational Formation Director at CTS to have a conversation with your mentee about his/her psychological evaluation. If recommendations or requirements arise out of that experience, continue conversations with your mentee about their progress with those requirements
- Ask your mentee about what God has been speaking to them through their formation group experience (for EPMC participants, this group is formed during the CTS Connection Trip).
- What have you sensed God speaking to you lately?
- How is your work/study/life balance in this busy season? How are your stress and anxiety levels? How are you feeling physically, emotionally, mentally? What ways have you found to draw healthy boundaries? How much time are you devoting to family time, friend time, exercise, hobbies, etc.?
- What challenges have you faced as you seek to stay rooted in your identity as a child of God?

• What have you learned about how others perceive you and how does this influence how you see yourself and how you believe God sees you?

Additional questions for mentees who are in the EPMC program:

 Once the CRCNA Connection Trip has been completed, ask your mentee about their experience with the retreat portion of this trip.

4. <u>Demonstrating Competency in a Range of Ministries</u>

The Seven Ministry Practice Areas: Leadership, Preaching/Teaching, Seeking Justice, Worship, Evangelizing, Pastoral Care, Cross-cultural Competency

- Over the course of the mentorship, check in with your mentee about their recent experiences in each of the ministry areas above. Ask them to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses, from their own perspective and from the feedback of others who have witnessed their ministry.
- What are they learning about themselves through these ministry experiences? What are they learning about the Church?
- Ask which ministry practices give them the most anxiety. Which seem to come naturally to them? Which give them the most joy?

For mentees who are in the EPMC program:

- Have you completed your Vocational Formation Template yet? If so, have you received feedback from your EPMCF team?
- Are there ways I can connect you to opportunities to practice areas in which you have less experience?

Mentorship Resources

- Mentor report forms and other helpful materials can be found on our forms and resources page of the Candidacy website (www.crcna.org/candidacy/forms-and-resources)
- 2. The following pages contain a "Personal Qualifications for Ministry Checklist", that was adapted from a similar resource developed by Calvin Theological Seminary.

Personal Qualifications for Ministry

(Adapted from a resource developed by Calvin Theological Seminary)

The following is a list of personal qualifications that should be developed and demonstrated by candidate applicants during their preparation for candidacy. We offer this document as a suggested resource to be used in conversations between candidacy mentors and their mentees. It may also be helpful as a tool for self-reflection or for mutual assessment and edification in a peer group setting.

Assessment is never an end in itself but a means to identify aspects of personality which students need to address to become more effective in ministry. Outlined below are a pattern of personal qualities which describe the kind of person whom the church seeks for the pastoral office. The qualifications mentioned should not be taken separately but seen as parts of a whole.

The "Substantiating Behaviors" and the "Incompatible Behaviors" listed with each statement of personal qualifications are given as specific illustrations of each general description. Personal qualifications are known through attitudes and behaviors.



Personal Qualifications for Ministry Checklist

This Personal Qualifications for Ministry Checklist can be used for self-assessment, peer review, or candidacy mentorship discussions.

Instructions:

In a session near the beginning of the mentorship, the mentor introduces this resource and informs the mentee that they will use this tool throughout their meetings together, addressing 1-2 sections per session.

- > Mentor makes a plan for how to cover all nine points within the span of the mentorship.
- > Before the first meeting in which this tool is used, mentor prints out two copies of the assessment, one for themselves and one for mentee.
- ➤ Mentee reads 1-2 of the qualifications and its substantiating/unsubstantiating behaviors out loud, assigning themselves a letter on each point. (C) Consistently
- ➤ (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely

- > The mentor may agree, challenge or initiate more conversation (if the mentor is not very familiar with the mentee, they may want to spend a lot of time asking questions). The mentor may make notes at the bottom of their copy.
- ➤ When mentor/mentee agree that growth is needed on a given point, they develop a strategy for addressing that growth point.
- > The mentor checks in on the progress on these strategies in future meetings.
- ➤ In mentor reports to candidacy, mentor reports relevant conversations and observations regarding growth in #3 and #4, (sections one growing spiritual/emotional readiness).

1. Commitment

C S R

Ministers must show a deep commitment to Christ, the Word of God, and the Church.

Substantiating Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely

Engage in regular Bible study and prayer

С	s	R	Participate regularly in the life of the church
С	S	R	Communicate God's will while standing under the Word
С	S	R	Acknowledge personal shortcomings and trust in Christ for righteousness
С	S	R	Express confidence in God's grace in the face of failures

C S R Work with a sense of freedom from panic or despair because of trust in God

C S R Submit to authority in healthy, appropriate ways

Incompatible Behaviors

С	S	R	Communicate God's Word from a superior attitude
С	s	R	Appear to have "arrived" in Christian faith or life
С	s	R	Speak divisively or competitively

NOTES (Assessment of strengths and areas of growth. Development of targeted strategies to improve any areas that need attention.):

		-	ne and Self-Control ust lead a disciplined life with steady effort and faithfulness in all responsibilities.
Sul	bsta	ıntiat	ing Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely
С	s	R	Carry out ministry tasks, even those not personally enjoyable
С	s	R	Complete what is started, even with declining results
С	S	R	Establish ministry priorities and allocate time accordingly
2	s	R	Maintain punctuality and preparedness for appointments and sermons
3	s	R	Exhibit self-motivation and work independently
3	s	R	Engage in regular personal devotions and worship
ıc	om	oatibl	le Behaviors
;	s	R	Excessively devote time to personal hobbies or recreation
;	s	R	Preoccupy with appearances or superficial details
;	s	R	Initiate many projects without implementing or maintaining them
;	s	R	Procrastinate on unpleasant tasks
;	s	R	Neglect family or fail to honor commitments
;	s	R	Show evidence of workaholism
	s	R	Find it difficult to say "No" when overwhelmed

Ministers must treat others as image bearers and fellow workers with respect, affirming their value, and contributions.			
Su	bsta	antiatir	ng Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely
С	s	R	Listen and take seriously others' viewpoints
С	s	R	Affirm cultural diversity and minority perspectives
С	s	R	Communicate respectfully with opposing viewpoints
С	s	R	Accept group decisions, even when contrary to own judgment
С	s	R	Delegate responsibilities to others
С	s	R	Encourage participation from under-involved members
С	s	R	Accept criticism graciously
С	s	R	Rejoice in others' achievements
Inc	Incompatible Behaviors		
С	s	R	Dominate discussions or intimidate others
С	s	R	Belittle others' opinions or contributions
С	s	R	Publicly criticize or preach against others
С	s	R	Try to control everything due to lack of trust in others
		-	essment of strengths and areas of growth. Development of targeted strategies to areas that need attention.):
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3. Communicates with Respect and Sensitivity Toward Others

4. Motivated by Love for God and Others

Ministers must demonstrate love, patience, and kindness in all relationships.

Su	Substantiating Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely			
С	S	R	Listen with concentration, seeking understanding before offering advice	
С	s	R	Speak kindly and generously, even to those unkind to them	
С	s	R	Remember names and details about people	
С	s	R	Show hospitality to marginalized groups	
С	s	R	Express the same love for family as for others	
С	s	R	Shed tears or express sorrow when sharing others' grief	
С	s	R	Contribute generously to the church and social service agencies	
Inc	om	patible	Behaviors	
С	s	R	Express irritation or resentment to schedule disruptions	
С	s	R	Hide behind a cold professionalism, avoiding appropriate affection	
С	s	R	Talk excessively about personal accomplishments	
С	s	R	Avoid or demean critics	
С	s	R	Make demeaning comments about family in public	
С	s	R	Avoid helping others in need when able	
С	s	R	Demand church staff works around pastor's schedule	
			essment of strengths and areas of growth. Development of targeted strategies to areas that need attention.):	

5. Honesty

Ministers must show integrity in both private and professional lives, honoring commitments.

Substantiating Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely			
С		R	Maintain confidentiality in pastoral work
С	s	R	Manage finances responsibly, paying bills promptly
С	s	R	Remain faithful to spouse emotionally and sexually
С	s	R	Honor pastoral commitments and inform others if delayed
С	s	R	Support policies and programs of church and denomination
С	s	R	Willingly admit when they do not know something
С	s	R	Demonstrate consistency between preaching and life
С	s	R	Discontinue programs that do not live up to expectations
Incompatible Behaviors			
С	s	R	Call in sick to avoid ministry tasks
С	s	R	Give partial accounts of events to protect themselves
С	s	R	Publicly criticize the church or denomination
С	s	R	Blame others for failures or broken commitments
		•	ssment of strengths and areas of growth. Development of targeted strategies to reas that need attention.):
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6. Humble in Service to God and Others

Ministers must serve God and the church with devotion, without seeking personal gain.

Su	Substantiating Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely		
С	s	R	Pursue professional excellence without seeking recognition
С	s	R	Embody truth and love in ministry
С	s	R	Command respect for the office, not personal treatment
С	s	R	Minister to people from all stations, regardless of status
С	s	R	Acknowledge the accomplishments of fellow ministers
С	s	R	Publicly give credit to others in the church
С	s	R	Acknowledge personal limitations and accept advice
С	s	R	Present their case for salary without complaints
Incompatible Behaviors			e Behaviors
С	s	R	Worry about others' opinions or seek personal gain
С	s	R	Focus only on areas that bring public approval
С	s	R	Expect preferential treatment as a minister
С	s	R	Ignore those who cannot bring recognition
С	s	R	View career growth only in terms of promotion
С	s	R	Brag about accomplishments or complain about sacrifices
NOTES (Assessment of strengths and areas of growth. Development of targeted strategies to improve any areas that need attention.):			

7. Exhibits Character for Healthy Leadership

Ministers must demonstrate confidence, initiative, and creativity in leadership.

Su	Substantiating Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely		
С	S	R	Assess group dynamics and make appropriate judgments
С	S	R	Exhibit non-anxious presence in conflict or confusion
С	S	R	Discern the Spirit's voice in group decision-making
С	s	R	Challenge a group to move forward with vision
С	s	R	Suggest unpopular ideas for the sake of progress
С	s	R	Lead celebrations with freedom and spontaneity
С	s	R	Encourage creative solutions and novel suggestions
С	S	R	Tolerate and work through conflict within a group
Incompatible Behaviors			
С	s	R	Avoid or squelch group conflict
С	s	R	Scold congregation about irregular attendance or sleeping in church
С	s	R	Minimize differences to avoid confrontation
С	S	R	Retract statements or apologize for sermons hastily
С	s	R	Hesitate to make judgments in crucial moments
С	s	R	Coerce or manipulate groups into their decisions
		•	essment of strengths and areas of growth. Development of targeted strategies to areas that need attention.):

8. Possesses Wisdom

Ministers must demonstrate good judgment, rational thinking, and common sense.

Substantiating Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely			
С	s	R	Show good judgment in personal, familial, and pastoral matters
С	s	R	Distinguish between major and minor issues
С	s	R	Use tact in social and conflict situations
С	s	R	Maintain confidentiality and act with foresight
С	s	R	Consider the right person for each responsibility
С	s	R	Think before acting and offer thoughtful solutions
Inc	omp	oatible	Behaviors
С	s	R	Make unnecessary conflicts or overreact to situations
С	s	R	Ignore early signs of significant problems
С	s	R	Say things without considering consequences
С	s	R	Make hasty moral judgments without understanding context
С	s	R	Delegate responsibilities without proper consideration of an individual's capacity
NOTES (Assessment of strengths and areas of growth. Development of targeted strategies to improve any areas that need attention.):			
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9.	Em	otion	al Health
Mir	niste	rs mus	t demonstrate emotional well-being, self-awareness, and resilience.
Su	Substantiating Behaviors (C) Consistently (S) Sometimes (R) Rarely		

C S R

Show growth and adaptability

C S R Apologize when needed, accepting limitations C S R Maintain calm under stress C S R Laugh and cry with others CSR Balance self-worth with self-acceptance C S R Observes the limitations of intimacy and the propriety of distance **Incompatible Behaviors** C S R Complain and criticize to demean others C S R Act defensively or confrontationally C S R Overreact emotionally (tantrums, pouting, etc.) C S R Seek to escape responsibility under pressure C S R Revisit unresolved issues repeatedly C S R Exaggerate the magnificence of the ministerial office C S R Think they can solve everyone's problems C S R Apply Gospel to others but not to self C S R Revel in hearing and passing unfavorable gossip NOTES (Assessment of strengths and areas of growth. Development of targeted strategies to improve any areas that need attention.):