

Circle of Accompaniment
Supplement

Questions or topics of interest you might consider discussing:

- How do we balance serving others with self care
- Think of a time you had to rely on some one else for help. What was that like for you?
- How have your expectations around lifestyle changed over the years?
- What gifts for ministry have you identified?
- Reflect on a recent prayer practice you have engaged in.
- Reflect on a recent biblical passage you have been studying/struggling with/found comforting.
- Look at a part of the creed and what resonates with you
- Bring in a favourite hymn
- How is leadership shared in your/a congregation?
- What are your expectations when it comes to leadership and delegating authority?
- What energizes you/what drains you?
- Name a moment you felt very close to God/very distant from God and how is/was your faith affected by these moments.
- What do you do to nurture your spiritual care?
- What contributes to your sense of God's presence in your life?
- How have/are your views changing with respect to your faith, belief in God?
- Contrasting experiences they've experienced in different congregational settings or learning environments.
- Time management issues/ juggling school and work and family
- Where are we headed as a denomination?
- Social ministry
- Ethics
- Upcoming field placements, supervised ministry or learning circle opportunities, concerns, learning goals, relocation etc.
- Personal and pastoral identity.
- Personal maturity arising out of recent life or work experience
- Reflection on practice of ministry
- Do you feel you are exercising your gifts in a way that is life giving to you? To those around you?
- Meeting individually with an annual gathering (option)
- How to adapt this for Diaconal Stream?

—DRAFT—



The Circle of Accompaniment is designed to:

- ~ *help us reflect on our learning*
- ~ *be supportive and encouraging of one another*
- ~ *be a time of growth and learning*
- ~ *be prayerful*
- ~ *be discerning*
- ~ *be constructive*
- ~ *be meaningful*
- ~ *be affirming*
- ~ *be honest*

January 2014

The purpose of the Circle of Accompaniment:

Is to encourage, support and nurture candidates and to foster an environment of on-going discernment. Given that each individual is unique, that there are many “pathways” and that its an ever-changing and fluid process there are no set rules to follow when setting up, or facilitating, a Circle but the following are meant to be offered as guidelines to use as a spring board from which to develop a process that best suits your candidate(s) and makes for a meaningful time of support and encouragement. I also encourage any of you that are involved in Circles of Accompaniment to share feedback with us about what you have found helpful or developed as practice or resource so that we may further develop this resource and continue to build it as a collaboration of ideas and practices.

Location and Format of meetings:

- Most individuals naturally feel more supported if they are in a comforting environment.
- Encourage the candidate(s) to choose a time and location that suits them, that is welcoming and comfortable and that will provide the necessary level of confidentiality.
- Arrange to have a snack or beverage, especially if you are meeting on a week night and folks are travelling in from work. I have our meetings catered by someone in the congregation so its not an additional chore for anyone already participating in the event and it adds a nice sense of “you are special” to the event that we all look forward to.
- Open and close in prayer, and take turns leading the prayers, everyone is equal in a circle and it’s a time of sharing and growing together.

A typical Circle of Accompaniment evening for us is:

(and this is just one model or suggestion)

- gather with a social time of snacks and beverages as people arrive
- after everyone has had a chance to relax, replenish and visit, gather in a circle and open in prayer
- check in time : this can be as simple as
 - “what’s new since we gathered last?”
 - “how was your summer?” orchoose one of the many suggest questions from the back page.

We do a joint circle of accompaniment with all the students together from our presbytery and it includes both diaconal candidates and candidates for ordained ministry so we invite a guest ordained minister and diaconal minister each session and invite them as the

evening progresses to share a bit of their journey and schooling, as well as being there to answer any questions that come up under question and answer time. Question and answer time just sort of “happened” spontaneously at our first gathering and it was so popular we kept it. Basically students have a chance to ask any questions (or concerns) that they have and the other students or guest ministers all join in. Often its questions about courses or resources or preaching on a specific theme that’s coming up etc. and everyone learns so much and enjoys the time of sharing and the realization that “they are not alone” that it really fosters the feeling of support.

We incorporate in also a time of discussion and there are lists of potential discussion questions on the back page but really the possibilities are endless and based on the individual’s needs and where they are at on their journey it really is almost something you have to gage on an individual basis or assess after you’ve had a meeting or two.

We also do a time of resource sharing, usually after we have closed the more formal part of the evening. This also happened rather spontaneously our first night and we’ve kept it. The guest ministers the first night happened to bring books and resources they thought the students might be interested in seeing and a lending library sprung up as a result.

Also at the end of each meeting I ask the students for input on what they would like to plan or see happen at our next gathering, what approximant date they would like to meet next and feedback on what’s been helpful so far in the process or any changes they would like to initiate. We also take time to celebrate and acknowledge successes.

Frequency of meetings:

Many factors will come in to play in determining how many times per year a Circle of Accompaniment meets but the general recommendation is four times per year. A diaconal student during a theme year that is meeting with their local committee will likely meet less; as may a student going in for ordained ministry that is on their supervised ministry education placement that is meeting with their lay support team. When considering times, dates and frequency of meetings remember the primary goal is that of support, so you want to meet often enough that the candidate feels supported and encouraged but not to a point where it becomes overwhelming if they are engaged in a heavy course load or work experience.