

Ninety Day Companion

Background

The first ninety days or “start-up” is crucial for the new presbytery leader. 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 coming to service from a parish or from a secondary leadership position in another governing body. The purpose of the ninety day companion is to provide the new leader with a close colleague relationship where questions can be asked and anxieties shared. The ninety-day period begins as soon as possible after the person’s election by the governing body and concludes ninety days later. It is designed to assist with the period that includes their installation and initial orientation to the work. The companion serves as a resource for information and contact for the new presbytery leader.

Selection of Companions:

Ninety day companions will be identified by the steering committee of the Presbytery Leadership Formation 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 presbytery size, racial ethnic composition and staff position description. Companions are considered volunteers and will not receive a stipend. They will be asked to attend an annual gathering of companions in conjunction with either the Association of Executive Presbyter meeting or the Middle Governing Body/General Assembly Council Gathering and any additional expenses incurred by such attendance will be reimbursed by the Presbytery Leadership Formation Program. Every effort will be made to match the new presbytery leader with a Ninety Day Companion serving in a similar ministry setting.

Ideal Characteristics of a Companion

- Calm presence
- Able to see and celebrate the gifts and strengths of the new leader
- 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 governing body leader
- Well versed in General Assembly resources
- Knows their assembly-wide colleagues

Companion Duties

The Ninety Day Companion agrees to initiate weekly contact with the new presbytery leader and to pray for their ministry daily. Unlike the Coach who will be assigned to each participant, the Companion is there specifically to answer questions about the functions and practice of presbytery leadership.

Topics for Discussion Might Include:

- Building relationships with staff and entering staff dynamics
- Relationship and working with the Committee on Ministry
- Managing presbytery budgets
- Working with the Council
- Managing time and establishing priorities
- Decision making within the presbytery
- Relationships with other Middle Governing Bodies and the General Assembly
- Dealing with congregational conflict
- Coping with loneliness and other adjustments
- Any question regarding the function of the presbytery and/or the role of the presbytery leader

Evaluation and Feedback

The 90 Day Companion will initiate a closure conversation with the presbytery leader at the conclusion of the 90 days. An evaluation form measuring the effectiveness and help of the relationship will be sent to the presbytery leader.

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