

## **The Gift of One Hour: Strategies for Reflective Supervision**

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and Deborah K. Davis**



**S**upervisor-mentors work very hard to create hospitable space in which our students may practice the arts of ministry. This is captured in a litany of beginnings that Duke Divinity School uses at the beginning of a field education experience in a congregational setting.

Supervisor: We have been called as a congregation to be for \_\_\_\_\_ a teaching and learning community.

People: We welcome you into our community as God's representative. Our homes, our hospitals and nursing homes, our classrooms and programs, our sanctuary, our lives, are all open to you.

Intern Minister: With God's help I seek to learn about ministry within this congregation, to earn your trust, and to be a fellow laborer in Jesus Christ with you. I seek your support and your response to me as one who is preparing to serve as an ordained minister.<sup>1</sup>

Specifically, in this contextual learning space the supervisor-mentor is critical for guiding and directing the student into ministerial experiences—particularly those agreed upon through the Learning-Serving Covenant—with the student's formation for ministry in view. The supervisor-mentor also provides access to a breadth of experience so that the student has the opportunity to explore the range of ministerial arts and gain a stronger sense

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of the contours of their call. The litany is a helpful reminder that “education for ministry is simultaneously intellectual, practical, and spiritual.”<sup>2</sup> Supervisor-mentors reflect theologically with their students on their ministerial experiences and events within the congregation (or non-profit) and the larger community, nation, and world.

Most field education programs require time set apart for theological reflection, often at least one hour per week. This is an extraordinary opportunity. From the perspective of a twenty-something seminarian, consider this: “A veteran clergy person is willing to set aside one hour per week for me, with my personal and professional growth the sole focus. Apart from my peers and perhaps my parent(s), who offers that kind of gift?”

As we offer strategies for reflective supervision that we hope will catalyze the imaginations of our colleagues and their supervisor-mentors, we understand each to fall under the umbrella of theological reflection. We take the definition of theological reflection posited by Blodgett and Floding as the umbrella under which these strategies are exercised. Theological reflection within field education is “*reflection upon lived, embodied experiences in ministry that seeks to make sense of practice and form reflectors in habits for competent ministry.*”<sup>3</sup>

### A WORKING COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Deborah Davis and I (Floding) had been in conversation about creatively supporting our supervisor-mentors in making best use of this precious gift of reflection time. To gauge the level of interest in gaining skill in reflective supervision, I conducted a workshop entitled “The Gift of One Hour” for our supervisor-mentors at our summer field education orientation on May 5, 2015. The interest was strong, with over 100 supervisor-mentors registering for the workshop. The feedback expressed appreciation for the practical guidance and the variety of approaches. In response, we decided to work together to share our experiences and outline a variety of helpful strategies for reflective supervision. Davis extended an invitation to Lucinda Huffaker at Yale Divinity School and me to join her at a working retreat at the Erdman Center at Princeton Theological Seminary on July 7–8, 2015.<sup>4</sup> The fruit of our work together is this article, which is intended to offer support to our fellow theological field educators and the supervisor-mentors to whom we entrust our students. Our goal is to consider how to dwell in the

giftedness of this one hour for mutual benefit, but especially for the benefit of the ministerial student.

Although creative and effective use of what we are calling *the gift of one hour* is the focus of this article, we acknowledge that there are other legitimate approaches. One would be similar to an apprentice model in which the novice shadows the experienced clergyperson, who explains the practice as he or she engages in it. Questions are entertained, and, at the right time in the judgment of the veteran, the novice is given opportunity to perform the practice and is evaluated.

### GROUNDED IN OUR BAPTISM

We believe that the supervisor-mentor's level of commitment to each ministerial candidate is grounded in the baptismal promise and reflects our covenantal relationships. In baptism we make promises like this:

Do you promise  
to instruct *these children/this child*  
in the truth of God's Word,  
in the way of salvation through Jesus Christ;  
to pray for *them*, to teach *them* to pray; and  
to train *them* in Christ's way by your example,  
through worship, and  
in the nurture of the church?<sup>5</sup>

Each field education setting is an extension of the congregation, in Christ, that has made these promises. In partial fulfillment of these promises, we offer the following nine ways to engage the gift of one hour with our students.

### NINE STRATEGIES FOR REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION

#### *Adult Learning Theory (Floding)*

In theological field education the assumption is generally made that adult learning theory relates helpfully to the learning opportunity that field education provides. This theory in large part focuses on the student's capacity to be self-directed. In other words, it assumes that the student knows what she or he would like to learn. Although this may not always be the case, Malcolm Knowles in *The Adult Learner: a Neglected Species* is very helpful in naming four assumptions he believes apply to adult learning:

- Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
- Experience (including mistakes) provides the basis for the learning activities.
- Adults are most interested in learning subjects that have immediate relevance and that impact their job or personal life.
- Adult learning is problem-centered rather than content-oriented.<sup>6</sup>

Jane Vella, also an adult learning theorist, adds, "One basic assumption . . . is that adult learning is best achieved in dialogue."<sup>7</sup>

These assumptions come into play soon after the student arrives at the field education site when the student and supervisor-mentor design a negotiated learning agreement, referred to here as a Learning-Serving Covenant. By combining Knowles's assumptions about adult learning and Vella's affirmation of dialogue in learning, a supervisor-mentor might try the following reflective supervision strategy in one of the first meetings with the student.

Sitting down with a blank sheet of paper, ask the student, "What would you like to learn while you are here with us?" Write everything down. Fill the page with possibilities. Tell him or her, "This is great. Let's sit with this for a while. As you get to know your context a bit, let's see what emerges as the top two or three that you would like to build into your Learning-Serving Covenant. We'll keep mindful of all the rest on this sheet. In fact, we'll both keep a copy of this sheet and I'll mark with a highlighter the ones we cover during this academic year."

Turn the page over. Tell her or him, "This is what I am learning from you. I'm going to leave it blank for now because we've only begun to be colleagues in ministry. But, each week I'm going to write down on this side what I'm learning from you. At the end of the year, I'm going to make two copies of both sides of the paper, one for myself and one for you, as a remembrance of all the learning we both have experienced!"

Given the nature of the call to vocational ministry, the wonder of formation for ministry in community, the privilege of participating in vocational ministry, and God's active role in the process, it is entirely fitting to begin the relationship with humility, a sense of mutuality and respect. It is also especially appropriate to end the season of ministry and learning together with celebration of what God has done.

*Considering Context (Floding)*

All ministries are contextual. William B. Kincaid asserts, “Imaginative and effective ministry requires that you understand where you are and what goes on around you.”<sup>8</sup> The community, the theological heritage, the building, and the sacred story of the local church are foundational to engaging in ministry in that space. Acknowledging one’s own formational story, including its context, is likewise significant. In fact, reflecting this reality, some theological field educators have the title director of contextual education.<sup>9</sup>

One practical way of attending to context is noted by Kim Griffith, who serves as a Path 1 New Church Strategist with United Methodist Discipleship Ministries. She was a church planter for over ten years, during which time she experienced various ways to relate to a local context meaningfully. In her current role, she reports that church planters who approach a context with a pre-conceived or a “one-size-fits-all” approach to church development face the most difficulties. On the other hand, new church start pastors who enter a context as listeners and learners in order to be attentive and responsive to what God is already doing there seem to be more effective.<sup>10</sup>

Kincaid’s chapter dealing with context, entitled “Understanding Where You Are,” is complemented by a helpful appendix that equips the reader to engage four tools for contextual analysis: observing, listening, gathering, and interpreting. Here are a few of his questions (some are paraphrased).

*Observing:*

- What do you see in this neighborhood?
- What stands out to you, either for its beauty, neglect, or uniqueness?
- What other faith communities and agencies are present?
- What goes on in this neighborhood during the week?

*Listening (including interviewing others):*

- How has the neighborhood changed?
- What are the conflicts in the area?
- What are the cycles and seasons of this place?
- Who is invisible in this place?<sup>11</sup>

A discussion of context in ministry cannot ignore the contributions of the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute at Northwestern University. Luther K. Snow’s book *The Power of Asset Mapping* takes the core insights of ABCD and applies them to empower congregations to understand the abundance that God has provided in their midst and to act

faithfully. The context also includes the physical assets, individual assets, associational assets, institutional assets, and economic assets.<sup>12</sup> Snow writes, “Intriguing possibilities come alive when we connect our gifts across the circle of our lives.”<sup>13</sup>

Early in the field education experience, a supervisor-mentor might simply take her or his student for a walk in the neighborhood. The context itself invites questions and the connecting of dots. After the walk, visiting a favorite local coffee shop gives the opportunity to reflect together on the neighborhood. Ask the student, “What do you see?” Fresh eyes will no doubt see things in revealing ways. The supervisor-mentor then has the opportunity, based on his or her experience, to fill in the blanks related to community history, associational connections, personalities, and God’s Spirit on the move in the community.

#### *Entering a Community of Practice (Floding)*

*Community of practice* is a term coined by Étienne Wenger and colleagues to describe committed learning communities. Wenger defines it in this way: “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis.”<sup>14</sup> How does one become an effective and growing clergy person? One answer is to participate in this kind of ongoing formational learning.<sup>15</sup>

Wenger adds that this kind of formation “involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person.”<sup>16</sup> For our purposes, Wenger has effectively described the outcome of an intentional mentoring relationship that exists in a formational field education placement that nurtures pastoral and professional identity.

To form a new clergy person, to help them become a kind of person, the supervisor-mentor in field education embraces the opportunity and challenge of the action-reflection-action model of learning. She or he commits to a thoughtful intentionality in providing increasingly more engaged opportunities for ministerial practice. The student, as an observer and participant in ministerial practice, experiences the complex nature of this intellectually engaging, highly imaginative, socially aware, and deeply embodied experience, which unfailingly generates questions and conversations that enrich student and supervisor-mentor alike.

Picture the common experience of a student placed in a context in which the style of worship is quite different than what he or she is familiar with. This of course might also be the experience of any visitor to this faith community. The veteran pastor in this scenario practices liturgical catechesis because of his or her commitment to make a more liturgically traditional form of worship *seeker comprehensible*.<sup>17</sup> In other words, without being distracting, the pastor sensitively offers brief instruction as to the meaning of perhaps one movement in worship during the service, for example by responding to the unspoken question, Why do we offer a prayer of confession each week? In this example, the supervisor-mentor might have the seminarian proclaim the words of assurance after the prayer of confession. As part of the preparation, discussing together the journalist's questions—What? Where? Why? When? and Who?—will undoubtedly prompt deep theological and practical reflection. One such question might be, Why do we stand next to the baptismal font when we proclaim the assurance of pardon? Another might be, Who can proclaim this good news?

Later in the week, while exploring how it feels to offer this good news, imagining how the congregation experiences this proclamation and discussing biblical texts that are most appropriate to undergird it will provide a rich hour of reflection. The student's participation in this portion of the liturgy will likely never be the same. The process helps the student go deeper into his or her identity and practice of ministry. This underscores Wenger's contention that "meaningful participation in a new community of practice is a complex process that combines doing, talking, thinking, feeling, and belonging. It involves the whole person, including bodies, minds, emotions, and social relations."<sup>18</sup>

#### *Vocational Discernment (Davis)*

Vocational discernment can be a valuable component of the field education supervision process. Students arrive at seminaries and divinity schools with a variety of purposes for attending a graduate school for theological training. Although many students come with a sense of call to parish ministry or to further study in the academy, students also arrive considering social justice ministry; ministry in the public realm; media ministry; careers in law, medicine, social work, ethics, or secondary school teaching; and a variety of other types of ministry. Each field education experience is used to discern, affirm, and/or reconsider the nature of the student's call to minis-

try. The field education supervisor can often be a helpful conversation partner for the student who is seeking to discover who he or she is called to be.

Four strategies are helpful in focusing vocational discernment conversations.

- **Listening to the call story** without judgment or expressing opinions, reflecting on the essence of what is being heard concerning the student's dreams, wishes, fears and aspirations.
- **Discussing the student's concrete strengths and challenges.** Offering self-assessment tools to help the student identify and affirm gifts and strengths. One introductory assessment tool can be found in *Ministry Greenhouse* by George Hillman, Jr. (Appendix B, "General Ministry Leadership Competencies").<sup>19</sup>
- **Exploring resources** to aid the student to do further research in the student's area of interest. Introducing the student to a network of connections.
- **Offering consultation on preparing a resume, CV, and cover letter,** tips on preparing for interviews, suggestions for professional development, and help building an e-portfolio.

If the field education supervisor is overseeing an academic-year internship, four sessions of the thirty-week year could be devoted to these four vocational discernment strategies. The first session (listening to the call story) would occur at the beginning of the internship as the supervisor and student are getting to know each other. The second session (assessing the student's areas of strength and challenge) could be held six to eight weeks into the placement, once trust has been established. The third session (exploring resources and introducing the student to network connections) could be offered at the fifteen-week mark as the student begins to consider his or her next internship experience. The final session could be held at the twenty-week mark as the student comes toward the end of the placement and is involved in searching for a position or next educational experience.

Several excellent resources that might be employed in working with the student on vocational issues are: *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* by Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner landscape of a Teacher's Life* by Parker Palmer, *Images of Pastoral Care* by Robert Dykstra; *The Wounded Healer* by Henri Nouwen, and *What Color is Your Parachute?* by Richard Bolles (the updated version discusses the use of social media, resume writing, networking, interviewing, salary negotiations, and tools for self-evaluation).<sup>20</sup>



*Leadership Formation (Floding)*

Daniel O. Aleshire, executive director of the Association of Theological Schools, has written,

I believe that *theological* education for ministry is *leadership* education... One of the most unique characteristics of theological education is that graduates go *immediately* into positions of leadership upon graduation, if not before. The organizations they lead may be small, but from week one, the new pastor in a parish or program director in an organization is expected to lead.<sup>21</sup>

Pastors of congregations and leaders of non-profit organizations feel the force of what Aleshire has written. It is a debt we owe to our mentees to cultivate leadership skills—skills that are best acquired by an intentional commitment to learn, practice, and then reflect on that engagement.<sup>22</sup>

Leadership in ministry is complex! Before delegating responsibility and authority to tackle a ministry opportunity, consider using one week's hourly meeting to discuss the elements of leadership. This can be wonderfully empowering. Here's one such list.

- **Organizational leadership:** Able to clearly describe collective goals so that each member understands any initiative's purpose and direction and is empowered to determine what to do and why. The leader is skillful in strategic planning and developing clear action plans in collaboration with key stakeholders.
- **Public leadership:** Able to interact with, speak to, and provide leadership in the broader, non-congregational community.
- **Collaborative and connected leadership:** Able to cultivate congregations and ministries committed to God's work in the world by encouraging, equipping, empowering, and celebrating members and their accomplishments. The leader is committed to being connected with peers and mentors for personal support and guidance and seeks out multi-church/ministry partnerships.
- **Reconciling leadership:** Able to effectively engage and resolve conflict and to reconcile conflicting parties.
- **Resourced leadership:** Able to integrate Scripture, theology and tradition, local history, and personal stories in addressing ongoing leadership challenges with pastoral imagination.
- **Learning leadership:** Able to persistently engage in ongoing formal and informal learning through reading, writing, reflecting,

and conferencing with colleagues and peers. Capable of practicing self-awareness and social-awareness that benefit from feedback.

- **Transformational leadership:** Able to foster deep adaptive and innovative change in an inter-culturally proficient and emotionally intelligent manner.
- **Sacred and sustainable leadership:** Able to engage in practices through a Rule of Life that grounds leadership in a deep spiritual rootedness that is life-giving, “like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season.”<sup>23</sup>

Sharing a personal story of how several of these elements of leadership were engaged will help the student imagine how she or he might integrate them into their own leadership. For example, a supervisor-mentor might share a leadership story of organizing the local ecumenical food pantry. Asking at the beginning Who are the stakeholders? and then naming other churches or ministries in the neighborhood, mapping this out in expanding concentric circles, and communicating plans with other leaders and agency heads in the community and inviting their participation exemplifies collaborative and connected leadership. The supervisor-mentor could explain that public leadership was exercised when presenting the idea to neighborhood focus groups, which included local business and political leaders. Organizational leadership was exercised by suggesting a structure that empowered those being served to serve and give leadership for the ministry. Sharing one’s own story and intentionally reflecting on various elements of leadership with one’s student provides a richer understanding of how leadership is practiced.

When the door of leadership opportunity is opened for the student, many of these elements will be practiced. As a good beginning point for reflecting on a ministry experience, ask the student, What kind of leadership did you find yourself exercising in this situation?<sup>24</sup>

### *Coaching (Davis)*

Coaching is another method that can be effectively utilized by field education supervisors. Most supervisors have had a coach (sports, drama, debate, dance, etc.) at some point in their lives. “Life coaching” focuses on motivating people to analyze and then make concrete, positive changes in their way of approaching the world, their career, and/or their personal life.

There are five core components of a “coaching method” for caring for a student.<sup>25</sup> For a coach, the ability to **listen well** and keep the attention on the student is primary. The field education supervisor, as coach, needs to be able to listen to the meaning beneath the words as well as the body language of the student. This means listening with sharp focus, suspending judgments and opinions.

Second, the coach needs to be able to **ask succinct, powerful, precise questions**. Usually these questions are short (5–7 words), open-ended, and move the person towards a goal. Examples are: How will you begin this task? What is your first goal? Why is this important to you? What obstacles are standing in your way? What are your resources? How will you contact them? What is your time frame? These questions are particularly effective in the field education setting when the student is having a difficult time getting started or showing initiative or seems overwhelmed by the expectations of the placement.

Another component to coaching is **providing constructive feedback** aimed at development. The skillful field education supervisor is able to offer honest and astute feedback that will motivate reflection and positive change as well as increase the trust in the relationship. Supervisors who do not offer objective feedback miss the opportunity to use the supervisory hour for more than a nice chat. Aggressive and/or dismissive feedback, on the other hand, can produce defensiveness and destroy the trust relationship.

Providing an encouraging and supportive environment is crucial, but it is also important for the coach to **maintain a standard of accountability**. Research shows that people have a greater chance of achieving a goal if a standard of accountability is in place and is maintained. Sometimes, field education supervisors seeking to be kind, understanding, and pastoral offer forgiveness so readily when a commitment is not honored that it becomes “cheap grace.”

Finally, a good coach helps the student **see things from a different perspective**. When a student feels trapped in a situation, the field education supervisor needs to be able to help the student explore different perspectives on it. One method of doing this is to help the student who sees themselves as caught between two polarized ways of responding to a situation to creatively imagine a third option. Once the either/or way of thinking is removed, a third, fourth, and even fifth option of responding tends to emerge.

Field education supervisors might effectively employ the coaching method of supervision when they are working with a student who needs

motivation to set and achieve goals; a student who tends toward procrastination; a student who responds to all suggestions with “Yes, but . . .”; or a student who describes themselves as overwhelmed by their responsibilities at home, in the academic world, and in the field education placement.

*Encountering Difference (Floding)*

Amey Victoria Adkins’s powerful Holy Week poem “Saturday” begins with these lines:

I grew where the blue of the mountains is so beautiful  
 you think you’ve drowned in eternal life  
 and where folk swim up streams still divided by  
 railroad tracks  
 unresolved<sup>26</sup>

There are many divisions that remain unresolved in the world and in the church. How do we engage difference in a reflective and redemptive way?

Supervisor-mentors can ground their commitment to healthy engagement with difference in the gospel claim that Jesus Christ “is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.”<sup>27</sup> Although Paul is addressing divisions rooted in differences between Jews and Gentile Christians, he affirms this more broadly in his admonition to the diverse Roman Christian community: “As far as your responsibility goes, live at peace with everyone.”<sup>28</sup>

One place where difference is being newly experienced in many communities is in interfaith encounters. It is no longer surprising to see a fellow shopper at Target who is Muslim and wearing a hijab, or head scarf. One may not have many opportunities for deep conversation in such a setting, but an enterprise called Scriptural Reasoning is intentional about bringing persons of diverse faiths together.

As the name suggests, Scriptural Reasoning is a practice of interfaith reading. In small groups Jews, Christians, and Muslims, and sometimes people of other faiths, read and discuss passages from each other’s scriptures. The Cambridge Inter-faith Programme describes the hoped-for outcomes for the participants.<sup>29</sup>

*Not consensus . . .*

The participants don’t have to agree. They may not accept one another’s texts as scripture, nor agree with each other’s reading of them.... It is not about seeking agreement, but about understanding one another’s differences.

*... but understanding ...*

Scriptural Reasoning deepens understanding. You learn more about the scriptures of other faith communities, and some of the ways in which they are read. You witness the passion others have for their scriptures, and hear their questions. But you also learn more about your own scriptures, because you read in the company of people who may never have read them before.

*... and friendship.*

Scriptural Reasoning deepens relationships. You spend time with people of other religions, talking about scriptural texts they really care about. . . . You don't have to politely agree about everything—you can wade in deep, and talk about issues at the heart of your faith. This doesn't lead to agreement, but . . . it does lead to friendship.

Difference can include race, religion, socio-economic status, political views, and more. Perhaps the best place to begin is the obvious place: difference within the church or ministry context itself. Christina Cleveland, in her book *Disunity in Christ*, employs insights from social psychology to probe the disunity difference can cause among Christians. She employs the terms Right Christian and Wrong Christian to explore this, along with self-deprecating humor, as in, "Curiously, Right Christian looks a lot like me."<sup>30</sup> In one of the weekly hours together, the supervisor-mentor could initiate a conversation with the student on the need to encounter difference, including Wrong Christians, with grace and the requisite disposition of respect, empathy, humility, restraint, curiosity, generosity, and kindness.

Easing into difference, a student could be assigned to practice the art of pastoral conversation with a person who is from a different generation.<sup>31</sup> Instructions could include asking questions like: What movies, books, and television programs were important for you growing up? What national crisis or celebration can you recall in which you vividly remember exactly where you were? Who were iconic personalities? What were important faith experiences for you and how was the church involved in them? In the next ministerial reflection hour, the conversation could be explored at the level of what the responses mean and how one might be a faithful pastor for this person and others in his or her generation. Generational differences are relatively small challenges in the larger scheme, but practicing encountering difference at this level can produce fruit at the next.

*Spiritual Direction (Davis)*

Some supervisors have begun to utilize the spiritual direction model for supervision. The goal of this type of supervision is to offer the student a safe and holy space to encounter and contemplate the place of God in the student's ministry, life, and vocational discernment. In a typical format for a spiritual direction session, the supervisor and student begin with a period of contemplative silence. The student is invited to break the silence when he/she is ready by describing a ministry event or offering a personal reflection on an issue with which he or she is dealing. While listening to the student, the supervisor empties him or herself as one would do when offering pastoral care using the *kenosis* method. That is, the supervisor empties the self of thoughts and agendas in order to take in what the student is saying in a non-judgmental manner. The supervisor seeks to respond to the student by listening to the thoughts that come to the supervisor from within and beyond. The responses of the supervisor might be focused on the theological themes and issues that are present, the significance of the event for the student, relevant scripture or readings related to the matter, and the presence of God in the encounter. The student and the supervisor engage in reflection for about forty minutes. Sometimes spiritual disciplines are discussed that might be helpful to the student's growth. The session is concluded with another period of contemplative silence, often ending in prayer by the supervisor.

In a thirty-week internship, the spiritual direction model of supervision model is often used monthly, with the other three weeks of the month utilizing a more conventional method of supervision (e.g., dealing with the practical issues of ministry, case studies, group work). Students who received this type of monthly supervision report that they feel their supervisor was attentive, compassionate, and thoughtful throughout the internship. Others say that this one hour a month of taking time to sit in silence and to reflect upon their internship experiences and life was a gift. Still others describe these supervision sessions as transformational, citing a time when the supervisor helped them to gain clarity regarding their vocational trajectory through praying with them about the issues involved. The spiritual direction model of supervision, used in conjunction with more conventional methods of supervision, allows the supervisor to effectively and authentically live into his or her role as spiritual guide and mentor.

Two excellent centers for supervisors to receive training in spiritual direction are Shalem Institute in Washington, D.C. and Oasis Ministries in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania.<sup>32</sup> Two fine books on the subject are *Holy Listening:*

*The Art of Spiritual Direction* by Margaret Guenther and *Active Spirituality*<sup>33</sup> by Kent Ira Groff.

*Discipleship (Davis)*

The heart of all discipling is helping the followers of Jesus form their lives around faithfully following Jesus. For many generations, pastors have been discipling their field education students. As pastoral mentors, these supervisors have been actively engaged in caring for their students through times of Bible study, shared prayer, discussion of pastoral care issues, and sermon analysis to foster growth in their students. The pastors talk with the students about their faith, their life, their hopes, their dreams, their vocation, and their spiritual disciplines.

For many pastors, this involves studying scripture with their student each time they meet, frequently working together through a book of the Bible or focusing on the lectionary texts. During this time, the student and the pastor share reflections on the scripture from a scholarly and personal perspective in order to encourage each other in mutual growth in faith. Pastors also use the *lectio divina* approach to encountering scripture with their student. In this method, a scriptural text is read slowly, three times, and meditated upon, with each participant listening for the particular word or phrase that speaks to them. Reflection upon the time of meditation happens after the third reading.

Another way to do scripture study is for both the pastor and the student to prepare a brief reflection on the lectionary passages for the week. These reflections are then discussed during the supervisory hour, and occasionally the student is asked to develop his or her reflections into a sermon for the week. This provides a conversation partner on scripture for both the pastor and the student, a sense of reciprocity, and sharpening of both the pastor's and the student's skills.

Many pastors begin and close each session with their students in prayer. This can be a brief opening and closing prayer. Other times pastors use the prayer time as the heart of the supervision session, a time when concerns of the student, the congregation, or mutual concerns are discussed and prayed about. Sometimes students and pastors engage in intercessory prayer for members of their congregation, especially after they have discussed their pastoral needs. A pastor mentioned to me once that when a student came to confess something that had not gone well the past Sunday, the pastor listened intently and then also used the time to confess one of his

current issues. The student and the pastor prayed for each other. This was a turning point in their relationship.

A student who has a wise mentor, one who disciplines the student with faith, courage, wisdom, integrity, authenticity, and compassion, is deeply blessed. Many times students who have had this type of supervision go on to become excellent supervisors themselves. "For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations" (Ps. 100:5).

### EUCCHARISTIC HOSPITALITY

Utilizing one or all of these nine strategies for reflective supervision is, in our view, practicing hospitality. We affirm that hospitality begins with the hospitality of God, with whom we enjoy a covenant relationship by grace through faith. This hospitality is embodied by congregations living out the promises and commitments made at baptism and is extended through the life-giving gospel promises and the communion offered in the Lord's Supper. It is our shared conviction that this hospitality that congregations offer is also experienced in the practice of reflective supervision by supervisor-mentors.

### NOTES

1. Adapted from the "Litany of Beginnings" shared by members of the Presbyterian/Reformed Theological Field Educators' Caucus.
2. Barbara Blodgett and Matthew Floding, *Brimming with God: Reflecting Theologically on Cases in Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 3.
3. *Ibid.*, 4.
4. We would like to thank Lucinda Huffaker for being a helpful conversation partner and reflective listener.
5. From the liturgy of the Reformed Church in America. For the reader who does not practice infant baptism, it may be helpful to think instead of the host church embracing its call to make disciples and nurture gifts and calls.
6. Malcolm Knowles, *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Houston: Gulf Publishing, 1984), 55-61. See also "The Adult Learning Theory—Andragogy—of Malcolm Knowles," *eLearning Industry*, accessed January 5, 2016, <http://elearningindustry.com/the-adult-learning-theory-andragogy-of-malcolm-knowles>.
7. Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach: The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994), 3.



8. William B. Kincaid, *Finding Voice: How Theological Field Education Shapes Pastoral Identity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), 13.
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