

The Shepherding Committee

Role of Shepherding Committee

San Francisco Theological Seminary recognizes the role of the laity as crucial in the preparation of men and women for the ordained ministry. A mandatory internship is part of the Seminary curriculum. In each ministry setting in which an intern is placed it is expected that three to five lay persons will be asked to serve as the Shepherding Committee. This committee should have regular contact with the areas of the life of the ministry setting in which the intern is involved.

The Internship Supervisor is responsible to the seminary to see that three to five people are recruited from the areas of the life of the congregation in which the intern is involved. The Shepherding Committee will be persons to whom the intern can turn for advice and counsel throughout the internship. It is hoped that the relationship will be one of friendship and support for the intern. The Shepherding Committee should also be persons from whom the intern can receive honest evaluation about performance. If the relationship is open and honest the intern should be able to accept both negative and positive criticism without feeling either defensive or embarrassed.

At least once a month through the duration of the internship, the Shepherding Committee should meet with the intern for a conference during which the work of the intern should be examined, and strengths and weaknesses pointed out. The purpose of these conferences is both to encourage the intern to feel competent in areas of strength and to seek to improve in areas of weakness.

During the internship, the Shepherding Committee may be asked to assist the supervisor in evaluation of the intern's work and progress. The members of this committee may be asked to evaluate the intern's sermon delivery and to provide input to the supervisor in advance of the Mid and Final Evaluations.

Who and Why

The Shepherding Committee is made up of members of the ministry setting who are in a position to facilitate an intern's learning and experience in ministry. Its importance derives from the fact that there are lessons to be taught which only lay people can teach. The role of this group is to provide a perspective on the community to the intern and be an additional resource for the intern and Internship supervisor.

The two basic purposes of this committee are

as Representatives, Interpreters, Story-Tellers, and Supporters:

- welcoming the intern and facilitating his or her entry into the community
- interpreting to the ministry setting the purposes and scope of the field studies
- being sensitive to the human needs of the intern, accepting mistakes, affirming the person, celebrating new growth

- inviting the intern (and family) into the common life of ministry.

as Mirrors, Teachers and Learners:

- to provide "feedback" and evaluation to the intern about his or her ministry
- monitoring the Learning/Serving Agreement
- reflecting on specific acts of ministry, providing constructive criticism
- participating in the mid-point and final evaluations of the intern's ministry which is written by the Internship supervisor
- sharing with the intern, their involvements in the church, agency and community and their personal faith journey.

In a congregational setting, the team should be representative of a broad cross-section of the congregation. Members should be persons who are able to be sensitive to what is happening at the levels of the intern, the Internship, and themselves. They should have the ability to ask themselves the questions which help define feelings and suggest the reason for the feelings as well as their meaning. Finally, they should be able to communicate these perceptions and evaluations to the intern in helpful ways, avoiding personal judgments and promoting further dialogue and growth in ministry.