

The Learning/Serving Covenant – CHURCH SETTINGS

Shared by Student, Supervisor, Lay Committee
and MTSO (Academic Advisor, FE Instructor and FE Director)

Introduction

“Covenant” means a binding of persons in mutual trust and loyalty before and with God. The purpose of covenant-making for student internships is to create an intentional promise for professional leadership development. The setting for covenant relationship will be in the context of shaping Christian ministry, in this case, the church.

Covenant-making takes time and thought. Reflection, analysis and dialogue lead to new perspectives on ministry which ultimately

1. Test church professional vocation
2. Develop ministerial identity
3. Develop basic competencies for ministry
4. Teach theological thinking
5. Integrate theological perception with the practice of ministry

The Covenant will be created in the presence of God, between Student and Supervisor and Lay Committee. Academic Advisors at MTSO, along with FE Instructors and the Director will contribute to the conversation as they review the Covenant after it is written by the Student.

Guidelines for Covenant-Making

Writing a Learning/Serving Covenant articulates a Student’s and a church’s teaching and learning goals, developing a plan to meet objectives in a particular time frame. The discipline of conversation about the Covenant brings persons together for shared ministry by building mutual trust and common vision. The FE site is a primary context for refining the call and living into the Covenant; the writing process therefore sets the tone, parameters and direction for the FE relationship.

1. Who is involved? Student, Site Supervisor, Lay Committee all participate from the church’s perspective. Student, Academic Advisor, FE Instructor and FE Director all participate from MTSO’s perspective. The Student is responsible for writing and circulating the Covenant.
2. What training is needed? Each year, a Supervisory Training Seminar for Site Supervisor and Lay Committee representatives is offered in late summer or early autumn. Attendance is strongly suggested. The FE Director will demonstrate the kinds of conversations hoped for during Supervisory and Lay Committee meetings, explain materials in the “e-packet” on the website and establish a wider understanding of the church-MTSO partnership.
3. When is the Covenant due? The written Covenant is due the first class period in October, to be collected by the FE Instructor. The Instructor will make comments and pass it on to the FE Director to be used for mid-year review.

4. What is the process to begin to discuss Covenant-making?
 - All parties involved from the church are requested to review the information online about the requirements and hopes for the FE relationship.
 - In early September, begin to think about the mutual ministry the church and the Student will engage based on the calling of each.
 - Think also about the Student's talents and skills and what she/he wishes to learn and teach.
 - Develop general timelines for emerging goals, a Student plan for integrating academic work with the church's ministry and a timeline for meetings.
 - Review the two sets of evaluation forms to establish what will be pertinent information for student feedback during the year.
5. What is the format for the Covenant?
 - Preface – the purpose of this particular Covenant
 - The vision of ministry for the church setting
 - The vision of ministry for the student
 - Plan for weekly Supervisory meetings including dates
 - Plan for Lay Committee meetings (every 6-8 weeks) with dates
 - Compensation and compensation schedule
 - The work
 - Goals
 - Job description and responsibilities of all parties
 - Timeline
 - Additional hopes and special needs

The signature page – please plan ahead to obtain signatures from all parties. Availability of Academic Advisors should be determined well in advance by appointment.

Supervision and the Setting

6. What Supervision is required? Students and Site Supervisors need to set dates for weekly meetings at the beginning of the Covenant relationship. The FE office relies on Supervisors and Lay Committees to guide and work with Students based on the commitments made in the Covenant. The Covenant and the evaluation forms provide information for the content of these meetings. For example, are the goals of the Covenant on target or do they need to be refined or changed? Are the categories on the evaluation forms being addressed (as relevant)? What are the theological implications of the ministry occurring during the week? What skills are being learned?
7. What exactly are the expectations of the setting? There are several elements of FE to bear in mind:
 - Every conversation matters for Student and church development
 - Students needs to experience ministry fully (beyond one program)
 - Students need to be taken seriously as professionals – many have significant life-experience and education
 - Clear goals, priorities, timelines and compensation schedules are essential for good relationships. Communicating these clearly and effectively among parties involved leads to clear expectations.

- Students should be respected when providing feedback to the church.
 - Covenant-living implies mutual accountability, clear communication and strong support.
8. What if the Covenant needs to change because the nature of the church's and/or Student's ministry is changing? Students are free to submit changes to the Covenant by January 30 to the FE Instructor and Director. All changes must be signed.

Evaluations

9. What do we need to do for evaluation? Supervisors and Lay Committees, respectively, need to begin mid-term evaluation conversations with Students in January so that the Student can turn in the forms in a timely manner. Forms are available online and should be printed in October so that Supervisors and Lay Committees know what they are evaluating. Final reviews should be conducted by mid-April.

Categories as applicable:

- Accountability/responsibility
- Preaching/Worship leadership
- Pastoral Care
- Administrative skills
- Communication skills
- Risk-taking/Vulnerability
- Vocational identity
- Note that there are questions in the evaluations that require written responses. These responses pertain directly to the Covenant.

If you have any questions, please contact the Field Education Office at 740.362.3340.

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