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*FAQs = ‘Frequently Asked Questions’
Introduction

As part of our commitment to passionately nurturing discipleship at CBC, we are seeking to foster powerful, accountable and intentional one-to-one relationships which will aid those in them to take their ‘next steps’ with Jesus. Mentoring is a wonderful and exciting way of pushing more deeply into what God has in store for us.

If you are reading this it probably means you’re interested in exploring mentoring for yourself. If so, please read through this handbook so as to familiarise yourself with its contents, and keep it handy for reference in the future. A PDF of this handbook can be found on the ‘Mentoring’ page in the discipleship section of the church website, and it will be joined by other resources as time goes on. So keep an eye out!

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Christian Mentoring at CBC

We’re not adopting a formal mentoring structure at CBC since we think it’s best to allow such relationships to grow and develop organically. However we’re seeking to encourage these relationships through the provision of training events, guidance, and useful resources like this handbook.

Our ground rules

Having said that, whilst we’re hoping mentoring relationships will develop organically and arrangements will be the responsibility of individuals, there are a few key guidelines that it’s worth setting out from the off. We are strongly advising that anyone wanting to act as a mentor should:

- attend one of the training / briefing sessions before starting
- register the relationships with the CBC Mentoring Co-ordinator and advise if the relationship comes to an end or changes
- prepare a contract for agreement between those in the relationship and to review it at least annually (see appendixes 1 and 2)
- enter a mentoring relationship with a person of the same gender so as to avoid complications or temptations
- provide feedback by attending and contributing to follow-up sessions on mentoring
What is Christian Mentoring?

Isn’t mentoring just a trendy term from the business world?

There’s some truth to that — the explosion of mentoring in the past four decades was triggered when companies adopted mentoring programs in order to more intentionally encourage employees with potential. However this thinking then swept through various spheres of society, such as education, healthcare, youth work, and restorative justice. Over the past few decades it has also caught the imagination of new church traditions which sensed a need for intentional one-to-one relationships that would help to shape their members into the likeness of Christ. There has been a recognition that mentoring echoes patterns of relating for mission that can be found in the Bible and throughout church history.

So what does mentoring have to do with the Christian faith?

Well there are more than a few examples of one-to-one relationships in the Bible which look similar to what we might call mentoring relationships today; people who journeyed together in their spiritual walk in an intentional and dynamic way. Examples include Jethro and Moses; Moses and Joshua; Deborah and Barak, Naomi and Ruth, Elijah and Elisha; David and Jonathan; Samuel and Saul; Barnabas with Paul and John Mark; Paul with Timothy and Silas. Most significantly, Jesus chose to entrust his message to a small rag-tag group of disciples, who shared his life and learnt from him at close hand.

Mentoring a few for the sake of the many seems to have been part a key feature of Jesus’ strategy and mission. Whilst he had a public ministry which reached thousands at any one time (see e.g. Luke
9:10-17) he also made time for one-to-one encounters through which he offered spiritual guidance (e.g. Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, Peter at the lake side). Scripture tells us he specifically called and zeroed in on 12 disciples to focus his attention on in a more intentional way (see Luke 6:12-16), and seems to have particularly taken 3 of these (Peter, James and John) under his wing (see Luke 9:28). They thus served an apprenticeship under Jesus, the master craftsman of the Kingdom.

The twelve were sent out by Jesus to try out what they had learned (Luke 9:1-6) and as a result of the disciples discipling for themselves the next team of apprentices that was sent out by Jesus numbered 72 (See Luke 10:1-24)! This simple pattern of making disciples who make disciples who make disciples (and so on...!) has led to the explosive transformation of the world.

**So what is Christian mentoring?**

There are various definitions floating around, but the following (based on Rick Lewis’ ) is where we’ve settled.

Christian mentoring is concerned with:

- identifying and promoting the work of God’s Spirit in the lives of others
- enabling one another to access God’s resources for mutual growth and strength in spirituality, service and ministry
- using relationships that are unique, intentional and empowering
How is mentoring related to other intentional one-to-one relationships?

Mentoring is more intentional, focussed and deliberate than friendship, but there are other forms of intentional one-to-one relationships. These include:

- **Pastoral care**: Reactive rather than proactive help; normally problem centred
- **Coaching**: Helping someone to develop a specific skill
- **Counselling**: A formal and specialised listening service
- **Spiritual direction**: A form of guidance specifically aimed at developing the inner life of prayer

Whilst it may occasionally overlap slightly with these other kinds of relationship, mentoring is different. There may be times when you feel it right to refer your mentee on to others who can offer these kind of specialised relationships.

What model of Christian mentoring will we be using at CBC?

There are two models of mentoring we’re hoping to develop at CBC:

1. **Traditional Mentoring**: This involves a more experienced disciple (the ‘mentor’) journeying with a less experienced disciple (the ‘mentee’) to help them grow in their walk with Jesus.

2. **Peer Mentoring**: This is where disciples at a similar stage in their spiritual growth decide together to help one another to grow in their walk with Jesus. Prayer triplets can often function as an expression of this kind of mentoring.

The following sections tackle some ‘frequently asked questions’ (FAQs) for those involved in these two models in turn.
Am I a suitable candidate for being a mentor?

On the one hand, anyone can be a mentor, so don’t write yourself off too quickly! It just takes a bit of thought, sensitivity, common sense and discernment. And on top of this, if people start to seek you out as a mentor, or have already done so, that’s generally a good indicator that this might be a gift God’s given you.

On the other hand, if you’re aware that you have deep-seated emotional baggage still to sort through, then you may want to focus on getting through that first, since sometimes it could cause you to mentor out of your needs and impulses rather than from genuine spiritual discernment. You need to be able to ‘tread gently’ when it comes to people’s souls, so if you know you’re currently prone to causing relational damage maybe hit the pause button, at least for now.

Perhaps ask a few friends — whose opinion you trust, and who know you well enough to give you an honest answer — for their opinion. If it’s not the right thing for you right now, why not consider coming alongside people as a friend, or of being part of a peer-mentoring relationship / prayer triplet instead?

Can I be a mentor if I don’t have a mentor myself?

If you are mentoring someone we’d strongly encourage you to have a mentor yourself, or else be clearly accountable to another responsible individual or group who will regularly check with you that things are going okay. Having your own mentor means you that you have someone to talk things through with when the going gets tough, and a broader experience of mentoring will also improve your own practice. Iron sharpenes iron and all that.
How do I approach a potential mentee about mentoring?

It might not always be appropriate to jump in feet first with a potential mentee. Why not start gently by asking ‘do you fancy meeting up for a coffee at some point to chat about what God’s up to in your life right now?’ If this goes well and the potential mentee values the experience, why not meet up a few more times. If it’s right, you’ll both get the sense of wanting to get increasingly intentional about what you’re doing and eventually adopt the term mentoring for what it is you’re doing.

How can I manage expectations?

If you get to the stage where the relationship is becoming more intentional and you’re both ready to adopt the term ‘mentoring’ to describe your relationship, it can often save a lot of confusion and tension if you take some time to clarify the nature of the relationship by jotting down an agreement (preferably written rather than verbal) as to the nature of the relationship and any boundaries that need establishing. This might sound a bit artificial but it can really be a big help and avoid any mismatch of expectations further down the line. See page 20 for a skeleton agreement to use / inspire you.

How long should a mentoring relationship carry on for?

Mentoring relationships don’t have to go on indefinitely, in fact if you don’t have a clear timeframe the relationship can easily lose its focus. It’s best to build in a regular review—say once every 6-12 months. Agree this together when you first meet up to talk about expectations. When you review you may feel that the relationship is still beneficial, in which case you can continue for another set period. Alternately if you feel it has served its purpose—pray for each other and wish each other well as you both move on to new things. See page 22 for some suggested questions for a 6-12 monthly review.
How confidential should I be?

This is a tricky one. Generally speaking you should be utterly confidential. Permission should always be sought before you share someone’s private information. Having said that you should never promise confidentiality, because in certain extreme situations you may be legally required to share information. For example if the person poses a significant risk to themselves or others—especially children.

What if I feel I’m out of my depth?

If you feel out of your depth—that’s okay, it doesn’t mean you’ve failed, and it’s much better to admit this sooner rather than later. Your role might then be to refer your mentee on to someone who can help them. Your role as mentor is not one of professional counselling etc.

How directive should I be?

Mentors are there to empower mentees to do the legwork of discipleship for themselves. This means that on the whole a mentor should lean towards being non-directive, and that the mentee should be the one who sets the pace and makes the decisions. At times it may be appropriate for the mentor to ‘step in’ and alter the course, or rescue the mentee, or deliver a challenge, but these occasions should be exceptional, not the norm.

If you ever see a chick hatching from its egg, you will naturally feel the urge to help it out a little. But actually this is the wrong thing to do. It needs to break out itself in order to develop the muscles it needs to survive long term. In the same way a mentor must for the most part resist the powerful temptation to intervene. You can create a supportive environment, a place of ‘incubation’, but don’t intrude. This can be tough when you see your
mentee struggling, but ultimately your job is not to put things right it’s to help them to discover how God is going to help them.

**What would happen if I were too directive?**

You may have heard of the phenomenon now called ‘heavy shepherding’ which affected several charismatic church networks in the UK and America that were enthusiastically experimenting with mentoring in the second half of the twentieth century. Mentees in those movements were encouraged to submit to and obey their ‘shepherds’, and sometimes this led to *spiritual abuse* or *co-dependency*. This undercut the original intention of forming passionate, accountable and mature disciples.

*Spiritual abuse* is when you use a position you’ve been entrusted with, and the power that comes with it, to lord it over someone. Often this will mean trying to force round pegs into square holes, manipulating people into making decisions or disclosures they don’t feel ready to make, and just generally damaging their soul.

*Co-dependency* is when two people subtly start to relate to one another in a subconscious ‘contract’ that goes something like this: the mentor needs to be needed, whilst the mentee subconsciously enjoys being needy/dependent. This results in the mentor endlessly spoon-feeding and directing the mentee in order to feed their own ego, whilst the mentee never accepts responsibility for their own walk with Jesus. The task of the mentor should be to enable the mentee to grow up as Christ would have them do. The aim, as always, is to be interdependent not co-dependent.

As a mentor a good litmus test to check for co-dependency is asking yourself: will I rejoice when my mentee outgrows me, rather than feel threatened or hurt by this?
Here are Ten Commandments to help in this area:

I. Thou shalt never expect or pressurise your mentee to make self disclosures they don’t feel comfortable with.

II. Thou shalt avoid asking strongly leading or loaded questions.

III. Thou shalt keep the emphasis on the mentee setting the pace and prayerfully setting targets for themselves, rather than writing them a prescription yourself.

IV. Thou shalt not assume anything, but resolve instead to speak less & listen more.

V. Thou shalt not regard your mentee as a receptacle into which you must dispense your great wisdom.

VI. Thou shalt not in any way seek to make your mentee a carbon copy of yourself. God made us as we are for a reason, and one of you is enough!

VII. Thou shalt not look down on your mentee, dish out judgement, or lord it over them, ‘for with the measure you use...’

VIII. Thou shalt not use your mentee as a prop for your ego, it is Jesus Christ who has saved and is sanctifying them — not you.

IX. Thou shalt not view your mentee as your disciple, or life caddy, for you both belong to Jesus, and ‘God has no grandchildren’.

X. Thou shalt always approach your mentee with the wonder, respect and reverence due to any child of God.

What about mystery?

Always remember that you are dealing with mysteries when it comes to this work. In the words of the old hymn, ‘God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform’, and although he may have worked in your life in certain ways in the past, God’s freedom and creativity means he may choose to work in the life of your mentee in very different ways and these will seem strange to you. Don’t stifle this, rather go with the grain of what God is doing.
Remember that the person before you is also a mystery. Try to avoid making assumptions; labelling them in any way, or imposing upon them an agenda or plan that isn’t tailored to them. Instead approach them with prayerful reverence and look to learn from, and hear God through, them. Your own perspective and walk of discipleship will broaden and deepen as a result, and you’ll avoid abusing the influence over your mentee which they, and God, have entrusted you with.

Traditional Mentoring: Mentees - FAQs

How can I find a mentor?

If you’re looking for a mentor, you can approach our mentoring coordinator (currently David Tomlinson), who will have a list of those who have been along to a mentoring training / briefing session and have asked to be on the list. You can look through the list and see if there’s any one on it who you might like to approach for an exploratory conversation about mentoring.

You may know somebody who’s not on the list, but who you’d like to approach. There’s no harm in asking and if they’re interested why not point them to the mentoring co-coordinator who can provide them with resources such as this handbook and details of future training / briefing events.

What if I’m not sure I’ve got the right person as mentor?

If you have entered a mentoring relationship and it doesn’t seem to be working, talk about this with your mentor—they should know not to be offended (and if they are it’s probably a sign that it wasn’t right anyway).
It’s silly to remain in a situation if it’s not really doing what it says it’s supposed to on the tin.

The initial making of a ‘contract’ is a great time to clarify what your hopes and expectations are, establish healthy boundaries for both you and your mentor, as well as to agree on when you will periodically review the mentoring relationship. These reviews provide a natural point at which to draw the formal aspect of the relationship to a close if you feel it has served its purpose.

**What should I expect?**

You may want to read the rest of this handbook, and particularly the section for mentors to better understand what you can expect from a mentor. But at no point should you feel pressured or manhandled by your mentor—the relationship is meant to be a life-giving and exciting one that enhances your walk with Jesus and helps you to better engage with his will for your life.

Having said that you already have a messiah, so please don’t expect your mentor to be a surrogate one! They won’t be able to solve all your problems, or tell you what to do; answer all your questions, or be available to help you at any minute of the day or night. Remember: they’re not so much there to help you themselves, as to aid you in accessing God’s help for yourself direct.

Likewise you shouldn’t expect your mentor to be the chief driving force in the relationship—that’s your job. With mentoring you get out what you put in. There’s a Chinese proverb which says ‘when the pupil is ready, the teacher comes’. This means that the onus is on you as mentee to power your own walk with Jesus, the mentor is there to facilitate you in that. Someone could be the best mentor in the world, but if the mentee hasn’t really got their ‘head in the game’, the relationship won’t be fruitful.

If you have any other lingering questions or concerns feel free to have a conversation with the mentoring co-ordinator.
Peer Mentoring - FAQs

What’s the difference between traditional and peer mentoring?

In traditional mentoring, there is a clear sense that a more experienced disciple (the ‘mentor’) is journeying with a less experienced disciple (the ‘mentee’) to help them grow in their walk with Jesus. In a peer mentoring relationship the dynamic is more mutual and reciprocal —with both participants acting simultaneously as mentor and mentee.

How do I find a peer mentor?

The mentoring coordinator will have a list of all those who have attended a training / briefing session and you may find someone on that list or at the session itself who would be a good fit with you.

Peer mentoring relationships tend to emerge from existing friendships between likeminded disciples who want to help one another get more deliberate about following Jesus. You may for example already regularly go for coffee with someone or be part of a prayer triplet. These relationships may be well on their way to carrying out the function of peer mentoring. What distinguishes them from normal friendships is that a decision has jointly been made to add a deliberate and formalised structure to time together that aids discipleship (e.g. certain questions you have agreed to regularly ask one another; or certain goals / ‘next steps’ you have committed to pray and support one another towards).

What do we do during our time together?

Almost all of the material in this handbook can be easily adapted for the purpose of peer mentoring. You may want to pay particular attention to the suggestions for the format and content of sessions in the following pages.
Format of Sessions

Mentoring works best when scheduled in at regular intervals—normally once every 4-6 weeks. Keeping meetings short and sweet (i.e. two hours tops) keeps it fresh, leaves you wanting more, and helps the relationship to remain constructive, sustainable and sustaining.

There is no prescribed place or manner of meeting. Some will prefer to meet in their homes; others in coffee shops, cafes or pubs; some like to go for a walk or jog together. Whatever works for you.

A typical session may look something like:

- getting together and catching up over a cuppa,
- spending some time in more intentional activity (e.g. see below),
- closing with a time of prayer.

Content of Sessions

Here’s a brainstorm of the kinds of discussion topics or activities mentors and mentees have found helpful:

- Studying the Bible and praying together
- The mentee keeping a spiritual journal & sharing it with their mentor
- Reading a book / spiritual classic together; meeting up to discuss it chapter by chapter
- Working through questionnaires / spiritual audits together, for example the Personal Discipleship MOT document or a gifting questionnaire from the ‘Disciples’ section of the church website etc.
- Brainstorming together ways forward for the mentee
- Some people have said that talking about a painting together (e.g. ‘who are you in the picture?’) has been helpful
- Carrying out tasks together (e.g. going to visit a specific ministry together and discussing afterwards how God was at work through it)
Remember: people have different learning styles; some learn by hearing, others by seeing, and still others by trying things out for themselves. Ultimately there aren’t any set formulas—there are horses for courses and what works with one person may not help another at all!

**Good Question!**

A good question will take you places. The following list is suggested by Rick Lewis in his book *Mentoring Matters* (pages 195-6), and might provide some fruitful avenues for you to explore during your time together:

- When was your last full day off and how did you spend it?
- What memories give you strength?
- What do you see for yourself when you look ten years ahead?
- What have you done this week that will make a difference in five years time?
- What ways of approaching God are most fruitful for you?
- Where has God been present in the events of today?
- Where was he working for your good?
- How is your discipling of others helping you to grow?
- How do you satisfy the need to create something?
- What have you learned about yourself recently?
- Who do you need to forgive, and who owes you an apology?
- What are you reading at the moment?
- What makes you feel powerful/powerless? How do you respond to that feeling?
- Do people have expectations of you that make you uncomfortable?
- What is the hardest thing for you to be honest about?
- What grief/loss have you experienced recently and how are you dealing with that?
- How do family members other than your partner know that they are important to you?
- Who do you spend time with who enjoys your company but does not need you?
- Which of your relationships is most at risk of becoming unhealthy?
- How are you developing friendships with people who are not yet Christians?
Two Helpful ‘LifeShapes’

The following two lifeshapes, easily drawn on the back of a napkin, are useful tools in the context of mentoring. They’re from The Passionate Church: The Art of Life-Changing Discipleship by Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad (Kingsway, 2005).

The Triangle

The **up-in-out triangle** is a helpful and simple diagnostic tool to help you assess whether there’s a healthy balance to your life. Are all three in balance? Where are you strong? Where are you weak?

- **UP** Represents the vertical dimension of life and is concerned with the quality of our spiritual walk with God through personal prayer and worship

- **IN** Represents one’s relationship with other Christians—the quality and health of fellowship / friendship

- **OUT** Represents the outward movement of the individual through engaging in mission.

The Circle

The circle is a tool which helps us to prayerfully reflect on and appropriately respond to the raw material of life. Things happen to us all the time and yet we rarely give enough time and space to intentionally learn or grow as a result of these experiences.

The dotted line along the top symbolises time, and the ‘X’ marks a ‘kairos’ moment. Kairos is the greek word for a specific point in time, here it means a moment in our day-to-day life when something **significant** has happened to us, whether good or bad (e.g. being made redundant, an argument with a close friend, the birth of a child etc.).
Having identified a significant ‘kairos moment’ for your mentee, something which obviously affected them emotionally or otherwise, you can then work through the points on the circle together.

**Observe**  Take some time to articulate what happened—identify the emotions and reactions involved as honestly as possible.

**Reflect**  Now we need to reflect on those observations—why did we feel the way we felt? Why did we react as we did? What was going on there?

**Discuss**  Together chew the cud about the issues that are raised. Is there any scripture or received wisdom that has a bearing on the situation?

**Plan**  Start to think what might be a suitable way to move forward. ‘We need to make a plan to lead our inner change’. What concrete things need to take place or be in place in order to fully learn from this experience / avoid the same mistakes / keep on track with what God has revealed through your observation, reflection and discussion?

**Account**  In order to help ensure the plan takes place it is important to have a strategy for staying accountable to it. Talk about how the mentor can help support (or chivvy!) the mentee with regards to the plan they’ve settled on. ‘Change doesn’t happen in private’

**Act**  Now put the plan into action creating a new ‘kairos’ moment! Enact a new reality!
Appendix 1: A Mentoring Agreement

Here is a suggested series of questions that might form the basis of an initial conversation about a mentoring relationship. It might seem quite formal, but it’s incredibly helpful to clarify expectations from the off. This template for a mentoring contract is adapted from *Mentoring Matters*, by Rick Lewis (Monarch: Oxford 2009), p.101, and is also available in a printable format on the website.

**Over what period will the mentoring last?**

**How and/or where will mentoring sessions be held?**

**How often will sessions take place and how long will they be?**

**How accessible is the mentor to be outside those sessions?**

**Who will initiate contact and confirm arrangements?**

**How will incidental expenses be handled? (e.g. coffee!)**

**What matters will the mentoring address?**
What outcomes are expected?

Who has responsibility for those outcomes?

What expectations does the mentee have of the mentor?

What expectation does the mentor have of the mentee?

What are the expectations of honesty and accountability?

What standards of confidentiality are expected?

What process of review will be followed?
Appendix 2: A Review Structure

A review should be built into your mentoring relationship every 6-12 months or so. Spend some time thinking and praying before you meet. You may even wish to bring some reflections with you. Below are some suggested questions that might help to guide the review process.

Look

• What has happened in the mentee's life during the past 6-12 months that is to celebrate/mourn?
• What has God been doing or teaching them during this time?
• How has your mentoring relationship assisted what God has been doing?

Reflect

• Do you both feel it right to carry on this mentoring relationship for another specific period of time?
• If no, pray for one another, giving thanks for the time you've spent together, and committing your next steps to God.

Plan

• If yes, are there any changes to the format or scope of your mentoring relationship that could be made to make the time more useful? Are there any revisions to your original agreement needed?
• Are there any specific areas the mentee feels God would like them to focus on/prioritise in the coming 6-12 months?
• Commit these to paper and to prayer.
Appendix 3: Suggestions for Further Reading

Here are a few recommended books if you’re interested in exploring things a bit more deeply:

*Mentoring Matters*, by Rick Lewis (Monarch: Oxford 2009)

A lot of the material in this handbook is indebted to this tome. Accessible and thorough, it’s packed full of useful suggestions.

*The Passionate Church: The Art of Life-Changing Discipleship*, by Mike Breen and Walt Kallestad (Kingsway, 2005).

This book offers some useful tools to aid discipleship, two of which are mentioned in this handbook (p. 18 and 19)

*Christian DNA Groups: A workbook for the first year*, by Nigel Coles (Verité, 2012)

A workbook by our regional minister Nigel Coles for discipleship triplets. A useful resource for peer mentoring.

Phil Durrant also wrote a dissertation on the topic of Christian mentoring and spiritual direction, so if you’d like to borrow a copy or have him email it to you drop him a line. It’s in an academic format so maybe not one for a light bedtime read—unless you want some help getting to sleep!
NOTES