

Suggestions for Creating Professional Development Goals

Theological Field Education is an experiential learning opportunity that is focused on professional competency and personal growth, toward developing your pastoral identity and imagination – your sense of who you are as a minister . During your field placement, you will covenant to be in a learning/serving relationship with your supervisor and congregation/community, using an action-reflection model of learning together. Your placement year will be filled with *action* – practical, hands-on experience as you take on the tasks of ministry, wherever you may be serving. And your supervisor (and perhaps other members of the congregation/community) will join with you in *reflection* – offering guidance and companionship as you reflect theologically on your experiences and grow in knowledge, faith and vocation.

Your goals should thus identify your intentions for *how you wish to develop personally and professionally* during this placement. There will be tasks, readings, and feedback mechanisms that accompany them – but the goals themselves should be focused on your learning interests and development needs. As you name your goals, you may wish to use words such as, *develop, experience, learn, discern, explore*, etc. You may also wish to keep a few things in mind:

- To what vocation/ministry do you feel called? What knowledge and experiences will you need to have as you prepare for this ministry? You may not be able to do it all – but it will be helpful to incorporate enough of a variety to make your experience as well-rounded and fruitful as it can be...
 - e.g., for parish ministry – worship & preaching; Christian education; Bible study; pastoral care/visitation; community service, justice/advocacy; church governance & stewardship, etc.;
 - e.g., for a non-parish ministry – knowledge of the prison/justice system; knowledge of resources for hunger, homelessness, etc.; understanding of health and wellness resources and barriers; understanding of youth development; etc.
- Are there denominational requirements for ordination and/or endorsement that you must address? And/or (for a specialized vocation, such as chaplaincy or counseling) are there other requirements for certification that you must pay attention to?
 - If you need assistance finding any of these requirements, the Director of Theological Field Education can help you locate them
- Are there areas of academic learning that you especially wish to integrate into your practical ministry?
 - e.g., scriptural studies; particular theologians and/or philosophers; world religions; multicultural concerns and competencies (e.g., black faith and life, liberation theologies, LGBTQ theologies or ethics, etc.); psychotherapeutic and/or pastoral care theories/theologies and techniques, etc.

- How do the needs and interests of your site placement fit in with your own learning needs and interests? Are there any areas that are a natural fit for your tasks and learning needs and desires to come together?
 - e.g., if you are especially interested in faith-based community service and the church you are serving has a soup kitchen, you may wish to create a goal such as *learning all of the aspects of running a church-based community service*, with accompanying tasks such as *volunteering at the soup kitchen twice a month, assisting the volunteer coordinator, learning about finances from the comptroller, etc.*
- What are your strengths and gifts for ministry? What are your growing edges and experiential gaps?

A note about gifts and growth... While it is sometimes quite natural to lean toward (or on!) our strengths and gifts, it is important to pay attention to our gaps and areas for growth. As you develop your learning covenant, you may wish to focus more on your growing edges, knowing that there will be plenty of opportunity for your strengths and gifts to shine through, during the course of the year. Or, you may wish to strike a balance with both. Your strengths may allow for an opportunity to learn how to help a congregation grow and develop – for example, someone who brings gifts in teaching and volunteer administration to a congregation that seeks to improve upon its adult Christian education offerings, you may wish to set a goal of “*developing my skills in program growth, as I help Grace Methodist Church develop its adult education programming.*”

Finally – your Site Supervisor, your Academic Advisor and the Director of Theological Field Education are all your partners in learning. Please connect with each of them, as you map out the goals that will help you make the most out of your field placement experience!

Please see pages 42 and 43 for sample learning objectives for both congregational and community field placement settings.

For example, a parish field placement might include professional development goals such as the following:

AREA of COMPETENCY	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOAL	STRATEGIES (tasks/ activities and helpful resources)	What specific MDiv LEARNING OUTCOME will this goal address?	METHODS of ASSESSMENT
Develop Critical Thinking	Develop skill in preaching from the lectionary, in a way that is connected to both congregational life and current events.	Preach 2x/semester and participate in worship 3 Sundays/month Write weekly lectionary reflections, to share with supervisor Read <i>The Preaching Life</i> by Barbara Brown Taylor and discuss with supervisor	I.1 - demonstrate knowledge of the Bible, its history, tradition and methods of interpretation, and the capacity to bring scriptural wisdom into critical engagement with current crises and opportunities	Weekly supervisory conversations with supervisor Feedback from lay committee after each sermon
Cultivate Compassionate Connection	Develop confidence and competence in providing pastoral care to individuals and congregational community.	Shadow supervisor on pastoral visits during first 2 months Do solo pastoral visits, for crisis care and sustained pastoral care Incorporate pastoral focus into sermons Look at family systems theory resources with supervisor	II.2 - demonstrate ability to offer quality pastoral care and wise ethical guidance to individuals and communities	Weekly supervisory conversations with supervisor Feedback from lay committee after each sermon Direct feedback from parishioners I've provided care for (if they are comfortable providing it)
Promote Ethical-Spiritual Integrity	Identify and develop congregational leadership style that mirrors my spiritual and social commitments.	Attend staff meetings, council meetings, and relevant committees Practice facilitation skills that are sensitive to different styles of engagement Participate in congregational anti-racism training	III.2 - seek greater and greater coherence between one's publicly stated beliefs and values and one's personal and communal practices.	Weekly supervisory conversations with supervisor Periodic direct feedback from appropriate committee leaders
Support Concrete Strategic Action	Develop capacity for engaging a congregation in faith-based organizing that is focused on the needs of the surrounding community.	Attend local CAPS meetings at neighboring church Participate in outreach committee activities Attend organizing training with supervisor and congregational leaders	IV.2 - demonstrate ability to identify and analyze social structures of oppression and to propose and implement strategies of change	Weekly supervisory conversations with supervisor Periodic direct feedback from outreach committee leaders

Or, for a field placement at a faith-based or interfaith community-service organization (e.g., an agency focusing on homelessness):

AREA of COMPETENCY	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT GOAL	STRATEGIES (tasks/ activities and helpful resources)	What specific MDiv LEARNING OUTCOME will this goal address?	METHODS of ASSESSMENT
Develop Critical Thinking	Gain deeper understanding of Christian and neighboring faiths' responses to homelessness	Participate in interfaith dialogue series, which will culminate in a shared community service project Meet with leaders from the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs and Inner-City Muslim Action Network	I.4 - demonstrate knowledge of and ability to critically engage with at least one tradition other than Christianity	Direct observation and weekly theological reflection with supervisor and agency peer group
Cultivate Compassionate Connection	Gain understanding of and experience with sensitive and effective pastoral care with people who are homeless, and across the spectrum of agency clients served (teens, seniors, women, men, families, LGBTQ, African American, Latino/a, white, etc.)	Provide pastoral care and outreach services to clients, through regular participation in ongoing agency services and activities Read <i>A Recipe for Hope</i> , by Karen Skalitzky	II.2 - demonstrate ability to offer quality pastoral care and wise ethical guidance to individuals and communities	Direct observation and weekly theological reflection with supervisor and agency peer group
Promote Ethical-Spiritual Integrity	Develop ways to bring the compassionate care and advocacy needs of the homeless community into congregational ministry	Preach twice/year at in-care congregation, incorporating stories from outreach ministry Develop draft of curriculum about homelessness to share with in-care congregation	III.1 - engage in sustained, critical and effective theological and ethical reflection on the practice of ministry in the parish and other contexts	Weekly theological reflection with supervisor, feedback from church pastor, Christian Education committee and in-care committee after each sermon
Support Concrete Strategic Action	Learn about & demonstrate capacity with faith-based advocacy	Attend faith-rooted organizing training Participate in community action council meetings Work with agency advocacy team on educational event for aldermen and other local leaders	IV.2 - demonstrate ability to identify and analyze social structures of oppression and to propose and implement strategies of change	Direct observation and weekly theological reflection with supervisor and agency peer group; feedback from faith-rooted organizing trainers after actions and events

Field Placement Assessment Rubric: How do I know I'm making progress on my goals?

You and your supervisor can fill out this chart together, to identify specific ways that both of you can track how you are making progress on your professional development goals. Write each goal and its accompanying learning outcome into the first two columns. In the remaining columns, name *observable criteria* that will help you and your supervisor determine how you are demonstrating your ability in each of these areas. The Director of Theological Field Education will be glad to provide guidance for this exercise.

Goal	Learning Outcome	Demonstrates Strong Progress	Demonstrates Adequate Progress	Demonstrates Inadequate Progress	Fails to Demonstrate Progress