

GUIDELINES FOR SEMINARY FORMATION PLAN

The Seminary Formation Plan is foundational to your education, spiritual growth, and intentional development during your time at Northern. The plan you develop will be updated and reviewed yearly. This plan is to be used by you. Therefore, it will uniquely reflect where you are in your self-awareness and in your place of growth. It is also designed to push you to better understand your call to ministry. You'll also use this plan to develop part of your Internship experience.

Please keep a copy of your final Seminary Formation Plan in your personal records and refer to it often during your time at Northern to see how you're growing in each area. You will be asked to update this plan as part of each Supervised Ministry course you take at Northern.

Your task in the Seminary Formation Plan is to reflect upon what you have learned about yourself and ministry this quarter. This plan will probably be 8-10 pages in length. Please be thoughtful and concise in your responses.

In your plan, you are asked to draw upon what you have learned from classroom discussions, exercises, readings and your devotional life. In light of your understanding, develop a Seminary Formation Plan (using the format provided below) which you will implement during your next three years of seminary. Include reflection regarding where you are in each area. Please write specific goals under each area, and include how you intend to meet these goals.

Instructions for Seminary Formation Plan -

For each of the areas to be covered in your Seminary Formation Plan, please spend time in prayerful reflection and *answer the specific questions found under the subject areas bulleted below*. In addition to answering the specific questions, under each subject area discuss:

- a. Your strengths
- b. Where there is needed growth/experience
- c. List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth
- d. How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

SUBJECT AREAS

1. **Calling** – Articulate your understanding of your calling and how that understanding has moved/shifted/been strengthened/been called to question during this past quarter. What do you believe you are called to do and be at this point? During this year/quarter, how have you become aware of yourself as a minister and the ways your ministry affects persons?

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:

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2. **Spiritual Disciplines and Practices** – Describe your relationship with God at this time. Include how you have experienced a longing for God and how you have been “hearing” from God. Describe where you hear God calling you to greater healing, health, growth? What spiritual disciplines are you practicing in this season of your life? How fruitful is your devotional life and pursuit of the mind of Christ and godliness? What gets in the way? Where have you experienced victory? Where would you like to go from here? If you would like coaching regarding spiritual disciplines, a good resource is *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun (ISBN:978-0-8308-3330-6).

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:

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3. **Sabbath** – How do you practice a weekly Sabbath and other rest? What hunches do you have regarding how God may be calling you to shift these patterns?

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4. **Ministerial Skills** – Take time to list your ministry skills in 3 categories. (Example areas of ministry include: leadership, preaching, teaching, youth, older adults, community outreach, evangelism, counseling, administration, finance, conflict, etc.) The 3 categories are:
- a. What have you learned to **do quite well or find more natural** to do because of your natural abilities or gifting?
 - b. What do you think **you will do well with opportunities** to grow?
 - c. Are there areas of ministry that are a source of anxiety for you? Finish this sentence: “I do not want to be in a ministerial position where I’ll be in charge of or expected to.....”.

In addition to answering the specific questions, discuss:

- a. List specific action steps to be taken in order to achieve growth (Where/how can you practice these skills? What books should you read or conferences should you plan on attending?)
- b. How you will be – and to whom you will be accountable – for your growth/development

5. **Ministerial Ethics** – Does your life/lifestyle reflect the character of Christ? Describe how your life reflects the character of Christ? (i.e. Where do you see the fruits of the Spirit? Are you abstaining from sin? etc.) How are you doing in terms of:
- Confidentiality
 - Professionalism

- Decision making
- Doing the right things

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6. **Understanding of My Church and Denomination** – What is your understanding of the theological tradition of your church or denomination? Briefly explain the process for ordination in your church or denomination. Who should you contact to prepare for ministerial or vocational placement?

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7. **Physical and Mental Health** – Are you physically and mentally healthy? What are you doing in your life to care for your body and your mind? In what ways do you need to improve your health? What gets in the way of your achieving greater health? Reflect on your exercise, sleep, thought life and eating habits. Complete the following sentence: “If I were to be perfectly honest about my physical and mental health, I would tell you...”.

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8. **Relational and Social Health** – Do you have a healthy balance between ministry, social life, family, recreation, etc? Develop a plan for improving your relational and social health. What kind of appropriate boundaries do you have or do you need to create?

Do you have people in your life who support you in ministry and/or in seminary? Identify several people who will or have supported you emotionally and spiritually during your time in seminary. Develop a ministerial support team of fellow students and current people in ministry.

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9. **Financial Health** – How are your finances? Are you living within your means or are you struggling? Do you have a budget written that works for you and your family? Is there room for improvement? What are the stresses in your finances? Is there anything in your spending patterns about which you are ashamed?

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10. **Conflict Management** – Most of us know if we are people pleasers who avoid conflict at all costs or ignore our own boundaries and bend over backward in order to appease those who are angry, frustrated, hurt, etc. On a scale of 1-10, how comfortable are you in facing and managing individual and group conflict? What skills do you possess that you might you draw upon during conflict? What is your gut response and outward response when you see conflict between others? When the conflict involves you?

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11. **Time Management** – Each of us fall somewhere between absolutely **controlling time** (because it makes us feel and think we are competent) and, on the other end of the polarity, **ignoring time** (because of some avoidance issue or lack of motivation). Most of us struggle with not thinking we are enough, or falsely assuming we are absolutely fine with what we think and do. Explain your approach to time management. Is time an enemy, something you ignore or is it neutral? What is functional and what is dysfunctional in how you live within the time constraints and opportunities in life? How can you improve your time management skills?

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