Northern Synod

TASK TEAM MENTORSHIP 1

Report

1. Assignment

In the previous term of the SSC (2017-2022), a task team received the instruction to organise mentorate, but reported that though mentorate is important, it should not be organised. It is a spontaneous process where people become aware for themselves which people they resonate with and then approach such people to request them to be their mentors.

The SSC of the present term judged that it would be good to test the issue again, and phrased it as follows: :

To investigate the need for a task team for mentorate.

2. Task team leader and discussion partners

Fay van Eeden (task team leader), Tienie Bosman, Pieter Visser, Wynand van Niekerk, Jeanri Erasmus, Peet Venter, Gerrie Bodenstein, Anuschka Smit, Ernst van Wyk, Anton Pienaar and Fritz Snyman.

3. Execution of the assignment

I put two questions to the ten discussion partners who are mentioned above and who are all ministers between the ages of 28 and 65:

1. The Northern Synod is of the belief that mentors can play an important role in pastors' lives. The Northern Synod also believes that mentorate should not be organised but that ministers should find mentors with whom they resonate. What is your opinion on this?

2. In which way do you think the synod can play a role in mentorate, or is it a matter that belongs with the presbyteries?

Outcome

- All ten agreed that mentorship plays an important role in the development and guidance of ministers, especially in the unique challenges provided by each congregation and context.
- Furthermore, all think that each minister needs someone with whom he/she resonates theologically, contextually, and emotionally.
- The group all felt that ministers should choose mentors for themselves. By personally choosing a mentor, the minister has the opportunity to form a natural, authentic mentorship bond rather than a structural or enforced one that may be less effective.

As regards the role of the **synod**, the group felt that the synod should focus on making people aware of the importance of mentorship, rather than structuring the process. The synod could, by way of support, point ministers to existent mentorship resources. The director could also assist ministers to identify suitable mentors.

It is also possible for **presbyteries** to play a more active role. Meetings of the presbyteries can be presented in such a way that good relationships are fostered, which possibly can lead to mentorship bonds.

4. Recommendations

4.1 The Northern Synod affirms the important role that mentorship can play in the development, guidance, and support of ministers.

4.2 The synod encourages ministers to find mentors themselves. Getaways for ministers and sessions of the synod can be utilised to reaffirm the value of mentorship.

4.3 The synod encourages presbyteries to use visitation and other presbyterial events to conduct conversations on the importance of mentorship.

4.4 The synod reminds church councils and Employment Relations Commissions (ERCs) to attend to ministers' well-being and care.

5. Closing word

Although it does not appear necessary to have a task team to organise mentorships, the issue of mentorate should remain on the SSC's agenda.