

PRIMARY QUALITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY

- To identify six crucial qualities for persons in ministry
- To elaborate on the elements of each quality
- To examine a variety of ways each can be expressed
- To suggest ways to develop and strengthen each quality

*What does it take to be in professional ministry? How can I tell if I have the basic foundations for ministry?
In what ways would these qualities be expressed in every day life? Whom do I know who has these qualities?*

TRIAD DISCUSSION TO STRENGTHEN QUALITIES FOR MINISTRY: *This resource can be adapted to a variety of settings, including a workshop with church members, an Inquirers' retreat, one-on-one dialogue with an advisor, or a Committee on Ministry meeting. Read the "Possible Ways To Use This Resource" sheet for more specific guidance.*

**"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;...
varieties of service, but the same Lord;...
varieties of activities, but it is the same God
who activates all of them in everyone."
(1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NRSV)**

The varieties of gifts, service and working are many. As we strive to live out our calling from God, we are confronted by a diversity of vocational choices and must ask what gifts and interests...what talents and qualities...we have which lead us toward a specific choice. Although knowledge and skills can be acquired at different times in life, many personal qualities evolve only after years of developing one's own unique personhood. Thus we look carefully for certain primary qualities in a person which may suggest a harmony with the fundamentals of professional ministry. In a field as varied as this one (i.e. Parish ministry, Christian education, chaplaincy, missionary work, etc.) different skills and gifts are needed in specific settings. However, there are six primary qualities which seem to be important in most ministries for effective performance and a personal sense of purpose:

1. LIVES IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD
2. LIVES IN RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF
3. LIVES IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS
4. HAS COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL / SKILLS
5. HAS AN INQUIRING CREATIVE ORIENTATION TOWARD LIFE
6. CAN MAKE COMMITMENTS AND CARRY OUT RESPONSIBILITIES

The triangular activity of relating – **LIVING IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD...SELF...OTHERS** – often characterizes effective ministry. Failure to develop any one of these three areas may significantly hinder one's abilities in professional ministry. Two specific skills, **COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP**, are often essential in ministry, requiring both an interest and an ability to develop these skills. Having an **INQUIRING CREATIVE ORIENTATION** with its flexibility and openness is as important as being able to **MAKE COMMITMENTS AND CARRY OUT RESPONSIBILITIES** with its conviction and decisive action. Those who can utilize each quality appropriately will discover ministry being more productive and enjoyable.

Explore the dimensions of each quality...and survey the possible ways of living them out. One can often self-determine whether these qualities are personally significant and well developed, recognizing personal strengths and clarifying vocational direction. The listings of "ways to express this quality" are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive...but are intended to provide suggestions of what activities might be reflected.

POSSIBLE WAYS TO USE THIS RESOURCE

FOR VOCATIONAL SEEKERS

Have you ever wondered what it takes to be active in professional ministry?
Have you ever wanted to do something to express what you are feeling?
Examine these six qualities and ask which ones are important to you. Skim the ways

each might be expressed and identify those which already describe your behavior. Are there particular areas in which you feel the desire to grow? Does this resource help you understand what is important for many of those already involved in professional ministry? Would you like to explore this further?

FOR INQUIRERS AND CANDIDATES

You have already indicated your interest in professional ministry. Now you are testing your own gifts with those needed in that vocation. Examine these six qualities and ask which ones are most active in your present lifestyle.

Which quality is most obvious in your interests and actions? Which is least active?

Think for a moment what complications might arise if you were very limited in one or more of these qualities. Are there ways you might strengthen this quality? Could you talk about this with a member of your presbytery's Committee on Preparation for Ministry?

FOR COMMITTEES ON PREPARATION FOR MINISTRY

This resource could be used at several points: as you meet with those seeking to be enrolled as Inquirers, as you orient sessions to their responsibilities, as you decide on a person's readiness for candidacy, as you hold annual consultations and evaluate progress, and as you equip and train

your CPM members. This resource may help identify the ways persons are already demonstrating each of the primary qualities. Lack of expression in any one quality may raise an area for dialogue and planning for the future. However, do not use this as a checklist of expectations.

FOR PASTORS AND SESSIONS

You may review these qualities deemed important for professional ministry and recognize them being actively expressed by a member(s) of your congregation who could be encouraged to explore this vocational field. Or you may have members come to you to discuss their sense of call. This resource may help you better advise them as you review how they are expressing these primary qualities. No one person will do all of these activities, but these are many which have been identified by others as important at different ages and in various settings. An absence of any active expression of a particular quality opens a window for dialogue. However, do not use this as a checklist of expectations.

FOR THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS

Many persons may choose to contact your faculty or staff as one of their first steps of inquiry.

As you listen to them, you can be sensitive to those emerging qualities being expressed.

What

lifestyle activities do they describe which fit the various primary qualities? Does this person project a potential for ministry which should be encouraged? Has this person used the resources available in the congregation and presbytery? Current students might use this resource to identify strengths and weaknesses which could shape course selection. However, do not use this as a checklist of expectations.

1. LIVES IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- has a vital, searching personal faith in God revealed in Jesus Christ
- continually open to the direction of the Holy Spirit through the church
- affirms the role of Biblical faith relating to current social issues
- possesses a sense of divine presence and calling to professional ministry

VARIOUS WAYS OF EXPRESSING THIS QUALITY:

- + uses personal devotional practices (prayer, meditation, Bible reading)
- + reads books which deepen understanding of God's will and way
- + has a positive attitude toward the church as the people of God
- + expresses a confident, visionary commitment to the church's ministry
- + identifies and participates with a community of believers
- + is actively involved in some form of ministry
- + asks theological questions about meaning of faith and life
- + engages in opportunities for Christian fellowship
- + participates in Bible study / prayer / support groups
- + willing to articulate own faith...to pray aloud in a group
- + makes connections between Biblical faith, personal action & events
- + after a crisis, able to engage in rebuilding life
- + lives life with a sense of grace
- + perceived as being a theologian in life and thought
- + views personal life as a spiritual journey

2. LIVES IN RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

- makes realistic self-appraisal leading toward solid sense of identity
- respectful of self, acknowledging personal issues, strengths, and limits
- wholeness in mind / body / spirit enables capacity to care, help, and give
- has talent for self-direction and disciplined use of time / energies

VARIOUS WAYS OF EXPRESSING THIS QUALITY:

- + willingness to be self-critical and to self-disclose
- + exhibits self-confidence, while admitting limits and vulnerabilities
- + acknowledges mistakes; seeks forgiveness
- + record of trustworthiness, honesty, fairness
- + exhibits a congruence of words and behavior
- + possesses a combination of adaptability and moral integrity
- + able to live with risk and vulnerability
- + patient and flexible; tolerance for ambiguity
- + exhibits a sense of self-worth: attitude of joy, hope, optimism, playfulness
- + displays a sense of humor and lively personal interests
- + has good physical and emotional health
- + rebounds from defeat - ability to bounce back
- + committed to causes greater than self (justice, peace)
- + does not pursue personal advantage; not self-serving
- + lifestyle reflects high moral and spiritual commitments

3. LIVES IN RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

- possesses sensitivity and compassion towards all persons
- understands the need for healthy interdependence between persons
- seeks relationships which mutually empower and call forth gifts
- forms and sustains positive relationships

VARIOUS WAYS OF EXPRESSING THIS QUALITY:

- + respectful towards the uniqueness and diversity of persons
 - + desires to nurture / equip / support others in their unique ministry
 - + open and receptive to persons regardless of culture or background
 - + treats members of the opposite sex with respect and dignity
 - + relates well with a diverse group of people
 - = engaging and winsome
 - = shows love for people
 - = includes new people
 - + encourages peers in games, projects and social activities
 - + depends on others and is dependable; mutuality in relationships
 - + shows empathy and caring for persons under stress
 - = listens actively
 - = flexible; responsive
 - + teachable; has a willingness to be moved by others
 - + able to ask for help and share leadership roles
 - + intentional about connection to communities of faith
 - + gives own time and money
- = has a sense of humor
 - = comfortable with oneself
 - = not defensive or exploiting
 - = trustworthy in confidences
 - = compassionate

4. HAS COMMUNICATION & LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL/SKILLS

- ability to exhibit overt leadership rather than passive response
- can express thoughts and feelings in spoken and written form
- can inform, enlighten, motivate, challenge and persuade
- encourages group spirit, delegates responsibilities, listens actively

VARIOUS WAYS OF EXPRESSING THIS QUALITY:

- + ability to deal with facts and ideas; to analyze, synthesize, summarize
 - + ability to speak publicly to be informative, enlightening, and motivating
 - + written material is well organized and clear
 - + is an attentive, active listener
 - + opinions and problem-solving skills are respected and sought out
 - + selected for leadership roles by peers and superiors
 - + able to delegate and share leadership role
 - + exhibits initiative, good judgement, discernment, respect for others
 - + works well with a variety of people
 - + exhibits gifts for leadership
 - = initiates; self-disciplined
 - = flexible; open to change
 - = courageous; resilient
 - + has the potential for envisioning and developing action plans
 - + tolerant of long hours, misunderstandings, irrational love and hostility
- = ability to teach & move others
 - = able to manage conflict
 - = uses and confronts power wisely

5. HAS AN INQUIRING CREATIVE ORIENTATION TOWARD LIFE

- sees life as a gift and approaches it with respect, curiosity, joy
- has an intellectual alertness which is open, adaptable, energetic
- approaches new experiences with a spirit of adventure
- is imaginative and creative in envisioning possibilities

VARIOUS WAYS OF EXPRESSING THIS QUALITY

- + able to transcend self and situation; to think clearly and critically
- + more intrigued by possibilities than givens; sees beyond the obvious
- + able to connect ideas and realities
- + exhibits self-confidence in an environment of ambiguity
- + able to live with risk and vulnerability; to face the tragic / absurd
- + perceptive and energetic; will not stay discouraged
- + displays enthusiasm, openness and flexibility; is playful
- + has a genuine curiosity about life and a love of learning
- + shows a wide range of interests (i.e. reading, extra-curricular)
- + has breadth and depth in conversation
- + enjoys interaction with persons of different ages and cultures
- + eats foods from different cultures
- + has a hopeful vision of the church
- + displays effective study habits and positive peer relationships
- + mastery of academic requirements (theological disciplines)

6. CAN MAKE COMMITMENTS & CARRY OUT RESPONSIBILITIES

- expresses a commitment to the authority of Jesus Christ
- committed to empowering and preparing all the people of God
- willing to work within the structures of the denomination
- willing to engage, with compassion, in struggle for justice and peace

VARIOUS WAYS OF EXPRESSING THIS QUALITY:

- + makes public profession of faith; is an active church member
- + shows loyalty to congregational life and to larger body of Christ
- + invites / brings others to Christ and Christ's church
- + has a sense of ministry as a lay person
- + courageous in living with the risk of conflict and failure
- + thinks about the consequences of own actions
- + follows through on accepted responsibilities; acts out convictions and values
- + dependable work record
- + evidence of making commitments to causes, organizations, structures
- + commitment to causes greater than self (justice, peace)
- + commitment to work in partnership and common ministry
- + commitment to work against racism / classism / sexism / ageism
- + understands to nature of the institutional connectional church
 - = active member of Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
 - = acquaintance with and commitment to Reformed tradition
 - = enthusiastic about Presbyterian heritage / polity / program

INTRODUCING “ PRIMARY QUALITIES...” IN SMALL GROUPS

A. PROVIDE TIME TO READ THE ENTIRE RESOURCE

B. FORM RANDOM TRIADS

1. Reread the introduction (page 1) and recall the six primary qualities. 60 minutes

2. Focus on the 3rd paragraph which begins: “**The triangular activity of relating...**” and discuss together how you agree and disagree with this paragraph. Use the following questions to help your discussion: (20 minutes)
 - a. *Are these qualities you have observed in others in professional ministry?*
 - b. *Which of these qualities is currently your strongest?*
 - c. *Do you agree that each of these six qualities is important to your understanding of ministry?*
 - d. *Which would you most like to strengthen or develop?*

3. Choose ONE of these qualities for your triad to explore in detail. Read the descriptive phrases and the possible ways of expressing this quality. (20 minutes)
 - a. Take turns sharing how YOU have demonstrated this quality in the past four weeks.
 - Are these ways listed in the paper?
 - If not, would you recommend they be added?

 - b. If someone interested in professional ministry discovered that she/he was not demonstrating this quality regularly, what would you recommend to him/her?

 - c. If someone interested in professional ministry thought this quality was unimportant to his/her sense of call, what would you recommend?

4. Have each member of the triad think of her/his own sense of vocational direction and consider which of these qualities is most important. (20 minutes)
 - a. Take turns sharing briefly your own emerging vocational direction and describing which quality seems most important for your particular calling.

 - b. AFTER you have listened to each other, what helpful comments, observations, or suggestions might you make to each other?

5. If time permits, have your triad select **ANOTHER** quality and explore it as you did under section three.

C. BRING TRIADS TOGETHER

1. What have you learned in this process?
2. Discuss question 3.C.

20 minutes