

Ninety-Day Companions for New Mid-Council Leaders

A Service Provided by the Association of Mid-Council Leaders and the Association of Stated Clerks

What is the Ninety-Day Companion Program?

What is it like to begin service as a new Mid-Council Leader?

“I feel like I’m drinking from a fire hose” is a common reaction. Sometimes new leaders can feel overwhelmed and inundated. Some are looking for resources, and don’t know where to start. Some find it all exhilarating and want a good colleague to share the joy.

The purpose of the ninety-day companion program is to provide the new leader with a close colleague relationship to share the start-up season. The ninety-day period begins as soon as is helpful to the new leader – generally when the new position begins or shortly before the start-date. The companion shares the privilege of walking with the new leader through the beginning months of service.

Who is Eligible for the 90-Day Companion Program?

The Association of Mid-Council Leaders (AMCL) and the Association of Stated Clerks (ASC) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) will provide a 90-Day Companion to new Mid-Council Leaders who would like to benefit from this service. This includes those with position titles such as Stated Clerk, Executive/General Presbyter, Associate Executive/General Presbyter and those in hybrid roles. We recognize that there are dozens of titles for these positions, and will always work on an individual basis for eligibility. Those in temporary/transitional/interim positions are also eligible, in particular if it is a longer-term position.

How are 90-Day Companions Assigned?

The Associate for Mid-Council Relations in the Office of the General Assembly (OGA) keeps track of the selection of new Mid-Council Leaders and refers them to the joint 90-Day Companion Team of AMCL and ASC. The team matches the new leader with an experienced Mid-Council Leader.

How are the More Experienced Companions Selected?

The more-experienced companions are assigned from a pool of volunteers from ASC and/or AMCL. Regular opportunities to volunteer for service as a companion are provided to the organizations.

How Do We Get Started?

When the new leader is matched with a more-experienced leader, they will receive an email to connect them and start the journey. It’s traditional that the more experienced leader take the initiative to contact the new presbytery leader, but the new leader also often jumps in first. The 90-Day Team is always glad to get an email confirming the companion journey has begun successfully. The 90-Day Companion Team will touch base after 30 days to see how it’s going.

What Are Best Practices for a Terrific Journey as 90-Day Companions?

Many companions covenant for a weekly conversation for about 30 minutes for the first month at least

and then negotiate the frequency for the remaining two months. Not surprisingly, companions who meet over zoom or other video platform report a deeper sense of connection than those who might by audio only. Most companions out arrangements for the new leader to make contact when needs for help/support arise and need quick attention. It's good to agree on preferred communications methods: video, phone, texts, emails.

What are Fruitful Discussion Topics?

- Priorities in the first months and learning the environment and systems
- Best practices to thrive in the new position
- Personal life adjustments to a new position and often a new place
- Managing time and establishing priorities
- Dealing with pace of transition and change
- Building relationships with staff and the leadership/committees of the mid-council
- Building partnerships with other mid-council leader colleagues
- Managing budgets
- Effective ways to work with congregations
- Questions specific to the Leader's role: Working with COM, working effectively as a Stated Clerk, staffing other Mid-Council Teams and Committees
- Everything else!

How Do We Conclude?

At the end of the 90 Days, the more experienced leader should initiate a closure conversation to bring the formal Companion Experience to a conclusion. Both leaders will be asked to respond to feedback surveys on the experience.

How Else Can New Leaders Connect?

- **AMCLMatters Google Group**
New Mid-Council Leaders are also welcome to join the AMCLMatters Google group, which is a very active peer resource group. Generous colleagues respond with resourcing, brainstorming, rejoicing and commiseration. Enroll by contacting Erin Cox-Holmes, erincoxholmes@gmail.com.
- **New Presbytery Leader Orientation**
The Office of the General Assembly (OGA), in partnership with ASC and AMCL, holds New Presbytery Leader Orientations. This event replaces the previous New Stated Clerk Training (previously offered twice each year) and the Presbytery Leader Formation Orientation (previously offered once each year). All *newly elected* presbytery staff leaders—stated clerks, general/executive presbyters, and associates—are invited to share one combined orientation, offered twice a year. Interim/transitional leaders who may not have been elected by the entire presbytery must hold a comparable position to those who have been elected.