

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
CATHOLIC  WOMEN

Women Embracing Women

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Introduction

Mentoring reminds me of the old adage by Confucius "Give a man a fish and feed him for a day but teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime." The same can be said about < mentoring. By mentoring other Catholic women, we are insuring the future of our organization. The concept of mentoring has been around since the beginning of time, even if it wasn't called mentoring.

Mentoring is used in schools, churches, corporations and organizations. There is no single mentoring program that fits everyone. Some are formal, official programs within an organization, while others are more casual, informal and relaxed. It is the casual, informal and relaxed model that seems to work best in Christian women's organization.

A mentor can make the difference in whether a new member stays in council and gets more involved or leaves council. By mentoring members they will learn the structure of council, the responsibilities of the various commissions and committees and participate more with council activities. The use of mentors can contribute to a greater membership retention.

Women seek mentoring relationship in their lives:

- to strengthen the bonds of friendship
- a role model
- *encouragement* and help to keep going
- insight beyond her own knowledge

Mentoring:

- allows individuals to recognize their potential contributions to council
- engages participants more fully in council programs and activities
- enhances council with new talents, gifts and ideas

In recognition that mentoring is and can be an important tool in the development of councils and a powerful outpouring of support and care for individual members, NCCW put forth a resolution on mentoring at the 2017 annual convention.

Definitions

The word mentor comes from Homer's epic poem, *The Odyssey*. While Odysseus, King of Ithaca, is off fighting in the Trojan War he entrusted the care of his household to Mentor, who served as a teacher and overseer of his son Telemachus.

Mentor:

A trusted and experienced person who can advise you on personal and business matters. A mentor can serve as teacher, sponsor, guide, exemplar, and counselor.

Mentee:

A person who is advised and counseled by a more experienced person over a period of time.

Mentorship:

Is a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps or advises a less experienced person. It is a learning and development partnership between someone with vast experience and knowledge and someone who wants to learn.

The empowerment of women does not mean they control others, but rather women receive support to increase their personal capacity to act effectively. Individually, people can feel empowered through solving a problem, understanding how something works, or learning a skill. Collectively, people may feel empowered through organizing with a common purpose, understanding, or value. The National Council of Catholic Women, at all rings of council, provides the environment for empowerment of women, and mentoring is the method. Mentoring is understood to go further and deeper than most friendships. Goals and accountability to one another are not always part of routine friendship.

What the Bible Says About Mentoring

Mentoring is not a new concept, but it can be defined in a variety of ways. Although "mentoring" doesn't appear in the Bible, Scriptures does give us many examples of mentoring. Moses was a mentor to Joshua, Jesus mentored his disciples, and Paul personally mentored Timothy, Titus and many more. This quote from Ken Horton sums it up "Mentoring is a mutually encouraging relationship distinguished by the power of example, the wisdom of humility and an attitude of enthusiasm. These are experienced by both parties as God works his transforming purpose in them."

National Council of Catholic Women's Mission Statement

The National Council of Catholic Women act through its members to support, empower, and educate all Catholic Women in spirituality, leadership, and service. NCCW programs respond with Gospel values to the needs of the Church and society in the modern world.

Five Building Blocks for Success

Focus/Goals

Your goals should be what you want to accomplish or a target you want to reach. What results are you hoping for? Will they strengthen your Council? Are they good for the Council? Remember goals should be challenging but don't reach for the top of that 20-foot ladder and fail. Reach for the middle and succeed, then reach for the higher steps and make your way to the top. If you set the goal too high you are inviting frustration and failure, along with a good dose of demotivation. Just as you follow the recipe for baking a cake also have a recipe for planning out your goals. Start with a ½ cup of goals, add 2 cups of planning, a pinch of inspiration, and ½ cup of prayers, stir it up and get it going.

If your goal is to develop new leaders, then have board members, both current and past, work with those who express an interest or who you feel want to but are afraid to step forward. That woman who is always behind the scenes might just need a little encouragement to get out in front. If your focus is on membership, work on a plan to bring attention to the organization and your mission statement. Let them see who you are and what you are doing. Whatever your focus is make it strong. When the focus is strong the organization will be strong.

Involvement

Trying to figure out who is going to be mentors is the \$64,000.00 question. You need members who are knowledgeable about Council and, hopefully, have served on the board at one time or held a commission chair position. However, there are some qualified members who have not held these positions, so don't rule them out. They need to be approachable and open with the Council members in general. Mentors need to be friendly, flexible, reliable and caring. She should share her wisdom, skills, and provide a positive perspective for Council experiences.

Let's look at mentors as travel guides who have traveled to these places before, learned somethings along the way and are willing to assist other travelers. They can show a less experienced traveler the way, offer helpful advice and information, warn of dangers ahead, share their own experiences and, if necessary, provide first aid.

Some members are more knowledgeable in certain areas of Council - By-Laws, parliamentary procedures, writing reports, services projects, hosting - match them up woman who express interest in those areas. Remember mentoring isn't for everyone and no two mentors are the same.

Development

We got the goals and key women now let's plan a course of action. You should have at least three plans for each goal. Not every plan works so have backup plans. Don't overburden yourself with too many goals to start out, we want to succeed.

How do we accomplish these goals? At one of your regular Council meetings have a workshop/program on mentoring. Let your members know what the leaders of Council want to see in the way of mentoring. Talk about the goals they want to see happen. Discuss the roles of a mentor and mentee. Beforehand ask a few members to discuss with the membership how a mentor has helped them. Give some examples of situations where mentoring could be utilized by Council. Have a series of questions that can be discussed and answered by the group. Significant feedback and ideas should be recorded. This question and answer session can help you to put your plans into effect.

Suggested Questions:

How effective is your Council in preparing women for leadership positions?

Are you supporting them after they take the position?

Can you identify women who have made a difference in the life of another member?

What would be the impact of "experienced" women teaming up with new members?

Would teaming up with a new member make that member want to become more involved in the workings of Council?

Mentoring should be an agenda item for all your Council meetings. Keep the membership up to date with what is happening and what the needs for the program are.

Gratitude

The important item here is to recognize accomplishments and acknowledge them. Many individuals who achieve their goals or finish a project find personal satisfaction and a sense of gratitude for a task well done. But it's always nice to receive the recognition from your peers. Positive feedback is a great way to let members know they are doing well and to keep up the good job. By acknowledging and noticing good performance, ideas, and leadership the commitment of the membership grows.

Thank You are two words that should never be forgotten and used often.

Accountability

When you give someone the responsibility or authority for a project or job it should give them a desire to produce results with a higher standard. Everyone likes that sense of achievement. As a team, the mentor and mentee, should be encouraging each other in whatever job they are assigned to do. However, lax performance should be addressed, and guidance should be offered. You might need to re-group the persons involved with another mentor.

Have a review of the program at your board meetings and report back to the membership on the state of the program.

A Step By Step Plan

1. Make it an agenda item
2. A discussion with your members about the pros and cons of starting this program
3. If Council is in favor of implementing, get member's support
4. Define the expectations of both mentors and mentees
5. Two groups of women need to be identified: mentors and mentees
6. Schedule a meeting with potential mentors and review what role they will play
7. Schedule a meeting with potential mentees and review what they can expect
8. Bring the two groups together, to meet and get acquainted with each other
9. A meeting offering the opportunity for prayer and questions and answers
10. You can pre-select the partners or allow them to pair themselves off
11. Set a time line for the pairing (3 months or 6 months are good times)
12. At the end of the time line, evaluate the impact on the mentees and overall impact On Council work and spirit.

What to Expect from the Mentor and Mentee

Mentors to the Mentee

1. Provide information concerning the structure of Council, responsibilities of various offices, commissions, and committees and general working of Council
2. Share your own experiences of mistakes, struggles, failures and successes
3. Give friendly, unbiased support and encouragement
4. Be a sounding board for her ideas
5. Listen and provide constructive advice or feedback
6. Correct any misunderstandings when they happen
7. Maintain and respect privacy, honesty, and integrity

Mentee to the Mentor

1. Communicate clearly with her as to your needs or questions
2. To initiate questions and be curious about the structure and running of Council
3. Share your feelings and insights about Council
4. Accept the support offered
5. Be open to her advice
6. Correct any misunderstandings when they happen
7. Maintain and respect privacy, honesty, and integrity

Telling the Stories

On the sunny days, between the times of cold and rain, I made a new flower bed in my back yard. I'm not really good at growing flowers or vegetables, but I was prompted to make the new bed because I wanted to plant some of the beautiful flowers I received when my Mom died the middle of April. One was a gorgeous coral lily from the DCCW Board.

While I was working on the flower bed, and thinking of my Mom, I was also thinking of Council (years of being involved does that to you) and I remembered something from an NCCW Leadership Institute on Sharing Your Gifts. The institute focused on how to become a better leader and how a good leader "grows" new leaders. The analogy was comparing "growing" new leaders to growing flowers and getting them to bloom. I would like to share that with you.

We need to know the seeds-whether they prefer sun or shade, wet or dry, rich or poor soil. Get to know the women in your group-what their interests are, then match the person with the job they'd be most interested in. Prepare the soil-supply lots of info about the organization, officers, commissions, what each is about.

1. Remove stones: Get rid of anything standing in the way of a person doing a job. Examples: child care, lack of transportation, no resources. Remember that sometimes we have to dig a bit for the "stones".
2. Plant: Ask, appoint
3. Give the warmth of the sun: Accept them and their ideas. Praise them for a job well done.
4. Water (but don't drown): Empower them just enough; don't over-empower, don't under-empower. Know how much "water" they need.
5. Fertilize: Nurture, affirm, pray for them.
6. Remove weeds (but don't uproot the plant): Evaluate and critique where necessary but gently and with love.
7. Protect from bugs, other pests: Support, prepare them for criticism (because every leader is going to be criticized at least a little) and when it comes, really support them.
8. Stake, train or guide, if necessary: Training, formal or one-to-one, handbooks, manuals, mentoring.
9. Don't smother: Stand back and give them room to grow. Prepare them well; then let go and trust them. Delegate but don't hover.

Where to plant? Start in your parish CCW's. Match your people with jobs. Get each one to see why she would be good at a task or project. Encourage and compliment them. When they're successful in Parish CCW, encourage them to move to the deanery or regional board and bring along the expertise they've acquired- soon they'll be ready for the A/DCCW Board, and then possibly NCCW. Have a happy and a prosperous Council Garden."

Our Stories

My experience with the Council began in a different way: I read a notice in the bulletin about a ladies' meeting being held Tuesday evening. I was looking for something different to get involved with and this meeting caught my attention. I did attend that meeting, which was well over 20 years ago! I discovered the many acts of service of these parish women fell right in line with what I was looking to do. There I met my first mentor, Kathryn Ackeret. She and her husband were so involved in Pro-Life activities and she introduced me to the next level of Council, the Deanery.

My travel buddy at the time, Betty Reichert, was also a mentor, as she was so well versed in every commission and/or concern. It wasn't long before I met, Evelyn Lompa, on the diocesan level, who shared information on all the levels of Council and naturally, the National Council of Catholic Women. I am still in awe at all the many activities the women do for their parishes.

I am so thankful for that initial urging from the Holy Spirit to attend that meeting so long ago! Because of that initial meeting, my life has been filled with many new life-changing events. I have served on all Rings of Council, including serving as secretary for the National Council of Catholic Women.

I must add that along the way I met a very special lady, Lucille Brandner, who continues to mentor me every time we get together. Council women rock this world and this is something every parish woman should know! **Jane Schiszalk**

I have experienced many mentors since I became a Catholic on Assumption Day 2002. God has been good. My first mentor was Addie Halfmann, who got me actively involved in our East Deanery as Secretary. From there I moved on to the Superior Diocesan Council of Catholic Women (SDCCW) serving as Treasurer, Secretary, President-Elect, President and Director at large. On the Province level I served as Treasurer. To this day I still feel the strong mentorship of three truly great faith filled SDCCW women, Lucille Brandner, Jane Schiszik and Evelyn Lompa. I hope that I have helped and did a little bit of mentoring to the new officers of SDCCW on their journey in leadership. **Yvonne Glonchak**

Over the last 50 years I have had many mentors who turned into lifelong friends. At the tender age of 15, I began a mentor/mentee relationship that lasted over 40 years until his death. He saw something in me that I didn't know was there and with his mentoring and friendship I was able to enter into a male-dominant business field successfully. I remember him telling me to never give up without trying and that I could do anything if I set my mind to it. Those words stayed with me through the good times and the bad times. I valued his mentoring of me but his friendship became priceless.

Those words served me well in my journey in the Council of Catholic Women. I have had a network of mentors from the affiliate level to the national level. Mary Haller who invited me to my first CCW, or I should say told me I was going to attend with her, to the Past Presidents of the South Carolina Council of Catholic Women (SCCCW). Our past officers on all levels of Council are great mentors. We should always use their knowledge and experiences to help others find their way in Council. **Lindamarie Richardson Kelly**

ACRONYM

David Clutterbuck, an academic who studied mentoring relationships, in 2004 coined an acronym for what mentors do:

MANAGE THE RELATIONSHIP
ENCOURAGE
NURTURE
TEACH
OFFER MUTAL RESPECT
RESPOND TO THE LEARNER'S NEEDS

Christine Pace, a coordinator for the newly launched Catholic Women's Mentoring program in Australia, shared "that mentoring is an effective means by which to empower women. It's flexible and relationship-based structure helps develop your potential in a safe and supportive environment. The right mentor can redefine the way you view yourself. Mentoring is a tool of empowerment, which can help us to become what God created us to be. I firmly believe that Catholic Women who are strong and affirmed in their faith and their capabilities can do amazing things to transform society. Faith-filled women, on fire with the Holy Spirit, can be the hands and feet of God through their lives. To do this, we need solid formation, spiritual nourishment and encouragement from others in our faith."

Remember, if you want active members and future leaders you need to mentor today!