

11.2 SUPERVISION

1 BACKGROUND

Contemporary ministry is a complex, varied and often demanding vocation. It can also be a lonely one in which the dilemmas and difficulties of ministry are not readily able to be shared with a trusted other. Those in ministry may not find it easy to interpret the ministry context in which they are placed, or to discern how best to respond in relation to immediate and long term issues that may arise. The central purpose of a relationship with a supervisor is to enable a Minister in the context of a supportive relationship, to examine and explore, develop and extend, discuss and critique, learn about and from their practice. This can provide the Minister with the opportunity to seek to know where God is in the events and engagements of ministry, to consider if this is where God wants them to be and what to do in response to the activity of God in their life.

Professional Supervision provides a safe, confidential relationship which gives a regular opportunity to reflect on one's ministry and pastoral relationships. Professional supervision is one way in which those in ministry can take care of themselves and function more effectively, rather than a burden.

Those in ministry have a responsibility to ensure that they receive regular professional supervision. Professional Supervision is defined in the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice 2009 [3.9(d)] as a relationship with a supervisor to assist in enhancing the quality of ministry through maintaining the boundaries of the pastoral relationship, including competencies, time management, priorities and any difficulty arising in ministry.

The Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice requires that Ministers* demonstrate professionalism in all the tasks of ministry. Section 3 on Professional Conduct provides standards for one's relationships with colleagues and councils of the Church, for one's teaching and competence, and for the exercise of one's power, confidentiality and self-care. These are critical dimensions of one's ministry for monitoring in supervision.

It should be noted:

- Supervision will vary between Ministers, and between placements;
- Supervision is a priority for those in ministry;
- Supervision should be a regular commitment and is more effective when regularly undertaken;

2 REQUIREMENT FOR SUPERVISION FOR THOSE IN MINISTRY

In Western Australia supervision is compulsory for "Ministers" and "those in ministry"*. For the purpose of professional supervision this refers to:

- (i) All Ministers of the Word, Deacons, Community Ministers, Lay Pastors, Youth Workers and Pastors in placement or awaiting placement;
- (ii) Ministers from another denomination serving in an approved placement;
- (iii) Candidates for Ministry;
- (iv) Interns;
- (v) Retired Ministers who are fulfilling interim or supply ministries;
- (vi) All other persons exercising ministry within congregations and/or agencies, whether recognised by the Presbytery or not.

The Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice affirms that “regular professional supervision” is required of candidates and of those in lay ministry roles just as much as it is for those who are ordained. (Note: Candidates will receive supervision through formation ministry).

3 SELECTION OF SUPERVISOR

Ministers, apart from candidates, may select their own supervisor. As ministry has different contexts; differs from placement to placement; and ministers have different needs and requirements; supervisors should be chosen carefully. Supervisors should be people trained for the role of supervision; have good communication skills; understand the ethos of the Uniting Church and the role and responsibility of the minister; and can engage a person in reflecting and critiquing their ministry. Ministers are encouraged to develop a Supervision Covenant with their supervisor. (*Refer to 11.2A Sample Supervision Covenant*).

The Manager of the Pastoral Relations Committee (*PRC Manager) is available to offer assistance in choosing a suitable supervisor.

4 REGULARITY

Ideally supervision will take the form of face-to-face contact with supervisors however a number of different models exist that may involve phone supervision; minister-to-minister supervision or peer group supervision.

Supervision should be a regular commitment – ideally every month to six weeks. Five (5) supervised sessions per year is a minimum expectation.

It is acknowledged that those in a rural and/or isolated community may experience difficulty in accessing supervision and may have to look at different options.

5 COST

The Personal Resources and Development Grant is provided to assist in the financial cost of taking study leave, purchasing resources and supervision.

While no provision exists in the Presbytery budget to support supervision costs, extreme cases of personal financial hardship should contact the PRC Manager.

6 REPORTING OF SUPERVISION TO PLACEMENT BODY

Ministers are encouraged to report to their church council or placement body that they have undertaken supervision, even if it is an acknowledgement by the supervisor of how many sessions have been attended during the year (*Refer Sample 11.2B*). Detail of confidential discussion during supervision sessions does not have to be shared with the placement body.

7 REFERENCES

Professional Supervision: A process of Reflection on Ministry Experience

Published by the Ministerial Education Commission December 2011

<http://assembly.uca.org.au/about/mec>

Personal Resources & Development Grant (Policy 6.1)

11.2A Sample of Supervision Covenant

11.2B Sample Report from Supervisor to Placement Body