

# Pastoral Supervision

## The Task of Supervision

Pastoral Supervision is a regular and disciplined reflection space for ordained ministers (supervisee) to consider their ministry fully with the support of a trained supervisor.

The primary focus of supervision is to support ministers to grow and develop in their ministerial work. It is a joint endeavour between supervisee and supervisor to attend to themselves (person) their ministerial duties (role) and develop understanding of wider related and impacting issues (system). By so doing the quality of ministerial practice can be enhanced and transformed. In supervision, ministers are continuously supported to develop themselves, their clerical practice, to increase their capacity to understand and transform broader issues within their sphere of influence, and consider how these broader issues may be impacting on day-to-day issues they face.

Whilst one's personal and discipleship life are intertwined with how ministerial duties are exercised and experienced, the supervisor's role is to support the supervisee to consider these issues only in so far as they impact on those (people/issues) with whom they work as ministers. Therefore it is crucial to establish expectations, boundaries, and processes for review for supervision.

Pastoral Supervision is not personal therapy or spiritual accompaniment/direction. If this is understood then the boundaries and efficacy of these different interventions will be taken up most effectively.

The whole process is undergirded by research and provision for wellbeing and effectiveness, so we ask supervisees and supervisors to complete an anonymous questionnaire at the outset and at set intervals thereafter to monitor how supervision contributes to ministry formation and wellbeing.

## Purpose and Structure of Supervision

The purpose of Pastoral Supervision is to enable ministers to reflect on their work (Acts 13.2; 14.26) and role. Key is the observation of, and adherence to, appropriate boundaries. As indicated above, equally important is the distinction between the *person*, their *role*, and the *system* in which the minister works. As such, the minister reflects on her/his frames of reference, contextual issues, hopes and fears, systems and organisational matters, interpersonal dynamics, management and people skills, leadership style, ministry options, and it is a setting for encouragement.

Pastoral Supervision is regular and offered by someone who is outside the ministry context, certainly not in the same Deanery. Preferably the meetings will be for 60-90 minutes, about seven or eight times in the year, and the minister comes prepared for each meeting. It is the responsibility of the priest to use regular supervision to maintain accountability and self-care. They are also responsible to maintain the on-going relationship with the Supervisor.

It is expected that the Incumbent shall inform their PCC that they are in supervision and that this is a priority for their ministry effectiveness and personal wellbeing. It is hoped the PCC encourages their minister in supervision and supports her/him in prayer and with other practical support, such as paying towards reasonable costs associated with supervision, including the cost of travel.

The Director of Mission and Ministry (DMM), Canon Dr Neville Emslie, oversees the supervision programme and will contact new Incumbents to help them secure a good Pastoral Supervisor. The DMM is available to speak to all Incumbents about their supervision needs, [nemslie@diocant.org](mailto:nemslie@diocant.org)

### **Who Should Have Supervision?**

The Bishop of Dover wishes her licensed clergy to be in regular *pastoral supervision* to support you in your ministerial role, and in *spiritual accompaniment* to support you in your relationship with God.

In conjunction with registered and experienced Supervisors the diocese has begun to train Pastoral Supervisors and to establish processes so that, initially, all Incumbents new to post or new to the diocese will be offered a Pastoral Supervisor.

We hope to be in a position to provide all Incumbents with Pastoral Supervisors within the next 12 months. Further, Incumbents will receive supervision training so they are better equipped to offer supervision to their ministry team and training curates.

All those who trained to be Pastoral Supervisors will be in supervision themselves; we will be providing one-on-one or group supervision to Supervisors as appropriate.

### **Supporting the Supervisors**

Group Supervision is offered to all Pastoral Supervisors who have been trained by the diocese. These will consist of up to five people plus the Supervisor for a two-hour session. Initially, Group Supervision will take place termly, i.e. three times per year and will be offered by a trained Group Supervisor.

### **Supervision in the Local Context**

A number of Incumbents in the diocese have received supervision training by virtue of being a Training Incumbent of a curate.

As many of our parishes exist within a larger construct of a multi-parish benefice, or a large parish that includes former smaller parishes, many benefices and parishes contain a ministry team or staff under the oversight of a Team Rector or Vicar. These teams often consist of stipendiary and non-stipendiary priests, priests with permission to officiate, Readers, Authorised Lay Ministers, and other lay ministers. We will be developing the supervision programme so all Incumbents have good supervision skills appropriate for oversight of ministry in their own context.

### **Key Supervisory Capabilities**

1. Capacity to establish a supervisory relationship and attend to appropriate boundaries.
2. Capacity to listen, reflect, question and hypothesize.
3. Capacity to assess supervisee issues, negotiate and define appropriate objectives and track progress.
4. Capacity of supervisor to self-reflect and understand and use own experience.

5. Capacity to observe organisational/institutional processes as they are invested in the supervisee and supervisor relationship.
6. Understanding of conscious and unconscious factors at play.
7. Capacity to communicate with the supervisee, open up thought and give and receive feedback.
8. Capacity to make appropriate interventions.
9. Where appropriate, an understanding of roles taken up in groups, teams and organisations.
10. Awareness of, and ability to, reflect on issues of difference including in the relationship with the supervisee.
11. Capacity to understand and manage beginnings and endings in depth.

### **Supervision Contract**

Each supervision relationship is unique; it is the only context in which these particular people work together. Their experience and understanding of supervision may differ, so they need to clarify what they are doing. If they don't there can be confusion and disappointment. A contract is the best safeguard.

A contract helps establish the relationship. Negotiating a written contract can be an important step in the setting up of supervision. It can be a learning experience and a model. It emphasises each person's commitment. It supports the effective use of time.

A contract provides a framework. Some people find making a detailed, specific contract a good base for on-going work. A contract sets ground rules for the shared task. It provides a framework for evaluation (are we doing what we agreed to do?). It can be re-negotiated and adapted to meet needs.

Significant things to consider in negotiating a contract:

1. The purpose of the supervision.
2. What each person expects the process of supervision to be like.
3. What each person expects a supervision session to be like.
4. What the roles and tasks of the supervisee will be in this relationship.
5. What the roles and tasks of the supervisor will be in this relationship.
6. How and when the supervision will be evaluated.
7. What ethical code or covenant will be adhered to.
8. The working details:
  - a. What preparation will be done.
  - b. The working format of the session – e.g. how it will begin and end.
  - c. How material will be presented [e.g. orally, written, voice or video recorded].
  - d. What records will be kept and how material will be disposed of.
  - e. The frequency, day, time and length of sessions.

- f. Starting and review dates and the proposed duration of the contract.
  - g. Agreement about cancellations, regularity, punctuality, interruptions.
  - h. Evaluation.
  - i. Confidentiality [what might lead the supervisor to wish to break confidentiality? What would he or she do? See also (d) above.]
  - j. What to do if there is conflict, or if one participant has a complaint.
9. How payment will be arranged, if relevant.

Not everything suggested here will be written into the contract but discussing it helps to clarify both parties' expectations. Sometimes it may clarify for one or other person that the relationship is not likely to work.

### **Bibliography**

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