



PARTNERING FOR PREVENTION

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Professional Supervision of Clergy

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What is Supervision?

'Supervision interrupts practice. It wakes us up to what we are doing. When we are alive to what we are doing, we wake up to what is, instead of falling asleep in the comfort stories of our routines and daily practice.'

Ryan, S (2004) Vital Practice. Portland, UK: Sea Change Publications.

'British miners in the 1920s fought for what was termed 'pit-head' time – the right to wash off the grime of the work in the boss's time, rather than take it home with them. Supervision is the equivalent for those who work at the coalface of personal distress, disease and fragmentation.'

Hawkins and Shohet, 2000

'Clinical supervision is the most appropriate learning medium for the counselor because it is a "learning by doing" process rather than a distant, classroom type of experience. Supervision provides us with an ongoing assessment of our skills and areas of clinical strengths and weaknesses.'

'It has been demonstrated that it directly impacts on job satisfaction and burn-out by professional and personal growth. It provides the counselor with emotional-refilling, needed to function in an emotionally-draining field.'

Powell, D.J. (1993) Clinical Supervision in Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counselling

What is supervision in a pastoral context?

- A broad space to talk about whatever is happening in ministry.
- Sensitive to God's voice and the spiritual.
- Effects transition and transformation, resulting in the minister having ... enhanced self awareness, ministering competence, theological understanding and Christian commitment.
- If seen as a way of 'doing' ministry, it becomes both integral to, and formative for, ministry.
- Relational, covenantal, incarnational and 'gracefull'.
- Theologically and spiritually rich.

Pohly, K. (2001). Transforming the Rough Places: the Ministry of Supervision. Franklin, TN: Providence House

Challenge to Church Leaders:

'We may agree on the ideals (of personal growth and skills refinement for ministers), but the absence of institutional support and structures for the supervision of ordained ministers suggests to me that church leaders are resisting implementing this idea.'

LeMothe, R. (2005) Journal of Pastoral Care and Counselling. Vol 59. Nos 1-2

What is happening in churches now?

- Commonly seen now in field placement programs that constitute part of clergy formation and training prior to ordination.
- Limited to formation period.
- Strong emphasis on establishing learning goals and skill acquisition.

In Australia, outside of clergy formation and training:

- Mandatory in Uniting Church and Salvation Army.
- 'Strongly encouraged' and part funded by Newcastle Anglican Diocese.
- Recommended in informal forms by other dioceses, eg, Anglican Sydney retreat groups.

A Developmental Model for Lifelong Supervision (Holloway 1995):

1. Novice: Requires much support, guidance, structure, modelling, practice and feedback.
2. Journeyperson: Confident of skills but occasionally overwhelmed by complexity/difficulty of their work; supervision may focus on feelings and coping with impediment.
3. Independent craftsperson: Assured in skills; supervision largely an exploratory exchange of ideas for further development.
4. Expert: Functions autonomously and knows his/her limits; will largely set the supervision agenda to increase self-reflective practice.

Three tasks of Supervision: Normative, Formative and Restorative.

1. Formative - an educative process which may include:
 - guidance on handling difficult situation
 - teaching about various aspects of the work
 - skill development
 - developing self awareness
 - introducing new areas of knowledge
 - suggesting different perspectives
 - encouraging growth and change
 - rehearsing new strategies or roles.
2. Restorative - a supportive role enacted through:
 - active listening
 - encouragement and feedback
 - opportunity for discharging feelings
 - helping them to connect with their vision or sense of vocation
 - assisting with recovering 'aspects of self' that have got lost in the work, ie, being able to be themselves in their work role
 - recharging energy
 - sharing ideas and creative play.
3. Normative - dealing with administrative, managerial and boundary and ethical issues:
 - Dealing with matters of the supervisee being safe to work.
 - Are there issues of competency to address?
 - What policies and procedures need to be introduced?
 - Consideration of codes of ethics - are they being breached?
 - Are the boundaries of the supervisee's and supervisor's roles clear?
 - Can the supervisor challenge the supervisee re boundary violations?

Processes of Supervision: Critical Reflection

- 'Perspective transformation is the process of becoming aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world.
- Changing these structures ...make possible a more inclusive, discriminating and integrating perspective.'

Mezirow, J. (1991) Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Processes of Supervision: Theological Reflection

'Theological reflection's primary focus is on what happens at the intersection of what one believes and how one lives out that belief, and the centre of the process is in the discovery of the movement of the spirit of God in human experience.'

Paver, (1996) Formation and Transformation in Theological Reflection. Ministry, Society and Theology. Vol 10. No. 2

Boundary Violations

- Sadly this is why we are all here – it happens, but...
- Ministry is about crossing boundaries: 'We cannot do ministry without crossing boundaries. Those we serve assume a trust relationship with us where ... they are safe from harm. They tacitly allow us to cross boundaries in their interest. In fact they expect us to do so.'

Fortune, M. M. (2011) Healthy Boundaries, Healthy Ministry in 'Reflective Practice. Vol. 31

- 'Even highly trained clinicians often need supervision to work through the deep emotions... that might lead to unwise enactments.'
- 'The supervisor can act as the "prosthetic superego" supporting the therapist in maintaining or recovering a professional perspective.'
- There is a slippery slope where minor boundary violations usually precede more major ones – but usually only apparent retrospectively.
- Clergy are typically unaware of matters of 'transference' and 'counter transference' and how they can influence pastoral relationships.
- Emotional and other reactions to the congregation member should be explored in supervision.
- Violations related to commenting on appearance, questions re sexual behaviour unrelated to pastoral concern may precede sexual misconduct.
- The 'victim' may be seductive or inviting, but it is the ministry person's responsibility to not respond.

Gutheil, T. G. (2008) Preventing Boundary Violations in Clinical Practice. New York: Guilford Press

Preventative Supervision

- The supervision should be proactive rather than reactive ... not waiting for calamity to review the supervisee's work. It should be continuous and of varying intensity.
- Sensitive to the supervisee's personal situation.
- Attentive to the details of the cases and the interactions between supervisee and client.
- The supervisory interaction should incorporate guided exploration rather than cross-examination.

Walker, R. & Clark, J. (1999) Heading Off Boundary Problems: Clinical Supervision as Risk Management. Psychiatric Services Vol. 50 No. 11

What is an appropriate level of training for supervisors?

- A pre requisite of graduate qualifications and 5 years' experience in a relevant person centred field.
- Around 50 training hours.
- Supervised practice component,
- Evaluative reports from supervisors of the supervised practice, plus supervisee's self evaluations.

Taken from supervision training standards of Association of Pastoral Supervision and Education (UK), Association For Supervised Pastoral Education in Australia Inc. PACFA (Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia), & Christian Counsellors Association of Australia.

What does one need to do to get a supervision system happening?

- Get agreement between key stakeholders.
- Set out an overall integrated plan to provide lifelong supervision.
- Set requirements for supervision.
- Establish a register of supervisors – initially with experienced but not necessarily trained persons.
- Begin training programs for supervisors – initially with basic training.
- Set timetable for necessity for training for all supervisors.

Professional Supervision of Clergy and Church Workers: Resource List

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