

A Description of Supervision

Supervision is a formalised regular sustained review of a supervisee's self and work, undertaken within a structured, contractual supervisory relationship.

Good supervision enables the supervisee to grow both as a person and as a practitioner: it helps ensure that the supervisee's practice is safe, effective and ethical.

Supervision has three main functions:

- **Educative:** developing the skills, understanding and abilities of the supervisee
- **Supportive/restorative:** assisting the supervisee to become aware of his/her response to "client" neediness, and to take appropriate self-care
- **Managerial:** providing a quality control function to ensure the supervisee's work is safe. Effective and ethical.

Supervision can provide a supervisee with:

- A regular space to reflect upon the content and process of ministry
- A developing understanding and enhancement of skills within ministry
- Information and another's perspective concerning ministry
- Both content and process feedback
- Validation and support both as a person and as a minister
- Help so that as a person and as a minister he/she is not left to carry, alone and unnecessarily, difficulties, problems and client projection
- Space to explore and express personal distress, restimulation, transference or counter-transference that may be bought up by minister
- Opportunity to plan and utilise personal and professional resources better
- Assistance to be pro-active rather than reactive
- Oversight to ensure quality of ministry

Characteristics of effective supervision:

The relationship between the supervisee and the supervisor is emotionally significant:

- The supervisor is expected to offer challenges to the supervisee which will be productive towards personal and professional growth
- The supervisor is expected to be supportive of the supervisee since this is a growth experience in which mistakes are expected, even welcomed
- The supervisor is in an asymmetrical relationship to the supervisee. By definition and design the relationship is between equals, one of whom (the supervisee) giving the

other (the supervisor) the authority to “oversee” (this does not exclude the desirability of mutuality, reciprocity and collaboration in the relationship)

- **The Supervisor oversees the person rather than actions:**

The supervisor’s competence is demonstrated in how she/he uses the supervisory relationship to facilitate growth in the supervisee (both at a personal and practitioner level) rather than in demonstrating an ability to evaluate the supervisee’s work/ministry.

The Supervisory relationship has several characteristics which make it distinct from other relationships:

- It is a structural relationship with specific and acknowledged goals and expectations
- These goals and expectations are clearly negotiated, defined and accepted at the start of and throughout the relationship
- It is a relationship in which one person has an acknowledged authority towards another.
- There is a definite task responsibility on the part of both persons in the relationship
- There is a conscious evaluating of the relationship on the part of both persons during the life of the relationship.