



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

THE PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION OF MINISTRY

The Uniting Church expects all ministry agents to receive regular professional supervision. In the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice and the Regulations, professional supervision is explained as 'a relationship that Ministers have with another professional whereby they are assisted to maintain the boundaries of the pastoral relationship and the quality of ministry'.

Professional supervision is an intentional resource for ministry. It is a space, time, activity and opportunity where, in the context of a supportive relationship, ministers are enabled to reflect on and learn from their ministry and ministry experiences. Professional supervision recognises the accountability of ministry agents as outlined in the regulations.

In addition to Uniting Church expectations, **there are expectations from the general community** that ministers and other ministry agents receive professional or pastoral supervision. The recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse do not yet have the force of law but do outline best practice. They recommend that 'all people in religious or pastoral ministry... have professional supervision with a trained professional or pastoral supervisor who has a degree of independence from the institution within which the person is in ministry.'

In professional supervision the supervisee (you) and the supervisor meet to focus on you and your ministry. **The professional supervisor is there to support and encourage you in the various aspects of ministry practice, including ethics, accountability and working with difficult issues, which might involve reporting of abuse.**

Professional supervision is different from other kinds of supervision people may have experienced, such as:

- management supervision (where an employer or manager holds an employee accountable);

- student supervision (where a College or University student is supervised in field placement); or
- peer supervision (where a group of two or more colleagues meet to share about ministry).

Professional supervision is a specialised area of work. One Melbourne area supervisor describes it this way:

In professional supervision, the minister meets regularly with an independent person who is skilled in enabling them to reflect on and become more effective in their ministry practice. In a safe and confidential environment, they talk about encounters, concerns, fears and what's happening in the ministry setting. It's a place to test embryonic ideas and to debrief when things don't go so well...supervision reduces the sense of isolation and enhances pastoral competence, self-awareness and well-being.

Other Uniting Church ministers in this Synod who are receiving supervision describe it in words like these:

- *Supervision gives me the opportunity to discuss and reflect on my ministry practice with a trusted confidante.*
- *In my supervision, I find wisdom, counsel, correction and encouragement.*
- *I receive empathetic understanding, helpful feedback, faith-sharing and integration of my faith and practice.*
- *Supervision helps me get clarity on an issue and find a way forward. I get pushed and challenged to explore deeper.*

Importantly:

- **As people become used to receiving supervision, they are likely to find it a source of support, encouragement and opportunity for reflection. Supervision helps ministers to be the best they can be.**
- **The Uniting Church expects ministers and ministry agents to receive regular supervision.**

SUPERVISION FAQ

How do I find a supervisor?

The Synod of Vic/Tas keeps a list of currently available supervisors.

The most updated version is available upon request to the Synod's Ethical Standards Manager (sue.clarkson@victas.uca.org.au). You also can find a professional supervisor through the Australasian Association of Supervision: www.supervision.org.au/member-search/

How often should I go to supervision?

In the Synod of Vic/Tas, a recent survey of ministers in active ministry showed a majority attending supervision every 4-6 weeks. This is often enough to build the relationship without being too demanding of your time.

How do I pay for supervision?

Many Uniting Church ministers provide supervision to colleagues at a reduced rate or free. A professional supervisor will charge more. Your Personal Resources Development Allowance can be used for supervision.

Do I need to tell anyone about my supervisory relationship?

When you begin supervision, you should be asked to sign a covenant. A copy of this should be forwarded to the Convenor of your Presbytery's Pastoral Relations Committee or you may advise your PRC by email. A sample covenant is found in the Assembly document on supervision referenced below and in the Synod list.

What if a supervisory relationship doesn't work out?

As in any reflective relationship, both parties must feel comfortable. A good supervisor will suggest that a new supervisory relationship should be reviewed after two or three sessions. It is important that you find a supervisor whom you can trust, talk openly with, and where you find encouragement and support.

I'm retired. Do I need to go to supervision?

The answer is YES if you are offering supervision to others OR when you are engaging in an ongoing supply or interim ministry. The answer is NO if you are taking weddings and funerals and the occasional Sunday service. But always seek out supervision if you have a question about your own boundaries or ethical stance.

Where can I learn more about the theory and practice of supervision?

Look here especially for the document Getting the most out of professional supervision <http://ucaqld.com.au/about-us/ministry-resources/professional-supervision/>

This Assembly document contains a sample supervision covenant on page 16. www.victas.uca.org.au/UCA%20Resources/Documents/General/Professional%20Supervision.pdf

The Australasian Association of Supervision supplies useful information on the field of supervision. www.supervision.org.au/what-is-supervision/