

Synod Ministries Report

1. Southern Synod Ministries Committee (SMC) has met twice since the last Synod Together meeting, on 11th November 2020 and 20th January 2021, both meetings via Zoom because on the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions.
2. We are delighted that despite these restrictions so much effective ministry continues in so many forms, in so many places, by so many folk; though it is recognised this is sometimes at the toll of emotional and physical well-being in these challenging times. The need to be there for one another is crucial. The Moderator's Day with its emphasis on having fun as well as the serious was a reminder of how often Jesus took time out with His followers just to be. We thank the Moderator for arranging this day, and also congratulate her on her Induction to the role of Moderator.
3. Pastoral Supervision has been an evolving topic since it was announced last summer. At the last Synod Together questions were invited and the response from the Secretary for Ministries was fed back via SMC with the request these were shared with Synod Areas. Good communication is key. (see below for a summary).
4. We were also delighted that the Secretary for Ministries could join with us in our meeting in January to further explore some key challenges that lie ahead, not least recognising routes to lay ministry and ensuring appropriate policies and support are in place, the circumstances when an extension to Ministry is permissible, and deployment. A recent event to explore the sense of call to various ministries, led by Andy Twilley, had seventeen attendees which is most encouraging.
5. Thanks were recorded for Linda Richards, retiring candidating secretary, and George Watt for their huge contributions to the life of Southern Synod.

Questions raised about Pastoral supervision

1. *My church secretary says they have not received a letter about Pastoral Supervision. Can you confirm when sent and let me have a copy?*

The letters were sent out August 24th 2020. If you let me know which Church Secretary did not receive a letter, I will make sure they receive one. We had two other such instances and in the case of one the details of the church secretary had changed. We are, of course, dependent on churches and/or the Synod Office letting us know of any changes in personnel so we will have used the information which was current on the URC database. The other case was a minister where the information had gone into their spam.

2. *Although retired ministers are not currently within the scheme presumably if they remain active they will be at some point. Can they be given some guidance/information and indicate likely timescale?*

Some are. We used the URC definition of active minister categories 1-3 (General Assembly 2018). I asked Synod Moderators for the lists of retired ministers who fell into these categories. Therefore, all ministers who fall into the categories whether they are retired or not should have received the information.

I list the 6 categories below;

A Minister of Word and Sacraments is considered Active if they are on the United Reformed Church roll of ministers and at least one of the following applies.

They are:

- a) in a pastorate or post for which they are receiving a stipend (either full or part) from the United Reformed Church (e.g. deployed post, SCM post, Assembly appointment)
- b) in non-stipendiary service in a recognised ministry post (e.g. model 1, 2 or 3)
- c) exercising a ministry with another organisation (e.g. chaplaincy, educational establishment, ecumenical body) for which they receive a stipend, salary or serve in a voluntary capacity
- d) providing recognised voluntary service on behalf of the church (e.g. Interim Moderator, serving on a synod or area committee, representing the URC on an external body)
- e) not in a formal position but whose expertise and experience means that, enjoying the confidence of synod officers, they are asked to undertake pieces of work from time to time
- f) frequently leading worship in a church other than where they are a member

A Church Related Community Worker is considered Active if they are on the United Reformed Church roll of CRCWs and in a recognised post.

Where there is uncertainty as to whether or not a Minister of Word and Sacraments falls within any of the 6 descriptions given above the judgment shall be made by the minister's synod, which may delegate the responsibility to one of its committees. Any appeal against the decision of a synod in this respect should be directed to the Secretary for Ministries.

3. *Does Pastoral Supervision apply to EM2 Ministers who already have a Pastoral Adviser?*

No, they do not need to do pastoral supervision until they have completed EM2.

4. *What about part time Ministers? Are they expected to still see a Pastoral Supervisor the same number of times per year as a full time colleague? Or pro-rata (50%, 75% etc.).*

Yes, if pastoral supervision is to be effective it requires a minimum of 6 sessions per year which is what the URC has agreed to. I do appreciate that this is difficult for those who have very small percentage of ministry (I think you have one minister at 15%) but it does need to be effective.

5. *Some Ministers already have similar support mechanisms in place. Can these be considered Pastoral Supervision?*

Holding reply –I think these would need to be agreed by the Moderator

We have asked all active ministers under categories 1-3 to do pastoral supervision. This is not spiritual direction or counselling.

Whilst there are overlaps between spiritual direction and pastoral supervision, each performs a different function. Spiritual Direction can be defined as 'help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship'. (William A.

Barry SJ and William J. Connelly SJ: The Practice of Spiritual Direction p.8). Pastoral Supervision, on the other hand, is 'a regular, planned intentional and boundaried space in which a practitioner skilled in supervision (the supervisor) meets with one or more other practitioners (the supervisees) to look together at the supervisees' practice which gives the supervisee freedom and safety to explore the issues arising in their work. It is praxis based – focusing on a report of work and /or issues that arise in and from the supervisee's pastoral practice and attentive to issues of fitness to practice, skill development, management of boundaries, professional identity and the impact of the work upon all concerned parties. (Definition of Pastoral Supervision –The Association of Pastoral Supervisors and Educators – APSE).

Whilst pastoral supervision includes spiritual and theological perspectives, it focuses upon the wellbeing and health of the person as this concerns their practice. Practice is always the focus of supervision, even if the questions raised are theological or spiritual.

That said, if someone is already having pastoral supervision but with someone who is not APSE or BACP accredited they should speak with their Synod Moderator.

6. *Can more detail of the financial arrangements/mechanisms be given. Will the claim to the local church be each time I see my Pastoral Supervisor or once a year? How often will the local Church be reimbursed and who do they submit their claim to? Some fellowships are suffering financial hardship at the moment and only claiming once a year may cause difficulties*

It has been written into Terms of Settlement:

Pastoral Supervision (Mission Council July 2020) is also a mandatory requirement and the minister is expected to arrange pastoral supervision in line with guidance from URC Ministries Department. The minister and supervisor are expected to share their agreement with the Synod Moderator [or nominated person] who will report annually to the Secretary for Ministries. The pastorate agrees to pay X% of the cost of supervision in the proportions agreed in paragraph 7, and will reimburse the full cost to the minister on production of an invoice and claim back the other 100-X% annually from central funds.

Paragraph 7 talks of how percentages may be dealt with in a multi-church pastorate.

There is no tax implication for the minister as it seen as in-service training and, as such is viewed as part of the role of a minister (Minister of Word and Sacraments and CRCWs)

The other way would be for the pastorate to pay directly and claim back from the national church once a year. That could also be written into Terms of Settlement.

7. *The fee to see a Pastoral Supervisor will be split 50/50 local pastorate/national church. What about travel expenses? What is considered a reasonable distance to travel?*

As this is viewed as part of the role of the ministry, travel expenses should be paid for by the pastorate. Therefore, reasonable travel expenses should be paid. It should be possible to find a pastoral supervisor within one's own Synod. If this is not possible, the minister should speak with the Synod Moderator.

8. *By paying the fee myself and then reclaiming are we sure there is no tax/NIC implication?*

No, I have doubled checked this and there is no tax implication as it is treated as in-service training.

9. *Not many of the Supervisors on the list are Christian. Is this not a flaw in the system? I am not comfortable with seeing someone who does not share my faith.*

No, it is not a flaw in the system. This is pastoral supervision and not spiritual direction (see above). We know there is a capacity issue with Christian pastoral supervisors which is why we have given 3 years for a minister to find the right person.

10. *This is said to come out of the Past Case Review but as an oversight mechanism it seems pretty light. Most abusers are devious and just seeing someone outside the denomination a handful of times a year does not seem adequate*

Pastoral Supervision is not simply an oversight mechanism nor is it the only one. There are other checks and balances. Without going into great detail here this is not simply about oversight but about the health and well-being of the minister. That is stated quite clearly in the paperwork and in the letter to the Church Secretary.

11. *Will there be an opportunity to train as a Pastoral Supervisor? Do we have a likely timescale for this opportunity to be offered?*

Ministries is looking at this at present. The Mission Council paper stated this would be looked at and the denomination would identify appropriate people to undergo training. I do not have a timescale at present: finding the right course and then doing the training takes time.

12. *I am still not sure what Pastoral Supervision is*

If the person who wrote this needs any help then they should speak with me. Apart from the report to MC July 2020, the paperwork provided and my definition in 5 above I would need to know what it is specifically that the minister does not understand.

13. *If I ignore this will it go away?*

I find this an alarming question. It is mandatory and any minister under categories 1-3 of active ministers is required to do it. If they do not within 3 years find a supervisor without good reason, they will find themselves in a disciplinary process (just as they would be in if they did not do their DBS).

Rev Helen Warmington
March 2021