



Reflective Supervision Guidelines

Reflective supervision is a form of pastoral supervision useful as a means for clergy to explore and reflect on the practice of ministry, their calling, and their wellbeing. A clergy person (supervisee) covenants to meet with a trained and approved supervisor in a supportive and confidential space. It is a relationship of accompaniment providing a safe space for reflection and reducing feelings of isolation.

Pioneered by the Methodist Church of Britain, research has demonstrated that reflective supervision:

- Provides reliable accompaniment that supports the wellbeing and flourishing of clergy
- Strengthens boundary awareness and role clarity that supports the safeguarding of everyone in the congregation
- Provides intentional sacred space for discerning what God is saying

A means of grace

John Wesley named practices which open us to an encounter with God as “means of grace.” Reflective supervision is a place where the voice of God is heard speaking into a situation as the supervisor leads the supervisee to openness around the specific ministry issue. There is a confidence that God will visit! Reflective supervision holds together both support and accountability for the responsible exercise of ministry.

A covenanted practice

Those participating in reflective supervision make a covenant with the supervisor for their work together. This covenant includes:

- Purpose and function: to support the wellbeing and development of clergy; to give consideration of the wellbeing of the congregation, and to ensure that the ministry offered reflects God’s mission and the vision of the United Methodist Church
- Ethos of the relationship: specifies that this is a relationship built on the foundations of trust and attention to the movement of the Holy Spirit with a mindfulness of the diversity of cultural, racial, gender, and lived experiences as they impact ministry
- Form and process: supervision follows a specific and intentional form and shape which provides the opportunity for reconnecting with God and self; attention to at least one

issue or situation each session; and attention to risk of potential harm to self or others and wellbeing concerns that need referral

Boundaries and expectations of the supervisory relationship

Clear boundaries and expectations are established in the covenanting process. This is a confidential relationship. The supervisor completes an Agreed Record at the end of each session with the input and approval of the supervisee. The signed Agreed Record is sent to the District Superintendent (or other appropriate named person of oversight).

It is the supervisee who brings an issue or situation to supervision. Over time, these should reflect a wide variety of areas of their ministry. The District Superintendent may ask the supervisee to reflect on issues he or she has identified through conversation or knowledge of the practice of ministry. The supervisor may not share information with the DS except what is contained in the Agreed Record unless there is a serious risk of harm and safeguarding is necessary.

The supervisee may share their experience of reflective supervision as they deem appropriate. The supervisor will discuss their supervisory relationships with their own supervisor for the purpose of developing good supervision practices. The supervisor will keep Boundary Training (if clergy) and Safe Gatherings up to date.

Differences between reflective supervision, mentoring, coaching, spiritual direction

Reflective supervision includes elements common to other modalities, such as prayer and reading Scripture. However, the distinctiveness of reflective supervision is the emphasis on the work of ministry. Clergy bring anything that has a bearing on their ministry into supervision. This could include spiritual and personal matters as they impact upon those with whom they work as ministers.

- Reflective Supervision: the focus is upon the disciple (clergy person) as a minister within the specific details of their work
- Spiritual Direction: the focus is upon the disciple (clergy person) as a follower of Christ
- Coaching: the focus is on setting goals for work or life and identification of ways of reaching and measuring progress toward the goals
- Mentoring: the focus is on developing the skills for ministry with an experienced clergy person and can include observation, giving feedback, and advice giving 2. Expectations and Responsibilities of the Clergyperson (Supervisee)

Eligibility

All clergy in the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference are encouraged to register for reflective supervision. At this time, as we are piloting this in our Conference, there is no cost on behalf of the clergy.

In the future, because of the costs associated with supervision, we anticipate that it will be a cost-sharing relationship. A clergy person with inadequate continuing education funds may apply for a scholarship to cover a portion of the cost when registering.

Clergy are expected to

- Ensure they are prepared to meet with their supervisor at the agreed times and prioritize the agreed upon time
- Prepare spiritually for each session by spending time in reflection and prayer to discern the significant issue or situation to bring to supervision from their ministry context. The focus of exploration each session is determined by the supervisee
- Make notes between sessions of issues or situations that would be appropriate to bring to supervision so that you remember them
- Approach supervision with an openness to explore aspects of their own development , wellbeing, practice of ministry, and self-awareness using a variety of creative tools
- Commit to following through with next steps identified during supervision for personal development and learning
- Coordinate with supervisor for zoom or face-to-face sessions. Travel for face-to-face sessions is the responsibility of the supervisee
- Work with their supervisor to explore dimensions of risk in their work relating to safeguarding self and others; the use of power by self and others; and the negotiation of boundaries
- Notify the supervisor at least 24 hours prior to a session if unable to be present
- Be punctual in returning documents to supervisor
- Share about the reflective supervision experience with their District Superintendent

Frequency and duration

Upon registering, the commitment is for 6 sessions of supervision spaced over 8 – 10 months. Each session typically lasts 60- 90 minutes.

The supervisory relationship

- If a supervisee is dissatisfied with the supervision they are receiving, they should first discuss the matter with their supervisor and secondly with the Reflective Supervision Manager
- If the relationship does not seem to be one that can be fruitful or there are concerns that cannot be resolved, the Reflective Supervision Manager should be informed, and alternative arrangements will be made
- As the commitment for 6 sessions of supervision is drawing to a close, the covenant should be reviewed, and opportunity given for either party to indicate how well the relationship has been working. It is hoped that the supervisory relationship will continue as long as it is productive
- If the supervisory relationship needs to be ended and a new one initiated at the time of reregistering, the Reflective Supervision Manager should be informed, and alternative arrangements will be made.

Records and Informal Note Taking

The supervisor completes an Agreed Record after each reflective supervision session in consultation with the supervisee. The signed Agreed Record is sent to the District

Superintendent. The covenant is also sent to the District Superintendent. The supervisor will maintain a copy of the Covenant and Agreed Records through the duration of the supervisory relationship.

It is good for supervisors to keep their own notes of supervisions for the purpose of tracking and monitoring the relationship. These will be maintained in a locked filing system or password protected electronic format. Notes of the supervisor will be destroyed at the end of the supervisory relationship along with the agreed records and covenant.

Role of the District Superintendent (or other third party)

- Receives the Agreed Record and Covenant of a supervisee in their area of oversight and reviews them
- Raises issues with a clergyperson they wish them to discuss in supervision
- Monitors Agreed Records to follow up on these issues
- Discusses the Agreed Records with the clergyperson at the annual pastoral consultation

Responsibilities and expectations of supervisors

- Demonstration of attributes and openness
- Potential supervisors must be recommended by their supervisor, having demonstrated an understanding of the process and receptiveness to the use of a variety of exploration tools while in supervision
- All who supervise for the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference must have been trained as a supervisor under the policy of the Conference and the General Board of Higher Education (GBHEM). Training begins with a six-month course called Grace and Responsibility which includes four days of education in reflective supervision, practice in training triads and with volunteer supervisees, assessment, and written work. After successful completion of this training, the person becomes a probationary supervisor ready to provide supervision under this policy, working towards certification as a supervisor. A trainee can anticipate a minimum of 15 months from beginning the training to completion of certification
- Remain in good standing with the TWK Conference and the United Methodist Church •
- Supervise at least two persons in order to maintain and continually develop the skills for excellent supervision
- Renew certification every five years according to the policy of GBHEM and the Conference
- Participate in continuing education opportunities offered by GBHEM or the Conference
- Participate in meetings and check-ins of conference supervisors
- Receive supervision on their supervision practice as required by GBHEM and the Conference
- Complete and distribute covenants and agreed records as required by the guidelines
- Maintain Boundary and Safe Gatherings Certifications