

Initial Guidance Notes concerning SUPERVISION -John-Francis Friendship APS*

The scope of supervision is wide. It covers awareness of God in one's ministry, growth in insight and professionalism (good practice); a 'safe-space' to explore feelings, encouragement and support. Sometimes the issues that come up in ministry can be very complex, confusing or difficult to disentangle. It might be that the relationship between those who exercise ministry and those with whom they work has become troubled, for whatever reason, or perhaps the supervisee feels stuck in a given situation. Supervision offers the opportunity for the supervisee to step back and reflect with another professionally trained and trusted person in an environment of confidentiality and complete anonymity in an attentive and supportive climate which should allow the director to explore new options and ways to approach the difficulty that has arisen.

I have spent many years as a Supervisor and have a close relationship with the *London Centre for Spirituality* at St. Edmund's, Lombard Street. From 2000 to 2002 I undertook the *Ignatian Spirituality Course* and now lead the second year of the *London Course in Spiritual Direction*. In 2005 I undertook training in *Supervision Skills for Spiritual Directors* and was accredited as a Pastoral Supervisor by the *Association of Pastoral Supervisors and Educators (APSE)** in 2010.

The *task of supervision* has been described as:

Contemplative - Awareness of God

The central task of Supervision is to foster a contemplative attitude. The focus of Supervision is on the presence of God in the session discerning 'where and how God is' in the work of Supervisee.

Formative - Growth in Insight

There is often need for ongoing formation in ministry. This might take the form, of:

- theory, sharing of knowledge and insights ;
- reminders about communication/listening skills, awareness of content and process, appropriate interventions, and use of silence;
- development of self-understanding, especially strengths and weakness;
- identifying and clarifying any transference and counter-transference, i.e. strong feelings, thoughts and fantasies. What is their source? Does it originate with the supervisee, or is it being stimulated by the person they are working with?

Normative - Growth in professionalism or good practice

This area concerns standards and ethics. Supervision is the place to bring these areas as they arise and so encourage good practice. Typical examples of this are boundaries and referrals.

Restorative - Release and holding

Supervision offers a place in which to discharge feelings. If these are not attended to they will push you around! Own them, claim them and release them.

Affirmative - Encouragement and support

Many of the tasks above imply a fair bit of gentle challenge: all this is done in the context of ongoing support and affirmation.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION:

CONFIDENTIALITY: It is important that you are aware of some of the 'norms' associated with this ministry. *Confidentiality* is essential (☞). However, as a Supervisor I undergo regular Supervision and there may be times when I need to discuss aspects of what has emerged with my own Supervisor. This would be anonymous and is, of course, quite normal for those seeking to act professionally. Supervisors realise the importance of being accountable to someone for our ministry;

DATA PROTECTION: I may make *brief notes* about matters that have arisen. These are kept in a secure place and are destroyed at regular intervals.

COST: As I depend on this ministry to provide some of my income needs, I do ask for a *donation*. Your gift will also cover such matters as on-going training, Supervision and, where applicable, room hire. As a guide this might be equivalent to your hourly income or you may consider the value you place on this ministry.

REVIEW: If you decide to proceed I would expect that, after about 5 sessions, we would review the relationship to see how it's working for both of us. This review would consider the process and content of our time together with the idea of looking at the effectiveness/suitability of the process and whether we are both confident in the way the relationship is developing. Such Reviews would take place from time to time (app. Every 18 months or upon request).

☞ **NOTES ON CONFIDENTIALITY AND CHILD/VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE**

Whilst the relationship between the Supervisor and Supervisee is confidential, information which is disclosed during meetings will need to be disclosed to the appropriate person if someone's safety, including that of the Supervisor or Supervisee, is seriously at risk. It is possible that in such a close and private setting as ministry you may hear of situations in which the protection of a child or a vulnerable adult is an issue. It is important that all those engaged in Ministry understand what is expected of them should they become aware of any concern which falls within this description. There is guidance in *Protecting All God's Children* (The Church of England's Child Protection Policy) ssA3.2 - A3.6. More detailed information can be found in the chapter on confidentiality in *Working with Young People*, published by the Children's Legal Centre, which sets out the general principles governing confidential relationships for all age's groups.

WONDERING WHAT TO BRING TO SUPERVISION?

In preparation: Have a notebook beside you. Relax, take some deep breaths and allow yourself to concentrate on your breathing for a minute or two. Then let your mind drift back over your work with. Some of these questions may help to reflect on your work and your feelings about it. After reflection, make some notes. Think about what you want to learn and how you might present your material, and yourself, in supervision.

What surfaces for you immediately? Notice it and let it go.

What things left you feeling pleased? In what way did they go well?

What interventions, things that you said or did, seemed to be most helpful?

What was difficult for you? How did you feel when experiencing these difficulties?

What were you, are you, uncertain about?

What are you looking forward to in your ministry?

Are there any anxieties about the way you are working with any one?

Are there some doubts/anxieties just 'out of view' which you would rather remained out of view? Identify the feelings not the items.

This may not be what you talk about when you get to supervision but you will have given yourself and your areas of work an 'airing'. Preparation can be a valuable form of self-supervision, reviewing our work and identifying what we really want to explore, to help ourselves and therefore as a result those with whom we work.