A Vital Tool in a Leader's Toolbox: Professional Pastoral Supervision and its Value and Opportunities for Leadership in The Australian Christian Churches.

A White Paper prepared for ACC VIC Executive on the Value and Benefits of Professional Pastoral Supervision for all ACC VIC Ministry Leaders.

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Contents

A Vital Tool in a Leader's Toolbox: Professional Pastoral Supervision and its Value and Benefits for Leadership in The Australian Christian Churches.

Abstract

This paper explores the value and opportunities that professional pastoral supervision (PPS — as distinct from professional *clinical* supervision) offers church ministry leaders in the Australian Christian Churches, specifically in ACC VIC. It is written as a White Paper to be presented to the ACC VIC Executive for the purpose of defining, explaining and advising them about PPS following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in 2017 and its sub-report into religious organisations in 2020. Secondly, it seeks to highlight the value and benefits that PPS offers ACC ministry leaders as an effective personal well-being and development tool and the positive ripple effect this will have for those they lead and serve. Thirdly, based on the findings from this discussion and the recommendations from the Royal Commission, it presents two important recommendations for the ACC Executive to consider: 1) that regular PPS becomes mandatory for credentialed ACC ministers as part of their ongoing professional development and as a requirement for maintaining their credentials; 2) that ACC highly recommended PPS for all other ministry leaders as part of their professional and personal development for the sake of those they serve. In order to identify the value and benefits for ACC ministry leaders of PPS compared with other development and accountability tools, this paper also includes a brief discussion of mentoring and coaching highlighting key differences between PPS and these other important leadership development and accountability tools.

Executive Summary

1. This paper **recognises** the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017; 2021). Specifically recommendation 16.45:

> Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, 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. (Royal_Commission, 2021)

2. This paper **acknowledges** the positive place and purpose mentoring and coaching plays in ACC VIC.
3. This paper **defines** Professional Pastoral Supervision (PPS), and the differences between it and mentoring and coaching.
4. This paper **expounds** the values and unique benefits PPS provide all ACC ministry leaders and their constituents.
5. This paper **recommends** that PPS is **mandated** for all credentialed ministry leaders, and **highly recommended** for all other ministry leaders.
6. This paper **offers** an opportunity for ACC VIC to add its voice to the growing development of supervision as part of the development and accountability processes in Australian churches and lead the way in implementing effective change.

	Mentoring	Coaching	Professional Pastoral Supervision (PPS)
Primary Focus	Personal and spiritual development. Reflection on Soul	Individual skill-development. Reflection on context	Missiological: On the individual *for the sake of* the others not in the room (the context). Reflection on Soul, role and context
Time	Long-term	Short-term	Medium to long-term
Relationship	Mentor-protegee Mentor is usually a more experienced wise elder	Coach is the expert in a specific area of skill development	Supervisee as expert of their Soul, role and context — Supervisor act as a facilitator
Process	Exploring what the Spirit is doing in the life of the individual	The identification of skill blockages or limitations and the implementation of training and practice of new skills	Reflecting together on what is distressing or disturbing and how this impacts the individual's soul, their role and their context. Then envisioning together how the individual can align to align their soul with their role, for the sake of their context
Result	Regular accountability and personal growth. Healthier individual Definite benefit to self Possible benefit to context	Upskilling and more effective in role Definite benefit to self and context	Better internal and external alignment Definite benefit to self, role and missional context

Table 1: Distinctions between Mentoring, Coaching and PPS

1. Introduction

1.1 General Introduction

Since the release of the final report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in 2017 (Royal Commission, 2017; 2021), most Church denominations including the Australian Christian Churches (ACC), have implemented mandated processes that address the requirements of the ten recommended Child Safe practices. These mandated processes have definitely improved institutional and individual accountability and practice for everyone working and volunteering in Church ministry to ensure the safety of those they serve. Nevertheless, a key finding from the Royal Commission that they believed led to the necessity to implement Child Safe practices, was a noticeable lack of systemic and systematic accountability, ongoing professional development and external professional supervision for leaders in religious institutions. According to the report, this lack was a major contributor to institutional abuse. Consequently, in their final report they made the following recommendation.

The release of the report also sparked a noticeable increase in organisations offering professional supervision courses. Additionally, several Christian organisations and denominations have begun implementing a mandatory requirement of regular professional supervision for vocational ministry leaders as part of their ongoing professional development and credentialling (for example, The Baptist Union of Vitoria, Churches of Christ Australia, and the Anglican Church in Australia. See the relevant websites below).

> **Recommendation 16.45**
>
> Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, 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.
>
> (Royal_Commission, 2021)

The ACC have also implemented the Safer Churches program that complies with State and Federal legislation based on the child safe standards in the report (Royal_Commission, 2017, Standard 5). Based on Recommendation 16.45, some individual ACC churches in NSW and Queensland already highly recommended or have even mandated a requirement that their credentialed ministry leadership engage in regular professional supervision (ACC Queensland & Northern Territory | Pastors Health & Wellbeing (qldacc.org.au)). To date, however, apart from ACC Queensland, ACC as a whole has not implemented any recommendation or requirement for its credentialed and volunteer ministry leaders to undertake regular supervision.

During my own studies towards becoming an accredited professional supervisor, I have had numerous conversations with students, pastors and Victorian State executives regarding what supervision is and the potential value it offers ministry leaders and the benefits this will have for their church communities. Common themes arising from these conversations include a lack of understanding or misconception about what professional supervision is, what it entails, how it differs from mentoring, counselling or coaching, and what it can offer Christian ministry leadership that these other tools already provide. In many cases, this misunderstanding comes down to two reasons: 1) Supervision is perceived in terms of work place performance or line-management supervision (Leach, 2020), or as clinical supervision, employed in counselling, psychology, social work and chaplaincy; 2) A more common (mis?) perception, is that *pastoral* supervision is another term for counselling, spiritual direction, or something which already happens in mentoring and coaching, and is therefore unnecessary as a separate tool for the well-being, professional development and ongoing accountability of ministry leaders.

Additionally, the theology and culture of senior leadership in the ACC has also influenced how supervision is perceived and what place and purpose it has in leadership and ministry. In Pentecostal contexts such as the ACC, senior leadership is considered more in terms of a strategic, organisational, and visionary role. Consequently, as the organisation grows, *pastoral* leadership is often delegated to others. Therefore, where supervision may be encouraged, this is commonly viewed as valuable for those in pastoral ministry roles other than senior leadership. This is not a criticism but an observation. Outside of Pentecostal denominations, however, the pastoral role is commonly viewed as a key aspect of vocational ministry at all levels — including senior leadership. Within these contexts pastoral supervision is encouraged and becoming normal practice.

Clearly, as organisations develop and grow, senior leaders take on greater responsibility for the ongoing strategic organisational development of their churches, so they do need to delegate well in order to ensure the right people are leading in the right places, according to their skill and giftings. To effectively grow into their expanding role, all leaders need to build a greater capacity in themselves to be effective in their developing roles and responsibilities (Coers et al., 2021). Nevertheless, because of the tendency to view senior roles as more strategic, professional development and support tools such as mentoring or leadership coaching, are given higher priority than reflective supervision. What the findings of this paper will reveal, however, is that supervision at all levels of ministry leadership is invaluable. This is because it provides opportunity for ministry leaders to regularly and safely reflect on current practice and, where necessary, disrupt ways of thinking, being and doing (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020), so that in reflection, leaders can adjust what they believe about themselves, their role and their context. In doing so they will become better leaders for the sake of those they serve. This not only benefits them as leaders but ripples out to those they serve. Healthier leaders help create healthier communities.

1.2 Paper Aims

Recent research and anecdotal evidence concerning supervision for Church leadership, supports the idea that adding PPS as an additional personal and organisational support for

ministry leaders — including senior leadership — is proving invaluable to their ongoing well-being and effectiveness. Based on the themes mentioned above, however, for supervision to be more widely adopted, further clarification is required of what professional pastoral supervision is and the differences between it and other support tools such as mentoring or coaching.

This paper has two aims: firstly, to inform; secondly, to advise. It aims to inform the ACC VIC Executive and ministry leaders about what supervision is and how it differs to mentoring and coaching. It also aims to highlight how vital and valuable PPS is as an accountability and development tool and why this is the case. Secondly, following the findings and recommendations from the Royal Commission, it advises the ACC Executive by recommending regular PPS for all credentialed leaders and volunteer ACC ministry leaders. To achieve these aims, I draw on current research into PPS, and distil the findings from this research that identifies the positive impact that supervision is already having in ministry contexts other than the ACC, both within Australia and beyond in the UK and Europe.

In relation to ACC ministry leadership, this paper will explore a model of supervision that is not just centred around normative, formative, or performative supervision (see fig. 1), all necessary to assist effectiveness and build capacity to undertake the various tasks the work of ministry and leadership require. It also includes a focus on the internal world of the ministry leader as they consider the content and shape of the call of God on their life, who and what they bring to this role, and what they expect from, and how they respond or react to those they lead— restorative supervision. It then explores new ways of thinking about themselves in their roles and the opportunities this offers for new ways of doing ministry and leading others in the future — transformative supervision.

NORMATIVE
- Professional practices
- Requirements of organization or management
- Ethical and compliance issues

FORMATIVE:
- Guiding
- Coaching
- Equipping
- Upskilling

PERFORMATIVE:
- Accountability to role expectations
- Ensuring client focus is correctly placed

RESTORATIVE:
- Supporting
- Encouraging
- Discharging feelings
- Recharging energies
- Creating opportunity for creativity

TRANSFORMATIVE:
- Turning experience into learning
- Finding meaning in experience
- Learning from the past for the sake of the future
- Encouraging growth and change for the future

Fig 1. Five Elements of Supervision
(Adapted from Paterson, 2022)

1.3 Paper Outline

Before we discuss PPS, I firstly, define Soul, Role and Context; three concepts that interact with much of what follows. Secondly, I define and discuss mentoring and coaching and their value to leadership accountability and development. Thirdly, I define PPS and explore its key concepts before comparing it to mentoring and coaching. Fourthly, I consider the value and benefits that it offers to ACC ministry leadership and their communities and ministries. Finally, I present two key recommendations for ACC VIC Executive to consider. These address both the concerns of and recommendations from the Royal Commission, as well as support the ongoing well-being and development of credentialed and volunteer ministry leadership.

2. Soul, Role, Context

According to Michael Paterson, a clinical and pastoral supervisor, and the founding Director of the Institute of Pastoral Supervision & Reflective Practice (UK), PPS provides "an intentional dialogue between, soul, role, and context" (Paterson, 2020, p. 82). Because these three concepts of Soul, Role and Context inform much of this discussion, so definition of each of these is important.

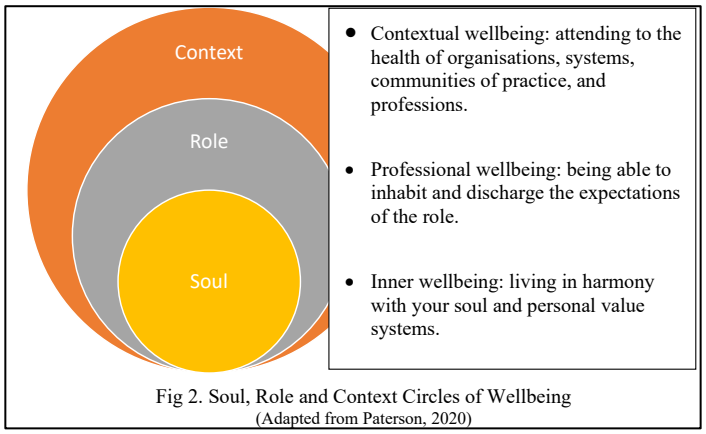

Fig 2. Soul, Role and Context Circles of Wellbeing
(Adapted from Paterson, 2020)

Soul represents "that deep underlying motivation in a person's work, what makes them tick; what gets them out of bed in the morning, the fire in their belly that provides meaning and purpose, and the impulse to contribute something to the common good" (Paterson, 2020, p. 83). Role represents the job or vocation whether "paid or voluntary," to which individuals "give their time, effort, and attention" (Paterson, 2020, p. 83). The role can be a job that aligns with their soul, or one they merely fill as a "positions vacant." Context is the situation in which a person applies their role. Context matters because it can determine whether an individual thrives or stalls in their role. As Paterson states (2020, p. 85), "more than anything" context "explains why people whose souls and roles were in harmony in one appointment become utterly discordant in another". When individuals are unable to harmonise soul, role, and context, this often leads them "to default to role and to simply get the job done no matter the cost to themselves" (Paterson, 2020, p. 86). Although they may be personally diligent and reliable in their roles, and accountable to their contexts, this lack of harmony can lead to "a dissonance between their inner selves (soul) and their outer selves (role)." When this occurs, the context, and those they serve, may be negatively impacted. Helping individuals to disentangle and defragment their soul, role and context through facilitating "ways to bring their soul's motivation into conversation with role" (Paterson, 2020, p. 86), can help them identify disillusionment, discouragement and a lack of fulfilment; all things that when addressed in a healthy way, will ultimately have a corresponding positive impact on a ministry leader and those they serve. Conversely, when left unattended and unaddressed, the resulting negative impact can have long term devasting impart on them, their work, and their ministry contexts.

3. Mentoring

In this section I briefly discuss the key elements and benefits of mentoring. This includes defining mentoring, discussing the elements of a mentoring relationship, and identifying the similarities and contrasts between mentoring, coaching and supervision. Due to the focus of this paper, this is neither exhaustive nor does it explore all current mentoring models or literature.

3.1 Definitions of Mentoring

According to Blake-Beard et al. (2017, p. xvii), mentoring is a "developmental relationship" in which a mentor brings their expertise and accumulated wisdom to a mutual relationship with a mentee. A mentor helps to facilitate the "development of professional skills and competence" (Piggot-Irvine & Biggs, 2020, p. 11). In a mentoring relationship, the mentee is challenged and encouraged to grow personally as an individual and as a leader. Generally, mentoring aims to help solve problems and set goals and plans in order for mentees "to generate more viable, robust, and sustainable pathways for increasing personal effectiveness" (Creary & Morgan Roberts, 2017, p. 19). While a mentee may seek a mentor, usually the relationship is initially chosen or accepted by the mentor (Piggot-Irvine & Biggs, 2020). Within a mentoring relationship, the process often involves advice-giving in the form of imparting experiential wisdom. In such a relationship the mentor exerts a high level of relational power and authority.

3.2 Discussion

Mentoring continues to be embraced as an important development and accountability tool for ministry leaders, especially within Pentecostal contexts. Based on Paterson's model of Soul—Role—Context, the mentoring relationship usually focuses on the intersection between soul and role in order to address issues and benefits of the formation and development of one's career (Trist, 2017).

Although mentoring is encouraged across many contexts of leadership, secular as well as Christian ministry, it is the biblical basis for mentoring that often drives the teaching and embrace of mentoring within the ACC. The biblical basis for mentoring is found in both the Old and New Testaments. For example, the relationship between Moses and his father-in-law, Jethro in Exodus 18 is understood as a mentoring one. Prior to Ex.18, Moses had spent forty years tending Jethro's sheep. When Moses was confronted with his own leadership dilemma in Ex. 18, Jethro was able to enter the situation and challenge Moses to rethink how he was approaching his task as leader over Israel. The respect Moses had for Jethro is reflected in the way Moses followed Jethro's instructions. In the New Testament, the discipleship model promoted by Jesus in the Gospels in which he regularly withdraws with the 12 after key moments in ministry is another classic example of a mentor-protégé relationship (see e.g. Mk. 4:10; 6:7–13, 30–44;9:35–37). The disciples not only observed what Jesus did and said but were led by him into deeper understanding afterwards, and through such a formative process, they were able to emulate his ministry following his death and resurrection.

Within the ACC, ministry leaders are encouraged to seek out trusted mentors; experienced elders who are usually themselves more senior and wise ministry leaders (Trist, 2017). Similar to Jethro or Jesus, these mentors can challenge their mentees how they are living, serving and leading, and also act as models to those they mentor. Because of the personal relationship developed in mentoring, and the respect mentors usually have, they can challenge motivations and encourage spiritual and personal growth in a distinct way (Mallison, 2010; Reese & Loane, 2012).

A mentoring relationship as described here suggests that a mentor is often a mix of discipler, spiritual guide, coach, teacher, counsellor, pastor, sponsor, and model — each with their own distinct expectations (Mallison, 2010). Described this way, the mentor acts more like a consultant who retains a level of expertise (Creswell, 2006), because they are perceived to be an experienced and knowledgeable senior and are, therefore, able to speak into both the professional and personal life of the mentee (Mallison, 2010). While over time this knowledge and expertise may be transferred to the mentee, the seniority in the relationship remains with the mentor.

Although traditional mentoring relationships tend to be hierarchical in form and work more in terms of a master-apprentice, elder-disciple or mentor-protégé ((Emmerich, 2000), more recently, this form of hierarchical mentoring relationship is being challenged especially in secular contexts. While in the workplace there may still be a requirement for more senior and skilled mentors, for personal growth and development other forms of mentoring relationships beyond the hierarchical models are being embraced (Murrell & South-Paul, 2017). One such model is peer mentoring. This has been shown to greatly influnce personal development, where peer mentors act as agents of social influence through helping, intentionally or inherently, shape “perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours” (Murrell & South-Paul, 2017, p. 93), through modelling and by challenging behaviours. This is a great substitute where more advanced mentors are not available (Coers et al., 2021)

3.3 Strengths and Limitations of Mentoring

Clearly, having a relationship with someone in a similar role of leadership who is more experienced and knowledgeable is valuable to personal and professional development. Formative and performative reflection in mentoring is useful in helping identify and make sense of past and present personal, professional and educational experiences of the mentee (Coers et al., 2021) — especially the formative nature of these experiences and how they have helped shape the mentee. Furthermore, as Reese and Loane suggest, a mentoring relationship can include personal reflection as part of a mentoring session. When this is includes, it often involves reflecting on past present and future, which Reese and Loane (2012, p. 137) label “Reflection … Projection … Direction.” Each of these require self-reflection and a “learning to notice” (Reese & Loane, 2012, p. 141), where the mentee considers the various things that have impacted their life internally, externally, vocationally and communally. Reflecting on these impacts, the mentee can then consider how they have enhanced or limited success. This reflection is what Reese & Loane (2012, p. 144) call “confrontation or discontinuity.”

Because there a level of intimacy is built over time in a mentoring relationship, similar to PPS, in mentoring, an individual may be challenged to consider their *motivation* and approach *toward* the people and community which they lead. However, in most cases the main motivation in mentoring focuses first on how the *mentee* develops as a person with an emphasis on individual goals and plans, showing limited deference to those whom the individual leads. Nevertheless, mentoring is an important and effective tool for leadership development and accountability. When done well and in concert with good mentors, mentoring will positively benefit a leader's community.

4. Coaching

As discussed above, a mentoring relationship with a significant elder mentor is an important development and accountability tool for ministry leaders. We also noted similar aspects of reflective mentoring that are shared with PPS. In this section I briefly discsus the key elements of coaching. This includes defining coaching, discussing the elements of a coaching relationship, and identifying similarities and contrasts between coaching, mentoring and supervision. Again, due to the focus of this paper, this discussion on coaching is not exhaustive, nor does it explore all coaching models or literature.

4.1 Definitions of Coaching

Although coaching is often considered a subset or form of mentoring, not all mentors are necessarily coaches, nor do all coaches include personal reflective elements indicative of some mentoring relationships and models. This is primarily because coaching itself does not require the same intimacy nor breadth of experience provided by a mentoring relationship. A helpful comparison between mentoring, workplace supervision, and coaching is that while a mentor "serves as a wise and trusted counsellor and guide," a coach helps "develop task-related skills and accomplish specific growth needs or objectives" (Emmerich, 2000, p. 109).

4.2 Discussion

Notwithstanding similarities between coaching, mentoring and supervision, coaching by definition is a relationship whereby a coach is able to work with an individual on a specific area of developing skills necessary to the workplace (Trist, 2017), and is centred primarily on the coachee's *desired goals and strengths* (Creswell, 2006). A key focus of coaching is to enable an individual to develop specific skills so that they can be more productive and better able to develop strategies "for which expertise is needed that doesn't already exist" (Creswell, 2006, p. 15). It can, therefore, assist an individual to discover their "untapped potential" (2006, p. 13) in order for them to better achieve work place success.

According to Hawkins and Smith (2013), coaching is not monolithic but operates on a continuum, beginning with Skill Coaching. As the name implies, Skill Coaching assists coachees to develop specific skills related to their jobs or roles. Within a ministry context, these skills can relate to areas such as technical, logistical, governance and leadership related, or people-helping skills. The next level is Performance Coaching, often undertaken by managers or line coaches who focus on performance outputs and outcomes. The third level is Development Coaching that focuses on the long-term development of the coachee.

Development Coaching can include mentoring and focusses on the development of the whole person, including their capacities for both current and future roles. The value of Development Coaching for ministry leaders is that it aligns well with models of discipleship and leadership training, especially in building capacity for future leadership roles. The final level of coaching is Transformational Coaching. Once someone has worked through the previous levels, this final level seeks to enable the coachee to be able to easily transition across the various levels and function at a higher-order level of role.

4.3 Strengths and Limitations

The value to Christian ministry leadership of the model of coaching that Hawkins and Smith propose, is its ability to identify and support what is necessary for personal leadership skill-development. Furthermore, over time the relationship between the coach and coachee shifts from the coach as leader and teacher, to the coachee as leader with a high level of personal agency, self-, and skill development. Consequently, coaching is an effective development tool as it eventually hands the reins of development back to the leader. However, this also means that the coaching relationship tends to be short term and skill specific. While the specific skill that one seeks coaching for, and the context into which they apply that skill is important, coaching primarily focuses on the *individual's* personal growth. In the context of Christian ministry, such an individualistic focus can ignore or has no required referent to the other or others who are not part of the coaching relationship: the individual, group, or community in which the ministry leader is serving.

Like mentoring, coaching is client-centred and aimed at developing the individual and their leadership capacity and capabilities. What is evident from coaching literature, however, is that most coaching focusses on the development of the individual for the *context* and *tasks* in which they are being coached, so they are able to apply new skills and practices that make them more effective in that context (see e.g., Creswell, 2006; Ogne & Roehl, 2008). Like professional supervision, except where coaches are themselves work-based supervisors, a coach is not required or expected to be an expert in everything to do with their client's role or context (Jordan Tovera, 2016; Mason & Mullen, 2022; Piggot-Irvine & Biggs, 2020).

In contrast to mentoring and professional supervision, the coaching relationship is often short-term where the endpoint is predetermined and primarily skill-specific, with an emphasis on accomplishment (Piggot-Irvine & Biggs, 2020). Mentoring and professional supervision tend to be longer-term relationships, often determined by the length of time an individual remains in their vocation, role or ministry. Additionally, the role of coaching is to develop forward momentum through encouraging proactive behaviours that draw the coachee from *feelings* about their roles and skills, to actual concrete action (Piggot-Irvine & Biggs, 2020). Notwithstanding these differences, coaching is an important tool for personal leadership and ministry skill-development, as it assists ministry leaders to become better practitioners within the roles and contexts to which they are called.

As an aside, while coaching is itself a development tool, even coaches as skilled practitioners are being encouraged to include reflective supervision similar to PPS as part of their personal development. (Bachkirova et al., 2020; Clutterbuck et al., 2016). As the

literature into coaching supervision highlights, because leadership coaching is part of the broader landscape of helping professions, including ongoing professional reflective supervision as part of a coaches professional development is becoming usual practice. This is because it is proving effective not only for the coaches themselves to become more effective practitioners, but also of consequential benefit for those they coach (Bachkirova et al., 2020).

This point cannot be overstated and should not be ignored. If external development practitioners such as coaches are themselves finding benefit and value in external professional *reflective* forms of supervision — as compared with formative or performative forms of supervision (Clutterbuck et al., 2016) — then this supports the idea that PPS is uniquely distinct from coaching and should be considered as an important additional development and accountability tool for ACC ministry leaders.

5. Professional Pastoral Supervision (PPS)

Having defined and discussed key concepts and the value of mentoring and coaching for leadership development and accountability, the rest of this paper will focus on professional pastoral supervision (PPS), and the value and benefits this provides for the ongoing well-being and development of ministry leaders and for those they serve. Firstly, I define PPS and consider further contrasts between it and mentoring and coaching. I then identify the value and benefits that establishing a regular PPS relationship offers ACC ministry leadership. Finally, in light of the recommendations from the Royal Commission, I present three recommendations to the ACC Executive for the implementation of PPS for all credentialed and volunteer ministry leaders.

> **Recommendation 16.45**
>
> Consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, 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.
>
> (Royal_Commission, 2021)

5.1 Definitions of Professional Pastoral Supervision

Michael Paterson and Jane Leach (2015, p. 10) define professional supervision as "a regular, planned, intentional and boundaried space in which a practitioner skilled in supervision, meets with one or more other practitioners to look together at the supervisee's practice. It is characterised by trust, confidentiality, support, and openness that gives the supervisee freedom and safety to explore the *issues arising in their work*" (emphasis added). In the context of Christian ministry, PPS provides a safe space where individuals without judgement can critically and reflexively consider how ministry concerns and issues that "arise within the framework of the expectations, beliefs, and priorities that shape" a ministry leader's context and work (Leach, 2020, p. 2), and how these all impact themselves and those they serve. It is a confidential space outside of usual ministry and mentoring relationships, that helps make "sense of the dis-ease, distress and disturbance that can be triggered" by the needs and fragmentations of those we lead. (Hawkins and McMahon, 2020, 5).

Michael Carroll (2007, p. 36) proposes that PPS is not only "reflection-on-action" (exploring past cases that occur and how ministry leaders responded to these), but also "reflection-in-action" (exploring current situations as they unfold for the leader), with the aim of "reflection-for-action" (what changes can and need to be made for better practice) According to Leach (2020, p. 2), professional supervisors are specifically trained facilitators "who can help support the agency and accountability of supervisees [in our case Church ministry leaders] as they seek to *live out* their vocation [their role]," as well as "fulfil mission priorities in *their* context" (emphasis added). Geoff Smith, the Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide, cogently states that reflective PPS assists ministers "to 'see' their ministry from a broader perspective, have insight into their ministry, and grow in their understanding of who they are in the ministry they exercise." (2020, p. 8).

5.2 Discussion

Several things are evident in these definitions. Firstly, PPS described here is both theological and missional. It is theological in that it is grounded in a Christological vision of shalom that promotes a wholistic praxis of restoration and transformational health for ministry leaders and their communities. When applied to the idea of reflection on the past, in the present, for the future, PPS facilitates opportunity to reflect on an individual's sense of call to ministry that is Christ-centered, Holy-Spirit empowered and located in the community in which they are currently located. It facilitates a regular collaborative conversation where supervisor and ministry leader can together explore past and current ministry practices (their role), along with the complexities, issues and fragmentation that arise from the context they minister in, their own learning about themselves and what they bring to their role (their soul) as a result of this fragmentation. This can lead to transformation where the ministry leader takes what they learn about their soul-role relationship, and make necessary adjustments, realignments or radical changes in their role for the sake of the communities they serve (future ministry) (Moore, 2016; Paterson, 2022).

Secondly, an important distinction between PPS and mentoring is that the focus of the supervision relationship is not on the individual supervisee and their self-development alone. Rather, PPS is primarily concerned for the other or others not in the room — the context in which ministry is located; in this case, the community in which the ministry leader serves and those they interact with on a day-day or week-week basis. Thus, from a Christian perspective, PPS is also ecclesial because it is primarily driven by a vision for those whom ministry leaders serve, i.e., their context (fig. 2). "Supervision is all about vision and, at its best, the supervisory encounter is the meeting point of visionaries: people who have been captured by a vision of their role in the world, of how life can be and of how best to express their care for others" (Paterson, 2022, p. 11),

Because role and context are key components of PPS, normative, formative, and performative elements (see, Fig. 1 above) that impact the supervisee are also important. The terms, "normative" and "formative", commonly employed in supervision literature and models, represent two of the three legs (their third leg, "restorative" supervision, will be discussed below) of the three-legged stool model of supervision developed by Inskipp and Proctor (1995). They denote a focus on organisational contexts and the requirements of an individual's role. The normative aspect includes such things as the organisational requirements and demand that relate to internal systems, processes, expectations, structures, governance, and ethics. Identifying and exploring these within the supervision relationship ensures that a supervisee is operating to the best of their ability in their role according to the expectations and requirements of the organisational context and role (the "performative" aspect).

Even though mentoring, coaching, and counselling may include aspects of what is described here, an important distinction between these and PPS exists, and that is the deliberate focus on those within the context. According to Leach (2020, p. 2), the "reflective supervisor's role is not to duplicate the management or oversight functions through which organizational goals are set or discipline is imposed" (the normative and formative aspects of

supervision). Therefore, a supervision relationship as recommended by the Royal Commission and adapted to church contexts, explores so much more than just the normative, formative, and performative aspects of ministry leadership. Instead, Professional pastoral supervisors facilitate spaces in which a ministry leader can "be a transformative presence in the lives of others" (Leach, 2020, p. 2). In order for this transformative presence to occur, a PPS relationship includes the restorative aspect of Inskipp and Proctor's model.

The transformative aspect of PPS focuses on the supervisee — who they are (their soul), in order to reflect on how that 'who' interacts with their role and ministry context (Paterson, 2022). Together a supervisor and supervisee explore together what may have got lost in the 'who' (the soul or person of the ministry leader), the role, or at the intersection between the two. The transformative aspect of PPS expands on the restorative element of Inskipp and Proctor and considers the personal learning that occurs in supervision where the supervisee learns about themselves, their role and their context, and considers new ways of being in their person in their role, and how implementing this learning and transformation can change how they engage their context (Carroll, 2008; Paterson, 2022). PPS thus encourages ministry leaders to learn from the complexities of their life and ministry at the intersection between their soul role and context, in order to *reorient* themselves and their practices as ministers to lead better in these contexts (Leach, 2020).

This identifies a further key distinctive difference between PPS and mentoring or coaching. In PPS, the *supervisor* is not the expert in the relationship. Instead, the *ministry leader* is expert of their own self, their role and their ministry context. They know what theu are struggling with; they know their role and what that requires; they know their organisation and community, and they know their people. So they come as the expert of themselves who can, with the right questions, identify feelings and emotions derived from their context that may cause them to "get lost or submerged" in their work (Leach, 2020, p. 2). The supervisor's role in this relationship is to merely offer hospitality; to host a place where that expertise can be reflected on and where the ministry leader can consider their responses and reactions that occur within their role because of and towards their context (Paterson, 2022).

An important aspect of PPS, then, is to help address reactive thinking, which Michael Carroll defines as "reactive learning;" something that "is governed by downloading habitual ways of thinking, of continuing to see the world within the familiar categories in which we are comfortable" (Carroll, 2007, p. 37). Few like to be disrupted or sit in uncomfortable personal spaces or thinking. Nevertheless, this reflexive disruption is important if transformation of both individual and praxis (Soul and Role) is to occur. For this to happen an openness and trust is

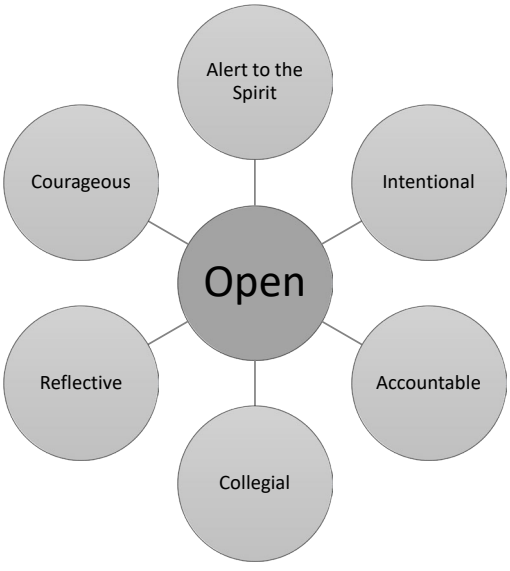

Fig. 3 Diagram of the Dispositions of a Reflective Supervisee (Leach, 2020, 139)

required (see fig. 3). This is an openness towards both the process of supervision itself, as well as an openness towards the supervisor so that supervisees are willing to become uncomfortable as they learn about themselves and identify some of their own reactivity that occurs within their role and context, and that is their issue to address on not the responsibility of those they lead.

Research has already shown that such a relationship built around trust and openness clearly leads to an increased learning about self, and a consequential greater transformation of soul and role (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020; Leach, 2020). In other words, this openness creates the opportunity to foster wisdom in the moment and help facilitate insight, so that this becomes part of the minister's own personal integrated reflection and praxis (personal conversation with Michael Paterson, 2023).

5.3 Values and Benefits of Supervision for Christian Leadership

Values

Having defined and discussed what PPS is, we can now consider the values and benefit that supervision offers ACC ministry leaders. As I have already noted, because supervision within a ministry context is a recent occurrence, there is limited current research into the effectiveness of supervision for ministry leaders or the impact this supervision has on their contexts; the "ripple effect" of supervision (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020, p. 267). Research out of the UK, however, is now in its second decade and anecdotal evidence from Australia is supporting their research findings. In this section I briefly discuss Jane Leach's research and some of the material that has begun to appear in other denominations settings in Australia. I then present a number of benefits that PPS provisionally offers ACC ministry leaders.

Although Leach's research developed out of the Methodist Churches UK, her findings are highly relevant for the ACC. In a strongly vision driven and growth focussed context such as the ACC, the inclusion of a theologically framed and spiritually attentive supervision process is important (Leach, 2020; Paterson, 2022). Especially when it focusses on the development and reflexive learning of ministry leaders as the experts of their own vocation and context. Furthermore, the soul-role-context model, ensures that attention is paid to their personal and professional wellbeing and that of their families, and broader missional context. Such a vision of wellbeing and development sits well in a vision driven and growth-oriented environment that is centred on the call of God to flourish and build God's people.

The outcome of Leach's research (2020, pp. 52–53) revealed that regular supervision provided a safe place for ministry leaders to:

- Self-Reflect.
- Critically reflect on ministry.
- Share concerns.
- Share highs and lows of ministry (without judgement).
- Help identify when trying to please people rather than God.

- Identify and provide a safe environment to explore what does and does not provide energy.
- Build more confidence in their role.
- Evaluate and discuss in a safe collaborative relationship, issues and concerns that would often be processed by the individual alone.

From a corporate perspective, some of the key findings included (Leach, 2020, p. 55):

- Reduced symptoms of isolation and stress through realistic and regular structured accountability.
- A more robust handling of risks and safeguarding risks through explicit attention to risk identification and risk management (a key concern of the Royal Commission).
- Less anxiety in the face of change.

As I mentioned above, many of these findings are echoed anecdotally by those in Australia who have already begun to implement regular PPS as part of their development. (see, e.g. the articles and personal feedback from ministry leaders detailed in ACC Queensland & Northern Territory | Pastors Health & Wellbeing (qldacc.org.au); St Mark's Review, 2020, 4)

Benefits

Based on these findings I present four benefits that adopting regular PPS offers ACC ministry leaders. Significantly, these four benefits reflect well much of the ethos and values of the ACC.

1. Firstly, the opportunity that PPS provides to interrupt practice and "disturb stuck narratives" (Paterson, 2020, p. 81) in order to effectively address and unpack issues, concerns or personal struggles that arise within the ministry context from ministry stressors. While mentoring and coaching help identify similar concerns, a ministry leader may not explore these concerns in these relationships, nor feel as safe or as open to do so as research suggest they do in PSS. Evidence from current research suggests supervision offers this safe relationship. This is partly due to the level or separation that rightly exists between a professional supervisor and the ministry leader's role and context. If left unchecked or unattended to, these issues, concerns or personal struggles can lead to the abusive leadership the Royal Commission identified as present in Australian churches (Royal_Commission, 2017), or to burnout and depression — both becoming more prevalent in leadership in Australian churches in general (see the excurses below).

2. Secondly, the supervision model presented here is biblically informed, theologically grounded, Christological shaped and Holy Spirit empowered (see fig. 3). Because it looks at the role and soul of the ministry leader for the sake of their context, it is also ecclesiological and missional. In other words, it assists in the ongoing well-being and health of the individuals and communities in which the leader serves — the ultimate purpose and contextual focus of PPS. Therefore, when done well, PPS assists ministers

to disentangle self for the sake of others, and as such reflects the character and life of Christ as self-giving for the sake of others. As is clear from ministry and leadership literature, when a leader is healthy then they operate in their role in a healthier manner, which has a clear corelative ripple effect on those they lead; consequently, their communities are healthier. Furthermore, when implemented as a regular relationship, PPS becomes a safety net and safe place to explore beliefs, current practice and reactions before they become issues (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020).

3. Thirdly, because of its visionary nature in reflecting on the past, in the present, *for the future*, PPS is eschatologically focused. It seeks to identify what is working and what is not, so that through reflection and supervision, the ministry leader can facilitate better the eschatological vision of God's shalom in their ministry and in their churches. This is the vision that God already has in mind for them, their role and their ministry context.

4. Fourthly, the purpose of supervision is always to consider the other not in the room; in this case those who the ministry leader servers. Consequently, PPS is missiological. It seeks the best for the other and extends beyond just the ministry context to the world in which the other lives — the communities beyond the church ministry context in which they live and work.

5.4 Excursus: PPS, Leadership Abuse, Depression or Burnout

Based on the above discussion of PPS and broader research into the benefit that supervision provides other helping professions (Eriksson et al., 2016; Hawkins & McMahon, 2020; Shohet et al., 2011), two areas of current concern in leadership circles that will benefit from engaging regular PPS, include ministry abuse and burnout.

As research into the pressures of church ministry has shown, the emotional and mental lostness and submergence that sometimes occurs within ministry can result in ministry leaders withdrawing and isolating from others for their own protection. This occurs when leaders carry the pressures and hits of their ministry and leadership alone, believing that only they are responsible for their call, their role and their community. A number of things that Hawkins and McMahon call "shadow" motivations drive this. Shadow motivations include: a drive for power; meeting one's own needs for acceptance, to be like or affirmed and a need to heal others — a deep empathy for the wellbeing of others at the expense of self. (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020, pp. 29–32). To this list I would add, an ignorance or misunderstanding of what authentic Christian leadership is and requires; narcissistic tendencies that drive a leader to believe that no one else can do their role better; an embedded personal sense of shame or fear of failure; or the need to prove themselves worthy of the call. These shadow motivations often result and manifest in workaholism that ultimately has negative results.

Whatever the drivers or motivations behind ministry — positive or negative — where circumstances or negative drivers exist and are left unattended or unchecked, leaders become rescuers rather than collaborators or co-workers; or self-imposed messiahs or dominators,

rather than nurturers and equippers (Eriksson et al., 2016). When leaders succumb to such temptations, they find themselves believing a subtle lie that their call is to carry others' burdens at the expense of their own time and well-being, and to not do so is perceived as a sign of weakness or failure. Conversely, such isolation or the belief the leadership task is theirs alone can ultimately lead to either leaking unconstrained and unaddressed stress on to their staff, other leaders, and their community (or even their families!). This leakage is often expressed as high demands or control of those they lead, which in turn can create a shame-based and over-controlled environment — a form of spiritual abuse which over time can lead to their community disengaging or becoming passive.

Alternatively, it leads to burnout; a reality that is increasing prevalent in the Christian community. Burnout is an emotional and psychological state of being that negatively impacts both the leader, their families and their communities. Burnout involves emotional exhaustion. Depersonalisation, and disillusionment, which result in reduced personal efficacy (notice the parallels to role, soul and context). It is never something that any ministry leader seeks or intends, but it comes after a slow burn of unrealistic expectations and demands that eventually take their toll; expectations that are both pressures and expectations from the context, as well as internal unrealistic and unspoken internal expectation that come from false beliefs about soul, role and context. As already noted, "the dis-ease, distress and disturbance that can be triggered" (Hawkins and McMahon, 2020, 5) by the needs and fragmentations of individuals and issues within ministry — often the very things that lead to embrace the ministry call in the first place — can become the very things that lead to the depression, disengagement or disillusionment characteristic of burnout, irrespective of the passion, the sense of call, or the purpose one has for their ministry role or those they serve. Like other helping professions, carrying other's needs, expectations and brokenness always impacts the internal lives ministry leaders (see, e.g., Faulkner, 1981; Frederick et al., 2018; Glenn, 2020; Kaldor & Bullpitt, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Navarra, 2016; Warlow & Stebbins, 2004). On reflection, my own personal experience of burnout in ministry was due to this.

Whatever the outcome, the impact of both over-controlling leadership or disengagement and burnout ultimately breaks "God's plan for shalom" for the church (Eriksson et al., 2016, p. 60). When either of these are allowed to occur, we "violate God's plan for shalom when we do violence to ourselves and others through burnout [or over-control]." More strongly, allowing these to occur "represents a violence of self-deception and expectations of others [or from others] that extend beyond capacity for health" (Eriksson et al., 2016, p. 60)

PPS can help avoid both extremes by facilitating a space where ministry leaders can safely and openly reflect on the disturbing and puzzling aspects of their work — those dis-eases, distresses and disturbances — that force them to isolate or act in ways that violate their call and character (see, fig. 3). While mentoring and coaching can build agency and capacity for the task of ministry, neither guarantee an avoidance of leadership abuse or burnout. Both PPS and counselling are proving to help promote personal healing and transformation in the all the areas of soul, role and context. However, where counselling is important for dealing with the *repercussions* of burnout or over-dominance, PPS has already proven to be effective

in catching supervisees before these occur (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020; Shohet et al., 2011; Wilmot, 2011). Consequently, this avoids the violence to self and others that over-control or burnout causes. It helps identify and explore vocational wounding that comes with ministry, and by facilitating discussion encourages ministry leaders to courageously reassess and realign their vocational gifting to their role and context in a healthy and empowering way.

5.5 Summary of the Distinctions between Mentoring, Coaching and PPS

	Mentoring	Coaching	Professional Pastoral Supervision (PPS)
Primary Focus	Personal and spiritual development. Reflection on Soul	Individual skill-development. Reflection on context	Missiological: On the individual *for the sake of* the others not in the room (the context). Reflection on Soul, role and context
Time	Long-term	Short-term	Medium to long-term
Relationship	Mentor-protegee Mentor is usually a more experienced wise elder	Coach is the expert in a specific area of skill development	Supervisee as expert of their Soul, role and context — Supervisor act as a facilitator
Process	Exploring what the Spirit is doing in the life of the individual	The identification of skill blockages or limitations and the implementation of training and practice of new skills	Reflecting together on what is distressing or disturbing and how this impacts the individual's soul, their role and their context. Then envisioning together how the individual can align to align their soul with their role, for the sake of their context
Result	Regular accountability and personal growth. Healthier individual Definite benefit to self Possible benefit to context	Upskilling and more effective in role Definite benefit to self and context	Better internal and external alignment Definite benefit to self, role and missional context

Table 1: Distinctions between Mentoring, Coaching and PPS

6. Key Recommendations

Having discussed Professional Pastoral Supervision and its value and benefit for ministry leaders and based on the findings of recent research on the value of professional supervision in Christian leadership overseas, I offer key recommendation to ACC VIC Executive to consider:

1. That ACC VIC ***mandates*** a minimum of **four (4)** regular PPS sessions per year for all credentialed ministers within the next two years.
    - This will allow a two-year buffer period to educate existing credentialed ministers on the value and importance of PPS and for them to prepare to find and set up regular supervision meetings.
    - This buffer will also provide a suitable timeframe to begin to implement mandatory supervision for all current and future probationary credentialed ministers and make this an ongoing requirement for credential renewal.
    - Although this will add additional costs to the professional development budgets of many church communities, the cost-benefit of funding 3-4 sessions per year for full time credentialed staff, and subsidising part time staff will prove to far outweigh the cost-deficit.

2. In order to **recognise, affirm** and **implement** the recommendation by the Royal Commission that *"**all*** people in religious or pastoral ministry receive professional or pastoral supervision" (Royal_Commission, 2021, emphasis added), I recommend that ACC VIC **highly encourages** *all* ministry leaders other than those included in 1 above, to engage in a minimum of **three (3)** individual or group PPS sessions per year.

    NOTE: Financial support for PPS for those in both 1 and 2 should remain the decision of individual ACC churches.

3. That, where possible, PPS is undertaken with a professional supervisor who has a **level of independence to the institution** of the ACC VIC. This will ensure a healthy contextual separation exists between supervisor and supervisee that the Royal Commission advised. This will ensure the necessary confidentiality and sense of personal safety ministry leaders need for effective and open self-disclosure and reflection.

These recommendations are made based on the following reasons.

- They acknowledge and address the concerns and recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- They ensure that the ACC VIC is leading the way in going beyond these recommendations for the well-being and safety of their communities and credentialed and voluntary ministry leaders.
- PPS is already proving to be an invaluable development tool for building ongoing

capacity, capability and resilience in ministry leaders.

- PPS provides a unique and safe reflective relationship that will mitigate many of the causes of leadership abuse or burnout; it greatly supports leadership health, wellbeing and ongoing ethical practice.
- The beneficial ripple effect of PPS on the individuals and communities in which the ministry leaders serve. As ministry leaders become healthier and are better aligned with their role, this positively benefits their constituents (fig.4).

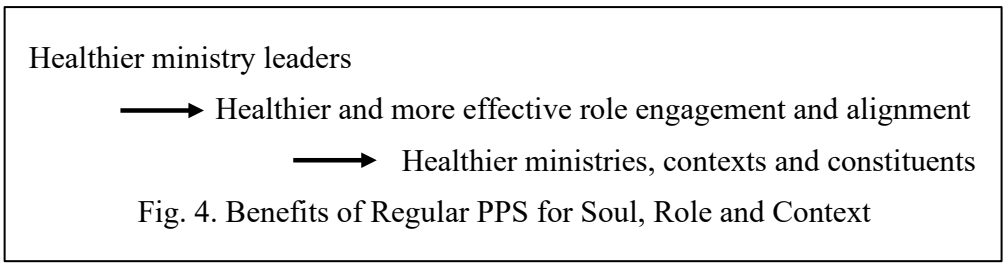

Fig. 4. Benefits of Regular PPS for Soul, Role and Context

7. Conclusion

7.1 General Conclusion

This paper has identified and discussed the importance, value and benefits of professional pastoral supervision (PPS) for ACC VIC ministry leaders and those they serve. I, firstly, defined and discussed the importance of mentoring and coaching as important ministry leadership development tools. I highlighted their unique contribution to specific areas of leadership development. I then defined and discussed PPS and contrasted this to mentoring and coaching relationships. Because of its unique contribution and approach in supporting supervisees, my discussion has shown the added value that regular PPS can provide ministry leaders as they deal with the complexities that come with leading and serving in church ministry. In light of recent overseas research on the value of supervision for church ministry leaders, I then presented key recommendations for ACC VIC Executive to consider implementing and mandating for credentialed and voluntary leaders in the near future. As my research has shown, PPS not only addresses the concerns of the Royal Commission, it also can help mitigate against maladaptive leadership practices and weak accountability structures within the ACC. It can also assist in addressing increasing levels of depression and burnout within ministry leader.

Implementing a requirement for supervision, whether mandatory or otherwise, will not be without resistance. Geoff Smith, who has considered how to implement professional supervision in the Anglican Church in Australia, notes that (Smith, 2020, p. 7), several issues "will need to be answered as we prepare to enlarge the uptake of regular supervision. The first of those is helping clergy and lay ministers to see supervision as a life-giving, ministry-enhancing activity." This is a relevant concern in the ACC as well. Thankfully, there has been greater emphasis placed on individual and community health and well-being in the ACC. This is welcomed, especially by those who work in and across ministry and counselling/psychology contexts. PPS will only add a further dimension to this growing emphasis on building healthy and visionary individuals who are better able to align their soul and role; thus fulfilling the call of God on their life, all for the sake of those they are called to serve.

8. Postscript: Personal Reflection

In my own personal and professional ministry journey, that has included chaplaincy, pastoral ministry, leadership, and counselling roles, I have greatly benefited from the supervision, mentoring and coaching that I have received. On reflection, I know that had I undertaken regular external supervision in a previous role, my own experience of burnout in 2008 and the consequential trauma and woundedness, would have been far less traumatic and lengthy. My current training in professional supervision has reiterated the value and benefits that regular PPS offers all ministry leaders, regardless of role. Writing this paper has strengthened my resolve to be as professional a supervisor as I can for the sake of those I supervise and their constituents. It has fuelled a desire to promote professional supervision as important for all ministry leaders, especially in the ACC in which I am also credentialed.

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