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# **A Kingdom Project**

**Developing Formational Supervision: a critical assessment  
of training offered to supervisors of candidates for ministry  
within the Church of Scotland**

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**MA, BD, MTh.**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Doctorate in Practical Theology  
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## Abstract

The supervision of students for ministry is of primary importance for the Church today. In a context where religion is becoming increasingly privatised and the Church increasingly marginalised, not only are there fewer candidates presenting for ministry, and fewer ministers, the challenges facing these ministers become ever more complex. Although the study of theology is basic to the exercise of ministry, the skills for ministry are learned on placement, where a student engages in the practice of ministry supervised by an experienced and trained minister. It is from this supervisor that the trainee minister learns how to deal with the complexities of ministry today. It follows, therefore, that the training given to such supervisors must be developed to take account of the changing role of ministry. The Church of Scotland has an intensive training course for these supervisors whom I will refer to as 'formational supervisors'. This thesis aims to evaluate this training to ascertain the extent to which it equips formational supervisors for the task.

To do this, I interviewed six formational supervisors and the six probationer ministers on placement in their congregations to determine the extent to which supervisory practice was sharpened and enhanced by the Church of Scotland's current training programme, where any weaknesses lay, and, therefore, whether the training was fit for purpose.

The results of my research show that the training offered is very good but could be excellent. I outline the strengths and weaknesses of the training as it is currently configured and suggest areas for development. I make ten recommendations for improvements to the training. I also identify the characteristics of the formational supervisor which sets this type of supervision apart from pastoral or clinical supervision. This is significant in enabling appropriate training in formational supervision.

The results of the research, while being of importance for the training of formational supervisors of ministry students in the Church of Scotland, have wider application. These results would also be helpful for reflecting on training in other churches and could be developed for the training of formational supervisors in any discipline.

## Contents

Abstract.....	2
List of Figures.....	7
Acknowledgements.....	8
Declaration of Originality Form .....	9
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	10
1.1 A Kingdom Project: transformative leadership .....	10
1.2 The Background: The Church of Scotland.....	16
1.3 The Background: Theological Education and Supervision.....	19
1.3.1 Theological Education .....	19
1.4 Provisional Definitions .....	23
1.4.1 Supervision .....	23
1.4.2 Formation.....	25
1.4.3 Formational Supervision .....	27
1.4.4 Reflection.....	30
1.5 The Background: My Experience.....	31
1.6 The Role of the Supervisor in Training .....	34
1.7 The Research Question .....	35
1.8 Theological Considerations.....	43
1.9 Conclusion .....	44
Chapter 2 Methodology.....	46
2.1 Introduction .....	46
2.2 The Methodological Approach .....	47
2.2.1 The semi-structured interview .....	47
2.2.2 Autoethnography as a research tool .....	49
2.2.3 Considering Ethics .....	50
2.1 Theological Considerations: The God Factor .....	54
2.2 The Research Pool.....	55
2.2.1 The interviews .....	57
2.3 Conclusion .....	61
Chapter 3 The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and Its Value in Training for Formational Supervision.....	64
3.1 Introduction .....	64
3.2 MBTI: Background.....	67
3.2.1 MBTI: For or Against?.....	71
3.3 Theological considerations .....	81
3.4 MBTI in Supervision Training .....	85

3.4.1	Case Study 1 .....	88
3.4.2	The Interviews .....	90
3.4.3	Case Study 2 .....	95
3.5	Conclusion .....	97
Chapter 4 Understanding Approaches to Learning in Formational Supervision		100
4.1	Introduction .....	100
4.2	What Makes Learning Happen.....	105
4.3	Theological Considerations.....	112
4.4	Approaches to Learning in Supervision .....	114
4.4.1	The Interviews .....	123
4.5	Conclusion .....	127
Chapter 5 Reflective Practice and Theological Reflection in Formational Supervision .....		130
5.1	Introduction .....	130
5.2	What is Reflective Practice? .....	130
5.3	Theological Considerations.....	146
5.4	Theological Reflection as Reflective Practice.....	148
5.5	The Parabolic Loop in Supervision .....	152
5.5.1	The Interviews .....	153
5.5.2	The Reflective Triad .....	158
5.6	Conclusion .....	160
Chapter 6 Understanding Ourselves in Conflict and the Practice of Formational Supervision .....		164
6.1	Introduction .....	164
6.1.1	The Supervisory Relationship .....	170
6.2	Conflict Management Styles .....	173
6.3	Theological Considerations.....	176
6.4	The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory in Supervision Training .....	178
6.4.1	The Interviews .....	181
6.5	Conclusion .....	186
Chapter 7 Conclusions .....		189
7.1	Introduction .....	189
7.2	The Methodological Approach .....	190
7.3	The Myers Briggs Type Indicator® in Formational Supervision.....	192
7.4	Approaches to Learning in Formational Supervision.....	193
7.5	Reflective Practice and Theological Reflection in Formational Supervision.....	194

7.6	Kraybill Conflict Styles Inventory in Formational Supervision .....	195
7.7	The Learning Journey .....	196
7.8	Critical Analysis of the Conference Programme .....	198
7.9	Recommendations for Development .....	203
7.9.1	Summary .....	206
7.10	Further Research Questions .....	207
7.11	Conclusion.....	208
	Appendix I: Training Programme for Church of Scotland Candidates.....	213
	Appendix II: Person Specification - Supervisor .....	215
	Appendix III: Candidature Review Process: Indicators for Assessment .....	217
	Appendix IV: Training Conference Programme.....	219
	Appendix V: Ordination Vows.....	220
	Appendix VI: Questions for Interview.....	221
	Appendix VIIa: Analysis of Interviews: Table .....	225
	Appendix VIIb: Analysis of Interviews: Text .....	227
1.1:	Anna (Supervisor) and Katie (Probationer): First Interviews.....	227
1.1.1	Anna: Interview 1 .....	227
1.1.2	Katie: Interview 1 .....	228
1.2	Anna (Supervisor) and Katie (Probationer): Second Interviews .....	229
1.2.1	Anna: Interview 2 .....	229
1.2.2	Katie: Interview 2.....	230
2.1	Beth (Supervisor) and Laura (Probationer): First Interviews .....	231
2.1.1	Beth: Interview 1 .....	231
2.1.2	Laura: Interview 1 .....	232
2.2	Beth (Supervisor) and Laura (Probationer): Second Interviews .....	233
2.2.1	Beth: Interview 2.....	233
2.2.2	Laura: Interview 2 .....	234
3.1	Charlie (Supervisor) and Margaret (Probationer): First Interviews .....	236
3.1.1	Charlie: Interview 1 .....	236
3.1.2	Margaret: Interview 1 .....	237
3.2	Charlie (Supervisor) and Margaret (Probationer): Second Interviews .....	238
3.2.1	Charlie: Interview 2 .....	238
3.2.2	Margaret: Interview 2 .....	239
4.1	David (Supervisor) and Neil (Probationer): First Interviews .....	241
4.1.1	David: Interview 1 .....	241
4.1.2	Neil: Interview 1 .....	242
4.2	David (Supervisor) and Neil (Probationer): Second Interviews .....	243
4.2.1	David: Interview 2 .....	243

4.2.2 Neil: Interview 2 .....	244
5.1 Eric (Supervisor) and Owen (Probationer): First Interviews .....	246
5.1.1 Eric: Interview 1 .....	246
5.1.2 Owen: Interview 1 .....	247
5.2 Eric (Supervisor) and Owen (Probationer): Second Interviews .....	248
5.2.1 Eric: Interview 2 .....	248
5.2.2 Owen: Interview 2 .....	249
6.1 Frank (Supervisor) and Patricia (Probationer): First Interviews.....	251
6.1.1 Frank: Interview 1 .....	251
6.1.2 Patricia: Interview 1.....	252
6.2 Frank (Supervisor) and Patricia (Probationer): Second Interviews.....	253
6.2.1 Frank: Interview 2 .....	253
6.2.2 Patricia: Interview 2.....	254
Appendix VIII: MBTI Questionnaire .....	255
Appendix IX: Learning Questionnaire .....	260
Appendix X: Outline of Reflective Session .....	272
Appendix XI: Triad Briefing Document .....	274
Appendix XII: Kraybill Questionnaire .....	276
Bibliography .....	279

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Johari Window.....	104
Figure 2 Competence ladder (a) .....	121
Figure 3 Competence ladder (b) .....	122
Figure 4 Clinical Rhombus.....	138
Figure 5 Parabolic Loop.....	140
Figure 6 Conflict Styles graph .....	180

The dataset which underpins this research has been deposited in Enlighten: Research Data, the University of Glasgow research data repository.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

“Those who have charge of the preparation of people for ministry have serious work to do; they have extraordinary responsibilities and marvellous opportunities” (Wilson 1988, 113).

### 1.1 A Kingdom Project: transformative leadership<sup>1</sup>

I am passionate about education for ministry. As a minister’s wife who trained for ministry between 1996 and 2001 within the Church of Scotland, and from the context of living in a manse, I was persuaded that the practical training I received from the Church, based, as it then was, on a traditional view of ministry, barely equipped me for the kind of ministry I had observed for eighteen years, let alone give me tools for a ministry which would face the challenges of the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> Both as a minister and as a Church member I considered that training, as it was then configured, was failing not only our future ministers but also congregations and the Church of Scotland as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

The challenges facing the Church grow with every passing year and it is of paramount importance that we prepare our ministers well for the tasks which lie ahead: “the world within which ministers are operating has changed and is continuing to change and the initial training needs to reflect that” (*Rethinking Initial Training*, 11). In a national context, not only is the role of religion within society changing, but the numbers of both ministers and members are falling, the ministry and membership are aging and fewer people are training for ministry than are required to fill the number of vacant charges.<sup>4</sup> In this situation, many new ministers quickly find themselves out of their depth and struggling to cope with the demands of the job, while at the same time trying to offer the quality of pastoral care and worship leadership which they feel they

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<sup>1</sup> Governance in the Church of Scotland is Presbyterian. "Seeking to follow the precedents of the early Church, Scottish Reformed theologians discerned in their 'ministers' the presbyters and the bishops of the NT documents" (Cameron *et al* 1993, 566). Thus, a minister in a parish is, by consequence of his or her ordination, a leader in the Church. Therefore, in the Church of Scotland to speak of training ministers is, by default, to speak of training leaders.

<sup>2</sup> My experience was that my academic training, in terms of the theology degree, was excellent, but that aspects of training provided by the Church, which included the conference programme and placements, did not sufficiently take into account the changing nature of ministry.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise stated, “Church” refers to the Church of Scotland throughout.

<sup>4</sup> A charge is one or more congregations in the care of a minister.

are called to deliver.<sup>5</sup> In this post-Christendom era, there is a need for an outward looking ministry with a focus on mission rather than simply care of the congregation. As Scott (2011, 14) points out: “given that 90% of Scots rarely (if ever) come into contact with the institutional church, the need to move out beyond the walls to meet with people and share the Gospel story is paramount.” In this climate, expectations placed on ministers by the Church of Scotland at national level, for example, a growing burden of administration, service on Councils and committees, or acting as Interim Moderator in a vacancy even early in a new ministry can be onerous.<sup>6</sup> Such responsibilities can be in conflict with the expectations of the local Church as, despite societal changes, congregations assume the minister will continue to offer the same level of pastoral care as previous generations of ministers. In these circumstances, a new minister can feel overwhelmed, quickly becoming exhausted and frustrated, trying to cope with the huge variety of demands on their time.

Given this scenario, it is hardly surprising that over the last two decades a crisis of confidence amongst the clergy has been identified (Alexander and Higton 2016). In 2000, the Church of Scotland’s Board of Ministry presented to the General Assembly the Report, *Ministers of the Gospel* (General Assembly Reports 2000, 17/3, section 2).<sup>7</sup> This report outlined the theological and doctrinal basis for a full-time and paid ministry within the context of a Church which espouses a doctrine of the ministry of all believers. It also considered the challenges facing ministry at the beginning of a new century and how the Church might deal with those challenges.

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<sup>5</sup> While there is an unwritten rule that new ministers will remain in their first charge for five years before considering a move, anecdotal evidence from the Church of Scotland’s Ministries Council pastoral care team suggests that an increasing number move within the first five years because relationships with key members in the congregation have broken down. In addition, a significant proportion (up to one third) struggle significantly within the first five years although they manage to maintain their ministry in that time.

<sup>6</sup> An Interim Moderator performs the legal functions of the Parish Minister when a church is in vacancy. He or she is responsible for moderating the Kirk Session and guiding the Nominating Committee through the search process. It can be a significant burden on top of the minister’s own parish responsibilities.

<sup>7</sup> The business of the General Assembly from one General Assembly to another is carried out by the Councils of the Church. These Councils superseded the Boards of the Church after a restructuring exercise in 2005. The Board of Ministry was the predecessor of the Ministries Council which currently oversees both training for ministry and support of ordained ministers within the Church of Scotland.

How is ... ministry to be understood and exercised today, in a Church that rightly affirms the ministry of the whole people of God and in a rapidly changing society that questions the relevance of [the] Gospel? And what does it mean to be ministers ... at a time when some are experiencing a crisis of identity and purpose in wrestling with inherited models and conflicting expectations of ordained ministry? (Ministers of the Gospel, 2.2.2)

This crisis of confidence coincides with a point in the Church's life when "it can seem as if everyone in the church is talking about leaders and leadership", as Alexander and Higton comment (2016, 5), with reference to the Church of England but equally applicable to the Church of Scotland. However, within this cacophony of voices discussing leadership (for example, the Church of Scotland's Ministries Council, the Church of England's Archbishops' Council, Ministry Division and House of Bishops, the Scottish Episcopal Church's Institute Council, and the Methodist Church) there is no clear concept emerging as to what kind of leadership is required.<sup>8</sup> Alexander and Higton observe: "there are many different accounts of the kind of leadership that will lead to flourishing, and many different accounts of the kind of flourishing hoped for" (2016, 6). The Methodist Church website notes: "Presbyters and Deacons are increasingly expected to function as leaders in Christian communities and in wider society. This can be very demanding, and it can sometimes seem at odds with the nature of ministry which is often understood from a more pastoral perspective" (The Methodist Church 2018, *Leadership Reflective Practice*). Yet, to order its affairs, the Church relies on leadership, therefore training for ministry includes enabling candidates to develop skills of leadership and managing people despite considerable uncertainty over what kinds of leadership and the nature of leadership skills are required. This makes the task of training ministers particularly challenging.

However, despite the uncertainty over the precise nature of leadership, managing people is clearly a core activity of Church leadership and therefore a key area to be considered in any training programme. Since the corporate world has reflected at length upon issues of improving leadership and management, it

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<sup>8</sup> See the Church of Scotland reports from the Ministries Council to the General Assembly of 2009, *Enabling Ministries* and 2017, *Rethinking Initial Training*; the Church of England report of the Faith and Order Commission to the House of Bishops 2014, *Senior Church Leadership: A Resource for Reflection*; the Scottish Episcopal Church report, *Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy* 2011 and, from the Methodist Church 2018, *Leadership Reflective Practice*.

is unsurprising that the Church has often turned to secular sources to improve its own practices: “Christians have always understood that God can be seen in the secular, even when he is not acknowledged” (Cummins and Stubbs 1999, 34). However, there is a danger that business practices are adopted wholesale and not considered through a theological lens: “any proposal for the ordering of the Church’s life ... must be grounded in the nature of the community called into being by the saving action of God in Christ” (Cummins and Stubbs 1999, 30).

The Church of England’s Faith and Order Commission (FAOC) report, *Senior Church Leadership: A Resource for Reflection* (2014) asked whether “the appropriation of leadership language from secular sources has been sufficiently critical” (Higton 2016, 190). This is a necessary and important question; however, leadership *per se* is not a secular concept. The Bible has numerous examples of what might be recognised as mentoring-based leadership training, including Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and Paul and Timothy (Whitmer 2008, 37). Jesus too had a leadership strategy; he selected and trained his leaders (Beckham 1997, 179-192). Writing about the language of leadership, the report on Senior Leadership by the FAOC commented:

This language is not going away anytime soon. It has simply become too prevalent and too deeply embedded, and we acknowledge that this is in part because it can name important needs in the church’s life. Rather than arguing about whether we should stop using leadership language, therefore, we discussed how this language may be used well. (FAOC 2016, 195)

In view of this, it would seem that looking to the corporate world for an analysis of good leadership is not entirely inappropriate and applying that analysis need not be done in the absence of theological understanding or language.

Against the background of the changing place of the Church in society, falling numbers and the resultant crisis in confidence among the clergy in their own leadership abilities, often prayer and attention to the minister’s own spiritual life is sacrificed. This is particularly true as ministers become increasingly busy with routine demands of the parish. There is a need to recover what Higton, citing the Church of England’s Green report, describes as “a ‘realistic confidence’ in our ability ... thankfulness for the gifts that God has given us, a practised knowledge in their possibilities and limits, and the joy in their

exercise” (2016, 194).<sup>9</sup> For candidates in training for ministry the development of this attitude of thankfulness and joy, and perhaps particularly ‘realistic confidence in our ability’, needs to be modelled by mentors if it is to be seen as achievable.<sup>10</sup> As Lee (2011, 21) points out: “a supervisor of a ministerial intern must be understood more by her person than by her functions. It is impossible to separate the roles of a minister from whom the minister is.” It seems clear, therefore, that mentors themselves must be supported in their ministry both to the congregation and to the candidate. Alexander and Higton quote Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who commented in a speech to the College of Bishops at Church of England’s General Synod in July 2015:

Leadership needs preparation in prayer, in theology, in the skills of everyday matters, in collaborative working, in interpreting the times, in safeguarding, and how to ensure overall that what the church discerns as necessary the church does. We must have a system that is pastorally sensitive for those being formed. (Alexander and Higton 2016, viii)

This comment echoes many of the concerns outlined in the Ministers of the Gospel Report to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2000: to engage in collaborative ministry; to use skills of reflection and hermeneutics to interpret situations in order to respond faithfully through the use of both embedded knowledge and new insights; to engage in a process of continual formation along with the whole body of Christ (2.4.5). That, eighteen years on, the nature, content and purpose of theological training is still being discussed indicates the persistence of these issues for the Church. One of the central tasks of the Church has always been to identify the gifts of the people for whatever ministry they may feel called, and then clarify and develop these gifts (Cummins and Stubbs 1999, 33). However, while it is the Church’s role to discern the gifts of the people, developing these gifts in the future ministers of the Church is, to

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<sup>9</sup> The Church of England’s Green report is the report of a working party chaired by Lord Green to the Archbishops and the Development and Appointments Group on *Talent Management for Future Leaders and Leadership Development for Bishops and Deans: A New Approach*.

<sup>10</sup> In the Church of Scotland, a student in training for ministry is a candidate while undergoing a university education and three practical placements with supervision. Upon graduation, the candidate becomes a probationer and embarks upon a probationary placement which is full-time and lasts for 15 months alongside an experienced formational supervisor. This is the last stage of training before entering ministry. Throughout this thesis I will refer to students when speaking generally, candidates when speaking of the Church of Scotland and probationers when referring to the research. See Appendix I for a complete outline of the Church of Scotland programme for ministerial formation.

a significant degree, devolved to the supervisors of practical placements. There are several aspects to ministerial formation within the Church of Scotland: a university degree, a comprehensive conference programme, a series of short placements alongside academic training, and the Ministries Training Network. This last comprises groups of six to eight candidates who meet monthly during term-time for peer reflection with discussion guided by a facilitator who is an experienced supervisor and reflective practitioner. Once academic training is completed the candidate enters a probationary placement of fifteen months duration. This final placement is full-time and is the closest equivalent to the Church of England's curacy, although, unlike a curate, the probationer is not ordained.

The placement, of whatever duration, under the supervision of an experienced minister, is the context in which skills are developed, put into practice and honed. As Cahalan notes: "a primary goal in introducing students to ministry is to help them gain a broadened understanding of what constitutes ministry and a deeper appreciation for its diverse, plural, and complex forms" (2008, 93). This is most easily communicated through the practical work in the placement, which introduces candidates to the multifaceted character of ministry, often for the first time: it is striking that all the six probationers interviewed expressed a degree of surprise at the complexity of full time ministry. Cahalan characterises this complexity in six questions: "Who is the minister? (*form*); What are the tasks of ministry? (*function*); Where does ministry take place? (*social and ecclesial contexts*); When? (*historical context*); How is it accomplished? (*methods*); Why does the church engage in ministry? (*rationale*)" (2008, 93). Martin Scott, (2011, 15-16), then Secretary to the Ministries Council which had overall responsibility for ministerial formation, pointed to the importance of supervisors demonstrating a collaborative, reflective, and formative ministry as they supervise candidates in training. He was clear that good supervision is vital in ministerial formation: "the supervision of candidates on placement is both a special privilege and significant responsibility, especially when the emphasis on modelling good practice ... is taken into account." This is echoed by the report on Supervision to the Methodist Conference of 2017 which states "supervision demonstrably contributes to accountability as well as to support and learning" (3.2.4). It therefore seems essential for the sake of future ministries and the



congregations with which the future ministers will be involved that supervisors are equipped for the task of formational supervision as fully and as professionally as possible: “successful learning relies on supervisors who ... model ... characteristics of competent ministry” (Jackson 1995, 11). To be a supervisor is a high calling.<sup>11</sup>

In summary, those involved as supervisors and mentors in training candidates for ministry have a daunting task. Yagjian argues that, “mentoring in theological education [is] a theological practice warranting further professional recognition and research” (2013, 222). It is into this context that this thesis speaks.

## 1.2 The Background: The Church of Scotland

The Church of Scotland has always been proud of its educated ministry and for four hundred years this education has been predicated on a university degree (Weatherhead 1997, 112). However, from its inception in the sixteenth century with the publication of the *First Book of Discipline* (1560) the Church of Scotland recognised that a strictly theological academic degree was too limited as preparation for ministry and facility in other disciplines and practices was beneficial. Education for ministry, unlike education for other professions, was designed to be multifaceted and required a working knowledge of several other subjects as a basis for theological degree. Training included an initial course in logic and philosophy as well as a practical aspect (Cameron 1972, 139). In addition, the candidate took part in the life of the local Church and presbytery “to the end that he might grow in the gift of government as well as doctrein [sic]” (Kirk 1980, 69).<sup>12</sup> In 1561 a former priest, destined to become the incumbent of a charge in Peebles, was sent to Edinburgh to be trained in Kirk Session discipline, take part in the local exercise, and to hear John Knox preach; a course in mentoring which we might recognise today (Whytock 2007, 31).

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<sup>11</sup> See Appendix II for the Ministries Council’s Supervisors’ Person Specification

<sup>12</sup> A presbytery is a geographical group of congregations with synodical decision-making structures; the presbytery comprises the middle tier of governance within the Church of Scotland, with the General Assembly being the highest tier and the Kirk Session of the local congregation the lowest.

Over a century later, in response to the ongoing challenge of establishing an appropriate programme of ministerial education, the General Assembly of 1696 passed the first complete Act of Assembly governing the standards expected of a candidate training for ministry, standards such as “piety, gravity, prudence, sobriety, orthodoxy and learning” (Whytock 2007, 100). Oversight of these standards was the task of the presbytery. The Act also outlined the dangers (such as contempt for the ministry and danger to the souls of the people) of ordaining someone in whom these virtues had not been attested by their Masters and Teachers.

This emphasis on the role of the presbytery and the character of the future minister has persisted. Three centuries later, in 1995, Herron pointed out that the presbytery was required to attest to the fitness of candidates for ministry, and comment upon their “character, beliefs, vocation, motivation and general suitability” (1995, 114). Today an applicant and then, if successful, a candidate is assessed on the basis of six categories of ‘Indicators for Assessment’: Integration of Faith and Life; Interpersonal, Leadership and Teamwork Skills; Openness to Learning; Preparation and Reflective Skills; Handling and Facilitating Change; Discernment and Affirmation of Call. These form the basis of the reporting system throughout the training process.<sup>13</sup> It is clear from this that consideration of suitability for ministry is not restricted to academic learning but also related to a person’s conduct and character as well as skills and aptitude for the task (Whytock 2007, 26, 29-32). It is against this background of an emphasis on the formation of the whole person that the Church of Scotland has continued to develop its training for ministry, recognising, with Nick Frost that “as the world changes ... professionals have to challenge and renew their expertise” (2010, 22-23). In 2017, therefore, we can still reasonably assert that the questions about the rise of new models of ministry, new ways of thinking about authority and church leadership that shaped the Reformation in the sixteenth century still resonate with the challenges that face today’s church leaders (cf. for the Church of England, Methuen 2016, 127).

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix III for a full breakdown of skills and qualities under each ‘Indicator for Assessment’ heading.

This project assumes that a good experience of ministerial formation has the capacity to provide a firm foundation for ministry in these challenging times. Having, in my Masters degree, analysed training for ministry from the perspective of the candidate in training, it became clear that the supervisory relationship is the most significant relationship in preparing people for ministry.

My Masters research concluded:

Better connections between theory and practice are required; more consideration of the individual's learning needs and a more rigorous process of supervision and assessment. Supervisors should be assessed as they require specific skills which not all possess, and there is a necessity to provide both tools and the training to enable robust mentoring of students, identifying learning needs and offering appropriate learning opportunities (Lamdin and Tilley, 2007). Placement experiences should be more consistent and tailored and the conference programme, while valuable, is a missed opportunity for tailored training and reflection. Early and continuing induction into expectations and skills would greatly enhance the learning experience for many candidates. (Denniston 2011, 55)

The implications of my research were that it was in the context of the supervised placement that the most significant opportunity for learning about ministry and preparation for ministry lay. Indeed, as outlined by Bush and Werstein, with reference to field education in ministry training in New Zealand, the placement provides “a praxeological frame of reference for reflecting on academic learning” (2010, 201). On this basis, the training of supervisors for those placements is of significant importance.

The principles upon which the Church of Scotland currently bases its candidate formation programme are outlined in the Candidates' Handbook. They are:

- The importance of the integration of theology and practice.
- The essential nature of good supervisory practice for the ongoing development of candidates.
- The development of recognised teaching placements.
- The development of a substantial conference programme, beginning in candidate life, continuing throughout all practical placements prior to ordination.
- Encouraging a sense of belonging to the church from the point of selection.
- Developing and extending peer group formation.

- The desire to have a consistent and coherent system of practical experience leading to ministerial formation (Candidates Handbook, 5).<sup>14</sup>

From this it can be seen that the Church of Scotland Ministries Council deems that teaching placements which demonstrate good supervisory practice are a key aspect of the formational process. Drawing on this, it would seem that formational supervisors need to be well-trained to deliver a quality learning experience which will, in turn, provide a firm foundation for candidates' future ministries.

### **1.3 The Background: Theological Education and Supervision**

Although it speaks most directly into the Church of Scotland setting, this thesis is set within the context of a wider debate on theological education, its content and structure; and on the nature of ministry and the way in which it is developing. This includes consideration of how theology is taught (whether through a university degree or other academic training), the place of practical training, and the place and nature of reflective practice. This debate also has an interest in - and implications for - broader supervisory theory and practice.

#### **1.3.1 Theological Education**

The current debate surrounding the nature, content, and purpose of theological education was born out of the recognition that traditional ministerial education was not preparing students for ministry today. Increasingly it has become clear that, as Wong points out: "the theory taught in the classroom has little bearing on the realities of the parish practice and the lives of pastoral leaders who are working in the 'real world'" (2011, 215). This is complicated by the fact that some students display an apparent inability (or unwillingness) to apply classroom theory to their practice: "some students profess to see little relevance between classroom theory and ministerial practice" (Wong 2011, 216). For theological educators, attempting to enable students to make useful connections between

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<sup>14</sup> The Candidates' Handbook has been in existence since approximately 2003. However, it is updated every year as a result of any changes in terminology, training, or terms and conditions arising from Acts passed by the General Assembly. While employed by the Ministries Council I was responsible for ensuring that appropriate updates were made. The principles noted here were agreed by the Candidates Committee which preceded the Training Task Group, the section of the Ministries Council which currently deals with ministerial formation.

theory and practice, “the issue of how to engage students’ imaginations and interest from the beginning of the process, remains ... unresolved” (Leach 2010, 135). This problem is at the heart of the debate regarding theological education and is intrinsic to any discussion of the role of supervision.

Some contributors to the debate argue that “ties with the university may need to be loosened, so that the university-based component complements the non-university - and arguably more critical - part of the formational curriculum, rather than *vice versa*” (Harkness 2010, 224). Others contend that the intellectual demands of a University degree are beneficially challenging, and the diversity of the university campus enables students to reflect rigorously on their beliefs (*Rethinking Initial Training*, 39). In the Church of Scotland at present there seems to be no appetite for abandoning a university degree as a basic theological training for ministry (*Rethinking Initial Training*, 39-41).

In the Church of Scotland, a review of the nature, content, and structure of initial ministerial education has been a focus of attention for the Church since 2000 and the then Board of Ministry’s Report to the General Assembly, *Ministers of the Gospel*. However, it has assumed a new impetus in recent years. Questions such as, “What is parish ministry? What does the next generation of ministers look like? [and] What do our parishes, communities and congregations want from their ministers?” are being considered (*Rethinking Initial Training*, 44).<sup>15</sup> That similar questions are also being asked in the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the Scottish Episcopal Church is an indication of their significance for ministerial formation across ecclesiastical traditions.<sup>16</sup> As Richard Tiplady, newly appointed Director of Mixed Mode Training for the Scottish Episcopal Institute points out: “as Scotland shifts more and more towards post-Christendom, we are in an environment of experimentation and innovation. Established methods of formation and training for Christian mission

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<sup>15</sup> See also the Church of Scotland Board of Ministry report to the 2000 General Assembly, *Ministers of the Gospel* and The Church of Scotland Ministries Council report to the 2009 General Assembly, *Enabling Ministries*.

<sup>16</sup> See the Church of England report *Vocation, Formation, and Transformation Annual Report on Training for Ordained Ministry 2017/18*; the Methodist Church report, *Fruitful Field 2011*, and the Scottish Episcopal Church report, *Whole Church Mission and Ministry Policy 2011*.

and ministry are being questioned and new approaches are being embraced” (Tiplady 2018).

Initial ministerial education is an area which is fraught with controversy. As the Church of England report *Vocational Pathways* puts it, “regarding what ordinands are being trained for there is a tension between generalisation for the sake of deployability, and specialisation to make use of particular skills and passions” (2016, 1). This aspect of the debate is ongoing in the Church of Scotland as it considers, for example, the nature of training for pioneer ministry (*Rethinking Initial Training* 7, 35). However, alongside the debates over appropriate skills and training for ministries of the future, theological educators also have to bear in mind that:

Faith communities demand a certain knowledge base or theology, certain skills in areas such as the pastoral side, as well as certain values. They want people who can teach others about the faith tradition and provide pastoral care. In addition, they want people who can continue to grow and develop in their faith and work, hence, be lifelong learners. (Wickett 2005, 157-158)

It is for reasons such as these that the Church of Scotland has, to date, resisted a formational pathway to ministry which focuses on skills of church planting and pioneering ministry rather than preaching and pastoral care.

Another aspect of the debate is that the language can be contested: are we speaking of education, training, or formation? (*Vocational Pathways*, 5). Each term has a different nuance and the term used will affect, to some extent, the nature of the conversation. In this thesis I will use the term formation, discussed more fully below (Section 1.4.2, pp.25-26), as, in my opinion, it more helpfully encompasses the various aspect of preparation for ministry.

The content of theological education varies from institution to institution (*Vocational Pathways*, 4; *Rethinking Initial Training*, 40). In Scotland, for instance, the Highland Theological College offers a thoroughly Reformed and theologically conservative education as against the broader ecclesiology and the

more liberal theology evident in the theology departments of, for example, the Universities of Glasgow or St Andrews.<sup>17</sup>

While reflection and reflective practice are core activities in training for many disciplines today, including training for ministry, nevertheless, as Leach points out, “one of the live debates in pastoral formation [is] on the question of how and when (and whether) it is best to teach theological reflection methods” (2010, 135). In the Church of Scotland context reflective practice has been included in ministerial formation since the *Ministers of the Gospel* report (2000). However, it has been difficult to embed it into the existing training programme, and it remains a somewhat awkward ‘add-on’. Nevertheless, the Ministries Council, prioritising reflective practice, takes an approach broadly in agreement with Wong’s observation that:

Pastoral leaders’ view of the relationship between theory and practice appear to serve as a basis for how they think and act in the context of ministry, and since one of the purposes of theological education is to produce effective pastoral leaders, this issue must be addressed in the context of their pastoral formation in the curriculum. (2011, 229)

Still, questions remain: where does this reflective practice take place? How is it enabled? Who facilitates it? These are questions to which this thesis speaks.

To sum up, the debate on theological education is wide-ranging and far-reaching. Nevertheless, regardless of how ministers are trained in future it seems certain that some form of placement where skills for ministry can be developed, put into practice, and honed, will be included. Therefore, some form of supervision will be required, and, as a result, training for those supervisors will be necessary.

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Reformed’, that is, conforming more to “the doctrinal consensus incorporating the theological perspectives of Geneva and Zürich rather than to the Lutheran tradition” (Cameron *et al*, 1993, 751).

## 1.4 Provisional Definitions

Several key concepts underpin this thesis: supervision, formation, and reflection. This section defines what is meant by these terms in the context of this study.

### 1.4.1 Supervision

The practice of professional supervision has become commonplace in many disciplines. Social workers, counsellors, and chaplains, amongst others, have engaged in supervision on their work for many years. However, there are different forms of supervision. Clinical supervision can be described as: “regular protected time for facilitated, in-depth reflection on clinical practice aimed to enable the supervisee to achieve, sustain and creatively develop a high quality of practice through the means of focused support and development” (Bryant 2010, 36). Hawkins and Shohet, quoting Kadushin and Proctor respectively note that it should be *educative, supportive and managerial*, as well as *performative, restorative and normative* (2006, 57). Supervision relates to the development of healthcare professionals, including social work and counselling professionals, and focuses on “the practitioners’ identity, skills and theoretical framework by reporting, and shared reflection, on their live work” (Leach and Paterson 2015, 261). Inskipp and Proctor liken pastoral supervision to a “three-legged stool” of which the three legs are: restorative (active listening, encouragement and feedback, reconnecting with vocation), normative (dealing with managerial aspects of the supervisee’s work), and formative (teaching, encouraging self-awareness, growth and development) (Leach and Paterson 2015, 21). Pastoral supervision, while having much in common with clinical supervision, is defined, by Leach and Paterson, as “a relationship between two or more disciples who meet to consider the ministry of one or more of them in an intentional or disciplined way” (2015, 1). While there is some overlap between clinical supervision and pastoral supervision the theological emphasis in pastoral supervision sets it apart from clinical supervision.



The Association of Pastoral Supervisors and Educators (APSE) has agreed an extensive definition of pastoral supervision.<sup>18</sup> APSE defines pastoral supervision as:

A regular, planned, intentional and bounded 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.

A relationship characterised by trust, confidentiality, support and openness that gives the supervisee freedom and safety to explore the issues arising in their work.

Spiritually/theologically rich - works within a framework of spiritual/theological understanding in dialogue with the supervisee's world view and work.

Psychologically informed - draws on relevant psychological theory and insight to illuminate intra-personal and inter-personal dynamics.

Contextually sensitive - pays attention to the particularities of setting, culture and world-view.

Praxis based - focuses on a report of work and /or issues that arise in and from the supervisee's pastoral practice.

A way of growing in vocational identity, pastoral competence, self-awareness, spiritual/theological reflection, pastoral interpretation, quality of presence, accountability, response to challenge, mutual learning.

Attentive to issues of fitness to practice, skill development, management of boundaries, professional identity and the impact of the work upon all concerned parties.

The definition emphasises what pastoral supervision is not:

Spiritual accompaniment - for the sole or primary purpose of exploring the spiritual life and development of the supervisee(s).

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<sup>18</sup> APSE was founded in October 2008 (<https://www.pastoralsupervision.org.uk/about-pastoral-supervision/the-apse-story/>). One of its main purposes is to promote "good practice in pastoral supervision" (<https://www.pastoralsupervision.org.uk/legal/>). It offers a process of accreditation in order to promote high standards of practice and to protect both the supervisor and supervisee (<https://www.pastoralsupervision.org.uk/why-accreditation/>). [Accessed: 27-2-2018].

Aspects of this may arise in Pastoral Supervision but are not the main focus.

Counselling - for the purpose of helping the supervisee(s) gain insight into their personal dynamics, or helping the supervisee(s) to resolve or live more positively with their psycho-social limitations. Aspects of this may arise in Pastoral Supervision and, if necessary, the supervisee(s) may be encouraged to seek counselling support.

Line management - for the purpose of addressing professional practice and development issues in relationship to the supervisee(s)'s performance and accountability (whether paid or voluntary) to her/his employer. Aspects of this may arise in Pastoral Supervision but are not the main focus.<sup>19</sup>

While pastoral supervision does not, as a rule, display these last three elements, the regular delivery of supervision in training for ministry will include both line management and a degree of spiritual accompaniment and vocational guidance. Such supervision only involves counselling in the terms described above. Supervision for training, which I shall call 'formational supervision' thus differs in important ways from on-going pastoral supervision.

Supervision has a variety of outcome as described by Milne and Watkins: developing knowledge skills and attitudes, or fitness for practice; developing capabilities, or fitness for purpose; developing professional identity, or fitness for profession; and feedback evaluation and monitoring, or fitness for award (2014, 5). These outcomes cohere closely with the outcomes required of supervision in training for ministry; however, formational supervision also requires a theological element and this needs to be included in any definition.

### **1.4.2 Formation**

As discussed above (p.17), candidates for ministry within the Church of Scotland are assessed on agreed Indicators for Assessment which might be called qualities for ministry relating as they do to character, habits, and talents rather than skills. However, they are also assessed on a set of competencies in the areas of Worship, Mission, Church Management, Leadership, Communications,

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.pastoralsupervision.org.uk/about-pastoral-supervision/> [Accessed: 27-2-2018].

Discipleship, and Personal Development (Supervisors' Handbook, 23-33).<sup>20</sup> Some of these competencies relate to skills which are relatively easy to quantify and assess, what we might call 'hard skills', for example: "draft and adapt prayers suitable for a wide range of liturgical and worshippers' contexts" (Supervisors' Handbook, 23). Others relate to personal development, or 'soft skills', for example: "maintain a journal related to personal spirituality" (Supervisors' Handbook, 33). While it is relatively easy to ascertain whether or not this journal is being kept it is much more difficult to quantify the extent to which the discipline of journaling is supporting the development of the candidate's personal spirituality. Hard skills are tested in a variety of ways: through examinations at University, through feedback from MTN facilitators and, in the placement, through assessment of preaching, worship leadership and pastoral skills through feedback by supervisor and parishioners. However, as Heckman and Kautz observe, "achievement tests miss, or more accurately, do not adequately capture, *soft skills*—personality traits, goals, motivations, and preferences" (2012, 451). To this list should be added, in the case of trainee ministers, spirituality. Given that, "soft skills predict success in life" (Heckman and Kautz 2012, 451), in ministry training they are at least as important as (and arguably, even more important than) hard skills. As Harkness notes: "the matrix for pastoral formation encompasses a wide range of competencies and traits in the students, well beyond solely a cognitive domain" (2010, 216). Soft skills, however, are, as Williams observes, "complex, personal, and difficult to measure" (1995, 91). That training for ministry involves the development of both hard and soft skills indicates its complexity.

In preparation for ministry, therefore, training is an inadequate word; rather, formation more effectively describes the process. As Lee puts it, "formation is different from training ... Formation supposes that an outcome cannot be known in advance because an individual's experience in the formation process, not the process itself, is at the centre" (2011, 23). While, in ministry training, there are some outcomes which can be measured according to an agreed standard, for example, an understanding of liturgical practices, or experience of conducting

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<sup>20</sup> The Supervisors' Handbook has been in existence since not long after the Church of Scotland first began training Supervisors in 1990. Like the Candidates' Handbook it is updated on an annual basis in response to Acts of the General Assembly and changes in the Ministries Council's policies, such as the introduction of competencies in 2012.

funerals, preparation for ministry also involves personal development which cannot be measured according to an agreed standard. This includes spiritual development, leadership development, and development of the interpersonal skills required to manage a congregation of individuals who are markedly different both from one another and from the minister. As Tomlinson observes: “ministerial training is first and foremost a matter of formation, the development of character, spiritual ascesis; it is primarily concerned with fostering a student’s attentiveness to God” (2001, 9). In training for ministry, the focus of development is vocational and directed towards the exercise of a ministry which is glorifying to God and fulfilling for minister and parishioner alike.

Formation, therefore, is that process by which a candidate in training gains skills for and experience in ministry whilst also developing personal attributes for ministry, thereby growing spiritually, personally, intellectually, theologically, vocationally, and practically.

### **1.4.3 Formational Supervision**

Supervision is often a concept new to ministers, certainly within the Church of Scotland, and yet in some form it has been part of ministry training for as long as the Church has been training ministers.<sup>21</sup>

This thesis assumes that there is a significant difference between clinical or pastoral supervision and supervision of candidates in training for ministry, that is, ‘formational supervision’. While many aspects of pastoral supervision overlap with formational supervision, there are other aspects of formational supervision which are unique to that role. For example, while there is a pedagogical element to all supervision (if we did not learn in supervision it would simply be an exercise in self-indulgence), the pedagogical element in the supervision of

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<sup>21</sup> Since 1929 and the union of the United Free Church of Scotland with the Church of Scotland, probationers in training for ministry have had a practical placement in a congregation and therefore have worked with a supervising minister (General Assembly 1930, XXII: 1073). However, the first reference to training supervisors is in the report of the Committee on Education for Ministry to the General Assembly of 1991 (6.4.8) which thanks the In-Service Training Committee for organising courses on supervision over the previous two years. In contrast, pastoral or clinical supervision for ordained ministers, currently optional, is a recent innovation (<http://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/supervision/>).

candidates is greater as the core purpose of the placement is for the trainee minister to learn, and to be ‘formed’ in ministry. This differs from the core purpose of pastoral supervision which is “to give an account of [the supervisee’s] work, to explore [his/her] responses, review [his/her] aims and develop [his/her] strategies and skills” (Leach and Patterson 2015, 1).

While, as Henderson, Holloway and Millar point out (2014, 25) “effective supervision is a collaborative process”, formational supervision carries an extra element in the power dynamic between teacher and student, trainee and gatekeeper (assessor), novice and expert.<sup>22</sup> Collaboration is still necessary, but this is not a relationship of equals. In pastoral supervision, the supervisee decides what the focus of supervision will be. In formational supervision, while the supervisee will indeed bring his or her work and insights into the room, the formational supervisor also has a responsibility to bring to the attention of the supervisee aspects of the work upon which reflection is required. In the Church of Scotland, the Supervisors’ Training Conference makes clear that formational supervision contains elements of line-management, pastoral care, spiritual direction, mentoring and coaching.<sup>23</sup> While pastoral supervision may at times contain elements of these, formational supervision will display most, if not all, of these elements at some point in every supervision session. The relationship is a more intensive one as the supervisor and supervisee work together, often on a daily basis, and meet together for an extended period on a weekly basis for dedicated supervision. A formational supervisor, during this weekly meeting, will have the responsibility to act as line-manager, checking that agreed work has been done, agreeing work to be done, managing relationships with other team members such as the church organist. As Henderson, Holloway and Millar point out, a supervisory session “is consultative, exploratory and essentially non-judgemental, not ordinarily a time to declare what the supervisee must do” (2014, 14). However formational supervision often requires that the supervisor tells the supervisee what to do, at the very least when acting as line-manager.

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<sup>22</sup> The terms ‘Gatekeeper’ and ‘Novice and Expert’, will be discussed more fully below, see p.40 and pp.107-108 respectively.

<sup>23</sup> Supervisors’ Training Conference, Module 1: “What is Supervision?”

Although enabling reflection is a significant feature of formational supervision there will be times when the supervisor will act as teacher, particularly at the beginning of a period of training: “when [a trainee] simply [does] not know something, it makes no sense for the supervisor to withhold information” (Williams 1995, 39). He or she will act as coach, offering honest feedback and encouragement on specific tasks. The supervisor has a mentoring relationship, journeying with the candidate in training and modelling good practice. As Williams puts it: “good supervisors meet their trainees from a variety of roles” (1995, 30). However, neither a mentor nor a coach has the assessment role which belongs to a formational supervisor. In addition, in the formational supervision relationship, there is an agreed end point to the relationship at the outset: the formal supervisor/supervisee relationship will last only as long as the candidate is on placement with the supervisor.

Intrinsic to this relationship is the fact that the formational supervisor stands between the candidate and entry into the body of professionals as an ordained minister. This alone would make formational supervision unique however it is not the only unique aspect. In pastoral supervision the supervisor will assume that the supervisee is the expert in terms of the issue being presented for supervision and will not teach as a matter of course, although sometimes it may be that teaching will be offered. In formational supervision the supervisor has greater expertise than the supervisee who comes to the discipline of ministry as a novice. The question is not whether but how this expertise is presented: to what extent and in what manner the supervisor draws out the supervisee’s inherent expertise before offering his or her own, and how this expertise is then offered.<sup>24</sup> As Williams observes (1995, 53), teaching should never be presented as a “quick fix” solution but rather as a spur to further reflection.

Formational supervision includes all three elements of Inskipp and Proctor’s three-legged stool, (see above, p.23). The restorative function includes the pastoral/vocational aspects of formational supervision with the supervisor acting as a support and on occasion as a form of spiritual director. In this mode, the formational supervisor offers active listening, encouragement, and feedback.

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<sup>24</sup> These issues will be discussed more fully below (see chapter 5, Reflective Practice and Theological Reflection).

The formative aspect includes the pedagogical aspects of formational supervision: teaching, mentoring and coaching. However, while the formative function is at the heart of formational supervision, the normative function has a particularly significant role. It requires the supervisor to act both as line-manager and as gatekeeper. The formational supervisor assesses the trainee's competence and offers support and/or access to further development when needed. He or she offers critical feedback, and, with the supervisee, reflects upon the supervisee's working practices. In particular, in formational supervision (as opposed to clinical or pastoral supervision) the normative role is strengthened through the supervisor's function as 'gatekeeper', which requires rigorous assessment in accordance with the supervisor's responsibility to consider the fitness of the supervisee to enter the body of professionals.<sup>25</sup> Formational Supervision thus differs from pastoral or clinical supervision which, while it includes aspects of assessing the supervisee's fitness to practice, does not have an ultimate assessing role of gatekeeper.

Formational supervision, then, requires regular bounded time and space for facilitated reflection on practice, including feedback on and assessment of work done as well as setting responsibility for future tasks, with the aim of enabling the supervisee to develop and grow as a practitioner through theological reflection, mentoring, pastoral support and line-management. It is pedagogical in nature and its aim is the spiritual, personal, intellectual, theological, vocational, and practical development of the supervisee from unconscious incompetence through to conscious competence in ministry, through the growth of skills for and the experience of ministry. At the same time, it forms an essential part of the process by which the supervisee may (or may not) gain entry to the body of professionals.

#### **1.4.4 Reflection**

For those engaged in training ministers, whether as university lecturer, MTN facilitator, conference workshop leader or, in the context of this project, supervisor, "the chief task ... is to form reflective practitioners of the faith ... to furnish them with the capacity to make ... judgements and answer ... questions

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<sup>25</sup> This is discussed more fully below, see p.40.

from the depths of their own beings” (Tomlinson 2001, 9). There are a variety of ways of doing reflection (Graham, Walton and Ward 2005). However, all have in common a belief that reflection, done with commitment and courage, can bring about personal growth and development, increased awareness of self and others, and engage with a spiritual dimension (where is God in this?). Reflection, therefore, has the capacity to bring about transformation of both self and the prevailing culture, whether that is ecclesial or societal. The nature and purpose of reflection, whether reflective practice or theological reflection, will be discussed in Chapter 5, however, at this stage, a provisional definition might be:

Theological Reflection is that process by which we consider our actions through the lens of faith in order to discover hidden assumptions and prejudices for the purposes of personal and contextual transformation.

## **1.5 The Background: My Experience**

This project has its roots in the interface between reflection and practice, conviction and experience. I trained for ministry from the context of having lived in a manse for many years and therefore observed a ministry in operation. My training involved three years of theological study, three practical placements, each of nine months duration, in local congregations during the academic terms, examinations in Church law and the Bible, an eighteen-month probationary placement during which I attended five conferences. As noted above, (p.10, n.2), the content of the practical training (as opposed to the academic degree, as it was then configured), did little to address contemporary issues in ministry, and my placements, which privileged a traditional approach to a ministry of preaching and pastoral care and assumed the minister as the sole practitioner in a charge, seemed to me to be inadequate training for the task of ministry in the twenty-first century.

After completing my training, I began work in the central offices of the Church of Scotland, and in 2005 assumed responsibility for organising candidates’ training for ministry. In the intervening years, training had improved somewhat, with, for example, a new commitment to reflective practice. Although the probationary placement had been reduced from eighteen months to fifteen, the conference programme had become significantly more comprehensive, including



five conferences during the academic years and four during probation. During these conferences the questions explored included “public worship and preaching, principles in effective communication, speech training, sacramental practice in the Church of Scotland, Church law and procedure, team working, leadership, support and encouragement of volunteers, the practice of ministry, personal prayer life, and mission” (Ministries Council Report to the General Assembly 2005, 5.2.2.1).<sup>26</sup> Between 2005 and 2012 a more intensive course in Church Law was instituted, and the conference programme was further increased. It now included an induction conference which comprised an introduction to reflective practice and journaling as well as an exploration of MBTI, Conflict Management Styles and Approaches to Learning, and attendance at the General Assembly with opportunities for reflection on its processes. In addition, the Ministries Training Network (MTN) was established (see above, p.15). Furthermore, probationers are now offered (and strongly encouraged by the Ministries Council to take) the opportunity to have a spiritual director (or a pastoral supervisor, as opposed to their placement supervisor), paid for by the Ministries Council four times a year during their probationary placement and during the first two years in ministry. Notwithstanding these improvements, more recent research shows that enhanced or additional training in a variety of areas would be welcome. For example, project management, people management/managerial skills, building relationships, interpersonal skills, change management, chairing and running meetings, running a charity (including governance and the role of the trustees), dealing with conflict, finance, working with and managing volunteers, fundraising, and a variety of chaplaincies, for example, school, hospital and workplace (*Rethinking Initial Training*, 13).

Although I have since become a parish minister (in 2016), for over ten years I was responsible for organising the conferences, placements, MTN and the programme of written work required by the Ministries Council as well as liaising with the universities and providing pastoral support for candidates in training. I had responsibility for organising and delivering Candidate Review, the process by which the Council ensured that educational and training needs were met at each stage of training before the candidate moved to the next stage. In addition, I

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<sup>26</sup> See Appendix I: Training Programme for Church of Scotland Candidates.

was responsible for organising supervisor training and offering support to formational supervisors when there was a candidate placed with their congregation.

When I took up my post with the Ministries Council in 2005 supervisor training comprised a one-day course running from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It included sessions on writing a learning covenant, including goal setting; writing a report; and a brief outline of the training process for ministry including Candidate Review. In addition, there was a session on conducting supervision including a demonstration, with approximately thirty minutes scheduled to practise supervision with a colleague. Even before I completed my Masters research I was of the opinion that this was inadequate training for the task of supervising candidates in training for ministry.

In 2009, I attended a conference of the Association of Theological Field Educators in the United States. There I met a field educator from the United Church of Canada, Saskatoon, who shared with me her Church's programme of training for ministry supervisors which I instantly identified as being far superior to that being offered by the Ministries Council. The training included sessions on personality, learning, and approaches to conflict, as well as a significant number of sessions on theological reflection and supervision, with ample opportunity to practise the skills. My fellow delegate then offered, along with two of her colleagues, to model the training over a five-day period in Scotland. I invited ten experienced supervisors to engage with this training and from this base, and with this group of supervisors, the current Supervisors' Training Programme was developed.<sup>27</sup> From that original group of ten, some have resigned, and others have joined. There are now fourteen supervisor trainers who continue to refine and deliver the training programme.

Training for formational supervision currently involves a forty-eight-hour residential conference, and as well as training in theological reflection, includes sessions on supervision theory, Myers Briggs (MBTI) personality theory and approaches to learning and to conflict management. There are also sessions on goal setting, report writing, and issues which might arise in supervision. The

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<sup>27</sup> See Appendix IV for the Training Conference Programme.

training is delivered by a combination of Ministries Council staff members, outside facilitators, and supervisor trainers. These trainers are experienced formational supervisors drawn from the Ministries Council pool of supervisors and are themselves trained to deliver the training. Trainee supervisors are required to complete three questionnaires (on MBTI, Learning, and Conflict) and submit written exercises which are assessed by the trainers.<sup>28</sup> Whilst my Masters research was of fundamental importance in developing the reflective practice programme for candidates, and in particular the Ministries Training Network, my research for the Doctorate in Practical Theology has informed and enriched supervisors' training by giving me greater understanding of the nature of supervision and reflective practice, highlighting my awareness of the relationship between personality and learning and conflict management, and providing a deeper appreciation of the uniqueness of formational supervision. All of this has been fed into the conference programme. Nonetheless, I believe that the training can be further improved, and one aim of this thesis is to consider in what way this might be achieved.

## 1.6 The Role of the Supervisor in Training

Good supervision involves the art of seeing below the surface. In the novel *Glamorous Powers*, Susan Howatch writes about a clergyman whose life and faith are in crisis. He seeks the help of a supervisor, who comments: "you're saying what you want me to hear but I hear the words you can't bring yourself to say", (Howatch 1988, 269). This illustrates one of the fundamental aspects of good supervision, that is, making explicit what is implicit and enabling the supervisee to identify and learn from the hidden depths of experience. This enables the supervisee to move beyond their current state to a fuller expression of their gifts and talents, taking them out of their comfort zone but into a new, safe space.

The supervisory relationship is a close one. The context is one where "cooperation, constructive conflict resolution, and creative controversy are strongly emphasised" (Deutsch 2016b, 22). In the best supervisory relationships, supervisor and candidate work together as senior and junior colleagues, meeting several times a week in formal and informal situations as well as for structured

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<sup>28</sup> See Appendices VI, VII and X for the questionnaires.

supervision. As noted above, (pp.27-28), the relationship is a complex one and involves a variety of elements. Earlier research demonstrated the importance of trust in the supervisor-candidate relationship (Denniston 2011, 48). As Jackson points out (1995, 12), “learning thrives in an atmosphere of trust and hope.” The training relationship, as has been noted, has the potential for a lasting friendship beyond the period of the placement; however, during the period of supervision there is no doubt that the candidate is very aware that the supervisor has the power to influence the candidate’s future as he or she writes a report and commends (or otherwise) the candidate in training. As a result, the candidate may have a temptation to temper truth in favour of expediency: “in superior-subordinate communication, subordinates frequently say what is acceptable rather than what they know is true” (Rahim 1986, 80). This clearly affects the ability of the supervisor to offer effective supervision and can only be overcome in a relationship with a high degree of trust between the parties.

While the nature of trust in a relationship often depends on the kind of relationship, e.g. whether it is professional or personal, in the supervisor-candidate relationship there are elements of both the professional and the personal. Thus, the relationship is not simply task-orientated, as might be expected if it were purely professional, but neither is it based solely on the relationship itself as it would be if it were purely personal. In this instance, the level of trust required may be less than is required in a personal relationship but more than is required in the average professional relationship. Trust is constructed over time. There may be a predisposition towards trust in the supervisor-candidate relationship, built upon reputations and the fact that each has chosen to enter the relationship, however this can be developed or destroyed depending on how the supervisor or the candidate behaves in the relationship. Building trust requires consistency and reliability, and the demonstration of commitment to agreements laid out at the beginning of the placement, including giving the candidate time and space and dedicated attention.

## **1.7 The Research Question**

In 2006 I embarked on a Masters degree in Reflective Practice focussing my research on training for ministry within my denomination. The combination of

my background, experience and research persuaded me that while reflective practice can make a significant contribution to ensuring effective preparation for ministry, the best place for this reflection to take place is during the practical placement, under the supervision of an experienced and reflective mentor. I concluded that, “in ministerial formation, theological reflection provides the bridge between theory and practice when it is supported by a process of rigorous supervision” (Denniston 2011, 20). Sims (2010, 18), in a study of twenty seminaries in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, also found that “the primary goal in one field education program is to give students an experience of working with ‘an effective role model.’ Students ‘experience the inner workings of outstanding ministries’ and ‘interact personally with an effective Christian leader’ as mentor.” My Masters research also indicated that candidates’ experience of placement and of supervision was extremely varied ranging from positive and often exemplary to negative and, on occasion, virtually worthless. As I observed, “placements were highly rated; however, the learning process was dependent on the quality of supervision. This ranged from: “*I don’t think my first placement really prepared me for ministry at all*’, to those where the candidate got a real feel for ministry, ‘*my placements were great*’” (Denniston 2011, 39).

From this recognition, it was a short step to appreciate that the training of supervisors was of great significance in preparing the Church of Scotland’s candidates for ministry in the parish. I discovered that issues of psychology and personality in supervisory relationships are significant. When placements founder, it is often on a clash of personalities rather than a clash of theologies; where there is a good relationship, differences can be accommodated, and even poor supervision can deliver some benefits (Lamdin and Tilley 2007, 129). However, there remain many pitfalls for the naive, untrained, or inexperienced supervisor. Foskett and Lyall outline several ‘games’ that candidates might play in the supervisory relationship, for example, pleading an excessive academic workload as an excuse for lack of engagement with the placement, or name-dropping the latest theologians in an attempt to change the balance of power in the supervisory relationship (1988, 119-120). Other risks are that the candidates might engage in transference or become dependent upon the supervisor (Foskett and Lyall 1988, 111-112). In any relationship of this nature there are boundary

issues (Ward 2005, 165-166). There might be resistance to learning or authority, resulting in clashes between supervisor and student (Lamdin and Tilley 2007, 127). Foskett and Lyall (1988, 78) show the necessity for a supervisor to be highly self-aware; he or she requires the critical ability to reflect on their personal responses to the candidate's experience and reflection, especially where these responses might be negative, without prejudicing the supervisory relationship.

Ward (2005, 88-91) suggests that the supervisory relationship is a safe space in which risks can be taken and where creativity can be encouraged within clear boundaries; it is not, or at least should not be, a relationship concerned simply with oversight. Hornecker, on the other hand, points out that a supervisor needs to be able to confront and challenge a candidate, offering feedback, on occasion critical, but this is a skill with which many supervisors struggle, feeling uncomfortable with negative assessment (1995, 27). A further weakness of much supervision is that, as Harkness (2010, 219) observes, "the disconnect between the espoused and operant philosophies of formation is obvious too frequently." That is, "supervisors have not themselves been trained under a reflective model and may not have developed the skills to engage in helpful critical reflection with their candidates" (Denniston 2014, 114). Harkness (2010, 219-22) finds that "quality oversight is a perpetual challenge wherever 'field education' is part of the curriculum for ministerial formation" and warns that "the 'field education' of ... seminary students too often degenerates into something akin to 'field labour,' primarily because of inadequate, un-informed supervision." He believes that supervision can be "encouraging where competent, available supervisors are in place, but when there is reliance on over-busy and under-trained church and organizational leaders for the supervisory role, results are usually patchy at best." An additional aspect identified by Harkness is that supervisors are volunteers, and "we ... struggle to find good solutions to [the] question, 'what is realistic to expect from volunteers?'" All of these concerns can be addressed in the selection, training, and support of supervisors; it is a calling for which not all are gifted. Some assessment of gifts needs to take place at the outset, and supervisors who are also busy ministers need to be equipped and supported in the task.

My Masters research demonstrated that these theoretical challenges also applied to the Church of Scotland:

Another area of weakness is the assessment, training and support of mentors or supervisors. While this has improved over the last few years, historically there has been little training or support and no assessment in this crucial role. The research demonstrated the significance of good supervision: *'we reflected on absolutely everything, things that he did as well as things that I did and he was open enough to... have me pick things to pieces'*. The skills required for this role can be learned (Brockbank and McGill, 2006). Therefore, there is a responsibility for the Ministries Council to enhance supervisors' training in this respect. (Denniston 2011, 52)

In addition, in researching the task of the formational supervisor, it became evident that there is a gap in the literature. While there is a plethora of literature relating to supervision in other disciplines, and although there is a growing body of literature pertaining to ministry training, there is little which considers the Scottish context. Moreover, the literature which is available tends to focus mainly on theological reflection; there is less consideration of other significant issues such as personality types, approaches to learning or conflict management styles and their effect on the supervisory relationship, or indeed reflective practice (as opposed to theological reflection) as the wider context of formational supervision.

In this study, therefore, I aim to research the role of formational supervision in providing space for the development and fostering of tools for ministry within the Church of Scotland in its current cultural setting. In order to bring together theological and pedagogical dimensions of formational supervision I will consider personality typing, approaches to adult learning, reflective practice including theological reflection, and issues of conflict management, and I will assess their significance for the construction of a fruitful, creative, and positive learning experience. Through research and analysis, I shall offer a critique of current approaches to formational supervision within the Church of Scotland. The aim is to inform the development of a training programme for the supervisors of ministerial candidates and probationers, designed to support the delivery of an educational experience of practical placement which is of a high standard, applied consistently across different contexts.

This research is conducted within closely defined parameters: it considers probationers who are in training for full-time ministry within the Church of Scotland, and their supervisors. However, although the context for the research is the Church of Scotland, the findings will be applicable in other Church contexts, and, more generally, in any context where supervision is offered as part of training. For this project, the primary stakeholders are the Ministries Council, which is responsible for the selection, training, and support of all candidates for ministry, including probationers, and their supervisors.

Throughout the research, it will be necessary to bear in mind that “the work of social program evaluators is steered by the interests of selected members of the setting being evaluated” (Greene 2000, 982). However, in this instance, although the interests I aim to serve are ultimately those of the candidates themselves and their future congregations, the power lies with the Ministries Council where the policymakers and funders are located (Greene 2000, 982). Any recommendations for changes to training would have to be accepted by the Council before they could be implemented.

The supervisor/probationer relationship is fundamental to this research. This relationship grows over a minimum period of fifteen months, the duration of the placement. Probationers are authorized to select their own supervisor for this placement while the supervisor must also agree to take a probationer on placement, so the relationship is initially constructed on the positive foundation of mutual agreement. The relationship is a professional one and while the supervisor and probationer might be friendly, and indeed become friends in the future, for the duration of the placement the relationship is hierarchical. Formal supervision is scheduled to take place once a week for a period of about ninety minutes but, in reality, often lasts two to three hours as the relationship develops. Meetings are structured around reviewing what has been done and planning for the future, but the Ministries Council advises that a significant part of any supervision meeting should be theological reflection. As noted above, (pp.27-28), there are elements of line-management, pastoral care, spiritual direction, mentoring and coaching in formational supervision, however, it also includes teaching and assessment. The unique factors in the role of the formational supervisor are: the significance of the pedagogical aspect, the responsibility to act as line-manager on a regular basis, the time-limited nature



of the relationship, and, a factor that has become apparent in the course of this research, the supervisor as ‘gatekeeper’. The gatekeeper, in delivering the normative aspects of supervision, noted above, (p.29), ensures the supervisee’s compliance with the core beliefs and doctrines of the Church as indicated in the vows of ordination as well as with canon law and statutory procedures.<sup>29</sup> Ziomek-Daigle and Christensen (2010, 407; citing Corey, Haynes, and Moulton 2003) observe that gatekeeping is “the process of monitoring and evaluating a ... trainee’s competence to enter the ... profession.” The supervisor as gatekeeper has to evaluate competency, ensure engagement with the training process and undertake remedial action when necessary (Ziomek-Daigle and Christensen 2010, 407). It is the supervisor’s responsibility to ensure that the trainee is fit to practice, and that the trainee does not proceed in training unless or until competence in the tasks of ministry is demonstrated. Demyan, Abraham and Bui point out that, “gatekeeping and remediating problems of professional competence with trainees ... is generally considered a less desirable aspect of ... supervision (2018, 67). However, they also point out that it is fundamental to good supervisory practise. The specific areas which the supervisor is responsible to assess are outlined in the Learning Covenant drawn up between supervisor and candidate at the beginning of the placement.<sup>30</sup>

The quality of the supervisory relationship is a significant factor in the candidate’s assessment of the value of the placement (Denniston 2014, 113). Therefore, it would be true to say that “given the importance of the role of the field instructor to the overall field experience, understanding the factors that contribute to effective field supervision is crucial” (Moore, Dettlaff and Dietz 2004, 337). Moore, Dettlaff and Dietz go on to note that while current literature discusses the knowledge and skills required to be an effective supervisor there is little which considers the personality of the parties and the impact that personal characteristics have on the experience. The clear implication, therefore, is that “it is important that field instructors be aware of personality differences and

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<sup>29</sup> See Appendix V for the Vows of Ordination. See also, Act 10, 2004, pp 214-215 of the Acts of the General Assembly, for an outline of regulations concerning the content of the training course for candidates for ministry within the Church of Scotland: ([http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/6678/2004\\_Act\\_10\\_Selection\\_and\\_Training\\_revised\\_to\\_May\\_2018.pdf](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/6678/2004_Act_10_Selection_and_Training_revised_to_May_2018.pdf)).

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix I.

how they may affect supervisory relationships” (Moore, Dettlaff and Dietz 2004, 337). My experience over ten years working with supervisors and candidates has led me to observe that personality differences often lead to problems in supervision. For example, Moore, Dettlaff and Dietz (2004, 337), quoting Holtzman and Raskin, noted that the failure of placements was often due to personality conflicts between supervisors and supervisees. Conflict in these relationships could have been avoided, or the impact reduced, if supervisors were more aware of their own personality and had the ability, knowledge, and understanding, to adapt to the different personality traits of their supervisee. Conversely, the supervisee might have experienced less frustration if they had an awareness of the supervisor’s personality and therefore what they could expect in terms of formational supervision.

This is a practical project intended to identify outcomes which could inform supervisors’ training within the Church of Scotland in order to “equip ministers with tools for a very different role [in terms of parish ministry] from one they may have seen modelled” (Denniston 2011, 6). These tools are necessary to support ministers of the future in “ministries which are pioneering, prophetic and visionary” (Denniston 2011, 6).

The issues to be addressed were identified in my Masters dissertation in which I made several observations. Reflective practice is fundamental to good professional development; however, it is problematic to describe, to enable, and to assess. Helpful reflection depends on good facilitation and supervision; a competent mentor is a crucial factor in positive learning. There is a lack of literature pertaining to theological education on the professional use of reflective practice, its structure and assessment (Denniston 2011, 29). In addition, as noted above, (p.18), skilfully facilitated reflective practice enabling better connections between theory and practice, attention to an individual’s learning needs, and supporting supervisors through provision both of useful tools for supervision and excellent training for supervision is a necessary foundation for a more consistent experience of placement for candidates in training (Denniston 2011, 55).

This analysis led directly to my current project. In undertaking my research, I bore in mind three questions:

- I. What constitutes formational supervision?
- II. To what extent does an understanding of personality types, approaches to learning and awareness of conflict management styles along with theological reflection assist in effective supervision?
- III. Can appropriate skills be taught, and tools given to supervisors to enhance the quality of their supervision?

In consideration of the research question the thesis is divided into six remaining chapters. In Chapter 2 I consider my methodological approach. This will be qualitative using semi-structured interviews and an element of autoethnography to collect the data. In Chapter 3 I analyse the Myers Briggs Type Instrument® and its role and effectiveness in enabling formational supervisors to work well with candidates whose personality may differ from their own to varying degrees. In Chapter 4 I am concerned with approaches to learning, how these differ between different personality types and how this might affect the pedagogical experience. In Chapter 5 I look at the role of reflective practice with specific reference to theological reflection and the manner in which different personalities approach the task of reflection with particular consideration of the supervisory relationship. In Chapter 6 I consider preferred approaches to conflict management, including the extent to which having a different approach may be a source of unhelpful tension between supervisor and candidate and whether understanding this can prevent these different approaches escalating into outright conflict. I also consider the congregational context and the necessity of good preparation for the parish to minimise the potential for situations of disagreement to deteriorate into conflict. In Chapter 7 I draw conclusions from the research and its analysis and evaluate the effectiveness of the current training, making suggestions for development of the training programme. I further reflect upon my three opening questions, drawing together thoughts on the nature of formational supervision, evaluating the role of MBTI, approaches to learning, theological reflection and approaches to conflict and reflecting on whether skills for supervision can be taught and supervisors inducted into the use of tools. Finally, I consider questions for further research.

Each of the areas discussed in this thesis - Myers Briggs Personality Type Instrument®, understanding ourselves in conflict, understanding our approach to

learning, and reflective practice including theological reflection - is in and of itself a topic worthy of study and reflection. There are many books, articles and reports written on each of these topics with a complex background of specific expertise, science, research, and learning associated with them. Given this, it has not been possible to survey the vast quantity of available literature, but only to indicate the breadth and depth of the ideas generated. One of the issues is that “determining how ‘thick’ to make a description is ... a decision based on prior assumptions about what is important, feasible and desirable” (Stoddart 2014, 15). I have aimed to limit my research and comment to the areas specifically related to the task of supervising student ministers on placement. Nevertheless, the process of researching these areas has simply confirmed to me that my current status is one of conscious incompetence.<sup>31</sup> There is so much more that I could learn and that would be of use. Added to this, I have attempted under each subject to reflect theologically. While this has further limited the space available to consider the topics under discussion it has also deepened the opportunity for learning and understanding.

## 1.8 Theological Considerations

This is a practical theology project. That it is multidisciplinary, looking at issues of personality, approaches to learning, reflective practice including theological reflection, and approaches to conflict management, is entirely in keeping both with the history of theological training in the Church of Scotland and with the discipline of Practical Theology. For example, historically the partnership of Church and university has “set standards of theological education second to none” (Cameron *et al* 1993, 278). Until recently this was demonstrated in part by a commitment to the Bachelor of Divinity degree as a second undergraduate degree as outlined in the *First Book of Discipline* which introduced a series of reforms to the three ancient Universities, founded in the 1400s, of St Andrews, Glasgow and Aberdeen (Cameron 1972, 137-155). These reforms enabled the universities to offer theological training hitherto not available in Scotland (Cameron *et al* 1993, 279). At St Andrews, for example, candidates were

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<sup>31</sup> Rogers (2007, 6-10) identifies various steps in learning which take the learner from Unconscious Incompetence through Conscious Incompetence and Conscious Competence to Unconscious Competence which indicates a level of expertise has been reached. See pp.121-122 for a fuller exploration of the Competence Ladder.

required to follow a three-year course studying logic, mathematics and philosophy, after which they were deemed to be “laureat and graduat in philosophy” (Cameron 1972, 139). After completing this, candidates either went on to study medicine or moral philosophy, followed by studies in Greek and Hebrew. Only after completing all of this in a satisfactory fashion were candidates permitted to be admitted to study Divinity.

In addition, Ghiloni points out that practical theology describes its interests broadly:

Practical Theology is multidisciplinary, with contributions drawn from counselling, social work, psychology, sociology, ethics, as well as pastoral and practical theology. This is most appropriate: religion tends to constitute humans’ whole way of life and cannot be sequestered to historical or theological studies. (2013,10)

This has been borne out in my research as, considering the various aspects of training and reading about personality, conflict, and learning, I have found myself reflecting upon and reading about what it means to be human, what it means to be in relationship, and what it means to be human in relationship with God. As Killen puts it, theological reflection is set “in the context of human beings’ innate activity of meaning making” (1995,105). Time and again issues of self-awareness are emphasised in offering good supervision; for a Christian, true self-awareness is to be found in relationship with God.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This is a Professional Doctorate. As such, my research focus is a specific aspect of my professional life for over ten years, seen through the lens of reflective practice, research and analysis of interview data. My aim in undertaking this study was to offer a critique of current approaches to training for formational supervision within the Church of Scotland. Through personality typing, considering approaches to learning, and approaches to conflict management, I hope to bring psychological understanding and theological wisdom into a creative dialogue, “using the insights of one to advance the agenda of the other” (Collicutt 2015, 45). My aim is to use these management and leadership tools to inform the development of formational supervision of candidates for ministry for the good of the individual, the Church, and the Kingdom. The use of these tools

is based upon the assumption that “improving self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-insight ... [is important] in promoting successful relationships” (Klimoski and Hu 2011, 59). Indeed, done well, formational supervision ought to do more than consider what has gone well or could be done better, and should rather offer space for the candidate’s own development as “the means towards personal transcendence” (D’Souza 2009, 82). Training for formational supervision therefore, ought to facilitate the development of appropriate skills in potential supervisors, enabling them to provide an experience of placement which is excellent preparation for the parish; an opportunity for the candidate to develop skills and gifts in areas where they are strong and grow gifts and skills in areas where they are weak. While no training can provide experience of every eventuality, probationers should go into ministry confident that they have sufficient preparation in the tasks of ministry, sufficiently developed reflective skills, and a sufficiently good understanding of the issues they are likely to face. Good supervision in training should be the foundation of and springboard for good practice in ministry.

## Chapter 2 Methodology

The qualitative researcher must honestly probe ... her own biases at the onset of the study, during the study and at the end of the study by clearly describing and explaining the precise role of the researcher in the study.

(Janesick 2003, 389)

### 2.1 Introduction

Initial research into formational supervision within the Scottish context has shown that there are no recent studies in this area.<sup>32</sup> Nor are there any studies which consider how the supervisory relationship is experienced, by either party, or how learning is accomplished by candidates. This is despite evidence, which I draw out in the course of this thesis, that personality types, approaches to learning, or conflict management styles can impact upon supervisory relationships, particularly where there is a clash of style or type with a candidate (see above, pp.40-41), Foskett and Lyall (1988, 116-123), Lamdin and Tilley (2007, 15-18) and Ward (2005, 77-78) highlight the importance of a supervisor's self-awareness in carrying out effective supervision, which suggests that tools to enhance such self-awareness would be helpful.

A basic tenet of this thesis is that the insights of personality typing, approaches to learning, approaches to conflict, and theology can facilitate an enriching conversation which will inform formational supervision:

This is not to suggest that there is always a neat coincidence between what the Christian narrative is saying and what the other disciplines are bringing. Rather, we find such dialogue fruitful in enriching our understanding of the Scriptures as well as improving practice of... supervision. (Leach and Paterson 2010, 3)

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<sup>32</sup> Foskett and Lyall, *Helping the Helpers* (1988), and Tomlinson, *Training God's Spies*, (2001) are the only studies from within the Scottish context which relate specifically to training for ministry.

Through methods of qualitative research combined with autoethnographic reflection this project analyses the current provision of training in formational supervision and offers an evaluation, outlining ways in which formational supervisor training can be improved, thereby also increasing the effectiveness of the ministerial formation program. As Greene states: “social program evaluators aim to inform and improve the services, programs, policies, and public conversations at hand” (2000, 981). I am concerned with outcomes.

## **2.2 The Methodological Approach**

The phenomenological approach of qualitative research is well-suited to this research as it explores the meaning events have for individuals rather than seeking to define that meaning on the basis of theology or philosophy. Offering new ways of understanding and interpreting the world, “it takes human experience seriously and seeks to understand and interpret that experience in a variety of ways” (Swinton and Mowat 2006, 31). In this context, I explored the meaning of events in the supervisory relationship, as well as events of supervision training, from the perspective of the participants. Through methods of qualitative research, I gathered data which is capable of informing the construction of a training event for supervisors which will give them useful tools, appropriate knowledge, and helpful experience to support them in the task.

### **2.2.1 The semi-structured interview**

My basic tool for the research was the semi-structured interview.<sup>33</sup> There are disadvantages to this process. For example, as Polkinghorne observes: “data about [experience] depend on the participants’ ability to reflectively discern aspects of their own experience and to effectively communicate what they discern through the symbols of language” (2005, 138). In this the interviewer, through the questions, aids the process. However, there is also a danger that “the ‘respondents’ utterances are shaped by and orientated to the interactional content” (Wooffitt and Widdicombe 2006, 48). Nevertheless, these disadvantages are far outweighed by the advantages:

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<sup>33</sup> See Appendix VI for the interview questions.



Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world ... qualitative researchers ... [attempt] to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 3)

Through the interview process, I gathered evidence relating to the six probationers' experience of supervision in their placements, and their supervisors' experience of supervision training. How effective is the formational supervision offered and does training increase this effectiveness? The method used to collect the information was qualitative research which emphasises "the value-laden nature of enquiry [in contrast to quantitative research, which emphasises] measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables" (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, 8).

The interview focused the research on the lived experience of probationers and supervisors in relation to the effect of supervisory training offered. The aim was to consider whether the tools provided, that is, an understanding of personality, learning preferences, training in theological reflection, and approaches to handling conflict, influenced the way in which supervision was delivered. The supervisor and supervisee view their relationship from very different perspectives. Consequently, the supervisory relationship recognises multiple realities and therefore is enhanced by taking "a constructivist approach [in which] ... terms such as *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability* replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 21). Truth, as it relates to the functioning of the supervisory relationship, is multifaceted and success in this relationship is concerned with 'what works' for the two people involved. However, this relativism is concerned with the context of supervision, that is, the relationship between the supervisor and supervisee and the manner in which it is conducted, rather than with the content of supervision. The formative and restorative aspects of the supervision will reflect the different and specific approaches and experiences of supervisor and supervisee. As discussed above, (pp.29-30), however, the normative aspects of supervision, particularly as they pertain to the doctrine and legal constraints of the institution, are not a matter for personal preference.

These complex distinctions within the supervisory relationship had implications for my research which sought to discover whether the tools currently offered by the Ministries Council in Supervisors' Training work in practice, taking into account the differences of personality and practice between the supervisors and supervisees. Each interviewee brought their own perspective and experience to bear on the research question, and in analysing their experience and responses I drew conclusions as to the effectiveness of the training.

### **2.2.2 Autoethnography as a research tool**

In addition to the semi-structured interview, it was impossible, given my close involvement with the training of both candidates for ministry and supervisors, for my own voice to be silenced in this research. Even in the midst of conducting the interviews, my understanding of the topic was an unseen guest in the room:

Reflexive, dyadic interviews focus on the interactively produced meanings and emotional dynamics of the interview itself. Though the focus is on the participant and her or his story, the words, thoughts, and feelings of the researcher also are considered, e.g., personal motivation for doing a project, knowledge of the topics discussed, emotional responses to an interview, and ways in which the interviewer may have been changed by the process of interviewing. Even though the researcher's experience isn't the main focus, personal reflection adds context and layers to the story being told about participants. (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011, 278)

I brought to this research a wealth of knowledge and experience gathered over more than ten years. As Mauthner and Doucet observe, "as social researchers we are integral to the social world we study" (2003, 416). In this project, elements of autoethnography were significant as primary data. This added another dimension to the data, enriching it and providing a different angle on the subject under study from that of the interviewees. "In addition to the usual criteria of substantive contribution and methodological rigor, autoethnography ... add[s] aesthetic qualities, REFLEXIVITY [*sic*] (consciousness about one's point of view and what has influenced it), impact on the reader, and authenticity of voice as criteria" (Patton 2004, 47). Autoethnography, however, raises its own problems in terms, not only of the status of data, but of ethics. Does my voice drown out other voices? It has been important to ensure that it does not.

Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011, 282-283) point out that for an autoethnographer the truth of the narrative is described in terms of reliability, generalisability, and validity. So, for example, reliability relates to the credibility of the researcher. Given what is presented, does the analysis ring true? Generalisability relates to the extent to which the narrative encapsulates the experience of the reader; does it describe their life or the lives of others they know? And finally, validity in autoethnography relates to whether or not what is presented could be true, or whether it is useful. This confirms the suggestion noted above, (p.48), that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are what validate qualitative research.

### **2.2.3 Considering Ethics**

In any research, ethical issues are significant and must be considered and addressed: “good research needs to be conducted in accord with recognised ethical principles” (Denscombe 2002, 191). This protects both participants and researcher, not least because it recognises that the interviewer has power over the interviewee in terms of how data is presented and conclusions drawn (Swinton and Mowat 2006, 65). In this research three issues were considered in particular: consent, confidentiality and sensitivity. “The ... clear presumption is that research involving human subjects gives primacy to the requirement of fully informed voluntary consent” (Gregory 2003, 35). Interviewees, therefore, were told the aim and purpose of the research, what would be expected of them, how data would be collected and stored, and who would have access to it. Agreement to take part was voluntary and, indeed, the probationer member of one supervisory pair initially approached declined to be part of the research, disqualifying this pair. In this research, all respondents are adults capable of full understanding and therefore giving informed consent. Confidentiality was assured through the anonymising of data; this not only ensured the individual’s right to privacy but also created the conditions for honesty in interview (Gregory 2003, 49).

Clarity over the desired outcome was important. I have no personal investment in the outcome as it is the responsibility of the Ministries Council to deliver the training, and, indeed, by the time I conducted the second round of interviews I was actively seeking a charge, and was therefore no longer involved in shaping

and delivering the training in the same way.<sup>34</sup> However, I was aware that I was closely identified with the delivery of training and the very positive relationship I had with candidates and supervisors could be a factor in their responses; they might be unwilling to disappoint me and it was necessary to bear this in mind in the interviews, encouraging honest reporting of responses. Issues of sensitivity related mainly to my role of perceived authority over both probationer and supervisor. While I was not in a position to assess a probationer or supervisor nor to make any decisions which might affect a placement's progress, nevertheless, I was aware that both probationers and supervisors had a tendency to credit me with more power than I actually possessed. This perceived authority, therefore, had the potential to affect responses and this too had to be borne in mind during the interviews. As Coghlan and Brannik put it (2014, xiv): "researchers need to be aware of how their roles influence how they view their world as well as how they are perceived by others, and to be able to make choices as to when to step into and out of each of the multiple roles that they hold." Although, in this case, the questions were not of an intimate nature and unlikely to raise negative or difficult emotions, good practice ensured that pastoral care could be offered by a third party if necessary.

### **2.2.3.1 Being an Insider Researcher**

As an insider researcher, there were a number of other ethical factors to take into account. These included gaining access to information and receiving permission, not only from respondents but also from the organisation. There is the danger of a clash of interests in the researcher taking on an additional role to their role within the organisation. There are issues about objectivity, moving beyond a personal perspective, and handling outcomes which may be seen negatively by the organisation (Coghlan and Brannik 2014, xiv). Therefore, in addition to the ethical issues discussed above there are particular dilemmas related to researching within one's own organisation. As Floyd and Arthur note, many ethical issues which arise during an insider researcher project are not covered by the usual ethical review application which is based on objective principles, such as consent and anonymity, "rather than acknowledging the more nonlinear and 'messy' process which typifies qualitative ... research" (2012, 3).

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<sup>34</sup> I am, however, on the team of Supervision Trainers and so continue to be involved in delivering training.

The insider researcher, being inevitably more subjective, has to deal with issues “linked to on-going personal and professional relationships with participants, insider knowledge, conflicting professional and researcher roles and anonymity” (Floyd and Arthur 2012, 3). However, this was not a significant problem in planning the project since my professional relationship with the interviewees, both supervisors and probationers, ceased at the end of the probationary placement. As it transpired, any formal relationship with all my interviewees ended on my entry into parish ministry in February 2016.

Another potential problem, as Unluer observes, is that the insider researcher may overlook certain behaviours due to familiarity or make assumptions about the meaning of events rather than seeking clarification which may lead to neglecting aspects of the bigger picture (2012, 6). Floyd and Arthur consider that there may be a lack of honesty on the part of the interviewees for fear of repercussions in the work place and that knowledge gained through the interviews, whether work related or personal, may have to be concealed from other colleagues (2012, 6-7). However, in the case of my research, I was not interviewing colleagues therefore there was no likelihood of difficulties arising in the workplace. In addition, there would be no repercussions for my interviewees arising from the interviews. Views expressed, whether positive or negative, would affect neither the supervisors’ parish ministry, nor the probationers’ progress into ministry. In other words, the content and outcome of the research would not affect any of those involved, either positively or negatively. Working relationships only existed between the supervisor and probationer pairing, not between pairings: each individual was asked to comment only on their own experience of supervision which bore no relationship to the experience of any of the other supervisory pairs. Interestingly, there was no attempt at anonymity among the research pool, they discussed the research with one another. Many of the supervisors knew the other supervisors who were involved in the research and met them at the training conference, and all of the probationers were aware that each of the others was taking part. Notwithstanding this, personal details have been anonymized as far as possible in order that other readers will not be able to identify individuals.

Floyd and Arthur point out: “power relations are more complex for insider researchers ... and ... the respective positions in the hierarchy of researcher and participant are likely to influence the research irrespective of which is more senior (2010, 4). However, given the relative autonomy of a parish minister, even when acting as a supervisor, and my lack of authority over either supervisor or probationer, the power relationships in this research were unusually simple for an insider researcher. Moreover, there are real advantages in being an insider researcher. As Unluer notes, it would take an outsider researcher a great deal of time to acquire the insider’s greater knowledge of the culture being studied, its politics and how it works. This knowledge is invaluable in understanding how best to approach interviewees and in analysing the information gained. The insider researcher’s presence does not affect interpersonal dynamics in the same way that an outsider researcher’s presence would, with concomitant possibility of infecting the data. However, an insider researcher has to take care to preserve a degree of objectivity (Unluer 2012, 1). Other advantages are that the insider researcher often has easy access to documents and records, he or she generally already has a relationship with those who are to be interviewed, and where there is respect for the researcher information is shared easily and fully (Unluer 2012, 5). I found all of these aspects of insider research to be true in my experience.

In conclusion then, although I was indeed an insider researcher, the normal sensitivities of this role were less obvious in my circumstances. I was not working on a daily basis with my research pool; I had no ability to influence the working conditions of my research pool; and the outcome of the research would make no difference to the members of the research pool. In addition, given that the team of trainers is always looking to improve the training offered it is likely that, even if I were to discover that the training was completely unfit for purpose, the response would be to seek to identify training which would be fit for purpose rather than become defensive of the current programme. Although it is the Ministries Council which is responsible to ensure delivery of the training, the responsibility for the design of the program and the delivery ‘on the ground’ lies with the group of supervisor trainers.

Moreover, my status was an advantage in building relationships with the group I was researching since I understood the situation from the perspective of both parties:

Good research depends upon ... researcher and participants developing trust and empathy ... necessary if participants are to speak freely and ... to work with the researcher to tease out fresh understanding. (Knight, 2002: 49)

It was also a significant resource. McCracken (1988: 18) observes that “the investigator cannot fulfil qualitative research objectives without using a broad range of ... her own experience”. From this perspective, the research allows for a level of knowledge of the topic that is enhanced by being an insider researcher. My experience thus became a positive factor in undertaking this project.

## **2.1 Theological Considerations: The God Factor**

This research is theological because it involves ministry; formation for ministry is a deeply theological act. The reflective processes inherent in ministerial formation are intrinsically theological as candidates work to make sense of their theology in practice in the messiness of the real world as opposed to the clinical atmosphere of the classroom. However, there is a fresh and interesting dynamic in considering issues such as approaches to personality types, learning, and conflict management styles from a theological perspective. These issues, although pertinent to relationships, are not generally taken into account in the practice of the Church. However, since “the theological reflection that *is* Practical Theology also embraces the practices of the world ... The practices of the Church cannot be understood as ontologically separate or different from the practices of the world” (Swinton and Mowat, 2006: 7-8). This suggests that issues of personality and interpersonal practice, for example approaches to learning styles and conflict management, should be fit for theological reflection. If we accept that we are, theologically speaking, made in the image of God, and that every human person has a spiritual dimension, these ontological issues of personality are also deeply theological. However, in consideration of issues pertaining to supervision, these particular factors have not been viewed through the lens of theological critique:

This hermeneutical task necessitates considerably more than simply *applying* theory to the practices of the Church through the development of effective techniques. Rather it will mean a careful theological exegesis of particular situations within which the practices and experiences that emerge from these situations are explored, understood, evaluated, critiqued and reconsidered. (Swinton and Mowat, 2006: 12)

For this project, therefore, I explored, evaluated, critiqued, sought to understand, and considered the way in which these psychological issues impacted upon the practice of supervision through a theological lens. This consideration has the capacity to give a new and fresh angle to understandings of supervision, and therefore brings an original aspect to the project: here the ways in which we operate as human beings learning in relationship from a psychological perspective are brought into conversation with theology.

## 2.2 The Research Pool<sup>35</sup>

The sample in qualitative research is small but representative (Silverman 2001, 248-9). While a small sample is potentially problematic due to the possibility of bias or non-representation, the aim is depth rather than breadth. Moreover, the Church of Scotland provides a well-defined and relatively small context for this research (approximately eight hundred ministers) in comparison with research in other settings. “In non-probability sampling the choice of cases is not based on a random selection, but on criteria that provide a sample that meets a particular need, depending on the aims of the research” (Plowright 2011, 42). For this project, the research pool consisted of three hundred supervising ministers trained under different models of supervision, of which approximately one quarter might have a candidate on placement at any one time. This pool was refined by selecting supervisors who had a candidate on placement and the probationary placement, being fifteen months long and full-time, recommended itself for this purpose. This limited the pool to fourteen supervisors who at that point had a probationer on placement with them, and from this group a representative sample was chosen. In the selection, the supervisor’s gender, theological preference, and experience, the demographic of the parish and its geographical location were all significant in ensuring that the research pool was

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<sup>35</sup> See Appendix VII for a breakdown of the research pool.



as representative of the Church as possible. The resulting research group comprised six supervisors and the six probationers with whom they were working, giving twelve different perspectives on the supervisory relationship and the task of supervision. The group of six supervisors was offered refresher training during the research and interviewed before and after the training. The group of six probationers was also interviewed before and after their supervisors attended the refresher training. These supervisors and probationers were therefore in a position to reflect on the helpfulness or otherwise of training offered, by reflecting on the experience of placement both pre-and post-training.

All the names are pseudonymous; supervisors' pseudonyms begin with letters A to F (Anna, Beth, Charlie, David, Eric, and Frank) and probationers' pseudonyms with letters K to P (Katie, Laura, Margaret, Neil, Owen, and Patricia). The group consists of four male supervisors and two female supervisors; this ratio mirrors the ratio of male to female ministers within the Church of Scotland which currently is around 67% male and 33% female. Theologically the supervisors interviewed range from conservative evangelical through to liberal. Experience in ministry is also varied but none has had fewer than two charges. Their current charges reflect the variety of geographical situations in the Church of Scotland ranging from inner-city and suburban to country town and remote rural. The supervisors vary in age from 45 to 63 years old. Each had participated in earlier training for supervision but none had been trained under the current model. The supervisors are all experienced as supervisors, although their experience varies from having supervised one or two candidates to having had a steady stream of candidates over many years. Before attending the training, all supervisors bar one felt reasonably confident in their supervisory skills. The pairings of supervisor and probationer also displayed a range of theological partnerships. Two of the probationers who self-identified as theologically liberal were teamed with supervisors who also self-identified as theologically liberal. Two of the more theologically conservative probationers were teamed with similarly theologically conservative supervisors. One theologically liberal probationer was teamed with a supervisor who was more theologically conservative and one probationer, while describing himself as not theologically liberal, nevertheless found himself more liberal on some issues than his supervisor.

### 2.2.1 The interviews

In preparation for the interviews I researched literature pertaining to the various areas under investigation: Myers Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI), approaches to learning, theological reflection, and approaches to conflict management. I then designed and piloted the interview questions. I ensured that each of the supervisors in the research cohort was able and willing to attend a training conference. I also arranged to induct the probationers into the various tools: MBTI, approaches to conflict management, approaches to learning, and theological reflection. While it is now the practice for new candidates for ministry to be given an induction conference at which these areas are explored, (see above, p.32), this was not the case when the six probationers entered training, therefore some preparation was necessary. Having completed this preparatory work, I then interviewed the six supervisors and the six probationer ministers. After the first round of interviews was completed I transcribed all twelve and carried out some initial analysis before embarking on the second round of interviews. This was to prevent the results of the second round of interviews infecting my analysis of the first round. The second round of interviews was conducted and analysed after all the supervisors had attended training and some months had elapsed, to allow any effects of the training to become embedded in their supervisory practice.

The first round of interviews was conducted soon after the beginning of each of the placements. Supervisors were asked to reflect on the gifts and skills that they brought to supervision: their supervisory style, including their understanding of their own personality type, their approach to learning, reflective practice and theological reflection, and their approach to dealing with conflict. At this stage, without having formally analysed aspects of personality, each supervisor reported a good understanding of their approach in a variety of situations, how they were likely to react, how they dealt with issues, and what their personal preferences were in dealing with others. Only one supervisor had previous knowledge of their Myers Briggs profile, although one other was sufficiently aware to identify as an Introvert.

The second round of interviews was conducted several months after the supervisors had attended a 'refresher' training conference.<sup>36</sup> Attendance at this conference represented the key to my research. In fact, one supervisory pair which I had initially approached to be part of the research became disqualified when the supervisor was unable to attend a refresher conference.<sup>37</sup> One significant concern about responses to questions, noted above, (p.51), was that the research pool would have a desire for the answers to be positively supportive of the training because of the personal relationship that I had with supervisors and candidates through my role as their Support Officer, and the fact that I was identified closely with the delivery of the training. I was concerned that this relationship, therefore, might act as a disincentive to be totally honest about the value of the training. I was alert to this possibility and frequently gave explicit permission for the answer to be negative. Occasionally I was aware that the supervisor was actively seeking a positive response rather than simply reporting their immediate reactions, however there was sufficient reporting of negative responses, or neutral responses, for me to be confident that the overwhelming status of the responses was that they were honest and true. In addition, I encouraged them to speak truthfully rather than diplomatically.

Initially, I was concerned that the knowledge of the coming interview regarding outcomes from the conference might have encouraged supervisors to apply themselves to the training with a greater degree of intentionality than might otherwise be the case. However, whether it was to do with the lapse of time between the conference and the second interview, or for some other reason, this did not seem to be an issue. There was no sense in the second interviews of supervisors having deliberately tried to put the training into practice after returning from the conference; in fact, somewhat frustratingly, rather the opposite in that it seemed that there was little intentionality in using insights from the conference. Realistically speaking, however, while it would have been useful for the supervisors to have returned from training all saying how much they had gained, and how much their training practices had changed, that

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<sup>36</sup> See Appendix IV for a programme of the Training Conference.

<sup>37</sup> I had originally intended to interview eight supervisors and eight probationers. Two couples became unavailable, one because the supervisor could not attend training and one because the probationer declined to be part of the research, (see above, p.50).

outcome was never likely. Given the experience of ministry and supervision that each supervisor brought to training, and that in the first round of interviews, each supervisor reported a good understanding of their approach in a variety of situations, how they were likely to react, how they dealt with issues, and what their personal preferences were in dealing with others, the sense that there was no dramatic change after the refresher training conference was to be expected.

As a group, the supervisors were experienced and able, illustrated by the number of candidates who asked to be placed with them over the years, and so I had expected that they would find the training confirmed them in their practice rather than being a revelation. In addition, the lack of complete freshness in the training, given that all had already trained, was always going to be problematic to some degree. There was, unfortunately, no way to avoid this since the supervisors were deliberately chosen for their experience not just of supervision but also of previous models of training. However, most of the supervisors spoke of a development in their understanding and, as will become clear, all the supervisors reported that they took something away in terms of renewed practice, confirmation that they were getting it right, or just more confidence. Charlie, David and Eric specifically mentioned the Parabolic Loop as a useful tool; Anna felt affirmed in her practice and encouraged; Frank was very positive about the material accompanying the conference; and Beth and David gave themselves higher marks out of ten for their supervision after the conference (see Appendix V, Breakdown of Research Pool I.I).<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, early analysis seems to indicate that while the training for these experienced supervisors was not revolutionary, it was nonetheless helpful, and a closer analysis yielded some interesting and useful data which will inform the proposals for the development of the training programme (see below, pp.203-207).

One result of this lack of a clear difference between ‘before’ and ‘after’ is that the effectiveness of the training is less immediately obvious; the findings are more nuanced. Findings would almost certainly have been different if I had interviewed ‘first-time’ supervisors who had not previously attended training.

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<sup>38</sup> For a full description of the Parabolic Loop see pp.139-141.

Indeed, at one training conference a new supervisor commented, *“I now feel much more equipped.”*<sup>39</sup> However, interviewing new supervisors would have prevented me from using probationers and probation supervisors as my research pool since first-time supervisors are not given probationers to supervise. On balance, I decided that the longer and more intensive placement, plus the experience of supervision and supervisor training which the probation supervisors brought to the exercise was likely to yield more significant data. For a new supervisor the input of the conference would have been fresh, however, the more critical comments of experienced supervisors are more useful in terms of refining the training offered.

Another complicating factor is that the research did not consider the probationers’ openness to learning, which can significantly impact upon the delivery of effective supervision; nor indeed did it consider the supervisors’ openness to learning, which can significantly impact the effectiveness of any training given. This is difficult if not impossible to assess as it is unlikely that interviewees would willingly admit to being resistant to learning. While the aim of the supervisors’ training process is to enable supervisors to engage the co-operation of candidates in their own learning there will always be those candidates who are simply unwilling to collaborate. Wingate (1999, 108) observes that while one quarter of theological students engage enthusiastically with a training process, one quarter go through the process unchanged. As indicated above, (p.37), even a well-trained, well equipped and experienced supervisor cannot teach a reluctant candidate, and similarly, even the best training cannot equip a supervisor who is reluctant to learn. For example, in an earlier training conference the response of one trainee supervisor to the concept of theological reflection was rather negative and there was significant resistance to the use of the Parabolic Loop.<sup>40</sup> When invited to use open questions to encourage theological reflection this trainee kept reiterating, in one form of words or another, *“but you have to tell them things!”*<sup>41</sup> In contrast, at a later training conference, one trainee supervisor said as she left, *“I’ve learned something about myself”* while another emailed later to say that she had found

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<sup>39</sup> Journal entry, 19 September 2013.

<sup>40</sup> See below, pp.139-141 for a full description of the Parabolic Loop.

<sup>41</sup> Journal entry, 2 May 2013.

the training helpful even though she hadn't wanted to be there.<sup>42</sup> The overall impression gained from the data is that the conference as a whole was well received; there was sufficient indication that, notwithstanding their experience and expertise, each of the supervisors found aspects of the training helpful (see above, pp.59-60).

## 2.3 Conclusion

This thesis is a tapestry, with threads of many colours woven into the final picture. The Church of Scotland is a thread, both historically and contemporaneously. The stories told by each supervisor and each probationer represents a thread. However, other stories too are woven into this tapestry. The story of the United Church of Canada in Saskatoon whose supervisor training has been foundational to the whole process of training supervisors in the Church of Scotland makes a brief appearance, a small thread but an important one. Other threads which are significant are: the nature of supervision, the nature of reflection, and tools such as the Myers Briggs Typology Instrument®, approaches to learning, and approaches to managing conflict. In a sense, these are the warp of the tapestry, the stationary threads under and over which the weft, the stories of participants, weave to make the final picture. As I have noted above, (pp.49-50), my story is also a weft thread. I have aimed to make the thread representing my story no more obvious or distinctive than that of my interviewees, and indeed, hopefully less so. As I have researched, read, reflected, and experienced my own story, I have become increasingly aware of the importance “of being reflexive about how we interpret our data, our role in the analytic process, and the pre-conceived ideas and assumptions we bring to our analysis” (Mauthner and Doucet 2003, 417). While reflexivity is challenging it is an important part of the design; I am part of this picture.

The data collected is as a result of hearing these stories; the story of the Church, those of my interviewees, the stories I read as I researched the literature, my own story and laying them all alongside one another, allowing them to influence one another to create a picture which is more than the sum of its parts. The aim is to explore training for formational supervision, as support

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<sup>42</sup> Journal entry, 19 November 2015.

for good quality supervision, including all the different elements that go into that process; theology, personality and pedagogy. As Polkinghorne puts it:

The evidence is in the form of accounts people have given of the experience. The researcher analyzes the evidence to produce a core description of the experience. The data serve as the ground on which the findings are based. In constructing the research report, the researcher draws excerpts from the data to illustrate the findings and to show the reader how the findings were derived from the evidential data. (2005, 138)

Given that the evidence relates to experience, the knowledge gained, as noted above, (p.48), tells us what works, and what does not, in people's experience. Although the experience of every story-teller is different, and different things will work for different people, the aim is to find the commonality from which generalisations can be drawn which will then inform the growing bank of knowledge relating to formational supervision.

In adding to the library of resources for formational supervision this research fills an identified lacuna in the literature. There is a need for a practical text which outlines the practice of supervision and the discipline of reflective practice when done within a theological context. In researching candidate training for my Masters degree, it became apparent that literature on supervision for ministry focuses on theological reflection rather than reflective practice *per se*. Although the two are closely linked, theological reflection is not the same as reflective practice. While the health care professions, teaching and social work publish widely on reflective practice, literature on ministry formation does not consider this in any depth. There is a need, therefore, for literature relating to reflective practice from a theological perspective, rather than simply theological reflection. In addition, there is an interesting and significant tangent in theologically considering issues of personality, approaches to learning and conflict management as they affect the learning experience. While these areas are dealt with in some literature on formational supervision, they are not considered in any depth and there is no consideration of how different approaches to learning might affect the supervisory relationship.

In improving the training for supervisors of candidates for ministry within the Church of Scotland, the results of this research can be multifaceted and wide-

reaching. If better supervision means better preparation for ministry, then new ministers are less likely to get into difficulty in the early years. This in turn will make for healthier congregations and fewer damaging disagreements within the life of those congregations. In addition, as well as the potential to influence the context for preparation for ministry for the good, as noted above, (p.39), there is also the possibility of influencing training in other denominations and disciplines.

As I weave this tapestry, each thread will contribute something unique, yet complementary to the picture as a whole; it is impossible that each thread will be unaffected by those around it. As a colour changes depending on which other colour is next to it, the threads of these stories will reflect different aspects of training in supervision and will influence one another. The final picture will privilege none of these stories but will honour them all.



## Chapter 3 The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and Its Value in Training for Formational Supervision

“The amazing extravagance of creation is marked by more than diversity of types; each individual of a given species is unique” (Collicutt 2015, 47).

### 3.1 Introduction

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) is the personality (or psychological) type instrument currently endorsed by the Church of Scotland’s Ministries Council in training formational supervisors.<sup>43</sup> MBTI was introduced to ministry training in the mid-1990s under the Board of Ministry, and indeed was the personality type instrument in use at the point when I trained from 1999 to 2001. However, by the time I took up my post with the Ministries Council in 2005, its use had been discontinued. Supervisor training had been reduced from two days to six hours and was simply an induction into the paperwork rather than training in supervision. MBTI was reintroduced into supervisor training in 2011 when the Ministries Council made the decision to enhance training for supervisors. While there are other personality type instruments which might have been chosen, the Council staff included trained MBTI trainers and this was one reason for its reinstatement. In addition, MBTI is the personality type instrument used by the United Church of Canada, Saskatoon, United Church of Canada, Saskatoon, in the Saskatchewan Conference who created the training programme on which the newly developing supervisor training was based, (see above, p.33). MBTI now forms a significant part of supervisor training within the Church of Scotland.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and evaluate MBTI as a tool for the delivery of effective formational supervision of those in training for ministry in the Church of Scotland. The *a priori* assumption of this thesis, and this chapter, is that “individuals differ from one another [and that] discourse about personality provides a vocabulary through which such individual differences can be discussed, interrogated, and possibly understood” (Francis 2002, 40). Current

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<sup>43</sup> See Appendix VIII for the MBTI Questionnaire.

personality research is mainly concerned with Five Factor Theory.<sup>44</sup> MBTI, in line with this theory, assumes that there are “consistent and stable individual differences in personality and that people can describe themselves reasonably accurately if asked appropriate questions” (Bayne 1997, 24). In addition, Bayne points out that there is substantial correlation between results achieved through completing a Five Factor Theory questionnaire and an MBTI questionnaire (2005, 10). While there are many personality profiling systems which rely on type as the basis of their analysis, there is insufficient space within the confines of this research to analyse each of these and to compare and contrast their value as tools for teaching and learning, and given that MBTI is the tool currently used by the Ministries Council, I will, therefore, only consider MBTI in my assessment.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the criticisms levied against it, MBTI is the most widely used personality instrument in the world (Briggs Myers *et al.* 2009, 9). This may be in part due to its relatively unthreatening nature; it is positive about different expressions of personality and although it is a developmental tool, it does not seek to measure development (Bayne 1997, 16). It is relatively easy to understand and, “using Myers Briggs is a bit like playing Othello, which takes ‘a few minutes to learn, and a lifetime to master’” (Myers 1995, 2). While for the most part MBTI is used in the business world, increasingly it is being used within the context of the Church: “psychological-type theory seems to have been warmly embraced by practical theologians during the latter part of the twentieth century and employed to illuminate a number of themes relevant for the development of aspects of Christian ministry and mission” (Francis 2013, 966). Given its ubiquity, and the fact that so many people are familiar with the concepts and language upon which MBTI is based, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Ministries Council has elected to use it in supervisor training. Indeed, given that personality affects

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<sup>44</sup> The Big Five Factor Theory is an integrative framework derived from decades of research that identifies five global dimensions of personality (Barrick and Mount, 1991; Costa and McCrae, 1991, 1992; Furnham, 1996; John, 1990; McCrae and Costa, 1987). These five factors are thought to have a significant impact on individual behaviour: neuroticism, one’s level of psychological adjustment or stress tolerance; extraversion, one’s degree of sociability; openness, one’s degree of openness to new experiences and ideas; agreeableness, one’s degree of friendliness and trust of others; and conscientiousness, one’s degree of organization, commitment, and persistence (Berr, Church and Waclawski 2000, 134).

<sup>45</sup> For examples of other typologies see Francis (2005a, 57-8), or Pearman (2016) who outlines, for example, the *Golden Personality Type Profiler*, *Majors Personality Type Inventory*, *Psychological Type Indicator*.

how we learn, how we reflect and how we deal with conflict, MBTI has become intrinsic to the training programme.

However, MBTI has many detractors and these include a significant number of practical theologians and other Christian leaders. Francis points out that, although some theologians have embraced personality typing, “another group of scholars has taken serious objection to the alliance that seems to have been forged between Christian theologians and psychological-type theory” (2013, 967). Similarly, Lloyd observes: “Some Christian leaders are sceptical of [personality typing] and anxious about its growing popularity in the churches. A few are frankly hostile” (2007, 112). Nevertheless, there is a significant cohort of theologians and theological educators who consider that MBTI is not only helpful, but that it can also provide the basis for a useful methodological approach to the analysis of a variety of ecclesiological issues. Indeed, “from the early 1980s a small, but growing, number of studies has introduced psychological type theory to the field of congregation studies” (Francis, Wright and Robbins 2016, 29).

It is but a small step from here to consider that MBTI might also be useful in analysing pedagogy, even that relating to the training of ministers. As Richardson and Arker have observed (2010, 81): “education is a relational profession that involves interacting and working with others, requiring teachers to work and communicate with a variety of people.” It follows that deepening our understanding of both ourselves and others can enhance our ability to communicate our thoughts and intentions with greater accuracy and therefore increase the effectiveness of both our cooperation in our own learning and developmental activities and our effectiveness as teachers (Osborne 2012, 893). Collicutt observes: “although for the most we can do little to change our basic personality traits, we can manage our lives much more effectively if we understand them” (2015, 51). In addition, and of particular value for a teacher or mentor, she suggests that “understanding something of the personality traits of others may also make us less likely to judge them” (Collicutt 2015, 51).

I am a convert to MBTI. On first acquaintance, as a probationer minister, I thought it was too business focussed and neither sufficiently nuanced nor sufficiently concerned with a necessary process of individuation. However, as I

came to understand MBTI more fully I realised its capacity to be helpful, not only in personal development, but also in the very specific areas of working relationships and team working.

In this chapter, therefore, I will consider the arguments for and against the use of MBTI and evaluate its usefulness within the context of ministerial training and formation. I will consider the theological appropriateness of the analysis of personality and the impact of this on supervision practice before turning to an analysis of the interview data to give some assessment of the effectiveness and usefulness of the training in using MBTI currently offered by the Ministries Council.

### **3.2 MBTI: Background**

MBTI is based on the personality theory of Carl Gustav Jung which he outlined in his *Typologie* published in German in 1923 and in English translation in 1924. Jung (1924, 612) defined type as “a characteristic model of a general attitude occurring in many individual forms.” Jung was convinced, based on his observations, that “there are different kinds of people, and that the differences are profound ones” (Bayne 2005, 20). Jung’s theory of type, later developed by Katharine Cook Briggs (1875-1928) and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers (1897-1980), focused mainly on preferences for introversion and extraversion (1924, 412-517). Briggs saw in Jung’s *Typologie* echoes of her own interests and studies and this encouraged her to develop the personality typology which has come to be known as MBTI (Bayne 1997, 15). Jung aimed to offer a description of differences that we recognise from everyday life to enable us to engage with these differences constructively (Briggs Myers *et al.* 2009, 8). Jung’s typology divided personality into Extraverted and Introverted types, further refined by Thinking and Feeling, Sensation and iNtuition, Judging and Perceiving (Jung 1924, 421-517). In their analysis, Myers and Briggs took these eight designations of preference which Jung had identified and developed them into a matrix of sixteen behavioural preferences which can be identified and codified as a description of an individual’s personality.

Myers and Briggs created their matrix by treating Jung’s eight types as four binary pairs by considering both what they called the ‘dominant process’ (the preferred process) and the ‘auxiliary process’ (the antithesis of the dominant

process) (Briggs Myers 1980, 18-22). Both are required for a balance which enables the individual to live in a world which can demand behaviour against preferred type.<sup>46</sup> The concept of ‘preference’ used by Myers and Briggs to define their typology is well described by the activity of writing your signature. Using your preferred hand feels natural and instinctive; using your other hand feels awkward and difficult. In the same way, some behaviours come to us naturally, while others have to be produced with some conscious effort. Preference “can be defined simply as ‘feeling most natural and comfortable with a particular way of behaving and experiencing’” (Bayne 2005, 12). Bayne goes on to point out that “we can do both, but we prefer one” (2005, 12). The sixteen preferences represent the matrix arising from the four binary pairs, categorised through reflection on the way in which we respond to the choices open to us in a variety of situations. They are designed to identify our responses in terms of our most natural and comfortable behaviours and thus our preference for one aspect of the pair over another (Briggs Myers *et al.* 2009, 7). Although the preferences are organised dichotomously, “the polar opposite expressions of the four personality components each have intrinsic value: one is not morally or functionally superior to the other” (Lloyd 2012, 27). The dichotomies are categorised in the following manner:

- Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I): this relates to where individuals get their energy; either the outer world through interaction with others, or the inner world through reflection and time alone.
- Sensing (S) or iNtuition (N): this relates to how individuals absorb/gather information; either through facts and empirical means or through the big picture and the sense of essential meaning.
- Thinking (T) or Feeling (F): this considers how individuals structure their decisions; through logic and reason or personal values and needs.
- Judging (J) or Perceiving (P): describes how people live their lives; through planning and organisation or through spontaneous response and flexibility. (Passmore, Holloway and Rawle-Cope 2010, 3)

An individual, answering a series of questions related to their preferred behaviour in particular situations, identifies a personality profile described by

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<sup>46</sup> For example, an Extraverted type requires a degree of Introversion in order to access her inner world, just as an Introverted type requires a degree of Extraversion in order to deal with other people.

four letters which indicate the clarity of an individual's preference for one set of behaviours over another. For example, an individual whose profile was denoted by the letters ISTJ would be likely to find themselves energised by time alone and drained by time with others. They would prefer to gather information through facts which could be proven. They would tend to make decisions based on logic and reasoning rather than their personal feelings, therefore, for this personality type, to treat everyone equally would be to treat everyone in precisely the same manner regardless of personal circumstances. They would tend to be organised and plan activities ahead of time; to reach a destination, for example, they would probably detail each step of the journey.

On the other hand, someone whose profile was denoted by the letters ENFP would be energised by time with others and would find time alone draining. Rather than coming to understanding through investigating detail they prefer to see the big picture first and then consider how the details fit in. They would make decisions based on values and personal feelings and so would not treat others uniformly but would aim to take into account differences in personal circumstances. They would have a spontaneous approach to life, and, aiming for the same destination, they would leave open possibilities as to the route taken. However, as noted above, (pp.67-68), each type has what Briggs Myers (1980, 12-13) describe as an 'auxiliary process' which helps to balance the dominant preference, thus enabling a more nuanced approach to the various functions of interaction in relationships. This process relates to the extent which the opposite function is present:

An extreme perceptive with no judgement is all sail and no rudder. An extreme judging type with no perception is all form and no content. In addition, ... the auxiliary [process] has another responsibility. It carries the main burden of supplying adequate balance (but not equality) between extraversion and introversion, between the outer and inner worlds. (Briggs Myers 1980, 12-13)

To take account of this, and "even though they felt that the categories were clearly the more useful information", Myers and Briggs developed "a numerical measure called the Preferences Clarity Index, or PCI, to provide an indication of how well the categorization task was achieved" (Salter, Forney and Evans 2005, 209). The PCI is "analogous to the *preference score* in previous forms of the

Indicator” (Briggs Myers *et al.* 2009, 148).<sup>47</sup> The term ‘Preference Clarity Index’ replaced the term ‘preference score’ as the use of the term ‘score’, as well as being inappropriate terminology for a personality type indicator, tended to confuse interpretations of the results. The word ‘score’ led to an assumption that the results displayed the strength of someone’s Extraversion or Introversion, for example, rather than simply the clarity of their preference for those behaviours (Briggs Myers *et al.* 2009, 148). The PCI indicates the consistency of a person’s responses to the dichotomous questions regarding a preference for, for example, Feeling over Thinking, leading to an indication of the clarity of their preference. It is important to note that these categories are simply descriptions of likely preferred behaviours and are neither prescriptions for behaviour nor an attempt to understand the psychology which lies behind the behaviour. Rather, “it puts strengths and weaknesses in a new perspective, suggesting, for example, why each of us find some activities more tiring than others. ... Our type tells us what we’re best at and what we really want to do most” (Bayne 2005, 62). MBTI is concerned with the ‘what’ rather than the ‘why’, in the sense of an underlying explanation of behaviour.

The aims of personality type theory are to enable people better to understand both their internal impulses, in terms of their preferences, and their external relations, and then, building on this understanding, to identify both the ways in which they are more likely to be personally fulfilled and the manner in which they are most likely to relate well to others. Moreover, it aims to offer the individual some understanding of how the preferences of other people might lead them to engage differently with relationships or situations. This understanding has the potential to increase the individual’s positive engagement with other people both within and against type leading to greater ease of communication (Bayne 1997, 1). As Duhe observes, the MBTI is therefore not only concerned with self-knowledge and self-development but also with the construction of functional communities:

Participants who complete and interpret the results of the MBTI questionnaire become more aware of not only their own personality

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<sup>47</sup> In this case ‘form’ refers to the questionnaire filled in by respondents to ascertain their best fit type. Different forms are available depending on various factors such as age, ethnicity, and reading levels required. In addition, forms are regularly updated, taking into account new research (Briggs Myers *et al.* 2009, 106).

preferences but also those of their teammates with whom they must accomplish some task. Thus, cooperation improves as team members realize that differences in work styles flow in large part from differences in innate personality traits. Once these natural-born differences are understood, they can be better appreciated and tolerated. (Duhe 2009, 143)

The MBTI questionnaire, first published in 1943, has been in widespread use since the 1980s. However, notwithstanding the apparently positive consequences which accrue from an exploration of personality through its use, it is not universally popular. There is still significant suspicion about the appropriateness of type theory in general and MBTI in particular.

### **3.2.1 MBTI: For or Against?**

MBTI, and indeed type theory as a concept, has a significant number of detractors, including within the Churches. As Francis (2016, 92) points out, “psychological type theory comprises a field of study that has been challenged both by theologians and by psychologists.” That it is still in widespread use in an extraordinarily wide variety of management and interpersonal development applications is an indication that it also has considerable support. Indeed, when engaging with MBTI, there are two equal and opposite dangers to beware of: rejecting out of hand the insights it can offer, or accepting them uncritically (Francis 2005a, xi).

In some Church settings, MBTI has been welcomed. As Francis observes, it has become significant for “practical theologians working within the tradition of empirical theology” (2013, 966). He goes on to list ways that psychological type theory has been used by practical theologians in scholarly studies in Australia, New Zealand, North America, and the United Kingdom to assess the profile of congregations, of religious professionals, to consider the association between psychological type and different responses to religious and spiritual experiences, including belief about the Bible (2013, 966-967). As he says: “clearly many of these writers also assume the compatibility between psychological type theory and the Christian tradition” (2013, 967).

However, Francis also outlines a number of objections (2013, 967), citing Woods and Ward, who consider that the use of psychological typing, particularly in



spiritual formation, risks confusing psychological type with spirituality, so that in developing psychologically one might assume that one is also developing spiritually. Davies and Delmerge objected to psychological typing claiming it does not reflect environmental and other contextual factors (Francis 2013, 967). Francis further cites Reader, Egan, and Joyce who criticise psychological typing on the basis that it can be used unethically, for example, to prevent someone being ordained based on their personality type (2013, 967). Lloyd cites other objections, notably those of Billings, who believes that personality typing assumes that similar personalities will behave in similar ways in similar circumstances despite the evidence of our own experience to the contrary (Lloyd 2007, 114).

This objection is echoed by Barry Williams (2005), who considers that personality typing is a direct contradiction of the doctrine of grace and argues that its use facilitates the description of personality in a fixed way (Lloyd 2007, 15). Collicutt's objection is similar, drawing on the experience of the prophet Amos (Amos 7:14-15) to suggest that "typological models of personality ... are ultimately deficient, [setting] up in us an expectation of conformity to the X prototype when perhaps God has other plans for us" (2015, 54).<sup>48</sup> As Francis notes, the major objection raised by theologians to personality type theory are that "the classification of individuals within discrete psychological types underestimates the infinite variety of human individuality and undervalues the power of God to re-create and to transform individuals" (2016, 93). Knowing their MBTI profile can, it is alleged, persuade people "to identify with one type throughout life, which encourages a degree of one-sidedness and can create other problems" (Myers 2016, 290). Lloyd also cites Rowan Williams who is "concerned at the 'mechanical and fixed ways in which personality types are sometimes presented in the self-help books generated by the popularity of this style of interpretation" (2007, 114). However, Williams also recognises the usefulness of MBTI in spiritual direction (Lloyd 2007, 114).

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<sup>48</sup> Then Amos answered Amaziah, 'I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, "Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'" [NRSV] All biblical quotations are taken from the NRSV.

Clearly, Christian practitioners are divided as to both the usefulness and the appropriateness of MBTI as a tool. However, the fact that it finds a significant number of advocates within the Church offers grounds for not dismissing it completely. It is therefore helpful to consider in what ways MBTI might be useful and how to deal with the objections.

Research into the effectiveness of MBTI has produced varied results and the argument as to its usefulness continues: “despite the volume of research in this area ... findings remain inconsistent, and thus researchers and practitioners continue to debate the underlying nature of ... personality measures and workplace-related outcomes” (Berr, Church and Waclawski 2000, 135). Brown and Reilly (2009, 919) observe that much of the criticism relates to issues of reliability and validity:

Among the concerns raised has been the use of a typology to describe personality (Mendelsohn *et al.*, 1982), the use of dichotomous scores (Cohen, 1983), the fact that the data are self-reported (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986), and more general construct validity issues (McCrae and Costa, 1989; Sippes and Alexander, 1987; Sippes and DiCaudo, 1988).

Several concerns are raised in this quotation. For example, the dichotomous scores are produced via binary forced-choice questions which can be difficult to answer, as many respondents would prefer a third choice somewhere in the middle. The issue of construct validity questions the effectiveness of typologies in general, and MBTI in particular, in describing an individual’s personality or measuring an individual’s responses, and indeed the appropriateness of attempting this. However, Brown and Reilly point out that:

These concerns must be weighed against generally supportive validity studies (e.g. Carlyn, 1977; Carlson, 1989). Perhaps most persuasive in terms of this study is the extensive review of the use of the MBTI to study managers by Gardner and Martinko (1996) in which they concluded that there is sufficient validity to warrant additional research into the relationship between the MBTI and management. (2009, 919)

Brown and Reilly see the usefulness of the MBTI in helping individuals to an understanding of their innate behavioural preferences: “individuals can be encouraged to consider when behaving in accordance with innate preference is helpful as well as to develop and appropriately deploy effective behavioural

repertoires in opposition to preferences” (2009, 927). This illustrates the capacity of MBTI to be a tool for development as individuals learn to operate against type when appropriate.

The critiques of reliability relate particularly to the test-retest reliability which measures how closely a repeated test compares to the first test which the respondent takes. Although there is a small minority of people whose results vary widely from test to test, MBTI generally gives impressive results in this regard, with a high degree of internal consistency of the four MBTI dichotomies across age, gender, and ethnic groups (Daisley 2011, 18). Despite the reservations regarding its reliability and validity, research has produced sufficient positive results to ensure the continued use of MBTI in a variety of contexts.

There are several other objections to the use of MBTI as a tool for personality analysis, and the usefulness of, or need for, the results of such analysis. These include the suggestion that MBTI tempts users to ‘pigeonhole’ people or to use the insights it yields inappropriately, for example in matching people to jobs or excluding them from jobs based on personality assessment. As Pittenger properly points out:

Because of its apparent simplicity, the MBTI may be misused unintentionally by some people. A manager, for example, may come to believe that only certain personality types are appropriate for specific jobs ... Similarly, employees may use type labels inappropriately. Thus, one might feel that “She’s an INFP, so I will never be able to work with her on an assignment,” or that “I’m an ESTP and don’t do well when it comes to details. (Pittenger 1993, 53)

However, as Pittenger notes, this is an improper use of MBTI because a person’s behaviour can change depending on external influences (2005, 217). It is also inappropriate because MBTI does not measure skills, nor levels of competence, nor the extent to which a person may have developed and learned to work comfortably with their auxiliary function when required. Rather, as MBTI trainers are at pains to point out, the uniqueness of each individual allows for nuances of skill and competence which cannot be deduced by simply considering an individual’s personality profile.

A further objection, noted by Lloyd, citing Billings, is that the questionnaires do not test real behaviour (2007, 114). Other objections are that the descriptions of type are so vague and general they can apply to anyone (Pittenger 1993, 53). A criticism offered more specifically from the Christian perspective is that personality typing in general is too reminiscent of astrology (Bayne 1997, 76; Francis 2005a, 91-94).

Despite all these criticisms, (noted above, pp.71-72), MBTI has an enduring popularity. Citing Gardner and Martinko (1996), Brown and Reilly note that “MBTI has been extensively used for over 50 years in an extraordinarily wide variety of management and interpersonal development applications” (2009, 919). It is possible that the popularity of MBTI could be explained to some extent by the Barnum effect, however, properly understood and applied and with the help of a trained and skilled facilitator a person’s MBTI profile becomes much more specific and tailored.<sup>49</sup> Lloyd points out that “individuals who have been taught the principles of P[sychological] T[ype] testify to its value in better understanding their own personalities and behaviour and those of their families, friends and colleagues” (2012, 23). In addition, as a developmental tool, MBTI encourages individuals to consider for themselves what their preferences might be, and to build on their strengths and address their weaknesses rather than just to accept a very brief and broadly complimentary description.

Supporters of MBTI, moreover, consider that all these objections can be answered, suggesting that many of the criticisms “appear to be based on misunderstanding or even misrepresentation” (Lloyd 2007, 118). Thus, in contradiction to the persistent myth that MBTI pigeonholes people, (as noted above, p.74), there is in fact no suggestion that people with the same personality types would be identical in behaviours to one another. Rather, “each preference has a different role and effect in each type. For example, Extraversion in ESFPs is lively, sociable, and present-oriented, while Extraversion in ENTJs is tough-minded and focused on taking actions directed towards future goals” (Bayne 2005, 21). In addition, other factors will affect behaviour, such as

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<sup>49</sup> The Barnum effect is named after P.T. Barnum, the showman who declared “there’s a sucker born every minute.” It is a common psychological phenomenon whereby individuals will give high accuracy ratings to descriptions of their personality that supposedly are tailored specifically to them but that are, in fact, vague and general enough to apply to a wide range of people.

the clarity of the preference or the effect of the context. We cannot assume, just because we know someone's MBTI profile, that we therefore know how they will behave in any given situation.

Salter, Forney and Evans (2005, 210) observe that it is unfortunate that “the use of numbers has led to the misinterpretation of a PCI [Preferences Clarity Index] score as an individual's strength or capacity to use that preference.” In fact, “MBTI preference clarity indexes indicate *how clearly* a respondent prefers one of two opposite poles of a dichotomy, not how much of that pole she or he has” (Briggs Myers *et al.* 2009, 5). For example, while I might clearly prefer to use my right hand to sign my name, I might be almost as fluent in using my left hand even although my right hand is my default.

In answer to objections of determinism, as Goldsmith and Wharton point out (1993, 62-65), discovering one's type should be the beginning of a journey of exploration and development, not the end. Personality typing does not claim to be deterministic and to use it as if it were is to misuse it (Francis 2005a, 7). In this context, it is also worth noting that, as Lloyd (2012, 26) points out, “type theory distinguishes between Reported Type, the Type indicated by an instrument such as the MBTI®, and True Type, thus acknowledging that no instrument or other approach is infallible in identifying a person's Type.” Rather, the combinations of preferences, such as SF/ST or NF/NT, give an indication of the likely approach of those individuals to situations.<sup>50</sup> However, Briggs Myers (1980, 4) point out that “each combination has qualities all its own, arising from the *interaction* of the preferred way of looking at life and the preferred way of judging what is seen.” Thus, properly understood, Personality Typing gives “an *indication of preferred behaviours* rather than a blueprint of actions; the Myers Briggs model reflects preferences but does not necessarily dictate behaviour” (Myers 1995, 41). Other factors than MBTI preferences will influence behaviour, such as the requirements of a particular situation, in which someone may find it more helpful to act against type, or the degree to which someone is, for example, energised by interaction with people rather than by

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<sup>50</sup> S and N denote the preference for either Sensing or iNtuition, while T and F denote Thinking or Feeling. In other words, an SF personality type would take in information empirically and make decisions based on values while an NT personality type would take in information through an overall sense of the meaning and make decisions based on logical processes and reasoning.

time in reflection on their own. Lloyd concludes (2007, 122), “presentations of [personality typing] should stress clearly that classifying personality types in no way undermines or compromises the uniqueness of every individual; indeed, they should positively stress and celebrate this uniqueness.” Furthermore, MBTI cannot and should not be used to predict behaviour; rather, as Briggs Myers explains, it is useful in terms of understanding how people behave:

Whatever a person’s particular combination of preferences may be, others with the same combination are apt to be the easiest to understand and like. They will tend to have similar interests ... and to consider the same things important ... On the other hand, people who differ ... will be hard to understand and hard to predict. (1980, 4)

We can all recognise that as we go through life some people are easier to get along with than others. MBTI offers, not only a description of these differences making them easier to understand, but also tools to enable us to be more accepting of those who approach life differently from us. MBTI, therefore, offers the potential for richer and deeper relationships

Further, to dismiss MBTI - as Pittenger (1993, 52) does - on the grounds that “there is no evidence to show a positive relation between MBTI type and success within an occupation” is to misunderstand the purpose of MBTI. MBTI is not a tool for career matching (Sell 2008, 311-336). Success in a career relies on many factors other than personality and in any case, as already outlined, (pp.67-70), correctly understood “MBTI identifies preferences rather than competencies” (Briggs Myers *et al.* 2009, 1). An appropriate use of MBTI in relation to career is illustrated by studies of Church of England clergy such as that of Francis, Ratter and Longden (2015, 178), which concludes: “type theory is not concerned to argue that some types make better clergy than others, but to argue that different psychological type profiles may be associated with bringing particular strengths to particular aspects of ministry.” It would be dangerous, as many detractors point out, to employ someone purely on the basis of their MBTI profile. Rather, MBTI’s worth is as a developmental tool, illustrated by Duhe’s finding (2009, 146) that “early awareness of the different personality traits students possess has contributed to improved interpersonal communication, professionalism, and work products in teams.” MBTI is not a tool for assessment; rather it is a tool for personal development.

Equally, it is made clear in the MBTI training course that personality type should never be presented as an excuse for bad behaviour, or for limiting opportunities for personal development. Indeed, “understanding the interplay between one’s personality preferences and one’s day-to-day workplace behaviors is critical for designing and implementing effective individual development efforts” (Berr, Church and Waclawski 2000, 134). A study into the practice of therapists and coaches, “recognised that the personality type of ... practitioners may influence their behaviour and thus provide a further insight into the coach and coachee relationship” (Passmore, Holloway and Rawle-Cope 2010, 4). Examples of this can be seen in research conducted among psychology interns with reference to their supervision. The results indicated that clear Sensing and Judging type students preferred a task-oriented approach to supervision, whereas clear Intuitive and Perceiving types displayed a preference for a relationally oriented approach.<sup>51</sup> It was also discovered that the student’s personality type often influenced the type of supervision sought and his or her perception about the quality or value of the supervision offered (Bernard, Clingerman and Gilbride 2011, 155). Thus, it is not surprising that extensive research by Thorne and Gough over a period of thirty years through the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research at the University of Berkeley concluded:

In every instance, for all ten types for which our data were sufficient to permit analysis, characteristic combinations of strengths and weaknesses were discerned ... As has long been recognized in the MBTI literature, each type ... has its own particular pathways to self-realization and its own particular problems to be resolved. (1991, 101)

When we consider supervision in the light of these findings it would seem likely that a supervisor who shares, at least to some extent, the personality type of the candidate might have a better understanding of the particular problems the candidate might face. Thus, it would seem that, just as we find it easier to get on with those of similar personality type, so we also find supervision more satisfactory when it is offered by a personality type which is similar to our own.

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<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting that MBTI consistently speaks in terms of the *clarity* of the preference rather than the *degree*. For example, a high-scoring Extrovert has a clear preference for interaction with others to maintain energy levels, but this does not translate necessarily into what we might normally think of as extrovert behaviour.

Because the MBTI is a typology, there is an assumption that its scores should be distributed bimodally and there is criticism over the lack of evidence for this. For example, Pittenger points out:

If you measure the height of 500 randomly selected eighteen to twenty-five-year olds and collated the results in a graph it would show a bell-shaped or normal distribution with most people being close to average height and a few being very short or very tall. If the sample was divided by sex the data should produce a bimodal distribution; women being on average shorter than men but within each sex a normal distribution of heights. In measuring the MBTI scores, we would expect that since people are either Introverts or Extraverts, the test results should yield two different curves. One curve would represent all the Introverts, the other, all the Extraverts. Although some people may be more Extraverted than others we would expect that all the Extraverts would be different from all the Introverts. What we should find is that there are two normal curves representing the two preferences, and that there is little or no overlap of the curves. (1993, 50)

Pittenger goes on to note that:

The data indicate that there is no evidence of bimodal distributions for the MBTI. Instead, most people score between the two extremes. This means that although one person may score as an E, his or her test results may be very similar to those of another person's, who scores as an I. (1993, 50)

However, there is a fundamental question over the appropriateness of using MBTI scores in this fashion: should we necessarily expect a particular personality trait to have a normal distribution? MBTI does not present a measure of traits but a balance of four ratios. Someone with a low E/I index is relatively evenly balanced between E and I, but this could mean that they are both highly E and highly I, or both low E and low I. Therefore, even if the E and I measures are normal curves, it is not clear that a ratio of two normal curves will itself be a normal distribution. Even if this were the case, and each ratio has a normal distribution, MBTI measures four such ratios. The intersection of four normal curves, if indeed personality traits produce normal curves, is going to be an immensely complex curve. In addition, given that MBTI measures balance, not score, someone who has high preferences in both poles will score the same as someone who has very low preferences for both and to date research in this area has produced contradictory results. It is also worth noting that although there is



evidence for normal distribution of height, which therefore produces a bimodal curve, there is real disagreement over whether weight is normally distributed.<sup>52</sup>

As noted above, (p.74), Pittenger points out that to use MBTI in matching people to jobs is to use it improperly (1993, 53). However, he uses this as a reason to dismiss MBTI rather than seeing it as a failure to apply personality typing correctly. MBTI comes into its own, and this is particularly relevant in the context of this research, when we understand that our preferred behaviour affects the way we respond to tasks and to learning: “type makes a natural and predictable difference in learning styles and in student response to teaching methods” (Briggs Myers 1980, 147). When differences between personalities are taken into account, learning goals and teaching techniques can be adjusted accordingly. The successful teacher engages the students’ interest in a subject and this is achieved in different ways for different students depending on their preferences (Briggs Myers 1980, 155-156). This in turn increases the likelihood of the learner being successfully engaged in the process.

While this thesis does not explore directly the possible relationship between an individual’s MBTI profile and their leadership abilities, it is concerned with the question of how MBTI can support both the supervision relationship and the ongoing ministry of Church of Scotland ministers. It is therefore worth noting that some scholars consider that MBTI offers insights also into leadership styles and preferences. Interestingly, in researching approaches to learning, reflective practice, and conflict management styles, the literature often referred to personality, and sometimes explicitly to MBTI. This echoed my experience in delivering all three sessions at a training conference where I would find myself referring back to the session on MBTI while delivering the sessions on approaches to learning and conflict management. MBTI, it seems, has something to offer to our understanding of a number of other disciplines.

In conclusion, it would seem that despite the many critics of MBTI, there is enough evidence to suggest that, correctly understood and properly applied, an understanding of personality types might be capable of improving supervisor-

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<sup>52</sup> Journal entry, 29 July 2017, conversation with Rev Dr Charlotte Methuen (supervisor) who, in addition to a theology degree, has a degree in mathematics.

supervisee relationships. Since MBTI is relatively easy to understand and remember, there is a case for believing that it might be a helpful tool for supervision.

### 3.3 Theological considerations

Theological considerations are fundamental to this study. On the one hand, the Church is about people. It is about people living together, worshipping together, praying together and thriving together. On the other hand, the Church is about God. It is about understanding revelation, building the kingdom, engaging in the *Missio Dei*. It is about people working together to build the kingdom, and therefore it is about managing people, but also and importantly it is about ensuring that our living, working, worshipping, praying, thriving, understanding revelation, building the kingdom, and engaging in the *Missio Dei* is done in a spirit of love and grace. All of this is done for the greater good of the community of faith, and for the good of the individual, to fulfil the promise of Jesus: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10 NRSV). As Collicutt points out, “self-awareness is a key part of Christian formation; Jesus’ charge of hypocrisy directed at the religious leaders of his day is essentially an accusation of poor self-awareness - a lack of insight into their own behaviours and motives” (2015, 45). Similarly, Francis and Robbins argue that:

The study of personality is concerned with individual differences. Taking people seriously, observing and understanding their individual differences, stands at the very heart of a deeply Christian respect for the rich variety which God the creator built into the very essence of being human. (2004, 3)

MBTI, in contradiction to some of the criticisms levied at it, affirms the uniqueness of each individual. However, as Briggs Myers *et al.* recognise (2009, 21), “the adoption of uniqueness, however, gives no practical help in understanding the people whom we must educate, counsel, work with, or interact with in our personal lives.” To do this well we need helpful tools.

As observed above, (pp.71-73), there is a body of opinion within the Christian Church, in all denominations, which is fiercely critical of MBTI (Lloyd, 2007). Having engaged with those criticisms, it seems right, in the spirit of the FAOC

report, to ask, 'how can we use this wisdom appropriately?' If, for example, personality traits are considered in the context of biblical exegesis, it is possible to hypothesize that different personality types would approach the text differently: making different assumptions about the text, considering different aspects to be of greater or lesser importance, dealing with the scriptural material in a different way and making different points in terms of application.

As Francis and Atkins put it:

We need the sensing function to ground us in the reality of the passage of scripture. We need the intuitive function to draw out the wider implications and to develop the links. We need the feeling function to become attuned to the issues of values and human priorities within the narrative. We need the thinking function to face the theological implications and to struggle with the intellectual issues. (2001, 11)

In this spirit, and as different parts of the Church have become more aware of its benefits, personality typing is becoming more widely used in spiritual formation. This is notwithstanding the suspicions of Woods and Ward (noted above, (pp.71-72)). Clearly not everyone shares the fear that using personality typing as an aid to spiritual growth risks confusing psychological development with spiritual development. Indeed, the past twenty years have seen the appearance of numerous Christian books applying MBTI to prayer-life and spirituality, indicating that many have discovered positive benefits of understanding how one's personality might influence how one approaches prayer and bible study, and its use in developing the capacity for spiritual growth.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as Lloyd (2007, 112) observes, in both the USA and the UK, an increasing number of courses and conferences are aimed at introducing Christians to personality typing, often by means of the MBTI.

It is arguable that different personality types are apparent even within the four gospel narratives. For example, John's visionary, spiritual, and poetic writing, and his concern for things eternal and the Kingdom of God to come, contrasts strongly with the practical approach of Luke, with his concern for the poor and for the advent of the Kingdom of God in the here and now. Equally, Peter's

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<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Keating, 1987; Duncan, 1993; Goldsmith, 1994; Johnson, 1995; Fowke, 1997.

personality as we see it portrayed in the Gospels contrasts with John's: "[Peter] seems unquestionably to be high on E. The beloved ('other') disciple [at the tomb (John 20)] gives the impression of being lower on E ... He gets to the tomb first, but then stops and considers ... Peter, on the other hand rushes straight in" (Collicutt 2015, 52-53).

It would be surprising if theological considerations could not be brought to bear on personality profiling, given the ontological significance of an exploration of personality. Francis considers:

Clearly the concept of personality is complex. In essence, it is an attempt to make sense of what may seem at first glance to be the randomness of human behaviour and human preference. But suppose that there really are basic individual differences like introversion and extraversion which shape in a very real way who we are and who we become, is not this important information about being human? (2005b, 59-60)

Harris argues that "[the] current emphasis in theological anthropology ... that we become persons through our relations to others ... is logically confused and ethically precarious" (1998, 214). However, while she may be right to criticise Graham (1995, 223) for suggesting that relationship is a pre-requisite for the actuality of personhood, theologians would agree that we develop as persons in relationship; the disagreement would be over the extent to which we are defined by our relationships rather than shaped by them (Harris, 1998, 214-234). As Volf indicates, following John Zizioulas, "to become an individual, a human being must merely be born. By contrast, becoming a person exceeds the possibilities of creaturely existence. For even though becoming a person is something that happens to an individual, it is *not merely a matter of an individual opening up relationally*" (1998, 82-83). As people of faith our dependency on relationship to function, grow, and develop includes our relationship with God. Theological considerations, therefore, become foundational:

Faith has to take the primary place in the sense of underpinning the whole enterprise, but this does not mean we can allow it to operate in ways that are dismissive or ignorant about how human beings actually function ... Increased awareness and consciousness of our unconscious life, but never complete, brings greater freedom. (Rose 2013,10)

This is perhaps one of the most significant factors in a theological apologetic for MBTI: how helpful is it in enabling us to live life to the full, to experience the life abundant described by Jesus in John 10: 10? As a tool to increase self-awareness it has the capacity to increase self-acceptance and a concomitant acceptance of others, for, as the Gospel of Mark (12:31) affirms, we love others as we love ourselves (Francis 2005a, xii).

The responses of the interviewees for this project to questions relating to their understanding of their own personality indicate that in learning more about their personality the respondents have found a truth which has set them free to be more themselves (John 8:32). Beth commented that early in her ministry someone had suggested she do a personality test and that discovering that she is an Introvert had helped her to find ways of dealing with that in ministry. She had therefore found that insight extremely useful. She will now say to candidates who are demanding time and energy of her:

*If we're ever in a difficult situation ... and I say to you, I just need to go, please accept that I just need to go and we will eventually talk about whatever it was, but I have to ... go and sort myself out, my priority is that and it's not that I don't care about you but I actually need to sort myself out so that I can care about you more.*

Anna was also affirmed by discovering that her personality, rather than being weak and vacillating, as she had assumed, was much more positively orientated towards keeping people on board and taking her congregation along with her in any changes:

*I want to keep people happy, which I thought was a negative thing and when I came along to the training ... I thought, look at this, this is a weakness, and the lady who is doing it said no this is a good thing, because you want to encourage people, but you want to keep them on board the same time ... at first, I thought this is a negative, I'm a big weakling, ... this is terrible and the lady who was taking it was very positive about it.*

In becoming more aware of the positive aspects of our personality, and in finding ways of dealing with those aspects of our personality which are potentially problematic when interacting with others, there is a sense in which we are released to be ourselves more freely than if we were hampered by a sense of inadequacy or failure. Used properly, therefore, MBTI can be a tool for personal

and spiritual development, and for the good of the body of Christ and in the attempt “if it is possible, so far as it depends on you, [to] live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18). In integrating psychology and the study of personality with theology:

Christ is seen, therefore, as an integral part of every dimension of our lives. In psychological terms, one might argue that the Lordship of Christ should be the living spiritual principle or power controlling every aspect of our personality. Within the realm of Psychology as a science, there are some voices who call for a new understanding of the theory of personality based not only on human intellect and emotion, but also on the ethical and spiritual aspects ... In the interests of integrating Psychology and Christian faith, one should strive to create a comprehensive psychological understanding of personality that ought to include explanations on how Theology and Psychology fit together. (Santrac 2016, 2)

Used improperly, of course, it can be a tool for control, oppression, and manipulation, but this is neither in keeping with the ethos nor the stated purpose of MBTI. Even explicitly theological doctrines can be used negatively by people with a particular agenda. So, for example, in spite of the many examples of women in leadership in the early Church, and the liberating attitude of Jesus towards women, many still use the Scriptures to oppress women, and slavery for a great number of years was justified on doctrinal and theological grounds. The misuse of Scripture does not cause us to abandon its use entirely. In the same way, “clearly psychological data on human personality needs to be properly filtered through wider theological critique” (Francis 2005b, 60). In this consideration of the relationship between psychology and theology, it is worth noting that personality typing theory is being used within several denominations including the Church of England, the United Church of Canada, and the Church of Scotland, “to promote personal and professional development among clergy during initial training and continuing ministerial development” (Francis and Atkins 2001, vii). It would seem that there is nothing inherently incompatible between personality typing and theology.

### **3.4 MBTI in Supervision Training**

Currently, supervisors within the Church of Scotland training process are required to undertake an MBTI assessment. This is followed up by a ninety-

minute session at a training conference which explains the significance of the Preference Clarity Index and preferred styles and which aims to encourage supervisors to use MBTI insights in their work with candidates on placement and to help them to reflect on how they might best do so. The assumption which lies behind this approach is that an individual's personality type, in addition to influencing how that person interacts with others, also has some bearing on how they learn, on the way in which they teach, and also on the way in which they deal with situations of conflict. For example, in the pedagogical relationship someone with a preference for Sensing, taking in information through facts and empirical means, may well find it difficult to teach, or to learn from, someone with a preference for iNtuition who takes information in through the big picture and the sense of essential meaning. Equally, in a situation of conflict, someone who has self-identified as Thinking, with a preference for privileging logic and reason, is likely to behave very differently from someone who has self-identified as Feeling, with a preference for privileging personal values and needs. At the extremes, personalities will find those of an opposite preference deeply frustrating with the concomitant potential for relationship break-down. Therefore, given the variety of personality types involved in the learning process, it is inevitable that teaching styles do not always complement a student's preferred learning style, which can lead to learning being blocked. However, "by understanding their students' different personality types, teachers can adjust their teaching to foster individual success" (Richardson and Arker 2010, 77). Analysis of the data tended to support this observation, showing that the pairs which worked together most easily were those who shared three or four preferences.

In the research pool of six pairs of supervisor and probationer, three pairs share a personality type profile and one pair shares three out of four preferences. The two remaining pairs (Eric and Owen, Frank and Patricia) share only one preference out of four. As MBTI might predict, those two were the pairs which reported the highest level of tension in the relationship. For instance, Eric commented, *"I'm not sure long-term if I could comfortably work with someone like Owen, because we would be so different."* Owen also noted how different they are: *"I understand where Eric and I differ, where we have different learning styles, and different needs, approaches to things."* Similarly, Frank was

very positive about Patricia - *“she’s a very good candidate”* - but noted a level of tension in the placement: *“Patricia was always very positive about her placement, which isn’t to say we were quite seeing eye to eye ... so it was probably good for both of us to reflect a bit on a question of style and pull me back from even in a minor way [feeling that she was] threatening my style.”*

Patricia too, was aware of negotiating the difference:

*I’d maybe put Frank there and me here, therefore there is a difference, and you know, this has to work, and how is this going to work, and therefore I think it makes me more aware of when he’ll say something or do something I don’t react to it because I think, oh, that’s his style, that’s okay, that’s him, this isn’t actually about me, it’s about him, so that’s okay.*

These experiences and observations chime with Goldsmith and Kindred’s recognition (2002, 73) that “team members who are opposite to each other on all four preferences may have special difficulties in understanding or relating to each other.” However, they also illustrate the way in which understanding where the potential for a clash may lie or why another person might approach an issue differently can go a long way towards preventing any difference in approach escalating from a creative tension into harmful conflict. Although situations can alter how people behave, given our desire to conform to expectations especially in a learning situation, “it is in the interaction between the situation and temperament that the stuff of personality is formed” (Collicutt 2015, 53). It is therefore also in this interaction that the potential for trouble lies when two people approach the situation from the perspective of having very different personalities. It is to the credit of Eric and Owen and of Frank and Patricia that their differences did not escalate into harmful conflict. It is also worth noting that this ability to work with someone of a very different personality has significance for relationships beyond the supervisory one. An understanding of MBTI may also help the supervisee recognise where their strengths and weaknesses will lie in dealing with parishioners, who are likely to run across the whole range of MBTI types.

In the Church of Scotland, the probationers have significant autonomy when it comes to selecting their placement and it would be rare for a probationer not to be placed in his or her first choice. In this scenario, the high degree of congruence between supervisor and probationer personalities is striking, since



probationers are not aware of the supervisor's personality type at the point when they choose the placement. A range of factors plays a role in making this choice; although probationers consider the location of the charge, what the charge has to offer in terms of experience, and a variety of practical factors, most are also concerned that they 'get on' with the supervisor. This seems to create a situation in which probationers tend to gravitate towards someone with whom they share a personality type. On the other hand, it is possible to get on with someone of the opposite type, and indeed, opposites can attract. Goldsmith observes (1994, 86) that while "people find their 'opposites' or shadows the most difficult people to relate to, because they represent all the preferences which have been rejected ... that is an over-simplification, and it occasionally happens that people marry their opposite types, seeing in them all the qualities that they do not possess themselves." Both Patricia and Owen had, for different reasons, less choice in terms of placement than the other probationers in the interview sample; had they had more choice they might have chosen someone whose personality aligned more closely with their own.

All six probationers spoke highly of their placements and all six supervisors spoke highly of their probationers. Nevertheless, there were clearly more tensions in the pairs whose personality types were the least similar. Although both pairs negotiated their relationships without serious disagreement being expressed it might have made for a more comfortable experience for all concerned if they had been able to speak more openly and knowledgably about their differences from the outset. The value of this capacity to understand and communicate is seen below in the case study.

### **3.4.1 Case Study 1**

Beth has been a parish minister, as well as a supervisor of candidates in training for ministry, for a number of years. As noted above, (p.84), she had been encouraged to do an MBTI test early in her ministry. As a result, she reports a high degree of self-awareness in terms of her personality and the way in which this impacts her delivery of the tasks of ministry. As someone with a very clear preference for Introversion she recognises that she needs significant amounts of time on her own to recover from social interaction, as well as a need to withdraw after difficult or taxing situations. She is also aware that her

preference for Introversion impacts on her delivery of supervision. She recounts a story from an earlier placement which illustrates this well.

*Not long after my first [candidate] came I had a very difficult funeral. A member who was pregnant lost her baby in the birth and the horrible thing about it was that I was actually six months pregnant at the time and I had said to them are you sure you want me to do the funeral because I'll really understand ... but they did want me to do the funeral. However, although everything at the church went fine, when we got to the graveyard the Council had dug the wrong plot. So, then we took the whole family to a hotel to wait while the Council dug the right plot. And of course, I'd taken [the candidate] with me thinking this was a good learning experience and then we got stuck in this hotel, and for me that's just exhausting, you're already in a difficult situation, heavily pregnant but you also have to deal with the emotions of a family who are even more upset. By the time the funeral had all finished ... and as we were going back to the family home we were actually going past the church, I turned to the family and said, "I hope you don't mind but I'm just going to get out here I've got a couple of things I want to do." And the [candidate] and I got out of the car. I said to him, "I'll see you tomorrow", and walked away. And the next day he tore into me because I had walked away, and I had to say to him, "I don't understand what's wrong about me walking away," and he said, "because I really needed somebody to talk to," and I said, "I needed to be by myself." I was caught in that really awkward situation where he really did need somebody to talk to but it wasn't me.*

Beth went on to explain that she now tells candidates what to expect from her in terms of support and mentoring so that there are no nasty surprises. From a training perspective, it would be preferable if Beth made other arrangements for any candidate who, unlike her, prefers to talk things over in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, but it is laudable that she uses her awareness of her own needs to alert her candidates to this potential clash of personalities.

Anna, who happened to be in the neighbouring parish to Beth for a number of years, and became her good friend, commented:

*I was speaking to Beth, and she said when she was first a [candidate] somebody had taken her aside and said, "let's do a personality test," and she said that's been incredibly helpful because she's actually quite shy and nervous although she doesn't come across like that, and they were able to say, "this is how best to deal with things, this is how best to counteract some of these things".*

Since the incident recounted by Beth, and in subsequent supervisory relationships, a clearer understanding of her preferences has allowed Beth to short-circuit the possibility of clashes in her relationship with a candidate in training as she withdraws from social interaction to recover her equilibrium after the heavy demands of parish ministry. This illustrates a helpful use of MBTI. Self-awareness enables Beth to talk openly, in the early stages of a supervisory relationship, about how she is likely to respond thereby ensuring that each party knows more clearly what to expect from the other and reducing the possibility of an unhelpful clash of personalities.

### 3.4.2 The Interviews

In the first round of interviews, more of the probationers than the supervisors expressed awareness of their MBTI personality profile. Even those who had not taken a formal test were able to describe themselves in MBTI terms and relate their approach to ministry to their understanding of personality. Laura (who self-identified as INFP), commented “... *as an Introvert I have enjoyed being able to go away and read things on my own.*” She also noted:

*I did have to make myself plan things and make myself write everything down. I would think, “Oh yes, I’ll remember that next week” and you don’t ... there is a lot of ‘J’ required of you in studying; being organised and meeting deadlines, which would be a struggle to some extent.<sup>54</sup> And I would compartmentalise ... I could do an essay every week but if there were two due on the same day that was a nightmare for me.*

Neil commented, “*I’m an ISTJ although I scored the same for T and F.*” He clearly saw a relationship between his type and his approach to training: “*I’ve taken a very methodical approach to training and to my academic training ... I was very methodical in what I needed to do for each particular thing. I think it helps me prioritise what I’ve done in the past three or four years.*”<sup>55</sup> Patricia was particularly impressed by her descriptors for iNtuitive and Feeling

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<sup>54</sup> Judging tends towards a methodical and planned approach to organising.

<sup>55</sup> Introverted, Sensing, Thinking, Judging. Although Neil's PCI was the same for thinking and feeling he identified himself as a thinker on the basis of his behaviour when compared with the described behaviours associated with that type. However, in Myers Briggs terms, this indicates that the clarity of his preference for thinking over feeling is not obvious and therefore he will be able to act against type with a degree of ease.

preferences; *“I was quite surprised when I looked at it I thought, yeah, ... that is the way I do it!”* Owen was open about his negativity towards MBTI: *“you know I’m not a fan of it, which is why I don’t remember what I am, [I don’t like] pigeonholing other people.”* However, he also commented later in the interview, *“my default position is rebellion and always will be, even if I agree with you”*, and so it is possible that he would never have admitted that it was useful even if it was shown that it was. Nonetheless, he did admit:

*[Considering] the topics within [MBTI], because ... when it comes to feedback, particularly negative, if there’s anything negative he won’t come right out, I’ll hear from other members of the team, “Eric’s been asking what I thought of such and such,” so that means he didn’t like that, so, I used to then bring it up [in supervision], not saying that someone else said, I’d bring things up, saying, “what did you think of such and such,” knowing that he has trouble with it because he’s raised it with someone else, and that’s his style because he’s done that to me with others too.*

Neil was also initially suspicious and negative to MBTI but became a convert to its usefulness, commenting:

*I think it was helpful. I probably shared with you in the past my cynicism so I’m happy to be proven wrong. I think it’s been helpful to me to see, here’s someone who’s similar to me, and so I can learn because I know that they operate in a similar way to me. And I think equally, had I been with a supervisor who was quite different it would have allowed me to look at that supervisor and say, they do that, but I know that I need to do it a different way, and so I think understanding them, and understanding yourself and seeing practically how that affects ... the way you go about ministry is useful.*

The supervisors had various degrees of positivity towards MBTI. As discussed above, (p.84), Anna found it affirming and realised that there were positive aspects to her personality in *“wanting to keep people happy.”* She also found it explained something of the way she prefers to operate in her ministry:

*I really am a bit of a performer, and I’m happy with my own company, and when I’m in other people’s company, I like to kind of, a bit by stealth, move about, so I now understand that you get your energy from other people but you still quite like your own company so probably borderline, but probably more borderline Introvert than Extravert, which was a revelation.*

Anna and Katie, who is supervised by Anna, have similar personality types, INFP and INFJ respectively, and their Introverted nature means that they share a lot in common.<sup>56</sup> Katie commented, *“I know that I need time by myself to recharge, I know that I can do about three pastoral visits in a day and then that’s it ... because I do feel it drains me.”* In the absence of an understanding of personality Katie might have felt guilty about not being able to do more without having to take time off to recover. Despite the similarities, in the supervisory relationship the P/J difference is potentially significant. When asked if they had compared MBTI results, Katie responded:

*I see things quite differently from Anna, I mean, we get to the same result but we go about it differently. We both came back and said yes this is really interesting! And ... it’s just that way of, how you approach things, and I think that’s very much to do with your personality.*

For Neil and David MBTI was shorthand, allowing them to get to know one another quickly. David noted:

*I just thought, from fairly early on, we are remarkably similar in lots of ways, in the way we react to things, and in our general demeanour so it wasn’t a surprise at all to find that [we had the same MBTI profile]. It could go one of two ways; it could go the extreme that you’re so similar that you’re constantly clashing or so similar that it is easy, and with Neil and myself I feel it’s been the latter.*

Neil was in agreement with this, commenting:

*I think it’s been useful for me to see somebody who struggles with the same things I struggle with and see how they manage that so, having tea and coffee after the service when you’re already drained is something that drains you further, and I’ve noticed that David tends to be quite strict in terms of taking a Monday off and I think part of that is because of personality and how draining two services are and Sunday is, chatting to people and tea and coffee and different things going on.*

Arising from these reflections is a question over how quickly and to what extent David and Neil would have identified helpful similarities in personality and

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<sup>56</sup> Introvert, iNtuitive, Feeling, Perceiving/Judging.

therefore in necessary working practices without the confirmation from MBTI that they were in fact so similar. David thought:

*I don't have to consciously think right, how am I going to get inside [Neil's] head to guess what [he's] thinking or how [he's] reacting or how this played out, because instinctively, without assuming that I know, because the danger is that because you recognise similarities and reactions you then assume that the other person will react in exactly the same way to a situation which you've both been in. So that's probably one of the dangers, but ... I think there's been enough intentionality about the relationship from both sides to avoid that.*

Charlie also noted similarities with his probationer, Margaret: *"I think we are quite similar in many ways. I think she's probably slightly quieter than me, I'm a very competitive person; Margaret isn't. I think when it comes to values and things like that; we share a lot in common."* Margaret, who had used MBTI extensively in her previous working role and found it helpful, confirmed this, saying:

*We are both the same, ENFJ, and that E part of it is quite significant. He is more Extravert than I am, and at times I struggled a little bit with that because, when I was quieter, more contemplative, more reflective, he'd be bouncing around all over the place and wondering why I wasn't bouncing along with him.*

This illustrates very well the importance of the clarity of the preference in understanding personality. The clarity (in MBTI terms) of Charlie's preference for getting his energy from others is more pronounced than Margaret's and translates into a greater degree of interaction with others on Charlie's part, whereas Margaret would prefer to take things more slowly and be more reflective in her approach.

Beth and Laura also share the same personality profile, INFP. Reflecting on this, Beth commented: *"Laura's introversion shows in the way mine probably did at the beginning ... she tends to go to groups she feels most comfortable with, and doesn't work a room, and you can't do that as a minister, so I have said that to her and we did talk about it."* Laura realised early on how similar they were and found it interesting to work with someone who faced the same issues arising from personality. She agreed: *"we have talked about being Introverted, I think*

*that's been the one we've focused on in terms of ... just being aware that some situations are tiring for me, and sometimes you don't think something is work and then you wonder why you're tired, that sort of thing."*

Beth also comments on the value of the supervisory relationship being between people of similar personality type:

*It has worked for us, the frustration has been in, while that's my personality type I quite clearly have over the years ... learned to operate on other planes because you can't operate entirely on that, so my frustration has often been that we are roughly the same age, and Laura is not there yet. ... I do hope that [Laura] feels that having someone who's a similar type, and being able to say to her, I can remember being that person, and I don't want you to be me but you do need to be somebody who operates in other fields elsewhere.*

Beth's comment here is particularly interesting, especially in the light of criticisms of MBTI which suggest that it pigeonholes people or traps them into a single *modus operandi*. As a minister, Beth would be failing her congregation if she simply indulged her preference for introversion and avoided social interaction in, for example, parish visits or over coffee after the morning service. Beth has, over the years, developed coping mechanisms to enable her to operate against type when required. On meeting Beth, I would not have been able to immediately identify her as an Introvert, however, in the test she clearly self-identified in that way. She has matured into ministry, learning to accommodate what she needs to do to function as a minister, as well as attending to her own needs to maintain good health, in a way that the probationer, Laura, has yet to do. She is also able to articulate this change using the language of MBTI to describe the difference between her inner and her outer world.

Patricia and Frank didn't explicitly discuss MBTI but both displayed an awareness of the effect of personality on working relationships, and on the relationship between the minister and the congregation. Frank noted:

*We're all different personality types and therefore, in a team setting ... you could easily have someone with a very different personality type. Patricia sometimes uses the expression, 'it's all a question of style,' ... we do things differently but then it is reflecting different*

*personality types. So, in that sense I thought that seminar was helpful, you know, not trying to push a probationer into our style. It just made me a bit more explicitly aware of what I was probably understanding anyway.*

Eric and Owen are the pair who struggled most to work together in terms of personality. Eric said of Owen, “*the things I think are really important he wouldn’t place a lot of importance on.*” Cloke and Goldsmith point out that differences escalate into conflict when one party “tries to change [the other’s] nature or personality” (2005, 200). The descriptions that Eric and Owen offered about their working practices make it clear that there were significant differences in approach which could have escalated into conflict if either of them had blamed the other for the differences. In Eric’s opinion:

*Personality-wise ... I think I’m quite in touch with my feminine side, my feelings, my nature, my sensitive side, Owen doesn’t have that, I couldn’t see it. He was very masculine in the way, in his views and in the way he would express them, and that was quite difficult.*

Although Eric’s self-analysis does not use MBTI terminology, it is interesting that he has considered his relationship with Owen in terms of the difference in personality. This suggests that a deeper understanding of personality difference and its effect on behaviour would be helpful, particularly in working with someone who is very different.

Owen also expressed the opinion that he would have found it difficult to work long-term with Eric, “*because at one point it was possible ... so I was thinking about it, but it’s definitely something that long-term I couldn’t have coped with.*” Although he went on to say, “*Eric and I have got on well, despite our differences,*” and Eric confirmed this in his interview, commenting, “*He’s a great man to have in a team.*”

### **3.4.3 Case Study 2**

Beth was the only one of the research pool at the training conference she attended. As an Introvert she was not particularly looking forward to it: “*Well you’re about to make me do the thing I absolutely hate and I keep looking at the conference going, I’m not going to cope.*” She had commented about her earlier supervision training, also a conference: “*actually it wasn’t fun ... it was a*



*necessary evil.*” However, she engaged well with the more recent training at the conference.

On this occasion one of her fellow trainees had arrived very early but had not engaged with any of the trainers who were already present, preferring to go and sit in the corner of the room without removing his jacket. He then struggled to engage with any of the interactivity in the first couple of sessions. Over lunch he seemed more comfortable but spoke only about himself. After lunch, the trainees went into triads for training in reflective practice. Thirty minutes into the afternoon session he excused himself, came to speak to me, and explained that, *“this isn’t really my kind of thing, I came because the presbytery wanted me to; I really think I should go.”*<sup>57</sup> Reflecting on it later, Beth observed:

*I think what was helpful was to have someone who is even more introverted than me leave, and in quite such a dramatic way! When we arrived, I was obviously hovering at the door because it wasn’t comfortable, but he was in that corner, and you actually felt you didn’t want to walk into the room because there was a dark energy in the corner, it was very strange. It was the strangest situation, he just didn’t want to talk to anybody, you then forced him to have to talk to people and it didn’t suit him. Just as well he found out at that point!*

Robert had self-identified as ISFP although, because he left before the session on personality, it was not possible to identify the clarity of his preference for Introversion. However, the experience was interesting as it illustrated quite graphically the manner in which different personalities approach a situation. Although it is rare for the Introverts in the group to completely disengage, when there is an option to choose either group work or solo work the Introverts generally opt to work on their own. In a highly interactive conference the trainers need to make every effort to accommodate the different personality types when possible. For example, information will be presented both in detail and in big picture format, there is a mix of discussion, presentation and writing in engaging with the material, however, perhaps more could be done to accommodate different personalities in the presentation.

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<sup>57</sup> This person, ‘Robert’, had in fact expressed doubt about coming in advance of the conference but because it was quite short notice and it would not have been possible to find someone to replace him in his triad I persuaded him to come. Journal entry, 16 September 2014.

### 3.5 Conclusion

Notwithstanding the number of detractors of MBTI, “the widespread acceptance and use of these tools is probably also the result of their intuitive nature, ease of use, and relatively nonvaluative approach” (Berr, Church and Waclawski 2000, 134). MBTI offers a convincing and logical structure for describing human personality in all its wide variety. Despite its detractors, it has proved its worth in varying contexts for different people. “Its insights have helped many people over many years in self-understanding, self-improvement and relationships with others. It therefore has reasonable claims to be a true description of reality” (Lloyd 2007, 121). Indeed, Francis and Robbins (2004, 26) suggest that “church leaders, church managers, and church educators should be encouraged to make better use of personality typing in the processes of selecting, training and developing pastors.”<sup>58</sup> Using the results appropriately is perhaps the most significant aspect of ensuring that MBTI is both helpful and supportive. Bayne points out that it is important, if MBTI is used as a tool, that the test is applied appropriately by which he means that it should be an authorised test, analysed by a trained practitioner (1997, 19). In this way, it may be possible to avoid or at least minimise many of the criticisms.

It is essential to recognise the impact of personality on the student/teacher relationship, whether that is in a classroom setting or under an apprenticeship, internship or supervision model. There are some people with whom we just do not get on and when we are in a close relationship, such as supervisor and candidate, this inevitably affects our ability to learn from them. There is, in fact, anecdotal evidence to suggest that when the relationship between a supervisor and a candidate breaks down, this is almost always to do with a clash of personalities rather than, for example, theological differences (noted above, (p.36). Richardson and Arker have found:

Diverse personalities impact relationships, motivation, and ease of learning in classroom and work environments ... A positive teacher

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<sup>58</sup> It should be noted that in advocating the use of personality typing in the process of selecting for ministry Francis and Robbins do not intend to exclude certain personality types but rather to recognise the strengths that different personality types bring to ministry. As has been discussed above, (p.77), typing should not be used to exclude certain personalities from following particular career paths, nor for matching types to careers. As a developmental tool, its use in selection and training is to enable the honing of strengths and the addressing of weaknesses.

connection can be a powerful motivator, ultimately leading to a student's improved attitude, efficacy, interest, participation, and performance in school. (2010, 78)

Given this, it would seem to be self-evident that greater self-understanding and greater awareness of the students' preferences in terms of how they organise their lives and interact with others would be helpful in creating a positive and valuable learning experience. This is not to suggest that such preferences should not be challenged, but that an awareness of such preferences can indicate the manner in which they may be challenged. Conversely:

Coaching performance may be enhanced by self-awareness, with the coach adjusting their innate preference to meet the needs of the coachee. ... The coach with an extraversion preference should be encouraged to be aware of their natural tendency to talk rather than listen, to intervene with a question rather than hold the silence. (Passmore, Holloway and Rawle-Cope 2010, 13)

Using personality types to understand teams and the way in which they operate can free people from personalising disagreements and conflict and provide them with a framework for obtaining facts, exploring possibilities, thinking through the consequences of different types of action and assessing the impact that their possible actions might have on other people (Goldsmith and Kindred 2002, 74). In the context of ministry training it should be used simply as a tool for supervisors and candidates to "understand their own prejudices or explain relationship difficulties" (Myers 2016, 292). In attempting to deal with people we find difficult, MBTI can help us to see that it is not the people who are difficult but that we struggle with some behaviours. In understanding that people are not trying to be difficult but that they simply see things differently we have an opportunity to bring a more creative response to bear on the situation.

Possible revisions to the training programme will be discussed at greater length in the conclusion, however it is possible to identify areas where improvements might be made. As noted above, (pp.96-97), greater attention could be paid to differing personalities and their preferred ways of taking in information. There is also room for improvement in enabling trainee supervisors to engage with MBTI through a theological lens, which might alleviate a degree of the suspicion which, for some people, currently surrounds it.

In conclusion, then, the usefulness of MBTI has become apparent through this research. Anna, Beth, Katie, Laura, Margaret and Patricia were positively convinced of its value while Neil became persuaded, from a position of cynicism, that it was helpful. Charlie and David could see the similarities between their own and their probationer's personalities and found MBTI a useful shorthand to describe these. Eric and Frank, whose personalities differed most from their probationers, found it helpful to see those differences described in terms of personality, rather than assuming that there was a need to deal with the differences through training; the probationers were different, not incompetent. Owen alone maintained his position of cynicism, although it is debatable whether this is, in fact, a feature of his self-confessed rebellious nature and therefore an unwillingness to admit that it might have been useful (noted above, p.91). Given his descriptions of the relationship between himself and his supervisor it is possible that more openness to the worth of such a tool may have stood him in good stead. Indeed, research has shown that "knowledge of type can enable students to learn how to study most effectively, understand their weaknesses, and problem solve. Teachers can also use knowledge of type to develop lessons with a variety of approaches that will encompass all preferred learning styles to facilitate learning" (Taylor and Harlow 2008, 40). However, there may still be reservations as to its appropriateness on the part of trainees, both candidates and supervisors. These are more likely to be countered if the language used is more explicitly theological and the case for MBTI as a useful tool for personal, including spiritual, development is made more effectively. The evidence, from the interviews, the literature, and my experience of working with candidates and supervisors, suggests that personality is fundamental in enabling a good learning environment, therefore, tools to help understand better how different personalities relate to one another can only improve the possibility of a good learning experience. This suggests that retaining MBTI in supervisors' training, while also improving the delivery of training in its use, is worthwhile.

## Chapter 4 Understanding Approaches to Learning in Formational Supervision

“Start first with self; even more fundamentally, to start with the most *inside* part of self - with your paradigms, your character, and your motives” (Covey 1989, 42-43).

### 4.1 Introduction

The theory that the way people learn can be categorised into a variety of styles and that this influences both learning and teaching has been in evidence since the late 1970s (Torrance and Rockenstein 1988, 276). It is reasonable to suggest therefore, that personality is also a factor in how people learn. Taylor and Harlow outline the relationship between an MBTI profile and an approach to learning. They suggest that:

Extraverts (E) prefer an active and engaging environment. They therefore value experience with verbal and nonverbal interaction. They often like to talk a lesson over with a partner, like to see what other students are doing, and see visible results from a project. This translates into a preference for seminar style classes, class discussions, class reports, and team competitions. Conversely, Introverts (I) prefer the opportunity to process and reflect on the content materials. They need time to construct meaning and therefore prefer to have advance notice of assignments. (2008, 38-39)

Although Extraversion and Introversion relate to the source of energy, it makes sense that this would also affect how people learn, as the Extravert is energised by interaction with others while the Introvert is energised by time alone. The Sensing and iNtuition functions relate to the way in which people take in information, and the Thinking and Feeling functions relate to what we do with that information, therefore we would expect these also to have an impact on approaches to learning.

Sensing (S) learners process information going from the concrete to the abstract. They process information inductively. Sensing students enjoy practical examples and steps that lead to a solution of a problem. They do not care for discussions that revolve around ideas or theories. Conversely, Intuitive (N) students are global

learners and prefer to learn the theory or the main idea before learning details. They process information deductively. Intuitive types are quick to see alternatives and missing details ... Thinking types preferring clarity, precision, truth and logic ... Feeling types prefer reduced competition. They enjoy topics focused on helping others, feedback showing care and appreciation. (Taylor and Harlow 2008, 38-39)

Finally, the Judging and Perceiving functions describe how we deal with the world; this tends to affect the way we learn in that:

Judging (J) types prefer structured plans, a precise and detailed syllabus, orderly instruction and adherence to a time line. However, Perceiving (P) types want to demonstrate their originality in their coursework and like autonomy. (Taylor and Harlow 2008, 39)

This understanding has the capacity to increase the success of the learning opportunities supervisors give to candidates if they know what approach to learning the candidate is likely to prefer. Indeed, “effective instructors need to understand how adults learn and what motivates them so they can tailor their strategies” (Daisley 2011, 16). However, although there several learning styles instruments which aim to analyse preferred learning styles, they remain on the periphery of mainstream educational practice, and Hall and Mosely comment that “the extent to which learning styles theory can have an impact on teaching and learning is unproven by current empirical work” (2005, 253). This may arise in part from the lack of any common conceptual framework and language, but it also reflects the fact that “there are very few robust studies which offer, for example, reliable and valid evidence and clear implications for practice based on empirical findings” (Coffield *et al.* 2004, 1, 136). Nevertheless, educationalists agree that people have different approaches to learning, and that learning poses different challenges to different people, so that “teaching strategies must take account of such parameters as ability, interest, motivation, difficulty ... physical and intellectual handicaps and many others” (Walklin 2000, 5). In considering supervision practice, therefore, some consideration of how individuals learn and how that may differ from other people’s preferred way of learning would seem to be useful.

In the context of adult education, one advantage to a consideration of learning styles is that learning styles instruments can function as a diagnostic assessment

tool which has the capacity to encourage “a more self-aware reflection about strengths and weaknesses” (Coffield *et al.* 2004, 14). However, perhaps of more significance and assistance in understanding the manner in which adults can be encouraged and supported through the learning process is the work of Phil Race. Race is not a fan of learning styles *per se*. Rather he has done extensive research among learners of all ages and identified some common features in all their learning which, if properly understood, can enable teachers to facilitate more successful learning experiences.

Rather than considering a variety of different learning styles, Race invites learners to consider the way in which they learn through the various factors which they identify as influencing their learning. He identifies a number of factors in successful learning, of which five are key: wanting to learn, needing to learn, learning by doing, learning through feedback, and making sense of what is (Race 2010, 12-24). This is echoed by Barker (1992, 39-40) who suggests that learned incentives for learning are: clear expectations, feedback, rewards and praise, grading and “learning goals that are based on self-improvement and knowledge acquisition” (1992, 40). Their significance was borne out by the research into candidate formation I carried out for my Masters degree (Denniston 2011). This research identified the need for learning to have a context and to make sense; it was important to clarify why this learning was necessary, what was expected of the candidate and what outcomes were anticipated.

I also found that candidates wanted to put their learning into practice and to be given timely feedback on what was going well or otherwise (Denniston 2011, 46-48).<sup>59</sup> In addition, Race observes that verbalising orally, including teaching others, and assessing, or making informed judgements about their learning and bringing critical analysis to bear upon it, enable learning to embed (2014, 57-58). Moreover, Race discovered that people learn through teaching and assessing others (2010, 29-33): “the process of assessing deepens our own learning every

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<sup>59</sup> The results of the research conducted for my Masters thesis persuaded me that one of the weaknesses of the supervisory relationship was that supervisors tended to approach the task of training the candidate as they themselves would prefer to learn. My exploration of learning theory indicated that a better understanding of different approaches to learning would enable a supervisor more adequately to meet the learning needs of the candidate. This conclusion led to the inclusion of a session on approaches to learning in the Conference Programme and the research outlined and analysed in this chapter builds on the conclusions of my Masters’ dissertation.

time we make informed judgements on learners' work, but particularly those first few times we engage in the process, where we find out a good deal very rapidly" (Race 2010, 31). I found this to be true in my own experience; several years of teaching supervisors, not only about learning, but also about MBTI and conflict has, I believe, given me a deeper understanding of these areas than if I had simply studied them.

The significance of teaching for our own learning has a particular resonance for supervisors who ought to find that having a candidate on placement significantly increases their reflection on - and therefore sharpens - their own practice. In supervisor training the Ministries Council has deliberately considered approaches to learning rather than Learning Styles Theory as a preferred method of enabling trainee supervisors to think about how they learn and how their candidates might learn.

Learning Styles Theory has been criticised on various grounds. For example, Hall and Mosely suggest that it tends to capture a learner in a particular approach and focuses on the characteristics of their learning to the detriment of the assessment or encouragement of the process of acquiring and honing cognitive skills (2005, 249). Race also considers that learning styles and theories of learning are somewhat questionable in terms of their usefulness. Rather he suggests that a consideration of the factors which underpin all learning is a more helpful approach. In addition, he suggests that the theory of learning styles has given rise to such complexity of styles that it would be impossible for any teacher to accommodate them within the classroom setting (Race 2014, 2, 20). Nonetheless, an understanding of our approach to learning can help us to increase our self-awareness in learning and encourage the development of skills of meta-cognition or "the ability to monitor one's current level of understanding and decide when it is not adequate" (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking 2000, 47). These skills, plus the ability to self-regulate, can offer an important tool to help individuals develop their autonomy, reinforcing their motivation and encouraging a habit of lifelong learning (Hall and Mosely 2005, 253). However, these advantages can be delivered and positive outcomes achieved without recourse to learning styles instruments, but rather seeking simply to understand more about how we learn and what motivates us to engage positively in the experience.



Amongst the tools used to describe the process towards self-awareness is the Johari Window (Figure 1). This allows trainers to outline individuals' various levels of awareness: (1) what we know about ourselves that is also known by others; (2) the things others know about us that we do not know about ourselves, for example, the way we come across in relationship; (3) the things we know about ourselves that we do not tell others; and (4) the things that we do not know about ourselves but neither do others. It further allows the introduction of a theological aspect as the unknown area for people of faith is depicted as the area known only to God. The aim of training is to reduce the size of the blind area, in particular, but also the unknown area in as much as that is possible by offering tools for greater self-awareness.

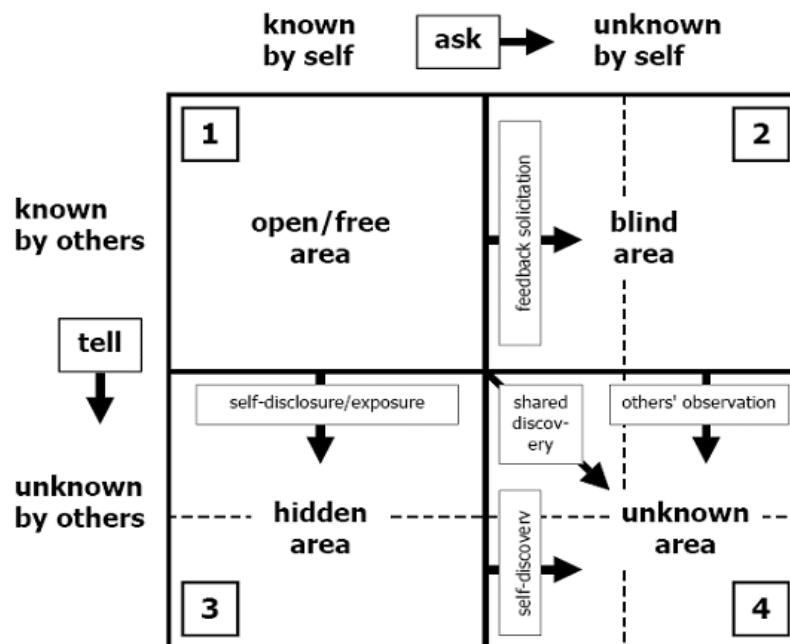


Figure 1 Johari Window

In this chapter, therefore, I will consider the factors that encourage learning: what makes learning happen, the theology of learning, approaches to learning in supervision training including an analysis of the interviews and draw some conclusions for the usefulness or otherwise of an understanding of approaches to learning for formational supervision.

## 4.2 What Makes Learning Happen

As Yen and Ng affirm, “It is generally agreed that professional learning should begin with self-awareness, self-discipline and affirmation” (2010, 415). Every learner brings to the experience of learning factors which are significant in promoting the success of the project, whatever it might be: for example, “maturity, previous learning experiences, academic qualifications, workplace experience and commitment” (Bold and Hutton 2007, 29). Candidates for ministry in particular come to ministerial formation: “already formed by a variety of experiences with family, congregation, school, work and the significant relationships in each” (Scharen 2008, 265). Unlike trainees in other disciplines they may well have had the opportunity to practise aspects of ministry before entering training. Race suggests that a significant factor in the assimilation of new knowledge is existing knowledge, or the pre-entry level of knowledge (2010, 7). Indeed, “learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the learners’ beliefs and ideas about the topic so that they can be examined, tested, and integrated with new, more refined ideas” (Passarelli and Kolb 2011, 70). Sims points out, with reference to trainee ministers:

Many of our ministry students are of a mature age. As such, they expect that prior learning will be recognised, and they value the opportunity for significant input into the learning process. If they develop their own learning goals in consultation with their supervisors and the director of field education, they are more motivated to work towards those goals. (2010, 225)

However, he goes on to point out:

There are risks here, especially if the students’ goals are vague or too ambitious or not focused on core ministerial functions and meanings. ... These may be reduced if the processes are well articulated, if the student is held to account by the learning goals, if there is the opportunity for later revision of the learning goals and if there is good supervision. (2010, 225)

Other risks are that “previous knowledge can help or hinder the understanding of new information” (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000, 78). Indeed, results of research into training for ministry suggest that candidates in training “don’t always know what they don’t know” (Lamdin and Tilley 2007, 24). Rather, they can be tempted to believe that they have nothing to learn because of their

previous knowledge or experience. Therefore, part of the pedagogical task includes enabling candidates to discover for themselves the gaps in their knowledge or experience.

As new candidates in training engage with the learning process they become more aware of what they do not know and therefore more committed to acquiring this necessary knowledge. Working alongside an experienced supervisor, whose skills make the tasks of ministry look straightforward, simple, and perhaps even easy, a candidate may be tempted to believe that a talent for the role is sufficient to ensure success in preaching, pastoral care, and other aspects of ministry. However, expertise is not the same as talent and, as Bransford, Brown and Cocking observe, “although many people believe that ‘talent’ plays a role in who becomes an expert in an area, even seemingly talented individuals require a great deal of practice in order to develop their expertise” (2000, 58). A candidate needs to see the hard work in which the supervisor engages behind the scenes in his or her ministry and which is the foundation for the apparently effortless accomplishment of tasks. For example, he or she needs to see the preparation that goes in to moderating a Kirk Session, not just the smooth running of the Session meeting. The prior work needs to be unpacked and explained.

LaBoskey and Hamilton observe:

In the literature on the self-study of teacher education practices, one desire of these teacher educators becomes most apparent - to model good thinking, good practice and good relations - for their students. To express and live that desire, they make themselves vulnerable and encourage themselves to engage in careful reflection about their practice. (2010, 339)

For a supervisor to illustrate the working behind the delivery of the tasks of ministry takes a high degree of self-awareness. Most supervisors are ministers who are so accomplished in these tasks that they will carry them out almost subconsciously, without awareness of the effort required to accomplish the end goal. There is a necessity, therefore, for the supervisor to become much more intentional about his or her professional life, working out steps they take to reach their goal in order to communicate these to the novice with whom they are working.

There is a significant difference between a novice and an expert, and this difference is not restricted to how much knowledge one has but also relates to the way that knowledge is organised and retrieved. Bransford, Brown and Cocking suggest that “automatic and fluent retrieval [of knowledge] are important characteristics of expertise ... Fluency is important because effortless processing places fewer demands on conscious attention” (2000, 44). A novice may have a good deal of knowledge about a subject but not yet be able to retrieve it in a helpful or fluent fashion. As Miller-McLemore points out: “skills ‘literally get sedimented’ in the ‘embodied know-how’ of the mature practitioner ... [who] knows more than he or she can tell or think to describe” (2008, 181). Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000, 31) also point out that the ways in which experts retrieve and organise knowledge differs from novices: they notice patterns and significant features of information; they have a high level of content in their knowledge, organized in such a way that displays deep understanding; the knowledge is contextualised, depending on the circumstances; and the knowledge can be retrieved with greater flexibility. The novice is less capable of understanding information when it is first presented, and even when the information is understood is less able to think creatively about it or consider ways in which their knowledge can be helpfully or appropriately utilized (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000, 31-43). As Henry (1992, 142) points out, “experts appear to organise their knowledge in a different way, (in ever more efficient chunks), so that they can access the information necessary to evaluate patterns and isolate the important problems in a way that novices do not.” This has important implications for the efficacy of decision-making, for example, when a trainee minister takes up his or her first charge; it will be a longer process at this stage than for an experienced minister and there is a possibility that a novice will make a poor decision because they have to make a speedy decision.

Practice and experience increase not only knowledge, but also the contextualising of knowledge and the fluency of knowledge retrieval. For Church of Scotland ministry candidates this is an explicit part of the purpose of the placement. The practical placement is the opportunity to put theory into practice, to test it out and gain sufficient experience to know when the theory needs to be adjusted, all within the safe environment of placement, that is, in a

situation of not being ultimately responsible for the congregation. The experienced supervisor is there to deal with any difficulties which arise as a result of the experiments of a novice.

Problems arise, however, when the novice does not realise the extent to which they are, in fact, a novice. As noted above, (pp.105-106), pre-entry knowledge and experience can blind a candidate for ministry to all that they still have to learn. However, of course, this applies not only to the training of candidates but also to the training of supervisors for supervision. Trainee supervisors are experienced ministers but are in most cases novice supervisors. One of the problems arising from this is that trainees can mistake ministerial experience for supervisory experience which in turn can make it difficult for them to be open to learning. It is one of the frustrations of the supervision trainers that those being trained do not or cannot necessarily understand the value of what is being taught.<sup>60</sup> At one training conference, after watching a supervision session modelled, a trainee commented, *“that was a waste of time; watching two people have a conversation.”* In fact, the conversation he had watched had been an exemplary demonstration of a deeply insightful supervisor guiding a probationer through a reflective process.<sup>61</sup> As Bransford, Brown and Cocking note, “the information noticed by novices can be quite different from what is noticed by experts” (2000, 36). That trainee supervisor had insufficient experience of the reflective process to recognise what he was watching. Effective learning occurs when learners gain enough knowledge to understand the value of what is presented and are therefore able to process information, “turning it into their own knowledge, not just capturing information” (Race 2005, 28). Notwithstanding the difficulties, pre-entry knowledge is a useful tool in this process. Moreover, adult learners resent being treated like novices, even when they are, and showing respect for their prior learning enhances the possibility that they will engage helpfully with the process. Bransford, Brown and Cocking observe:

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<sup>60</sup> Supervisors' Training Conferences are run by a team of Supervisor Trainers who are themselves experienced supervisors and have been trained to deliver the material which comprises the conference.

<sup>61</sup> Supervisors Training Conference, Letham St Marks Church of Scotland, May 2010, Journal entry, 5 May 2010.

There is a good deal of evidence that learning is enhanced when teachers pay attention to the knowledge and beliefs that learners bring to a learning task, use this knowledge as a starting point for new instruction, and monitor students' changing conceptions as instruction proceeds. (2000, 11)

The new design of supervisor training aims to draw on the knowledge in the room by encouraging trainees to speak of their prior experience of supervision, although there remain difficulties in engaging trainees in a real appreciation of the value of what they are being taught.

In conclusion, learning is supported by a variety of conditions. The learner may be highly self-motivated which makes the teacher's job easy. The learner may have been persuaded of the need for the learning, either because they need the qualification to get the job or because their teacher/supervisor has instilled curiosity about the skills necessary for the job and an awareness that the learner's skills fall short of this. Learners need opportunities to practise their skills; even those who prefer to begin their learning by observing, reading, or otherwise reflecting need to move beyond that and put what they have learned into practise to make the learning their own and embed it in their practice. Learning happens more effectively when good feedback is given, both negative and positive, and from a variety of sources, not just the supervisor. This is echoed by Daisley in his analysis of adult learner preferences, who finds that students are helped to learn by:

- Involvement in the planning and evaluation of their instruction;
- Opportunities to put new concepts into practice;
- A need to consider only subjects that have immediate relevance to their job;
- Problem-centered experiences rather than content-oriented instruction. (Daisley 2011, 16)

Learning happens more effectively when the learner sees the point of the exercise, can track the development in their learning, and has a sense of accomplishment.

There is an assumption that students want to learn and, indeed, learning cannot take place without a desire to learn or a recognition of the value of knowledge gained (Brockbank and McGill 2006, 14). However, as noted above, (p.37), many

students are resistant to the learning process, for instance through mistaken expectations or a determination not to be challenged, or because of a belief that no training is necessary, or through a failure to understand that skills may not be immediately transferable (Lamdin and Tilley 2007, 139-142). Students may have crippling anxiety about the process; confidence is a significant factor in the ability to learn effectively (Wallace 2006, 97-8). As Lawrence-Wilkes and Ashmore (2014, 21) point out, critical thinking can involve “some level of frustration and discomfort if [students] feel challenged because they don’t understand.” A nervous or anxious learner will not achieve as much as a learner who combines a sense of their own ability with a recognition that they can improve (Race 2014, 132; Rogers 2007, 7, 11). Race identifies a number of reasons why someone might fail to learn something:

- they didn’t want to learn it in the first place;
- they couldn’t see the point of learning it;
- they didn’t understand it; could not make sense of it;
- they didn’t have a chance to work out what it really meant;
- they had bad comments from teachers, which put them off;
- they felt they had been made to look silly;
- they felt tense and under pressure;
- they didn’t do enough practice and did not learn well enough;
- they were too nervous to learn properly and do well;
- they were afraid of making mistakes. (1995, 16)

All of these could equally apply to training for ministry. A good supervisor will recognise these potential hindrances to learning and attempt to avoid or overcome them. Although a determination not to be challenged or a belief that no training is necessary is a significant hurdle to be overcome, other blocks can be dealt with by a thoughtful and reflective mentor. However, the supervisor is not solely responsible for the success of learning; their “prime task is to engage the student in the learning process”, but at the same time, “the student must take an active role in order for learning to occur” (Minton 2005, 10). Learning is at its best when it is co-constructed with the teacher and the student has input into the manner in which the tasks of learning are achieved. “The importance of self-estimates of ability, self-concepts and self-perceptions in students’ approaches to learning cannot be underestimated” (Walklin 2000, 39). When students are enabled to be involved in both designing the learning project and assessing their own performance as they go through the process the likely result

is deep learning - that is, learning that changes behaviour - rather than surface learning, which is simply about remembering facts and being able to recite them (Rogers 2007, 38). In training for ministry deep learning and personal transformation is what is required; as discussed above, the aim is to train transformational leaders, (pp.10-16, 44-45).

Training for ministry, therefore, is a process that incorporates a full spectrum of learning experiences to expand a person's capacity to be effective in multiple leadership roles and processes. Challenging experiences and alternate perspectives force people out of their comfort zone. They create disequilibrium, causing people to question their own assumptions, framework, and approaches in leadership and management (Yen and Ng 2010, 416). While the practical placement is the optimal context for this learning to take place, it requires a significant investment on the part of the candidate. Hillman reflects that his experience of working with a number of ministry students over the years shows "that the intern who takes the initiative is much more likely to have a fulfilling internship than the more passive intern ... You get out of the internship what you put into the internship" (2008, 39). This echoes the aim of the Ministries Council which is to enable candidates to be partners in their own learning, giving them the opportunity for proactivity even within the context of achieving necessary and predefined goals. The pedagogical task is consequently much more complex than most people realise; engaging people in their own learning in a way that increases the likelihood of positive development requires specific skills that not all possess. These skills, however, can themselves be learned. The stated purpose of the 'Approaches to Learning' session is:

To communicate different approaches to learning and enable a deeper understanding of what makes a good learning experience. By the end of this session participants will:

- Have a better understanding of their own approach to learning;
- Understand the impact of different approaches on the learning experience;
- Be aware of the role of the supervisor in enabling learning to take place. (Supervisor Trainers' Manual, Module 7)

It is an important session which discusses issues, including communication, which are not raised elsewhere in the supervisors' training, but which are of great significance for facilitating the learning experience. This session has proved



more controversial than the sessions on MBTI or on Approaches to Conflict, perhaps because the concepts under discussion are less familiar to most participants. Moreover, since we have all been learning all our lives, there may be a tendency to assume that we know how to learn, and also how to teach. However, some participants have been surprised by the relevance and helpfulness of the session.

### 4.3 Theological Considerations

Is it proper to speak of a theology of education? Perhaps it is a concept that seems strange as “the study of the theology of education has received but little attention in Britain” (Hull 1990, 13). Spirituality, although clearly not interchangeable with theology, “has long been part of, and motivation for, adult education and training practice. Some of the most significant social movements in adult education began with the spiritual impulse, often spurred on by gospel values” (English, Fenwick and Parsons 2003, 11). Given this, and the fact that in Scotland the Church was initially the provider of education for the masses, it does not seem improper to speak of a theology of education. Indeed, it is a developing discipline and, in this particular context, one which it is appropriate to explore.<sup>62</sup> As Christians, we believe that God is involved in every aspect of our lives, therefore we might assume that he is involved in our seeking after knowledge. Indeed, “one influential statement of the aim of education is that to become educated is to learn to become a person” (Thatcher 1990, 74). For a Christian, to learn to become a person in Christ and find in Christ the fullest expression of our humanity is a deeply theological endeavour. It is arguable that, “education is about giving meaning to life and to living and, first and foremost, assisting the growth of the human spirit” (English, Fenwick and Parsons 2003, 7). In other words, as was indicated above, (p.81), education enables us to live the life abundant of which Jesus spoke (John 10:10). The issue then becomes: what theological language do we find in which to speak of our educational practices and experiences? From a biblical perspective, there is “an ideal of growth of which is everywhere assumed throughout the New Testament; though made explicit ... in the letters of Paul: edification or upbuilding” (Andersen 1990, 41).

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<sup>62</sup> In this context, the theology of education should be seen as distinctive from Christian nurture and discipleship.

There are, for example, significant examples of Jesus teaching, cited throughout the Gospels: in the Temple (Luke 20:1, John 7:28, John 18:20); in the home of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42); through the variety of parables which he related to both his disciples and the assembled multitudes; in individual encounters with, for example, the woman at the well, or the Syrophenician woman.

Or, indeed, the narration of the journey on the Emmaus Road after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Although not an obviously pedagogical encounter, the Emmaus Road story nevertheless has elements which are significant for the supervisory relationship and which provide a useful model for learning (Luke 24:13-35). The story opens with two people travelling along a road. They are sad and grieving, and as is normal in a situation of trauma or bereavement, they are rehearsing the events of the last few days (Brown 1999, 1). The disciples are on the threshold of a new life, a life without Jesus, although at this moment in time they do not know what that life will be like. This is a situation of grief and loss, and although training for ministry is not a bereavement situation, it is often a situation of loss. Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, candidates in training for ministry are at a threshold. They have had to give up their old way of life to pursue their call, are in the process of beginning a new life which will be very different from the one they have left behind, and they cannot yet know what that life will be like.

In the narrative of the Emmaus Road; someone joins these two people on their journey. He is a companion on the way, but he also tries to help them understand better what has taken place. He begins by asking questions. What are you discussing? What has happened? What is your story? He wants to know how they are making sense of things. In the same way, as a supervisor journeys with a candidate they should ask questions; both to help them understand the candidate, and to help the candidate understand themselves. These questions will enable the candidate to unpack their experience, to begin to see the gaps in their understanding and knowledge and to see where there is need for growth and development. Minton suggests:

Perhaps a teacher should be like the grit that gets into the shell of an oyster. How does it feel for the oyster? An irritation? A pain?

Whatever effect, the result may be a pearl, beautiful or misshapen, but a precious object nevertheless. A learner has to worry at the thing. Many teachers provide the pearls ready-made. Students are asked to value them highly for what they are, to store them in their bags. But they are borrowed, put into a bank. It is the pearls the students make themselves that they really value, that matter to them, and that will have a significant effect on their thinking, behaviour and self-esteem. (2005, 46)

Only after Jesus has asked the travellers to tell their story does he begin to fill in the gaps in their understanding and knowledge. He has information they do not have. In the same way, there will be times in the supervision of a candidate that the supervisor has to impart knowledge; self-directed knowledge has limits (Brookfield 1995, 58-60). As Thornton points out, with reference to spiritual direction but equally applicable to supervision, (1984, 11-12), on occasion it is necessary for the supervisor, who has knowledge, to give the supervisee, who does not, the benefit of his or her wisdom and experience.

However, perhaps the most significant part of the story for the purposes of the metaphor is the moment when Jesus breaks bread and they recognise him. “When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:30-31). When he took the bread in his hands perhaps they would see marks; the scars of the nails. But when he disappeared from their sight, what was left to assure them that it had not been a dream? Simply the bread lying broken at the place where he had been sitting. In the same way, the most revealing things that a supervisor will communicate to a candidate will be the things that are demonstrated, not the things that are explained. The learning experience for the candidate will be the way the supervisor does ministry, the attitudes and responses they display, the disciplines they observe and the priorities they set. These may well be more telling than any nuggets of information that they impart.

#### **4.4 Approaches to Learning in Supervision**

Supervisors over the years have noted that there are candidates who seem to believe that the call of God is sufficient both to qualify and equip them for ministry, as well as those who engage enthusiastically with training. Eric, one of

the supervisors interviewed, noted this about some of the candidates he has had on placement: “*they don’t listen to me ... they are hard to teach*”. Supervisors can find candidates apparently going through training as an exercise in ticking boxes, believing that the Church is waiting for them; renewal will be an inevitable result of their ministry and training is a waste of time. David Carroll, a Roman Catholic parish priest, recalls: “when I was ordained ... I believed I was completely formed and ready to change the world” (Carroll 2014, 97). These attitudes and beliefs can translate into a resistance to being taught; the task of training is, consequently, a complex and challenging one.

How then can the task of supervision be approached in a way that encourages the candidate to learn? It is important that supervision enables supervisees “to learn through and with their own experience, context, interpretation, reflection, intuition and creativity. By active and purposeful learning in this way, dense information becomes dynamic knowledge” (Yen and Ng 2010, 418). The supervisory relationship is a significant and important one, as it is mainly in this context, rather than the university or conference, that helpful reflective thinking on ministerial practice and a strategic approach to learning are located. The supervisor becomes a learning partner rather than a teacher *per se*, having the task of enabling the candidate to develop his or her own self-awareness and self-assessment skills in a safe context. On placement, with the safety net of a reflective supervisor, the candidate not only has the opportunity to experiment and make mistakes in a relatively safe environment but is also supported in understanding congregational dynamics when things go unexpectedly wrong, for instance when a contribution to a service was not well received. Together, supervisor and candidate are able to reflect upon the candidate’s practice (and indeed the supervisor’s) to identify the issues at stake: what assumptions were operating, for candidate, supervisor and congregation, and how practice could have been more appropriate in the particular context. Hall and Mosely (2005, 254) point out that:

Some kinds of thinking are routinized and our approaches habituated and in these circumstances the impact of difficulty, dissonance or failure on motivation and self-esteem are greater, since it is not clear where or how we have erred. In these instances, greater self-awareness and tools for reflection can be invaluable aids to progress.

The supervisor has the task of enabling the candidate to understand what went well and what went wrong, and why, but also to support and give an element of pastoral care when needed. It is in this situation of dissonance that the greatest capacity for self-transformation through good quality reflection exists.

However, “expertise in a particular domain does not guarantee that one is good at helping others learn it” (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000, 44). Supervisors also need to have a high level of self-awareness. They are required to have the capacity to analyse and explicate their own knowledge, revisiting their personal learning experiences and, taking into account their learning preferences, also taking account of the way in which their approach to learning might differ from that of the probationer. “Teachers need to be keenly aware of how learning happens for them if they are to help their students learn” (Minton 2005, 16). There is a danger, as Coffield *et al* point out, that when “teachers are unaware of their own learning style [they] may, as a result, teach only in that style, thus favouring certain students and disadvantaging others” (2004, 123). To be effective, therefore, a supervisor needs to be able to understand the differences between the way that they approach learning and the way the candidate approaches learning. “Those teachers ... who engage in self-study find that through the study of their own ... practices they unlock gateways to that knowledge for themselves and in doing so they support the reflective inquiry of their students” (LaBoskey and Hamilton 2010, 339). To do this it is necessary to recall the difficulties of operating from a position of limited knowledge and experience, in other words, to remember being a novice, and the difficulties of acquiring the necessary knowledge and experience. “The first important skill a teacher needs to develop is the ability to observe behaviour in a learning environment” (Minton 2005, 3). It is in observing the candidate developing and subsequently evaluating the learning experience that the supervisor develops the capacity to tailor the training to the candidate’s personality and approach to learning.

It is also important that a supervisor does not assume that a candidate is a blank canvas, but rather is aware that they bring a good deal of experience from previous placements, previous Church involvement, and possibly from a previous career. From this perspective, “expert teachers ... know how to tap into

students' existing knowledge in order to make new information meaningful; and ... how to assess their students' progress" (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000, 45). Critical (in the sense of rigorous and analytical rather than negative) assessment by a supervisor is foundational to the development of good skills of self-assessment. "Learning is most effective when people engage in 'deliberate practice' that includes active monitoring of one's learning experiences" (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000, 58-59). Candidates need to be able to trust their supervisor to respect the prior learning that they bring, to take into account the candidate's situation, which varies enormously from person to person, and the knowledge, experience, strengths and weaknesses they bring to the task. In this process, "part of the challenge for the students ... [lies] in being prepared to contest the solution proffered by the tutor; to value their own perspectives and their own voices enough in the learning process to argue their case" (Savin-Baden 2000, 1). This can be difficult for the supervisor too, as they are challenged by the candidate. However, being prepared to hold their own practice up to scrutiny, reflect on why they did something in a particular way and how it might have been improved is part of the process by which the candidate will learn the all-important skills of self-assessment. It may also improve the supervisor's practice.

The candidate who takes control of her own learning, who is prepared to be open to the process and commit to engaging with it, is more likely to learn. "Since understanding is important, people must learn to recognize when they understand and when they need more information" (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000, 12). Equally, motivation is significant in learning: "challenges ... must be at a proper level of difficulty in order to be and to remain motivating: tasks that are too easy become boring; tasks that are too difficult cause frustration" (Bransford, Brown and Cocking 2000, 61). Too much challenge is discouraging, while too much support leads to a lack of incentive to improve.

We have already noted, (pp.105-106), that a learner can struggle both to identify the gaps in their knowledge and to understand the meaning of what they are learning. The result of this is that there is a necessity for learning to be "iterative, idiosyncratic, and facilitated by interactions with multiple, personal and textual perspectives" (LaBoskey and Hamilton 2010, 336). Similarly,

“teaching [is] an intellectual endeavour that is highly dependent on context. It is an uncertain craft where final answers and particular formulas or recipes are impossible” (LaBoskey and Hamilton 2010, 336). In other words, situations of learning have to be repeated, tailored to the context and the person, and those seeking to impart knowledge and skills should keep open the possibility that lack of success might be due to their failure to communicate, or the need to structure the learning experience differently, rather than to the learner’s failure to learn.

At the supervisors’ training conference, the session on approaches to learning differs from that on MBTI or approaches to conflict management in that it is not based on a widely available typographical questionnaire. Rather, it draws heavily on the work of Phil Race, adapted specifically for this context. As such, it is a work in progress. Race does not use any of the standard learning styles typographies but has created his own questionnaire which, rather than aiming to discover a person’s learning style, asks questions designed to make learners think more deeply about how they learn and what matters to them in gaining knowledge. This questionnaire has been adapted for use with trainee supervisors as the original version was aimed at an academic context rather than reflecting on the achievement of practical skills.<sup>63</sup>

Race, as discussed above, (p.102), divides learning into five categories (2010, 12-24). The first is wanting to learn, which relates to a person’s intrinsic motivation; these learners are very self-motivated bringing a great intensity to the desire to learn. The second category explores the need to learn, or extrinsic motivation, where the teacher has to enable ownership of learning. This measures the extent to which learners feel ownership of both their need to learn and of the targets involved. Learning by doing is the third category and measures the extent to which learners feel that practice, trial and error, and repetition help them to learn. Fourthly, Race considers the extent to which learning through feedback is significant for the learner, measuring the value which learners derive from a wide range of kinds of feedback they may experience. This reflects the recognition that candidates are “better able to develop their own assessment skills when they experienced placements in which assessment

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<sup>63</sup> See Appendix IX for the Approaches to Learning questionnaire.

[is] ongoing” (Hewitt and Smith 2007, 107). Assessment on the basis of the informed judgement of a more experienced practitioner enables learners to deepen their learning and enhances the sense-making process of learning. However, feedback can also be provided by fellow learners, or from learning resources, or through results. The final category is making sense of what has been learned: getting one’s head round ideas, concepts, and theories. Teachers cannot do this for students, but good teachers increase the probability that it will happen. Candidates, and supervisors, will “select those bits [they] can make sense of and can link with present knowledge and understanding. The rest will probably be ignored, at least for the present” (Minton 2005, 9). However, every time the learning is revisited a greater proportion will make sense and be retained.

These five categories describe the factors which enable most people to learn. However, the significance of each factor will differ from person to person and the most helpful learning environment will, therefore, also differ. For example, Patricia is a highly motivated learner who would gain a great deal from any placement because of her thirst for knowledge; she scores highly in the category ‘wanting to learn’ and will learn in almost any context. Owen takes a very practical approach to learning and wants to try things out; his preferred approach to learning is ‘learning by doing’. If Owen’s supervisor expected him to read books and ask questions, to shadow and reflect, Owen would be deeply frustrated and would be likely to learn little. Owen needs to be ‘flung in at the deep end’ to discover for himself whether he will sink or swim. Conversely, Laura, who likes to reflect before acting, would be deeply uncomfortable in a situation where she was expected to contribute without first having the opportunity to observe and consider the context. In training, supervisors are asked to complete the questionnaire (which now candidates also complete) enabling them to ascertain which of these categories is the most significant for them in their own learning. The differences between the approaches to learning are explored and suggestions made as to how different approaches to learning on the part of supervisor and candidate either may either complement or be in conflict with one another.



The aim of this session is to deepen self-awareness and increase the supervisor's skill in enabling learning to take place during the placement. The session is heavily based on enabling supervisors to unpack their own approach to learning and encouraging them to discover the manner in which the candidate best likes to learn. There is a danger here, as Brookfield observes: "sometimes the last thing learners need is for the preferred learning style to be affirmed. Agreeing to let people learn only in a way that feels comfortable and familiar can seriously restrict their opportunities for development" (1995, 59). However, to increase the possibility of learning taking place, challenging a preferred approach should be an occasional event rather than the rule.

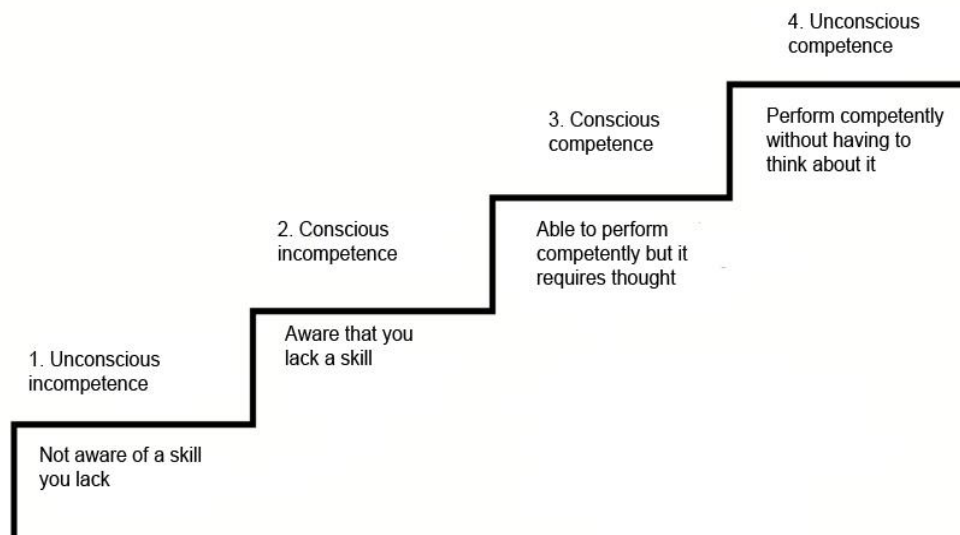
The Approaches to Learning session begins with an exploration of the supervisors' own learning experiences, using a written exercise for the introverts, and group work for the extraverts. This attempt to unpack their learning is a necessary first step to understanding their approach and how it might differ from the candidates' approach. Howe (1992, 71) describes a learning continuum from gaining knowledge, through learning how to apply that knowledge, to applying that knowledge in a particular situation and, through practice and experience, becoming highly competent in applying knowledge. As Scharen points out, "proficiency describes the stage at which one acts 'without thinking,' intuitively, drawing on 'know-how' that is the result of many similar experiences that now provide the mental backdrop for an immediate course of action in the current situation" (2008, 285). Trainee supervisors are enabled to reflect on what they do intuitively, in order to understand the mental processes necessary for someone who does not have their level of experience.

Educationalists agree that:

One of the hardest things for teachers to do is to imagine the fear that students feel as they try to learn what we teach ... we have most likely forgotten what it feels like to come to this learning as an uncertain novice ... The more we teach something and the farther we travel from our first experience of learning it, the easier it is to forget the fears and terrors new learning can provoke. (Brookfield 1995, 50)

Brookfield also suggests that "the best learners - people for whom learning a [new] skill comes entirely naturally - make the worst teachers. This is because they are, in a very real sense, perceptually challenged. They can't imagine what

it must be like to struggle to learn something that comes so naturally to them” (1995, 62). There is an element of truth in this, however it overstates the case; it is possible to learn how to teach, and to be reminded what it is like to be a novice. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind the difficulties inherent in an accomplished practitioner, who has no experience of teaching, teaching a complete novice who has no experience of ministry. To help this process, trainee supervisors are introduced to the Competence Ladder (see figure 2), which describes the movement from unconscious incompetence (the point at which most candidates are starting), through conscious incompetence, to conscious competence, and then unconscious competence (the point at which most supervisors are working).



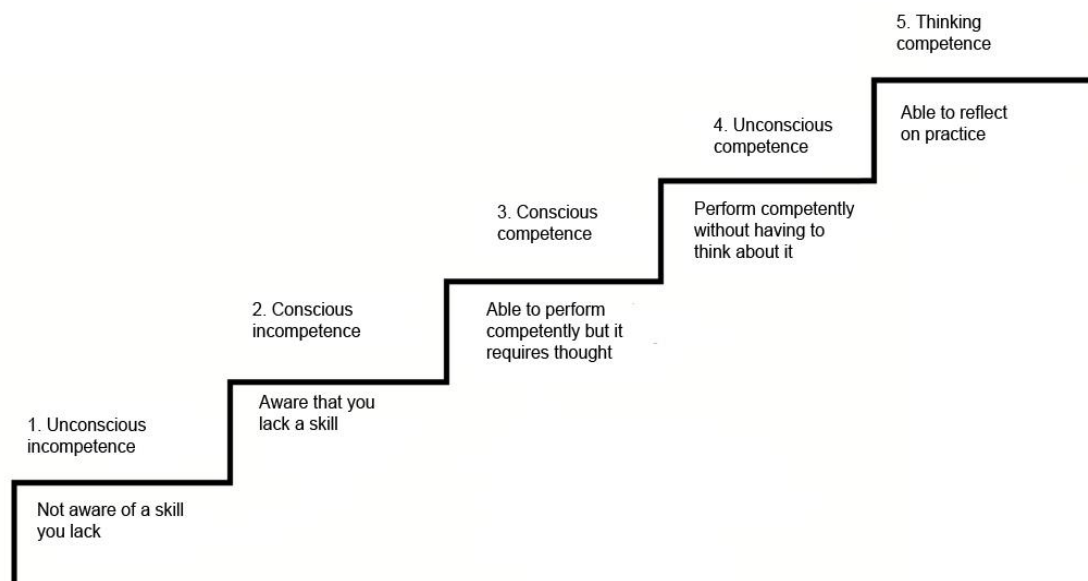
**Figure 2 Competence Ladder (a)**

Rogers (2007, 6-10) adds a fifth level, thinking competence (see figure 3), a reflective state in which the practitioner is capable of considering practice as well as theory in a way that leads to renewed practice. This is the reflective practice stage that supervisors are expected to reach and to maintain, but it is also the stage that we hope they will encourage and enable in the candidate, supporting them to develop their own reflective practice. Thinking competence is based on questions:

When that worked, why did it work? What didn't work and what might explain it? What do I need to be aware of? What may I be

concealing from myself about what I don't know? Where might I experiment even further? (Rogers 2007, 16)

Much of this is about communication. A supervisor who is unconsciously competent will struggle to communicate their competence to a candidate who is unconsciously incompetent. The various tools offered to increase self-awareness on the part of the supervisors are intended not only to enhance their awareness of their own practice but also to improve the quality of their communication and therefore the likelihood of that communication being effective.



**Figure 3 Competence Ladder (b)**

Supervisors are encouraged to use open questions in their supervision - who, what, where, when, and in particular, why and how, in order to stimulate reflection.<sup>64</sup> After one such session, delivered at a Supervisors' In-service training day I was copied into an email to the facilitator for the day:

*Just a note of thanks for your input at the supervisors training yesterday. The simple "ask why or how questions" was something I needed to be reminded of. This morning I had a meeting with our youth worker about how to solve an issue with our outreach programme. Instead of making suggestions I found myself asking, "how do you think we should take this forward" - which allowed him to come up with the solution. Much better than me telling*

<sup>64</sup> Supervisors Training module, Approaches to Learning, PowerPoint presentation.

*him what to do but also helping him to see that he has the tools he needs to make decisions in the future. Without your input, yesterday, I wouldn't have done that (even though I know I should!)*<sup>65</sup>

This well illustrates the process of good supervision; excellent communication, good quality reflection and an outcome which empowered the youth worker as well as giving him tools for the future.

It is good practice for ministers in charges to identify and work with a supervisor for themselves to help them to explore questions arising from their own practice, which should in turn improve their communication. The Ministries Council is in the process of promoting this.<sup>66</sup> One of the aims of equipping supervisors of probationers to a high standard is that the experience of good supervision at this stage of training would encourage probationers, once they are ministers in their own charge, to make their own supervisory arrangements. Supervisors of probationers are required to engage in supervision through attendance at a reflective triad throughout the duration of the probationary placement. The structure and operation of triads will be discussed in Chapter 5: 5.5.2, (pp.158-160).

#### **4.4.1 The Interviews**

Interviews indicated that this session was the least popular of the four sessions. Even before this research, there had been indication from trainee supervisors that it was the session that most trainees found it hardest to relate to, and to understand. As a result, it is the session which has been revised most often, even before the research began. Although the probationers had not been required to attend a session on approaches to learning they completed the questionnaire and I led a small-group session with all six of them to tease out the results and consider the implications for their approach to learning.<sup>67</sup> Neil

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<sup>65</sup> This is included in the Approaches to Learning module and is reproduced by permission.

<sup>66</sup> See <http://ascend.churchofscotland.org.uk/>. This is a new section of the Church of Scotland website which supports ministers in continuing professional development. A major part of the section is devoted to the promotion of supervision with the tagline: "Find out what pastoral supervision is, and how it can help make a positive impact on your ministry."

<sup>67</sup> Candidates for ministry who have been accepted into training since 2013 will have attended sessions on MBTI, Understanding Yourself in Conflict, and Understanding Approaches to

commented, *“It was probably the least useful, I think, perhaps because you know how you learn, or ... I felt I did.”* However, in a sense this response is not unexpected from the probationers; the primary target of this session is the supervisors, enabling them to better understand their approach to learning and discover how others might differ, although it is helpful to enable the probationers to consider how they learn in order to enhance understanding between parties in the supervisory relationship.

Among the supervisors Charlie, Beth, David and Eric were aware that they had a specific approach to learning which might not mirror that of their probationer. For Anna and Frank, the concept of differing approaches to learning was new, although Anna recognised herself in the learning analysis. Charlie explained, *“even going back to school-days I learned from somebody showing me and then repeating it.”* This clearly influenced his approach to teaching:

*I think that’s why, you know, we agreed that for the first period Margaret would just shadow me. And I think that worked well, and, there were times when you know, if we were maybe doing a visit, Margaret would just be sitting quietly watching and listening, and then came a point when I thought, I need to bring her in, so maybe after a bereavement visit I would say, Margaret, what do you think, what would you suggest. ... Not that I want to Margaret to do it exactly as I’ve done it but it’s a form that works for me, and there are certainly things that she’s borrowed and copied, and there are other things that she [hasn’t], and I’m happy for her to do that. I don’t want to create a clone.*

However, he didn’t check with Margaret that this was a helpful model for her. On the other hand, Margaret did tell him at the beginning of the placement *“I had quite a lot of critical feedback [on another placement]. To be honest, I actually just wanted to get on and do, especially sermons, I just wanted to get on and do it.”* Margaret is someone who does not find critical feedback particularly helpful and appreciates Charlie’s approach of being more encouraging than critical. She commented on her difficult placement:

*[The] supervisor I found very difficult because, ... I don’t think we gelled, and that is still quite painful at times because ... I found at times he was not supportive and very negative. I found it very*

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Learning at an induction conference. This was introduced after the cohort of probationers who made up the interview pool was accepted for training.

*difficult ... [it] is still quite painful at times because I think that his expectations of me were not what was required by the Church of Scotland at times, or the Ministries Council, neither was it what I was expecting.*

This highlights the necessity for a supervisor and probationer to be clear from the outset what their expectations are for the learning process so that such negative experiences can be minimised. It also highlights the importance of a balance of support and challenge. However, it also requires the supervisor to be very conscious of their own approach to supervision so that they can inform the probationer about what to expect during the placement.

Eric, Anna, and Katie had appreciated the session on approaches to learning. Eric realised that he learns through relational activities, *“I’m not sure I particularly learn from reading although I should read much more than I do; I’m much more inclined to learn through ... just getting alongside people.”* Anna commented, *“I don’t know that I learned anything that I didn’t know already but I learned to value what I’ve learned in a not particularly formal way, and I realise I’ve learned other skills, not bookish skills not academic skills, but other things too.”* Katie’s response to the questionnaire was, *“It made sense, sort of, reading it I thought, yes, that’s me!”* Neil, although he had not found the session particularly helpful, was aware of how he learns and tries to ensure that these situations arise in supervision: *“I enjoy learning through discussion and exploring something with others, so I just try to manufacture that situation.”*

Chivers (2010, 122) quotes Marsick and Watkins (1990) in identifying three personal characteristics that are conducive to learning. These are: proactivity, a tendency to critical reflection, and creativity or imagination. Where these qualities are present, the individual will learn through taking the initiative in situations, reflecting on incidents and the assumptions which lie behind events, and are sufficiently creative to construct a different perspective. Cheetham and Chivers (2000, 2001) in their research cited in Chivers (2010, 124-125) discovered that working alongside experienced colleagues, learning from role models and mentors, and working in teams were all highly rated as learning experiences. This research was echoed in comments by the probationers on their placements. Katie commented:

*Thinking about some of my colleagues and how they are with their supervisors, I'm really, really lucky to have someone whom I'm on the same wavelength with, I guess, so I find it very, very easy to discuss that stuff with Anna, and come out with my thoughts and if it's stupid then that's still fine ... I think Anna has always been very conscious of the supervision she had. I think she really enjoyed her probation and they are great friends, but there were things she didn't find helpful, and she's told me about them, and she does it consciously very different ... I think because I can see her more as a role model, in terms of family and this and that, just because she's been there, so, that's been really good, just getting an idea of life in a manse, you know, what it's like with the kids, that's been really good. I mean, we just really get on.*

Laura also speaks highly of her experience:

*I've been preaching as often as necessary and given free rein and that sort of thing has been very good, and obviously the feedback has been very good, and in the church people have fed their criticisms to her and she has siphoned them off and fed what she thought was relevant back to me in a positive way, because people can just say things to you at the door but I've had very little that has been negative or damaging said directly to me so that's been good. Pastorally I've been allowed to do that myself, I've not had my hand held on anything and that's been good but been given people to visit in a wide variety of situations, and that's been good.*

Neil reports: *"it's been a good experience, I feel like it's been a good match between David and myself, I really enjoyed it, and I think from our discussions he's really appreciated having me around, I hope he has anyway."*

While Owen displayed a slight ambivalence, he was mainly positive about his experience:

*It would be interesting to know how Eric works with other people but certainly I would have liked less rope, it's been nice to have it and go and do things, but I think as a training experience more control would have made more sense. But that's not to say that I haven't thoroughly enjoyed it and learned a lot because I have, but I suppose it took me a wee while within that set-up sort of working out where am I learning things, there wasn't a specific chart, this is where you learn about this, so there was any plan about this, and I would have liked that.*

Patricia also was guardedly positive:

*It's been a good experience working with Frank... I would say I was slightly concerned in the beginning and I didn't know how we work out with his wife, because ... she's very much part of, [the team] but it worked out fine, it's worked out well.*

Margaret has found her experience with Charlie a good fit:

*I think I'm happy with what he's doing, I think I'm happy with what's happening. I'm doing every second week just now, so he's really given me a lot. We know we are preaching each week and we know what the text is and there is quite a bit of leeway, a few times, like the other week it was communion in the evening, and he said to me to do the reflection, and that's it. He's just, "you can do whatever you want with it."*

Clearly, the probationers feel that they are learning. It is also clear from the nature of their comments that there is mutual respect in the relationships, although Eric and Owen and Frank and Patricia display more tension than the others. The overwhelming sense from the interviews was that the probationers understood what was being asked of them and why, and trusted their supervisors to deal fairly and appropriately with them. They appreciated the opportunities that they were given. It would also seem, from what is reported, that to a large extent the supervisors follow good pedagogical practice in the way that they construct the learning experience.

There have been difficulties in the delivery of this session due to problems with the questionnaire and its scoring; however, these are being resolved and each conference makes it possible to refine and hone the session. While it was the least popular session, the issue of how people learn is sufficiently important to make it worthwhile continuing to include this session whilst aiming to improve its helpfulness for supervisory practice.

## **4.5 Conclusion**

As noted in Chapter 2, MBTI indicates that different people access, assimilate and process information in different ways. Indeed, as Taylor and Harlow note (2008, 38-39), there is an observable correlation between one's approach to learning and one's MBTI profile. This is not surprising given that MBTI describes how people engage with the world. So, the E/I dichotomy describes whether a person is inwardly reflective or outwardly expressive, S/N dichotomy deals with



the way in which a person tends to absorb information, the T/F dichotomy describes how a person makes decisions and the J/P dichotomy deals with the way in which a person structures his or her engagement with the world. This translates into a preference for learning through reading and reflection or experimentation, through facts and figures or story-telling, through a planned approach to learning or trial and error, and through careful structures or flexibility. Of all the probationers, Neil, an ISTJ, was the only one who described his approach to training as intentional and methodical from the outset. Given that, it is perhaps unsurprising that he found the learning questionnaire the least helpful questionnaire as he already had good insights into his approach to learning. Indeed, as noted above, (p.90), he saw a clear correlation between his MBTI profile and his approach to training. Laura was clear that her Introverted personality type means that her preferred approach to learning is to read and reflect while Eric, as an Extravert, learns through interaction with others.

The session on approaches to learning aims to explore this area more explicitly, enabling supervisors to identify the way in which their personality affects their preferred approach to learning, and the manner in which this differs from others'. By exploring this, the trainers aim to enable supervisors to consider more deeply how they might create a positive learning environment for their candidate in training and to give them tools to construct opportunities for learning which might differ from the ones that they themselves would prefer.

While the session is the most controversial of all those offered at the conference, there was sufficient that was positive arising from the interviews to indicate that the session could be made more helpful and become a more valuable part of the training package. The fact that it is less popular than the others should be seen as a reflection of the strength of the other sessions, rather than a fundamental weakness in this session - it was not *un*-popular. Tools for self-awareness and reflection which are offered here would not fit easily into the other sessions; in addition, this session is a good opportunity to discuss learning theory and communication, including issues of support and challenge which are significant in ensuring that feedback is sufficiently rigorous but also that it is helpful and increases confidence.

My research for this thesis, through learning about learning, has persuaded me of the value of having a greater understanding of how people learn and the issues that matter to them in learning. I will consider the significance of the research for changes to this session in the conclusion, but my research and analysis has supported my sense that it is important to induct supervisors into aspects of learning that are not covered in other sessions. Nevertheless, the lack of enthusiasm for this session would suggest that it needs re-working to make its insights more accessible to supervisors.

## Chapter 5 Reflective Practice and Theological Reflection in Formational Supervision

“The interaction between supervisor and intern is a sacred one because of its creative and relational dimensions. Creation is at work in every engagement of learning: something new is formed, or something that always was is re-formed” (Lee 2011, 19).

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter considers reflective practice and its role in training for ministry. To that end I will consider theological reflection as part of reflective practice and the use of reflective practice in training formational supervisors. This differs from my Masters dissertation which simply considered the role of reflective practice in training candidates for ministry. This thesis builds on that research by considering the role of the supervisor in enabling reflective practice and theological reflection in candidates, as well as the importance of creating reflective practitioners as foundational to transformative leadership. I will outline the tools used in the process to facilitate reflection and will consider how these tools are received by the practitioners, i.e. the supervisors. I will reflect on the interviews and emergent themes and draw some conclusions as to the nature of reflective practice, theological reflection, reflective tools, and their place in formational supervision.

### 5.2 What is Reflective Practice?

Reflective practice has been fundamental to training and practice in a variety of professions since the early 1980s (Bradbury *et al.* 2010, 1-2). In contrast, it has been relatively recently included in training for ministry within the Church of Scotland (Ministers of the Gospel, 2000). Nevertheless, its value has been recognised and it is now firmly embedded in the processes of ministerial formation. In addition, since 2010 it has become increasingly important in

formational supervision and is a core element of the training for this role (Supervisors' Trainers Manual).<sup>68</sup>

Reflection is a dynamic, interactive and inter-connected process. Since the latter part of the twentieth century there has been an increasing interest in linking reflection with action for different purposes among different learning communities and social contexts (Yen and Ng 2010, 416). Leach and Paterson (2010, 201) define it as:

The capacity to think deeply about the situations in which one is engaged, involving taking responsibility for one's own actions, motivations and influence, questioning norms and structures, and being willing to stay with uncertainty and provisionality. It involves a high degree of reflexivity ... [that is] the capacity to reflect on one's own approaches, feelings, pre-judgements, responses and identity. It goes beyond problem-solving and seeks to come as close as possible to understand how others experience oneself. It requires a willingness to be open to feedback and new ways of thinking and doing things. It goes beyond protocols and procedures to develop wisdom in handling complexity and ambiguity.

Reflective practice is a relatively recent innovation within professional practice, but the concept can be traced back thousands of years. For example, Aristotle's notion of practical wisdom or '*phronesis*', "emphasised the importance of reflecting in the 'real world' and developing experience of it ... [paying] attention to emotions and imagination in order to develop our perception of the world" (Bulman 2013, 17). Plato also described the necessity of reflection, commenting in his *Apology of Socrates* that, "the unexamined life is not worth living" (Plato 38a).

The modern theory of reflective practice arose out of the work of the educationalist and philosopher John Dewey, who "emphasised the need for thinking to be directly linked with action" (Bulman 2013, 17). Dewey saw learning as being an active process of enquiry which seeks resolution in response to an experience of dissonance (Loughran 2002, 33). Dewey's original concept was rather cerebrally orientated, and "the idea of reflection as an individual activity, pursued in private, in isolation, is a persistent one" (Brockbank and McGill 2006, 53). However, reflective practice as we now understand it takes

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<sup>68</sup> See Appendix IV for the conference programme.

into account the whole person. Anton Boisen is credited with developing the idea that “a first-hand study of human experience - what [Boisen] called a reading of the “living human documents” - was a necessary supplement to classroom training” (Asquith 1982, 244). Although the concept of reflective practice has developed beyond what Dewey originally envisaged, his influence can still be seen in the way it is understood today. This is illustrated by Bolton’s definition: “through reflexive practice professionals realise dissonance between their own values in practice and their espoused values, or those of their organisation, leading them to make dynamic change” (Bolton 2010, 12).

As he became aware that the ways in which people acquire professional competence needed to be adjusted, in response to the vast changes which were taking place in society, Donald Schön took Dewey’s concept of reflection a step further (Schön 1983, 21-25). Schön observed that:

The professions are in the midst of a crisis of confidence and legitimacy ... the long-standing professional claim to a monopoly of knowledge and social control is challenged - first, because [the professions] do not live up to the values and norms which they espouse, and, second, because they are ineffective” (1983, 11).

As a result, classroom learning, as opposed to learning in the field, was increasingly criticised as being overly theoretical. Theory should no longer be privileged over practical experience; rather, we should allow our practice to inform our theory. Crucially, Schön (1983) stressed the importance of reflection-in-action, that is, reflecting while you are engaged in practice, in addition to reflection-on-action, which was reflection after the event, drawing this distinction for the first time. Based on this insight, Schön developed what he described as a cycle of experiential learning, through which the “abstract ideas of academia” could be interpreted as they affected/took shape in “the practical realities of people’s lives” (Kolb 1984, 6). Schön’s approach to critical thinking, although revolutionary, was largely concerned with supporting “practitioners [to develop] their work by thinking critically about their actions” (Kilminster *et al.* 2010, 2). However, early models did not take into account the social context within which practice was taking place.

Paolo Freire, in his early work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* brought significant developments to the practice of reflection. His view was that:

In authentic reflection, men ... begin to single out elements from their 'background awarenesses' and to reflect upon them. These elements are now objects of men's consideration, and, as such, objects of their action and cognition. ... Problem-posing education - which accepts neither our 'well-behaved' present nor our predetermined future - roots itself in a dynamic present and becomes revolutionary. (1972, 35-36)

In his later book of the same title, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1993), Freire, as presented by Lyons (2010), developed his thinking about context and its effect on practice to bring a new dimension to reflective practice: reflection as transformation. The significance of Freire's work is in his requirement that reflection must be critical, that is, it should scrutinise the prevailing culture and hegemonies. Reflection leads to transformation. As Lyons puts it:

Freire ... transformed ideas of education in the hope of the transformation of the world. He made it apparent that neutral, uncommitted, apolitical education practice does not exist. Now contexts of living and learning had to come under scrutiny, including political, social and cultural contexts. These ideas put in place a new concept of critical, transforming reflection. (2010, 17)

Today, reflective practice may encompass any or all of these concepts: "reflective enquiry as a mode of thinking; as a way of knowing in action; and as critical interrogation of the social and political contexts of learners and learning that might suggest actions to follow" (Lyons 2010, 20). Critiques of reflective practice in the main relate to the neglect of one or more of these aspects of reflection. Reflective practice as critical interrogation is particularly significant for the Church, and therefore for ministers in training, in the light of the current crisis of falling numbers in Church attendance and the marginalisation of religion. Why is the institutional Church largely failing to connect with society today and how does the training process enable ministers to identify, comprehend and address the issues which lie in this lacuna between Church and society? Lyons outlines the role of reflective practice in addressing this issue:

Reflective inquiry ... can [uncover] needed perspectives; identifying critical moral and ethical dimensions of practice; encouraging collaborative inquiries; deliberating about underlying professional

purposes and possibilities - all valued aspects of professional education that might otherwise be missed if reflective inquiry were lacking, not endorsed and practised. (2010, 8)

The substance of reflective practice is the direct experience of the practitioner, examined through the lens of relevant theory, but also taking account of the reactions, feelings, and responses of the practitioner in the situation (Moon 2004, 120). It is, as Bulman suggests (2013, 19), “more than simply being thoughtful ... but has the potential to help professionals to learn from their experiences.” For Bolton (2010, 4), reflective practice can reveal:

- what you know but do not know you know;
- what you do not know and want to know;
- what you think, feel, believe, value, understand about your role and boundaries;
- how your actions match up with what you believe;
- how to value and take into account personal feelings.

The value of reflective practice has long been realised in the psychotherapeutic professions, including healthcare, social work, and counselling, and it is now viewed as fundamental to education for ministry. Since 2000, its importance for the candidate in training has been increasingly emphasised, due to its capacity to enable growth and development, laying the foundations for excellent habits in continuing professional development. However, to be truly transformational reflective practice has to take account of the wider context and not simply consider the interior world of the individual, their thoughts, feelings, and motivations. Otherwise, there is a danger that “its radical potential [is] subsumed by individualistic, rather than situated, understandings of practice” (Kilminster *et al.* 2010, 2).

Reflective Practice is a rigorous process. Brockbank and McGill (2006, 22-23), citing Kemmis (1985), offer three aspects to reflection as a route to transformation:

1. instrumental - concerned with achievement of goals of solutions for example improvement;
2. consensual - questioning ends as well as means, for example cultural change programmes;
3. critical - challenging assumptions and prevailing discourse.

However, also required is a high degree of honest self-awareness, including a thorough evaluation and a scrupulous assessment of feelings, beliefs, and values, and of their effect on the other (Atkins and Schutz 2013, 41). Without this thorough evaluation there is a danger that “reflective practice can fall into the trap of becoming only confession” (Bolton 2010, 11). People enjoy telling their stories but rarely enjoy having these stories questioned. However, the reflective practitioner takes responsibility “for all their own actions and values and their share of responsibility for the political, social and cultural situations within which they live and work” (Bolton 2010, 11). As we question our theories, intentions, and actions with a clear-eyed critique, analysing our role in the situation, we “give situations new meanings. The situation talks back, [we listen] and ... reframe the situation once again” (Schön 1983, 131-2).

This can be an uncomfortable process: “reflection... involves many types of thinking that all go on more or less at the same time ... handling these multiple types of reflection at once can seem dizzying” (Click 2011, 35). In addition, in deep reflection our preconceived ideas, our theories and even our worldview can be called into question:

Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience into the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. It is the thread that makes continuity of learning possible and ensures the progress of the individual and, ultimately, society. It is a means to essentially moral ends. (LaBoskey and Hamilton 2010, 334)

Reflective practice can often be at a basic level, which simply leads to improved practice. However, it can go deeper: “reflective dialogue-with-another also offers the possibility of engaging at the edge of those assumptions and beliefs, reconsidering the [taken-for-granted] in relation to self-generated goals, and this ... [is] reflective learning for transformation” (Brockbank and McGill 2006, 56). Reflection, therefore, has the capacity to be a truly transformative, and indeed redemptive, process. However, it takes courage to engage in reflection; to make oneself vulnerable, to lay one’s attitudes and assumptions open to inspection, and to take steps necessary to renew practice at a deep level.



Some potential problems with the reflective practice approach have been identified. Boud (2010, 25) notes that it has been criticised as being overly individualistic. In addition, too often reflective practice can be “reflection as recipe following, reflection without learning, over intellectualising reflection and uncritical acceptance of learners’ experiences” (Boud 2010, 27). Other negative aspects are the capacity for thinking to become circular, the challenge of translating knowledge into depth of experience, and the lack of an imperative to action (Norton and Campbell 2007, 142). Kilminster *et al.* (2010, 3) comment:

Definitions of reflection ... focus on the individual’s internal thought processes and responsibility for their actions. The individual - what they did/thought/felt - is emphasised with little recognition of context, power dynamics or ideological challenge stop nor is there encouragement to critically evaluate professional practice.

In addition, particularly in a training context, there are other blocks to reflection, such as the fear and anxiety involved in being vulnerable with another person. This is a particularly pressing concern, given that useful reflection is almost dependent on being vulnerable. Perhaps, “self-protectiveness against exploring unknown aspects of oneself arises from fear of unpalatable selves” (Bolton 2010, 73); it may also rise from fear of misunderstanding or criticism. There can be a sense of loneliness, especially where complex power dynamics exist or there is a lack of trust either in the process or in individuals (Cole 1997, 18). This can be a particular issue in the candidate’s relationship with the supervisor, with whom critical reflection is intended to take place, but who has the power to disrupt or end the candidate’s training. Finally, there is a danger of meaninglessness if the candidate is not engaged, which in turn can lead to hostility and to the whole process becoming in fact counter-productive (Cole 1997, 19). To be effective, a level of autonomy must exist in the reflective process; not just in accepting responsibility for one’s motives and actions but also in making the choice to reflect critically on one’s motives and actions. Moreover, it is also important to reject any use of reflection in “instrumental and entirely procedural settings and its use by teachers who have a transmission or knowledge acquisition view of learning” (Boud 2010, 28).

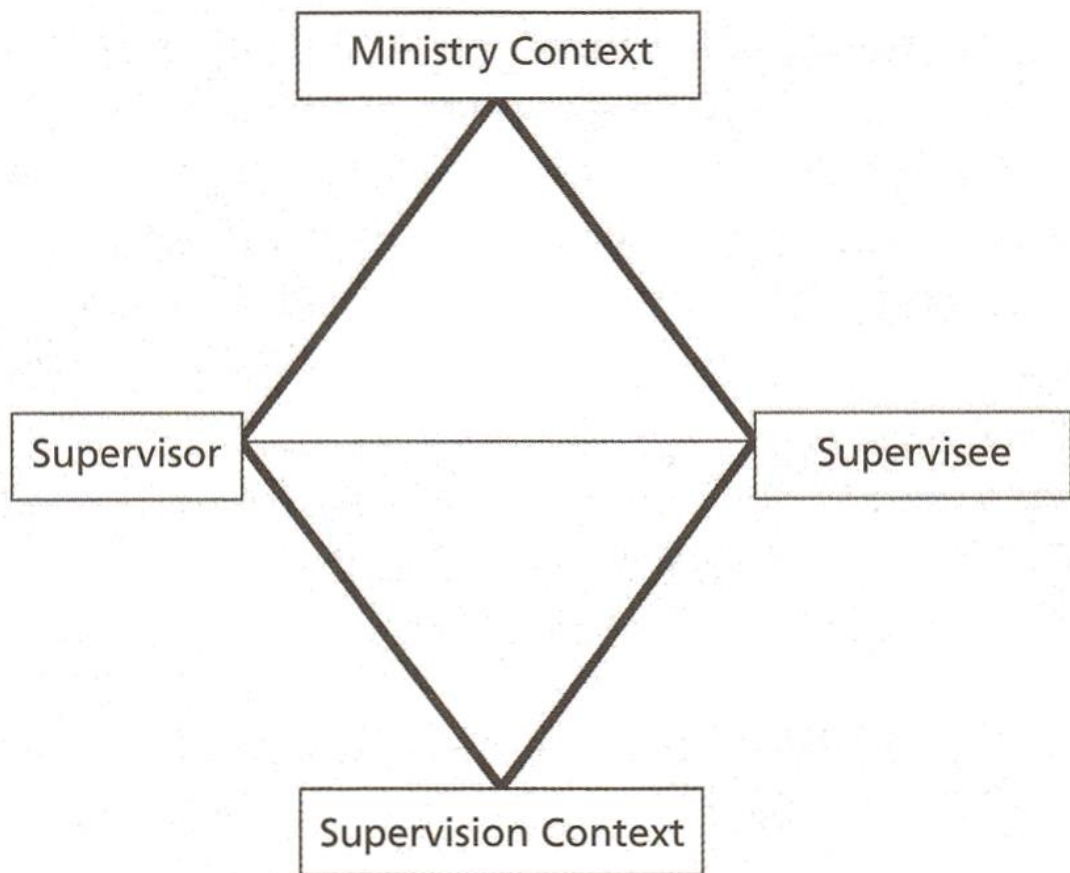
Reflection is a complex act and the incidents which are the substance of reflection are rich in experience; they cannot be routinized. These are significant objections. However, as has been noted in Chapter 3 with relation to scripture, (p.85), the misuse of a practice is not in and of itself a good reason to abandon it entirely; rather it is imperative upon us to ensure that the concept is understood and the practice multi-layered. As West notes: “really reflexive practice, which includes engaging with the auto/biographical dimensions of professional interactions, can provoke profound questioning of taken for granted norms in working contexts” (West 2010, 66). While West’s observation makes clear the critical nature of reflective practice, we should also be clear that transformational reflection does much more than question taken-for-granted norms; it has a deeper ontological significance in terms of who we are and who we are becoming.

In response to the criticism that reflective practice is too individualistic, Fook suggests that it is important to consider “the individual in social context” (2010, 38). This both acknowledges the importance of and begins with individual experience, a crucial feature of reflective practice, but also takes account of the context, thereby creating the space for the criticality of reflection. Boud comments (2010, 25):

In the 2000s we are, however, seeing a questioning of an overly individualistic view of learning previously associated with reflection, a focus on the nature of professional practice and an exploration of alternative conceptions that view reflection within the context of settings which necessarily have more of a group- or team-based work orientation.

As has been outlined by Foskett and Lyall (1988), and Leach and Paterson (2010, 2015) the context in which we work has a powerful bearing on our behaviours as well as our thought processes. This effect can be exacerbated when our desire to please those who are responsible for our continued progress is unacknowledged by us. The context then becomes implicit in the situation rather than explicit and we can be unaware of the effect on our behaviours or reflection. (Foskett and Lyall 1988, 32-35; Leach and Paterson 2010, 129-131; Leach and Paterson 2015, 191-196). The skilled supervisor will work with the trainee to make explicit what is implicit thereby enabling not only personal transformation at a deeper level and engagement with the critical process on

the candidate's own activities, actions and thought processes but also helpful critique of the organisation.



**Figure 4 Clinical Rhombus** (Leach and Paterson 2015, 190)

There are tools available to aid reflective practice in general and theological reflection in particular. That offered by Foskett and Lyall (1988, 33) and Leach and Paterson (2010, 129; 2015, 190-196) is the Clinical Rhombus (see figure 4). The rhombus aims to make explicit that which is implicit in the pastoral encounter. So, for example, the supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the candidate's training is appropriate and helpful. However, the supervisor also has a responsibility for pastoral care of the parishioner (Supervision Context) and has both responsibility and accountability to the organisation (Ministry Context), that is, to the Church of Scotland (and in this case specifically to the Ministries Council), for his or her actions towards both the parishioner and candidate. The candidate has pastoral responsibility to the parishioner, to the supervisor to carry out work allocated, an accountability for the manner in which this work is

carried out and has a similar responsibility and accountability to the Church. The Church has responsibility for the supervisor, the candidate, and the parishioner.

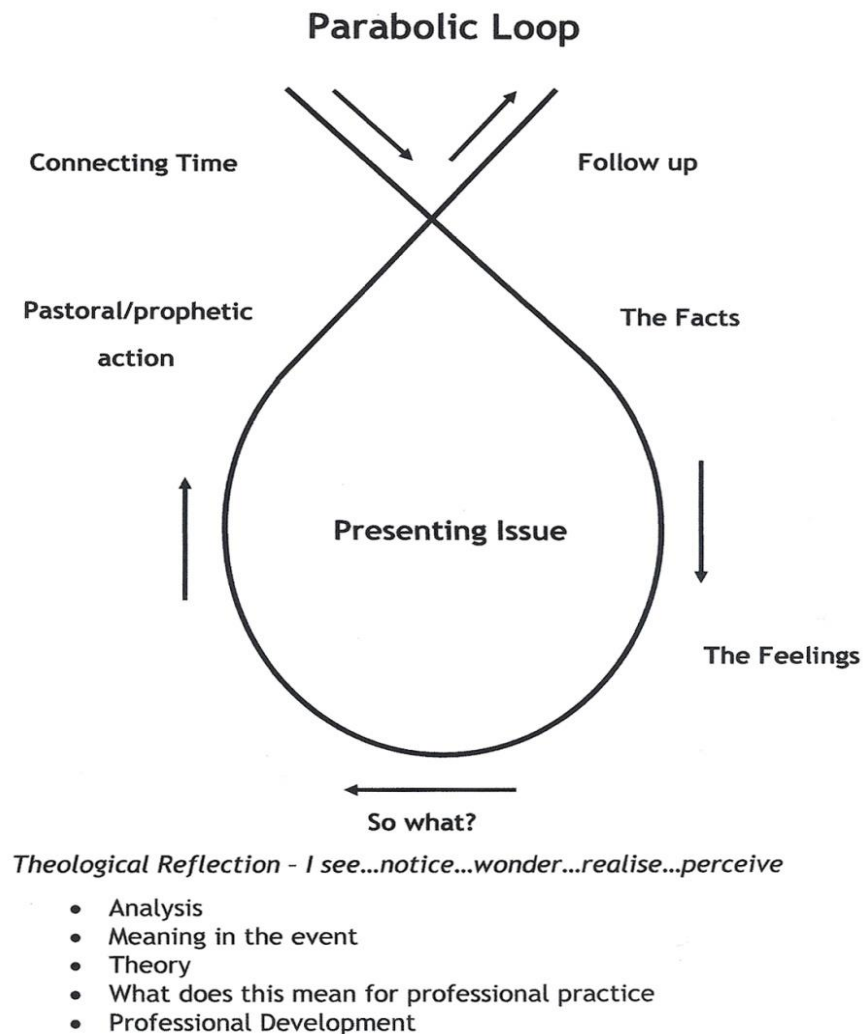
In spite of these complex lines of responsibility and accountability only the candidate and the parishioner are present during the pastoral conversation. However, the Clinical Rhombus reminds us that both Church and supervisor are present in the consciousness of the candidate and that this can have a significant effect on the candidate's responses in pastoral encounter. The Clinical Rhombus is particularly suited to identifying and naming unseen and unexpressed sources of power and influence which can affect the pastoral conversation.

The tool favoured by the Ministries Council is the Parabolic Loop (see figure 5).<sup>69</sup> The Rhombus has some advantages over the Loop in that it gives prominence, as outlined above, (p.138), to the roles played by hidden influences and powers in the situation under discussion. However, the Loop makes explicit the theological aspect of reflection which for formational supervision is a significant advantage.

In using the Loop, the supervisor begins with general conversation, checking in with the candidate, making the connection, opening up the relationship and setting the candidate at ease. This represents the beginning of the supervisory session where supervisor and candidate catch up on the week that has passed and consider anything of note or anything necessary by way of diary management. At this point the supervisor and candidate will identify any incident which the candidate wishes to discuss or may suggest something upon which they could helpfully reflect. Following the Loop down they then move into facts of the situation; a perceptive supervisor asks open questions - what, where, which, when, who, why, and how - in order to explore the case under discussion.

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<sup>69</sup> While occasionally a trainee supervisor will tell me that they have encountered this tool in other contexts I have been unable to find a source for it. I was introduced to it at the conference of the Association of Theological Field Educators, Atlanta, USA, in 2009 by a delegate from the United Church of Canada, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan Conference. The Loop as it is presented here was developed by the supervision trainers who deliver the training within the Church of Scotland (Supervisor Trainers Manual)



**Figure 5 Parabolic Loop**

The candidate then moves on to talk about how they felt about the situation. Again, the supervisor will assist by asking open questions. This can be difficult for some personality types; for example, Introverts and Sensing or Judging personalities often find it difficult to talk about feelings and may have to be guided through thinking into feeling.<sup>70</sup> Equally, an Introverted supervisor may find it difficult to remain in this part of the Loop long enough to give the candidate sufficient opportunity to explore their feelings in the situation.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>70</sup> This is not resistance on their part but rather arises from the fact that feelings are not uppermost in the consciousness and therefore explaining how they feel requires significant application to the task in a way that it does not for Extraverts or Feeling and Perceiving types.

<sup>71</sup> In using the Loop with my own reflective (MTN) group of students I have found that some students are readily able to identify what they felt while others consistently revert to telling me what they thought. Enabling them to identify feelings can take some time.

However, it is important that this part of the Loop is not neglected, as often it is in our feelings that the real nuggets of insight reside. Having explored the feelings, the supervisor then moves onto the theological reflection. At this point, they may ask the candidate if there is a biblical passage that springs to mind which seems to connect with this situation, or if there is a story from the Bible that seems relevant. They may also offer a theological concept, picture, or story and invite the candidate to accept it, or otherwise, as valid comment upon the incident.

For Leach and Paterson (2010, 41-46), it is the supervisor's role to see, notice, wonder, regarding the content that the supervisee takes into the supervision session. That is, to see the situation brought by the supervisee clearly, and in doing so to notice something in the situation that the supervisee has not articulated. This could be communicated implicitly by the body language, facial expression, or vocal tone of the supervisee, and made explicit by the supervisor, or it could be an aspect of the situation which the supervisor has noted as the supervisee recounts the experience. The supervisor takes the opportunity to wonder about this, through offering observations, raising difficult subjects, suggesting different interpretations and considering relevant biblical narratives which may, if these offerings resonate with the supervisee, move the reflection forward into a new space. The Loop takes seriously the viewpoint of the candidate who, even although a student, is an agent in the situation. Kurtz, reflecting on an influential supervisor, comments: "even though I was a student, she always treated me as an equal, assuming that I brought valuable insight and gifts to my work. She listened to my ideas and let me know when I said or did something that enlarged her understanding" (2010, 231). Supervision of this nature builds confidence in the trainee as a reflective practitioner and promotes self-awareness and the capacity to believe in reflective practice and theological reflection as a useful discipline.

From this point, supervisor and candidate will consider the journey they have travelled and whether the candidate sees any possibility of resolution or a different conclusion to the issue, how they now feel about it, and the option of renewed action in a similar situation in the future. They may simply have found it valuable to have the space and time to reflect allowing them to come to a

different perspective on the issue. The next stage on the journey around the Loop is to consider prophetic action, or what happens next. While this is presented here as a smooth and continuous journey, in reality the conversation will move back and forth between the different areas of focus. However, at its conclusion the process should have allowed the candidate to reflect in depth on the issue and come to a conclusion that represents forward movement, even if it is simply that further reflection is required.

Reflective practice can be transformational. However, for this to happen it is necessary to engage in it: “an effective reflective practitioner has authority for their own learning” (Bolton 2010, 78). The issue of lack of engagement is problematic to resolve, arising as it does from a variety of sources, including an unwillingness to learn (see above, pp.19, 36). Lack of engagement can also arise due to issues such as a lack of necessary trust and anxiety about the process (see above, pp.35-36, 110). In addition, different personalities will approach the task of reflection differently. Some will value journaling, while others will find it an onerous chore; some will engage happily in a reflective conversation while others will prefer to reflect on their own.

Negative responses can be directed towards either the process, and by extension the Ministries Council, or the supervisor but can be dealt with by a positive development of the relationship.<sup>72</sup> On one level, in formational supervision, we assume that engagement is occurring because a supervisor is supervising a candidate. However, just because some level of conversation is taking place does not mean that any transformation is occurring. How then do we ascertain that there is growth and development? Currently this is by establishing a process of assessment.<sup>73</sup> However, as soon as assessment is introduced other issues arise. For example, there is a great deal of evidence showing that “the method of

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<sup>72</sup> One candidate in training told the facilitator of her MTN group, “I’m only here because I have to be.” He dealt with that very openly, was not offended, and by the end of her probationary year she was suggesting that such reflective groups should be continued into ministry (Journal entry, 10 November 2014).

<sup>73</sup> Supervisors are invited to comment upon the reflective ability of the candidate in training at the end of the placement. In addition, the candidates are required to attend a Ministries Training Network group and produce two pieces of written reflective work during the year. These are assessed as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Journals are read by the MTN facilitator who will comment upon them, but they are not assessed. Candidates have struggled to understand the concept of a professional learning journal as opposed to a personal spiritual journal.

assessment shapes the nature of learning” (Lamdin 1999, 22). In addition, there is no doubt that, “awareness of assessment can ... at best alter, or at worst corrupt any reflective or reflexive process” (Bolton 2010, 146). Journals may be written for the assessor rather than as truly reflective writing. There is also the danger of a candidate simply ‘ticking the boxes’ in order to successfully complete training. Assessment, therefore, should be as unthreatening as possible. Indeed, in encouraging transformative engagement with reflection, the supervisor, and indeed the Ministries Council, needs to provide opportunities to reflect in different ways, appropriate to the individual’s personality.<sup>74</sup>

In any supervision, but particularly where there is assessment, it is necessary to have clear boundaries and ground rules of confidentiality to minimise the potential problems arising from issues of power and control (Leach and Paterson 2010, 138-9). In addition, supervisors “should be ... aware of the issues in requiring less powerful people to perform confessional reflective tasks and not ... assume that reflective learning is always about positive development” (Saltiel 2010, 140).<sup>75</sup> This can lead to anxiety which is counter-productive to helpful reflection (Cole 1997, 15). There is always the danger that the process is simply that of information gathering rather than the kind of engagement with below-surface meaning, which can enhance understanding in a deeper learning process (Moon 2004, 95-99). Transformation through reflection can occur; however, “mentors need to proceed with care, and here the learning relationship and trust are crucial” (Brockbank and McGill 2006, 59). As the candidate makes themselves vulnerable supervisors require pastoral skills and to have a clear grasp of boundaries.

A deep approach to learning can also be encouraged when reflection occurs within the context of a peer group, which increases the sense of it being a safe space to be vulnerable (Leach and Paterson 2010, 163-4). Group discussion and reflection encourages skills of critical thinking and argument (Saines 2009, 341). The learning of the individual is enhanced and the potential for dialectic tension

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<sup>74</sup> Currently, for example, journaling is required as part of the formation process during initial training; however, each candidate is free to journal in a way they find helpful – writing, drawing or audio recording, for example (Candidates Handbook, 45). Probationers are not required to journal.

<sup>75</sup> Here I take “confessional” to mean deeply personal and potentially difficult or painful.



between theory and experience can result in stimulating and creative reflection where feedback is “reinforcing, challenging, thorough ... sincere ... and non-judgemental” (Fund 2010, 696). Indeed “much is to be gained from dialogue and ... some of the most useful reflections are ones that are shared” (Sweet 2010, 190).

Peer reflection in groups can also offset the potentially individualistic nature of reflection. As Click observes:

Peer reflective groups are of value, for if they are expertly facilitated, ministers in formation grow to appreciate the distinctive qualities of their own theological stance. They are enabled to see the strengths and weaknesses of their own approach ... differing points of view are of value theologically; they are also of value in forming a professional capacity for operating as ministers within groups that disagree. (2011, 39-40)

Reflective groups, whether they are groups of peers with a trusted facilitator, or simply groups of peers, have the capacity to create the conditions for that vulnerability which can lead to truly transformational reflection. For candidates and probationers in training within the Church of Scotland, this opportunity is found within the Ministries Training Network (see above, p.15 and Appendix I). Trainee ministers are divided into groups of six or eight which meet every month for eight months to reflect on a case study or verbatim brought by each candidate in turn. As Duensing points out, “peer groups are an excellent venue in which to cultivate an atmosphere where you can be affirmed” (2011, 65). As such, these groups allow for the strengthening of peer relationships which are often carried into ministry and become invaluable sources of support.

However, group reflection “involves high levels of commitment to the task ... [openness to] ideas and experiences of others, and most importantly of all, a reasonable level of trust” (Boud 2010, 35-6). In such a context, there is the potential for good quality reflection and, where participants trust one another and the facilitator, a high level of engagement and development. “A closed group with the same members at each meeting... can enable, with skilled facilitation, trust and confidence, as well as listening, understanding and creative insightful response” (Bolton 2010, 160). Although much reflection in ministerial formation happens in the context of the supervisory partnership,

there is opportunity for group reflection at conference and in Ministries Training Network. Generally speaking, group reflection, whether at MTN or conference, proves popular with candidates.<sup>76</sup>

As has been noted, reflective practice has become foundational to ministry formation. As we have seen however, it is problematic to describe, to teach, and it is even more difficult to ensure that it is actually taking place. Bolton (2010, 186; citing Boud and Walker 1998, 193) considers:

Reflective practice is a contested field. An acknowledged element of professional education in diverse contexts, it is approached in varied ways with different principles and desired outcomes. Essential to the success of reflection and reflexivity provision are: clarity and consistency of principles and appropriateness to context: 'There are no reflective activities which are guaranteed to lead to learning, and conversely there are no learning activities guaranteed to lead to reflection.'

As Boud and Walker suggest, reflective practice in a formalised sense works for some but not all. This has to be borne in mind when designing training programmes and in the assessment of required reflective activities. While it would be difficult to excuse a candidate from a required activity on the basis that it did not fit their preferred approach to learning, it would be important not to exclude an otherwise competent candidate from entering ministry because of a difficulty with reflective exercises.

Moreover, there is sufficient evidence that good-quality reflective practice can lead to personal transformation and improved practice as well as organisational transformation. It is therefore important that, in formational supervision, supervisors are supported to enable excellent quality reflective practice. This enables them not only to encourage personal transformation in the candidate or probationer but also to be partners in organisational transformation as the probationers move on to become ministers in the Church.

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<sup>76</sup> While candidates report frustration with the exercises involved in MTN (journaling and two assessed essays per year) they also report a sense of the value of meeting together and discussing issues pertinent to training in ministry. The experience of the candidate who became convinced of the value of MTN, (see above, p.142, n. 72), is not uncommon in the student body. In addition, candidates often report that the most useful part of a conference is the peer reflection opportunities (*Rethinking Initial Training*, 42).

### 5.3 Theological Considerations

As theological educators have adopted reflective practice, it has been adapted from the process described by Schön (1983), Kolb (1984) and others into a more intentionally theological act which seeks to identify God's agency in addition to other factors in an event. In addition, to be useful in the context of training for ministry, reflection must be biblical and theological, as well as sociological (Wingate 1999, 106). Furthermore, "to interact meaningfully ... with other people or, indeed, with God, we first need to know something of ourselves" (Kelly 2012, 1). Self-awareness is significant. Since, as Kinast (1996, 20) puts it: "there is a divine dimension at the origin of all experience", this thesis is a profoundly theological undertaking.

It is tempting to assume that the theology of reflection and theological reflection are similar; however, it is important to draw a distinction. Theological reflection, and indeed reflective practice within the Church, is the activity for which the theology of reflection is the foundation. In a practical theology project, it is important to consider the theological basis for the project, as well as theological dimensions within it. Therefore, this section considers the theology of reflection.

It is arguable that theology, by its very nature, is reflective: "faith seeking understanding", a definition which, although credited to Anselm, has a long and illustrious history from Augustine through Anselm to Karl Barth (Migliore 2014, 2). Since seeking understanding is a reflective process, this places reflection at the heart of doing theology. When reflection must also include action since "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:17), it becomes not only theological reflection, but also reflective practice.

A good biblical example of reflective practice is the story of the encounter on the Emmaus Road, already considered in Chapter 3, (pp.113-114). The asking of open questions, teaching when necessary - that is, the imparting of factual information and filling in the gaps in knowledge - and most importantly, the demonstration of what is being taught, describe a reflective encounter through which the travellers are enabled to move beyond the state in which they began the conversation. It is perhaps too heavily weighted towards teaching to be an

excellent example, with insufficient room for the asking of questions, and, in addition, demonstration should also contain elements of practice on the part of the trainee, but nevertheless, the Emmaus story illustrates a reflective process and can serve as a model for a supervisor seeking to ground his or her practice in biblical principles.

A different angle on supervision is provided by Mark 6 where we see Jesus “intentionally [making] space to listen to the apostles and to provide time for them to rest” (Leach and Paterson 2010, 9). Mark 6 also raises issues of “accountability within the body of Christ; the service and accountability to those we serve” (Leach and Paterson 2010, 141-142). In this example, we see both the resentment against the exercise of authority by someone, in this case Jesus, who has in a sense risen from the ranks: “prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house” (Mark 6:4). We also see the positive effect of accepting that authority as the disciples find their ministry successful when they obey the instructions of Jesus (Mark 6:7-13).

In terms of supervision, then, while we might recognise the resistance to authority, particularly where there is a lack of trust, as outlined above, (pp.35-36, 136), we can also see that where a candidate is prepared to submit themselves to the authority of the supervisor and the Ministries Council, they become partners in their own development. Theologically speaking, trust and submission are both required for reflective practice to be positive and helpful. We could also suggest that faith is required: faith that the training process is designed to be supportive and helpful and not, as some candidates for ministry seem to feel, designed to catch them out. In this passage from Mark, the disciples find themselves partners in their own learning and development just as the Ministries Council aims to allow trainee ministers to be partners in constructing their own training, as long as they first submit to the authority of the training programme.

A third example of transformative reflective practice is the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). This parable creates dissonance between the worldview that it presents and the worldview of its listeners, and in doing so, opens up the possibility of both personal transformation while offering a critique on the prevailing culture. As Smith points out (2008, 121), “Jesus asked

questions ... Rarely did Jesus provide answers. He usually responded to a question with a more thoughtful question of his own. Asking, not telling, is the partner to listening.” This is an example which supervisors would do well to emulate.

It is arguable that for his entire ministry Jesus was engaged in reflective practice with his followers. Asking thoughtful, open questions he pushed his followers to give situations new meanings, to re-frame their world view and to arrive at new understandings for themselves. Like any good supervisor he allowed his followers to construct their own meaning rather than providing them with one ready-made and thus ensured that their new knowledge and understanding was embedded in their practice.

## **5.4 Theological Reflection as Reflective Practice**

Having considered, in general terms, reflective practice, its value but also its problematic aspects, we now turn to consider specifically theological reflection. To offer a distinction between the two: theological reflection is part of, but not the entirety of, reflective practice. As Boud puts it: “most ideas of reflection relate to the questioning of experience” (2010, 26). While this would be true of theological reflection as well as reflective practice, reflective practice relates to the discipline as a whole, with all its associated issues of assessment and the question of whether we can ascertain that reflection is actually taking place. Bolton comments: “reflective practice can take us out of our own narrow range of experience and help us to perceive experiences from a range of viewpoints and potential scenarios” (2010, 10). Leach and Paterson describe it thus: (2010, 201):

The term originates in secular professional practice though it has come to dominate the current model of pastoral (or practical) theological education, indicating the importance of placement work and reflection on it in the development of individual practitioners (ministers), and drawing on theological and other relevant disciplines.

In fact, we can do reflective practice without doing theological reflection.

Theological reflection concerns bringing our beliefs and values to bear on our action and practice, and in doing reflective practice through a theological lens we should find our practice and our theology informing one another. Classically, “theological reflection starts with experience and brings theology to bear on it” (Nash and Nash 2009, 36). Kinast notes that theological reflection: “helps a minister recognise God’s role in the ministry. This recognition may entail some changes in the minister’s self-awareness, outlook, motivation, and decisions. These changes become the basis for new action” (1996, ix). For Leach and Paterson, theological reflection is:

A broad term used to describe a range of theological processes. In the last 30 years, it has become associated with a number of models that provide a series of questions or stages to work through. Their purpose is to help practitioners connect theology and action. Increasingly theological reflection is seen as an aim of pastoral supervision. (2010, 202-203)

Theological reflection alone would not equip us to be reflective practitioners, indeed, as Miller-McLemore points out, trainee ministers “need more than just the capacity to ‘*think*’ theologically’ (the focus of plenty of books on reflective practice and the heart of many treatises on practical theology), but also the capacity to ‘*practice*’ theology’ by putting theology into action through one’s body on the ground” (2008, 173). Reflective practice for trainee ministers which did not include theological reflection would be lacking a core element.

Not surprisingly, literature on reflective practice from within the Church context tends to major on theological reflection. This, however, results in a lack which needs to be addressed. The wider discussion, outlined above, (pp.130-145), concerning how we do reflective practice, its advantages and its problems, needs to be considered within the context of the Church and theological community just as they are being addressed within, for example, the healthcare community, the social work community, and the education community.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> It is outwith the scope of this thesis to consider all the wider issues of reflective practice such as the various methodologies, the advantages and disadvantages of both reflective practice and its methodologies, the full range of tools available to aid reflective practice including journaling, and the pros and cons of assessment in the training context. These are but some of the issues surrounding reflective practice which are widely discussed in other professions and we would do well to consider them from within the Church context and from a theological perspective.

On the other hand, theological reflection is dealt with at length by practical theologians, for example, Whitehead and Whitehead (1995, 86), for whom it means “[allowing] faith perspectives to influence personal and social life ... [seeking] not religious insight alone, but insightful religious action.” For Killen and de Beer (1994, viii), “theological reflection puts our experience into a genuine conversation with our religious heritage.” Kinast (1996, x) considers that theological reflection: “tries to help the person (or group) discover God’s presence in that person’s (or group’s) experience.” Graham, Walton, and Ward see theological reflection as a process rather than a product:

Theological Reflection is an activity that enables people of faith to give an account of the values and traditions that underpin their choices and convictions and deepens their understanding. Theological reflection enables the connections between human dilemmas and divine horizons to be explored, over a wide range of academic disciplines including social sciences, psychotherapeutic and medical disciplines and the arts. (2005, 5-6)

Broadly speaking, they would all agree that theological reflection involves a conversation between the experience of the individual, the tradition in which the individual stands, including the biblical tradition, and the context. This conversation invites our faith resources to critique the situation to enable us to make sense of the situation from a theological perspective. This engagement enables us to identify the agency of God in the situation to bring enlightenment to our understanding of our faith, ourselves, our theology, our practice and our God (Nash and Nash 2009, 37). It is clear also that theological reflection is not just reflection about theology; it has the capacity to be transformational. As we have already seen, this approach to, and understanding of, theological reflection has a basis in a biblical model; encounters with Jesus were always transformational and “when [Jesus] wanted his listeners to get below surface thinking he burrowed in with questions” (Smith 2008, 121).

The story of the Good Samaritan, discussed above, (pp.147-148), is a good example of theological reflection as reflective practice. As illustrated by this story, “the practice of theological reflection challenges our compartmentalised approach to faith ... It constitutes an important, deliberate step towards the integration that sustains integrity in our faith” (Payne 2008, 56). Reflective practice draws upon a variety of disciplines, including psychology, and sociology,

and a diversity of skills, including cognitive, relational, and professional; theological reflection draws upon all these and adds the discipline of theology, the spirituality of the individual and the skill of the practical theologian, seeking to cast light on our actions and bring us to the point of transformation (Forster *et al.* 2006, 30, 100-110).

Significant in all reflective practice is self-reflexivity and this is no less true in theological reflection. Indeed, self-reflexivity is “a spiritual discipline that is shaped, revised and interpreted within particular ways of understanding God and God’s world” (Stoddart 2014, 17). Theological reflection is an activity carried out in prayerfulness and the reflective space is holy ground. We should expect, therefore, in engaging in theological reflection, that the Holy Spirit will be present and active (Nash and Nash 2009, 23). Our divinely inspired initiative can fuel our imagination in theological reflection, generating the creativity necessary to see connections between various relevant disciplines, our situation, the biblical narrative, the historical Church, and our context. It is helpful to see the reflective space as a space to play, a space to explore, to take risks, and therefore to learn (Ward 2005, 87-104). Above all, theological reflection as reflective practice ought to result in transformation: personal, but also institutional, as our practice informs our relationship with our organisation, and ecclesiological as our reflection enables us to better engage in the *Missio Dei*. Significant in enabling this to happen are the following questions:

1. Whose voices can you hear and whose are silent or silenced?
2. What are the wider issues here?
3. What is the situation doing to you?
4. What does the Christian tradition have to say?
5. What, in the light of all this, is the mission of the Church, and within that what is your role, here and now? (Leach and Paterson 2010, 41)

These questions encourage us to explore the subject from all angles. They help us to view the situation with a degree of objectivity, considering issues pertinent to the organisation and the values and influences of that organisation, while still being honest about our own feelings and responses. This is of particular importance in ministry, since it is the gift of good reflection to assist in articulating feelings and “unexpressed feelings are likely to be highly influential in ministry situations” (Leach and Paterson 2010, 43). Value is given to the



theological tradition and to the possibility of prophetic action as we consider, 'what next?'

There are, however, problems with theological reflection. Despite its claim to be theological, it is "often weak in its use of traditional Christian sources" (Graham, Walton and Ward 2005, 7). Graham, Walton and Ward go on to argue that analysis of the issue through use of the social sciences, consideration of contexts, and socio-economic factors is often more skilful than the theological reflection and, perhaps because of this, theological reflection is still conceived as being a novelty and an added extra rather than foundational to good practical theology (2005, 7-8). Nevertheless, in the twelve years since Graham, Walton and Ward wrote, theological reflection has become foundational to training for ministry, even if it is still viewed with some suspicion by those who are training, as well as some of those who are supervisors.

## **5.5 The Parabolic Loop in Supervision**

Since 2011 the Ministries Council has used the Parabolic Loop as a tool to aid reflective practice (see figure 5 above, and cf. pp.139-142). The advantage of this tool over other aids to reflection is that it is simple to understand, easy to remember, and, if followed diligently, works well in assisting candidate and supervisor to engage in the hard work of theological reflection. It also ensures that the supervisor does not take the easy, but ultimately unhelpful, route of simply giving the candidate a ready-made solution for the problem (going straight across the Loop from 'what happened' to 'what next') but supports them in working through it to find their own solution. It recognises that helping candidates to "come to see differently and thereby gain insights into how [they] might come to better understand and consequently value wisdom-in-practice is not as simple as just highlighting the problem and telling them what it is they should know" (Loughran 2002, 37).

This tool has been adapted from that used by the United Church of Canada (see above, p.139, n. 69), and could be further adapted, in line with the Clinical Rhombus, to ensure that issues such as context, power dynamics, silenced or unheard voices are made explicit.

The supervisors in general found this helpful tool. Charlie finds that he uses it almost subconsciously in supervision:

*I thought right, let's find out about the situation; let's find out what Margaret tells us about it. Initially I thought, I can't be bothered with [the Loop], but ... in more recent times, I've been thinking, let's just try it out quietly, make our way round. I think that was one of the things that ... certainly was something that was new ... It seems ironic, given that I'm a minister of the gospel but the useful bit in the Parabolic Loop is maybe getting that theological aspect, and there have been times when I've probably almost jumped ... straight across.*

He concluded, with a slight note of surprise in his voice: “I have to say I found the training really helpful!” Eric was positive about the Loop: “the Parabolic Loop, you know that's quite a helpful thing, the fact that I even still remember it.” David commented:

*And what I found very helpful was the challenge to theologically reflect on everything, you had to bring theology into, consciously into all our supervision sessions, as opposed to just, this is pragmatic church management, yes it might seem like it, but there is a theological underpinning to it, so, it was that idea of going right down to the bottom of the Loop rather than skip straight across was one thing I kept constantly in mind in supervision sessions.*

The Loop has its shortcomings. Unlike the Clinical Rhombus it does not specifically invite reflection on areas such as the ministry environment or organisational culture, and it is therefore always possible that some of the contextual issues may be overlooked. However, its ease-of-use, its ability to counter the temptation to short-circuit the reflective process, and its success in enabling theological reflection, compensate for its inadequacy in other areas. In addition, these shortcomings could be addressed in the development of the tool.

### **5.5.1 The Interviews**

Reflective practice was the area in which the supervisors seemed to develop most over the course of the training conference. In the first round of interviews there was a wide range of awareness in terms of good reflective practice. For example, in the first interview Anna described herself in reflective terms, as constantly asking herself, “Am I doing something in the right way? How can I

*best get them to do this*", while David presented as the least reflective of the supervisors, answering questions succinctly and without much in the way of elaboration. His understanding of reflective practice was at the level of: *"when I do something I think before I do it as to why I'm doing what I'm about to do and so plan it, and then after I've done it, analyse it, what went well, what didn't go well."* While this is a good beginning in terms of reflective practice it neglects the deeper issues of theological significance, opportunities for personal growth and development, or organisational critique. Frank's description of reflective practice was to say, *"we would reflect back on what Patricia's been doing and issues that she's raising and discuss something that she's specifically brought."* However, this seems to imply a similar approach to David's which neglects the depth of theological reflection. This was borne out by Patricia's comments: *"For Frank reflection was, we'll discuss, how did that go, whereas I would take it a little bit further than just how did it go."* Beth had the most sophisticated understanding, but the results she described still fell short of ontological or organisational transformation and remained on the level of renewed practice:

*In terms of myself, for reflective practice it's about spending time having a look at what you've been up to in the past week or over a period of time and ... looking at scenarios where you've struggled and looking at how you could have coped with them differently. I think it's also about doing that with the probationer as well. We've already in the month had a situation which Laura has alluded to. I sent her to visit a couple that I thought would be a good visit and she got ten minutes of how I'm a bad minister. And I struggled with how to deal with that. ... But then last week I said can we return to this visit that you did and I want to ask you what you would do if you were me? How would you now deal with this couple, what do we do? Do I send you, or do I go, what would the biblical principles in what we do and it was quite useful to have that kind of scenario fairly early on and to be able to reflect around it. So, for me I think it's a positive, it's looking at positives and negatives, either by yourself or with the other person to move you to a new stance on how you might take action on something, or, or how you might change your current practice.*

Like Beth, Anna was one of the supervisors who indicated an understanding of the theological aspects of reflective practice:

*Thinking about what you're doing. Well, every so often questioning what you're doing and why you're doing it; why something*

*happened, how it could be changed, so that either it happens again or it doesn't happen again. Thinking about how that can be based within the gospels as opposed to my particular prejudices and weaknesses.*

However, her understanding of the changes that might result remained at the level of practice rather than anything more personally transformational. Charlie's understanding was very much related to improving practice: *"Looking back at what you have done and trying to critically evaluate it to see what went well, what could have been improved, how you might do things different the next time."* Eric, similarly, saw reflective practice in terms of evaluating actions: *"It's learning from your mistakes and seeking to realise that there is always a different way of doing something, because I think that with myself, and with candidates who come, that they tend to have a default way of doing everything and you naturally switch into it."* David, as noted above, (p.154), saw reflective practice as analysing actions and results, but added, *"in an ideal scenario do that in collaboration with someone else, [but] that's not all always the case."*

By the second round of interviews, the supervisors had developed a more sophisticated understanding of reflective practice. As part of their training, trainee supervisors are allocated to reflective triads and assigned a facilitator. There are two afternoon sessions, entitled 'Peer Group Learning in Reflective Practice', during which the triads and facilitators meet to practice offering supervision with the aid of the Parabolic Loop.<sup>78</sup> Each trainee supervisor takes it in turn to act as supervisee, supervisor, and observer. The facilitator manages the session and keeps time. In preparation, the trainee supervisors are asked to bring to each of the training sessions an incident from their ministry upon which they wish to reflect. It is made clear that these incidents should be real; this is not role-play, although it is training. These sessions form the core of the training conference and the supervisors generally seemed to find them helpful.<sup>79</sup> David was quite clear about the value of the triads:

*I found the group work was the particularly helpful bit. The group exercises informed my practice I would say after that. Session three,*

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<sup>78</sup> See Appendix X for an outline of the training session.

<sup>79</sup> See Appendix IV for the conference programme.

*day two, that was the one where it all clicked into place. I found that I kept the parabola in my mind, through the year.*

Eric, Owen's supervisor, reflected, "*It's certainly sharpened [my approach to reflective practice], there's no doubt, it's been much sharper since the training*", although he found it difficult to use the Parabolic Loop with Owen. Notwithstanding Owen's self-identification as a reflective practitioner, Eric's comments illustrate the extent to which reflection does not come easily to Owen:

*I feel that Owen's got quite a closed mind to the concept [of reflective practice], which is unfortunate because, I thought after the time with me he would have opened up to it more but he didn't. He was in his comfort zone, which is much more of a doing approach, he's a big doer, if you give him a project he throws himself into it and does it really well but, yeah, he cannot reflect on it, and even his sermons were a bit like that, they lacked a kind of sensitivity, an emotional depth to them because Owen thinks matter-of-factly.*

Owen, on the other hand, sees himself as a reflective practitioner. He commented:

*Sometimes we end up discussing things that weren't what we decided we were going to discuss, yes, sometimes just to say things that you think you're thinking, is actually once you've said it you think that's a load of rubbish, or actually that's not what I think, not at all what I'm trying to express, so yeah, talking to someone can be good for that, to it put out there.*

It is clear from these comments that Owen's approach to reflection is significantly different from Eric's. As Loughran points out: "for some, it simply means thinking about something, whereas for others it is a well-defined and crafted practice that carries very specific meaning and associated action" (2002, 33). This neatly describes the distance between Owen's position, reflection as thinking about something, and Eric's, which is much more intentional.

Anna, too, was very positive about the reflective practice sessions: "*Part of the [value of the] reflective practice [sessions] came out of somebody else writing*

down what we'd done. So that was quite interesting."<sup>80</sup> Katie, on placement with Anna, describes a reflective session in supervision: *"It's very much, this is what happened there, and what do you think, and what does this mean, and it goes very quickly very deep, but that has developed over time as we got to know each other better and kind of trust each other more."* Katie's comment about trust is perceptive as it is clear from research that trust between candidate and supervisor is of paramount importance in the learning process (see above, p.35).

Several of the probationers commented on a change in their supervisors' practice after the conference. Margaret confirmed this in her awareness that at supervision sessions she would notice that:

*He's using that thing, and he did actually use that word [Parabolic Loop] at one point, and I thought, he's obviously taken this on board, but Charlie being Charlie, sometimes he's not awfully upfront about things, you mostly have to think, what's he doing that for, and then you think, oh yes, it's probably from the course.*

Frank had indicated that he felt that his counselling training enabled him to offer Patricia effective reflective practice from the outset: *"in the more distant past I've done counselling training and there was common ground here, so if I hadn't done the counselling training, then ... there would have been new ground."* Patricia, however, whose previous employment had required her to engage in regular and deep reflective practice, and who was in the habit of journaling regularly even before she came into training, described a change in Frank's practice after the training, *"I think after the training he embraced it whereas before I think it was a concept that he hadn't quite [taken] to the depths that I wanted to do it."* She described reflection at the start of the placement as, *"we'll discuss, how did that go, whereas I would take it ... further than just how did it go, you know, what did it mean, what did it mean for me what, did it mean for them."* Patricia observed that after attending training Frank would *"initiate that at our meetings as well ... and now that challenges me and makes me think, okay, I never actually thought of that."*

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<sup>80</sup> This refers to the written feedback which each trainee was given. The feedback was provided by the facilitator, the observer, and the supervisee.

Since reflective practice and theological reflection are at the heart of formational supervision it is heartening that the supervisors saw both the value of the reflection and helpfulness of the Loop as a tool. However, the tasks of supervision do not end with offering excellent theological reflection and reflective practice to the candidate in training. Those who supervise ought also to be in supervision; to address this, supervisors of probationers meet together in reflective triads and it is this area of support which we will consider next.

### **5.5.2 The Reflective Triad<sup>81</sup>**

Since 2012 supervisors of probationers have been expected to meet together in triads, with a facilitator, a minimum of three times during the fifteen-month probationary placement. The facilitator is drawn from the team of Supervisor Trainers. During each meeting, which lasts a minimum of 2 hours, each of the triad members has the opportunity to act as supervisee, supervisor, and observer:

The supervisee is responsible for:

- bringing an appropriate incident from supervision of the probationer for guided reflection;
- giving appropriate feedback to the supervisor on the experience of being supervised.

The supervisor is responsible for:

- guiding the supervisee through reflection on the incident. This does not mean finding a solution to the problem or resolving the issue.

The observer is responsible for:

- noting how the supervisor deals with the supervisee and offering appropriate feedback on the supervisory style.

The facilitator ensures that the meeting takes place, that everyone has an opportunity to act in all three roles, and that appropriate feedback is given. The facilitator also offers feedback on the supervision.

These triads have a threefold purpose:

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<sup>81</sup> The content of this section is drawn, almost in its entirety, from a handout given to the members of the triads.

1. To act as a support mechanism for supervisors in what is sometimes a lonely task:
  - Meeting, chatting and sharing in fellowship together over coffee and/or a meal provides mutual support;
  - The chance to reflect on an issue in depth in the presence of experienced peers is an opportunity to be supported.
2. To provide a safe place to bring issues from the supervision of a candidate; this is peer supervision, something with which counsellors and healthcare professionals are very familiar and is basic good practice in any situation where a practitioner is working with people in a situation of vulnerability, however slight that vulnerability may be:
  - Issues should be real and should arise from the practice of supervision with the candidate. This is not role-play. The supervisory peer will consider issues which have arisen for the supervisor as a result of supervising his or her candidate. Has the candidate been challenged? Puzzled? Dismayed? Are they rejoicing?
  - In exploring the issues in this context, the supervisor is given the space to reflect in depth and, hopefully, to identify options for renewed practice.
3. To exercise the practice of supervision in a context where the supervisor can receive helpful and constructive feedback:
  - when acting as supervisor the supervisor should use, as far as possible, the techniques and practices which he or she employs with his or her probationer. This enables helpful feedback on practice and hopefully provides both affirmation leading to greater confidence, and constructive feedback, leading to improved practice.<sup>82</sup>

Responses to the triads have been mixed. Generally speaking, experienced supervisors with able probationers find them of less value than inexperienced supervisors or those with probationers who have, or present, challenges of some description. Nevertheless, from my experience of facilitating a triad, even when a supervisor arrives at the meeting thinking that he or she has nothing of note to bring, good supervision can draw out issues and enable helpful reflection leading

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<sup>82</sup> See Appendix XI for the handout.



to renewed practice. The Ministries Council has been keen to promote the triads as it offers a form of supervision of the supervisors. This would be recognisable in other professions as good practice but within the Church of Scotland is currently only accessed by ministers on a voluntary basis.

Given that the supervisors in the research pool were all experienced, and the probationers were, in the main, able and committed without any real negative issues, it is perhaps unsurprising that the supervisors, while not negative about the triads, were not overwhelmingly positive either. Charlie commented, *“In our triads, [you would ask] how does this relate to what you believe. Sometimes ... it’s a bit like parables, you’re trying to find hidden meanings behind every single aspect and I think we don’t really need to do that.”* However, he went on to say, *“It’s been interesting, the triads.”* Frank noted, about the conference, *“You’ve got other people in the same boat and meet other people with more experience which is a good thing. And the triads and the exercise, and then being asked to come up with a situation, so all of that made one think and then indeed in some respects was quite helpful.”* In the reflective triad which I facilitated most recently, whose members are not part of the research pool, the same ambivalence could be noted, although none of the supervisors objected to meeting and seemed to enjoy the process. At the final meeting one of the ministers - an experienced supervisor who had a probationer with some challenges - commented that he had found it very useful.<sup>83</sup>

## 5.6 Conclusion

It has been shown that reflective practice has a long history (Bradbury *et al.* 2010; Lyons 2010; Bulman 2013). While we have noted some problems and issues arising from an uncertainty about how best to approach the task, what constitutes reflective practice, and the place of assessment in reflective practice, there is no doubt that it has become firmly embedded in the training for a variety of professions. That it has only lately become part of ministry training is not an indication that it is not helpful, but rather that the Church

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<sup>83</sup> Journal entry, 4 May 2017.

took longer to catch up with developments in education than other professions (Ministers of the Gospel 2000).

I bring to this project a firm belief in the necessity and effectiveness of reflective practice and theological reflection, arising out of both my research and my experience. I also believe in the concept of supervision as a teaching tool and the necessity of supervision for those who are supervisors. Given that the concept is fairly new to the Church of Scotland, the lack of understanding of the nature of reflective practice as well as the low priority given to it is perhaps not surprising, but it is alarming and frustrating.

All the supervisors described themselves as reflective practitioners. Although their understanding of the precise nature of reflective practice varied, it also developed for each of them over the course of the training. In addition, the supervisors indicated the helpfulness of the Parabolic Loop as a reflective tool. Indeed, this was the most consistently appreciated aspect of the training with Charlie, David, Eric, and Frank all specifically referencing the Loop.

Interestingly, the probationers noted a development in their supervisors' reflective practice to a greater extent than the supervisors after the supervisors had attended the training conference which perhaps indicates that the training had been embedded to an extent and was being employed unconsciously. The supervisors reported a greater understanding of reflective practice, but even after the training there seemed to be little awareness that it is a tool for transformation and perhaps this could be brought out more explicitly in the training.

For the supervisors, there seems to be a degree of resignation, if not resentment, of the necessity to engage in refresher training and take part in the reflective triad because it is demanded by the Ministries Council. "Theological objections to 'management'... may mask resistance to accountability within the organisation itself" (Leach and Paterson 2010, 3). Ministers are notorious for not wanting to be told what to do. There was some surprise on the part of some supervisors that the training was actually useful (Charlie, Eric). For at least one of the supervisors (Beth) there was a feeling of being outside of her comfort zone during the training. For others (Charlie, Anna) there was a sense of affirmation in what they were doing at the training conference. From my

perspective, I have a sense of frustration that supervisors in general do not engage more fully with both the training and the reflective triads; like the candidates, there is a sense that, despite their experience, they ‘don’t know what they don’t know’ (an interesting illustration of the Johari Window ‘blind area’ which is reduced in size by feedback from others (see above, p.104). Having said that, I am aware that it has taken me five or six years of reading in this area and working with these concepts - MBTI, Approaches to Learning, the Parabolic Loop and Approaches to Conflict, - to deepen my understanding of how they work in practice and their usefulness in the supervisory relationship.

The Ministries Council has the responsibility for creating policy, however, it is the responsibility of the Training Task Group, which reports to the Council through the Education and Support Committee, to ensure that the policy is delivered. In addition, in a nice echo of reflective practice, it is the responsibility of the team of supervisor trainers to provide information based on their experience which then shapes the policy. While this is an example of the classic reflective cycle it does omit theological reflection. This should be rectified, particularly as we are engaged in a theological exercise: developing and supporting vocations for ministry.

Reflective practice is widely regarded as a useful tool for professional learning (Bolton 2010; Bradbury *et al.* 2010; Bulman and Schutz 2013; Moon 2004). Theological Reflection is effectively, as noted above, (p.146), ‘faith seeking understanding’. As such, both reflective practice and theological reflection have a place in training for ministry. It is necessary therefore to ensure that supervisors, who have the primary responsibility for the formation of the future minister, are not only reflective practitioners but also able to reflect theologically.

The aim of training, as the supervisor models good reflective practice, is that the probationer will develop this in his or her own parish. However, it is one thing to engage in helpful reflection with a skilled supervisor as a probationer and quite another to take the time as a busy parish minister to prioritise reflection. The probationary year is a privileged time and the relationship generally a supportive one. How does the new minister achieve this in the parish? The hope is that by engaging in good reflection throughout training it

will, by the end of training, have become second nature. The role of the supervisor is crucial in this - not only to model good practice, but to enable it, to pass on tools to achieve good reflection and to lead by example in having their own supervision arrangements.

Notwithstanding these provisos, however, the training in reflection seems to be the most successful part of the training conference. The current training privileges theological reflection in its use of the Parabolic Loop and its application, and this is an area where the training seems to be effective. What can be developed, however, is greater attention to the processes of reflective practice and, in particular, attendant and problematic issues such as power and assessment, circularity of thinking, lack of imperative to action, resistance, and other blocks to effective reflection (see above, pp.135-137). In addition, there is need for greater theological grounding for reflective practice, rooting reflective practice as a discipline in biblical and theological precepts. Currently, the theological justification for reflective practice is simply that we reflect theologically, rather than considering the theology of reflection on practice. This will be considered in greater detail in the conclusion, however, at this point it is worth noting that with a few developments, the training in reflective practice could be more effective.

## Chapter 6 Understanding Ourselves in Conflict and the Practice of Formational Supervision

“The opposite of conflict is not peace but indifference” (Dudley 1998, 119).

### 6.1 Introduction

Conflict has been integral to human interaction throughout history and continues to play a significant role in interpersonal relationships today (Slabbert 2004, 83; Lee 2008, 11). For hundreds of years, human beings have studied issues of conflict resolution. From the 1900s, building heavily on the work of Darwin, Marx, and Freud, the early social psychologists began to consider conflict from the perspective of perceptions, beliefs, values, theology, motivations, and other psychological states (Deutsch 2016a, xvii). During the second half of the twentieth century, social psychological research and theorising on conflict more positively addressed conflict resolution; in the aftermath of two world wars, in the 1950s and 1960s the strategies, skills and competencies which we now associate with conflict resolution began to be developed (Deutsch 2016a; Kriesberg 2009). Whether personal, corporate or international, “conflict is ... one of the major areas of study in organizational behavior and management” (Rahim 1986, 79). It has been recognised that conflict is not only negative; indeed, “a moderate amount of conflict ... is essential for attaining and maintaining an optimum level of organizational effectiveness” (Rahim and Bonoma 1979, 1325). However, conflict is a word with negative connotations, and this is perhaps particularly so in the Church where there is an expectation that we will live in harmony (Psalm 133:1, “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!”).

As Burtonshaw-Gunn recognises, there are several degrees of conflict, indicating both of the level of conflict and the manner in which the conflict escalates.

These are identified as:

- Misunderstandings - these occur by accident and arise from misconceptions about what is said or intended; they are fairly easy to resolve once recognised.

- Differences in values and beliefs - as people have their own principles and sets of values differences can lead to disagreements about organisational objectives and decisions.
- Differences of interest and ambition - groups and individuals have different interests and ambitions which result in competition for limited power, status and resources within organisations; in turn this can lead to conflict.
- Feelings and emotions ... can also be intertwined with conflict, and are often disguised as 'the principle of the matter'. Conflict can arouse strong emotions that lead to further conflict and once emotions are aroused, the sense of proportion can be lost as the conflict escalates. (2008, 151)

Notwithstanding the fact that conflict is so much part of human relationships, it can often take us by surprise. Disagreements and discontent grow slowly and, if not expressed, discussed, and dealt with, may assume greater significance than is either necessary or appropriate. Often, however, the fact that conflict is brewing can be identified by its symptoms. For Proksch these symptoms are:

- Opposition, rejection: The conscious or unconscious attempt to hinder the opponent in the achievement of his objectives, in that work is carried out sloppily or information is not passed on;
- Withdrawal, indifference: The parties concerned lose the motivation to work as well as the need to open up emotionally. This is also referred to as 'inner resignation';
- Hostility, irritability, aggression: The anger that was initially swallowed suddenly and abruptly erupts;
- Intrigue, rumours: Sometimes it is attempted to obstruct and denigrate the opponent with intrigue or rumours, while at the same trying to win people over;
- Stubbornness, unreasonableness: Empathy diminishes the ability to see problems and perceptions from the other's point of view. Personal interests are put before the interests of the company;
- Formality, excessive conformity: In conflict situations, employees show excessive formality and conformity to their superiors;
- Physical symptoms, illness: Conflicts are often linked to physical reactions. The most frequent are headaches, stomach disorders and insomnia. This results in high absenteeism and staff turnover. (2016, 2-3)

However, although we might expect that these symptoms would be obvious to those within the situation, in fact they will rarely be conspicuous. Rather, to identify the fact that conflict was brewing, management would have to be alert to the possibility of conflict and deduce its existence from the extent to which

these symptoms are present. Indeed, “how we manage conflict in our day-to-day lives depends on a variety of factors, but it begins with personal awareness” (Glick-Smith 2007, 20). It requires a degree of perception to recognise the symptoms in others, and courage and wisdom to face the situation and attempt to deal with it.

Given the centrality of conflict to human affairs, it is somewhat surprising that, as Silberman and Hansburgh have observed (2005, 6), “we don’t have many positive words to describe conflict, yet conflict is natural, normal and necessary.” Conflict has many positive aspects: it highlights problems which may otherwise remain unnoticed; it can promote or provoke change which can be positive; it often stimulates creative thinking in the search for a solution. Conflict, when acknowledged and worked through, can actually strengthen a relationship and, indeed, only superficial relationships have no conflict (Proksch 2016, 10). It is arguable that conflict is essential for truly healthy human relationships; as Alan Breck said to David Balfour after their argument in the novel *Kidnapped*, “just precisely what I thought I liked about ye, was that ye never quarrelled - and now I like ye better!” (Stevenson 1993, 181). A quarrel resolved takes a relationship to a new level.

However, to accrue these benefits conflict must be recognised and dealt with and not simply ignored or sublimated. The study of how we manage conflict is, therefore, a crucial part of understanding how we relate to one another. Alistair McKay is a former Executive Director of the Christian conflict mediation organisation ‘Bridgebuilders’, which investigates conflict in the Church and trains leaders and others to deal with it in a way which is transformative rather than destructive. Bridgebuilders in turn draws on the work of the Alban Institute at Duke Divinity School which provides material related to congregational studies and “helps leaders connect and learn from one another by sharing practical wisdom, stories of thriving congregations and transformational models of ministry” (Alban Institute 2017). As McKay recognises (2009, 2), “for most people it represents a change to see conflict as something potentially constructive which offers an opportunity for growth and positive change.” In the Church, an organisation which often displays a deep-rooted resistance to change, this different perspective on conflict may be particularly challenging.

Conflict in the Church and particularly within congregations is far from unknown. McKay (2006) points out that a variety of factors means that members often have a deep emotional investment in their congregation and the way it operates:

- matters of Christian faith go to the heart of our identities;
- Christian communities function like an extended family, with close personal relationships and struggles over relating to the parental figures in the church, and issues around the healthy functioning of those figures;
- the broken nature of those who recognise their need for Christ and become part of the church, and the opportunity that the church can provide for exercising power and influence which may not be available to people elsewhere in their lives;
- the community life of the church has the potential to take on greater significance for those at the centre of that community, because of the breakdown of other social structures in our society;
- the tendency of Christians to avoid or spiritualise conflict;
- unrealistic and idealised expectations of those in ordained ministry;
- a lack of maturity and personal self-awareness among some of those in ordained ministry; and
- a lack of clarity and good process in church decision-making.  
(McKay 2006, 1)

These factors can lead to a high level of emotional intensity over sometimes apparently quite trivial issues, which can make Church conflict difficult to understand and to deal with. Patterson (2006, 1) comments: “church people will commonly deal with conflict as if it is all about matters of principle, when the real driver is probably unresolved emotional pressure”. In addition, he points out: “churches are natural nesting places for damaged people, so the church is inevitably called upon to manage high levels of anxiety” (2006, 1). In addition to these emotional factors, we have to add the complicating factor of theology: “implicit and explicit theologies sometimes compete with one another within a congregation... such beliefs... often surface in strong ways during times of conflict, dividing members” (Carroll 2011, 77). Conflict can also be exacerbated because, in the Church, people are expected to live at peace with one another. This leads to negative feelings being suppressed until this is no longer possible and they erupt. However: “conflict can provide a useful lens into many aspects of congregational life, including culture, leadership, and process” (Dudley 1998, 119). Congregations, like people, react to conflict differently, and understanding this can help to address issues helpfully rather than destructively.



Place for Hope, which offers mediation to congregations all over Scotland, began in 2010 as a project within the Ministries Council of the Church of Scotland (Place for Hope, 2017). That it has now grown to be an independent charity with a staff team of five and a team of fifteen volunteer mediators is an indication that the problem of congregational conflict will not go away. It is apparent, in the experience of Place for Hope, that St Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:18 ("If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all," noted above, p.85), is, for many congregations, an aspiration rather than a reality. Yet Paul's own words "If it is possible" imply that peace with everyone all the time is not a realistic option. We are all different, which means that we are all have different views and different priorities and different personalities. As we have noted, (see above, p.86), some personalities struggle to understand other personalities. Disagreements are inevitable, and it is important that these disagreements are expressed and considered. Everyone has a right to be heard. Moreover, disagreements are not in and of themselves the problem. Rather the problem arises, and conflict happens, when disagreements are not handled well. Sadly, in too many congregations, disagreements are indeed not handled well resulting in conflict between the congregation and Minister, members and members, elders and members, elders and Minister. These situations of conflict are not always apparent to the outside observer and the new minister can, on occasion, find themselves stumbling into, or unwittingly causing, a situation of conflict which takes them completely by surprise.

It is clear from this that, for a probationer, moving into the parish situation and making the transition from being a trainee without ultimate responsibility to being minister in the charge is a significant change. Even when there is no conflict in the new charge (which, we should be clear, is the rule rather than the exception) he or she moves from having personal support and the requirement of formational supervision for approximately ninety minutes at least once a week to the option of four meetings a year with a spiritual director or supervisor (see above, p.32). This change in the level of support places enormous demands on the new minister as they come to terms with their role:

New pastors are surprised by many things when entering their first call - by how difficult it is to discern what their pastoral role actually is, by how overwhelmed they feel by the expectations

placed upon them, by the pervasiveness of the conflict in their congregations, and by how difficult it can be to garner lay support and leadership. Though they feel well prepared to lead Sunday morning worship, they consistently comment on how ill-equipped they feel regarding how to understand and navigate congregational dynamics and decision-making. (Wood 2008, 292)

The probationer, intentionally placed in a highly functional congregation with a very experienced minister, may not have observed congregational politics as a negative phenomenon. As he or she takes up their first charge there is the potential for congregational politics to take them by surprise. Conflict, if or when it arises, can therefore find them unprepared and bewildered (Denniston 2011, 40).<sup>84</sup>

Taking all of these considerations into account, it is vitally important that in a training situation the issue of congregational conflict is acknowledged and explored. Proper introduction to conflict management in the parish situation may help to prevent or alleviate difficulties for the new minister when they later take up their own charge. It is important, therefore, for supervisor and candidate to be aware of the manner in which they approach conflict and how they attempt to manage or avoid it. Moreover, this awareness can also be helpful in facilitating a good relationship between supervisor and candidate. A degree of self-knowledge and an awareness of different conflict management styles may prevent the escalation of any problems that arise.

While congregational conflict is not inevitable, McKay (2009, 7), drawing on research from the Alban Institute, identifies nine circumstances in which congregational conflict is likely to arise. Three of these circumstances relate to conflicts between members: disagreement about values and beliefs, congregational members managing conflict poorly, or disaffected members withholding funding. A further three relate to structures: the congregational structure may be unclear, or may no longer be appropriate to the congregation's size, or lines of communication may be blocked. Finally, in the three which are

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<sup>84</sup> This evidence is gathered from the section of the Ministries Council which deals with the pastoral care of ministers. Staff in this section would report that new ministers in their first charge frequently find themselves struggling with issues of conflict which could have been prevented with a little more self-awareness, wisdom and an understanding of congregational politics. These can all be learned in the practical placement under good supervision.

of greatest concern to this discussion, the minister's role is central: "the pastor's role and responsibilities are in conflict; the clergy and lay leadership styles do not match; the new pastor rushes into changes" (McKay 2009, 7). Anecdotal evidence from the experience of probationer ministers moving into a charge who quickly find themselves in a situation of conflict would suggest that these are accurate descriptions of the causes of conflict early in a ministry. However, these same ministers, as probationers, had often been perceived as cooperative and able, team players, capable leaders, who displayed no sign of behaviour which might later lead to conflict.

### **6.1.1 The Supervisory Relationship**

Given the complexities of a relationship of formational supervision, it is scarcely surprising that on occasion friction may result. In this working relationship, therefore, it is important for each party to understand how the other 'ticks' to minimise the possibility that normal friction, if unaddressed, might develop into something more serious.

Lee considers that "conflict is ... viewed as a situation in which two or more individuals operating within a unit appear to be incompatible" (2008, 12). However, even those who are apparently incompatible in the way they approach tasks can work together quite creatively if each understands the reasons behind the other's behaviour and is prepared to moderate their own behaviour when appropriate. This requires openness and honesty with one another about motivations and feelings; as Saunders recognises (2009, 380), "dialogue is the medium through which relationship is experienced." Constructive dialogue also requires a level of self-awareness and a willingness on occasion to be vulnerable in recognising personal faults and failings or simply difference in the way work is managed. In the absence of these factors dialogue can be destructive and communication and meaning-construction counter-productive. Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2013, 100) suggest that "understanding an interpersonal conflict situation basically involves the study of how two or more individuals approach and manage the message exchange process and the meaning construction process." Where there is a willingness to be vulnerable, to open oneself up to the other, the potential for mutual understanding, respect and, most importantly, trust is increased. Without trust and respect there will be no

vulnerability or mutual understanding. Research indicates that trust is built as partners in the relationship consistently and reliably meet deadlines and commitments, and suggests that “that trust is enhanced if the parties spend time together sharing personal values, perceptions, motivations and goals” (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2014, 117). The aim within the supervisory relationship is to maximise trust and respect so that the potential for conflict is reduced and the best supervision takes place (Denniston 2014, 117). A further aim is that a candidate for ministry is enabled to recognise the signs of rising conflict when in their own charge, and have the skills to deal with it helpfully, preventing unnecessary escalation.

However, while personality seems to be a primary factor in handling conflict, there are other elements which should be taken into account, in particular when we consider the supervisor-candidate relationship. That the nature of the relationship can affect how conflict is approached is supported by evidence from elsewhere. For example, Rahim (1986, 84) found that there was a difference in the style of handling conflict related to individuals’ roles and positions within an organisation: “managers handled their interpersonal conflict with superiors, subordinates, and peers differently. They were primarily obliging with superiors, integrating with subordinates, and compromising with peers.”

Translated into the context of the Church, the supervisory relationship and the probationer’s later charge, this would imply that in the former, where the supervisor to a large extent holds the key to the candidate’s proceeding into ministry, the candidate may well be happy to defer to the supervisor. That same candidate, however, when ordained into his or her own pastoral charge, may revert to their natural conflict management style. Where this natural style is confrontational or competing, this is the model of behaviour which emerges with elders and members of the congregation. Such confrontational behaviour can lead to situations of conflict between minister and members, including the elders who make up the leadership of the congregation.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> A Church of Scotland congregation is governed by a Kirk Session made up of ordained elders. The Minister is the moderator of the Kirk Session and a ‘teaching elder’ rather than a ‘ruling elder’. In reality, the minister has a good deal of influence over the Kirk Session however, the responsibility for governance lies with the ruling elders.

It would be difficult if not impossible for the supervisor to have any chance of either foreseeing or dealing with this while the candidate was in training without some awareness of how he or she was likely to behave when in sole charge of a congregation. It is perfectly possible to postulate a situation in which a candidate appears to be accommodating in his or her role with the supervisor, but displays much more confrontational behaviour when in the more autonomous situation of minister in a charge, post-ordination. The importance of context highlights the significance of a supervisor's understanding both his or her approach to conflict and that of the candidate. This would enable the supervisor to be explicit about their own management of difficult situations within their congregation as a teaching tool, and to support the candidate in finding appropriate ways to express their own approach to situations of potential conflict. Once the supervisory relationship has come to an end the candidate is much better able to deal with situations of disagreement and discord if they have had the opportunity to reflect on how these situations arise and how best to respond to them in the placement. Hence, an understanding of conflict management style is a useful addition to the supervisor's toolkit. This is borne out by Rahim, who suggests (1986, 85):

Training in conflict management should enable organizational members to de-emphasize hierarchical relationships and to use the styles of handling interpersonal conflict to deal with different situations effectively ... Training in conflict management is successful to the extent that the trainees can make effective use of the five styles of handling conflict, rather than hierarchical relationships, to deal with different situations.<sup>86</sup>

In the Church context, where the minister has the role of leader in the congregation, the ability to 'de-emphasize hierarchical relationships' and develop a facility in different styles of handling conflict is a necessary skill.

There are therefore two interrelated aims to alerting the supervisor to both their own conflict management style and to the candidate's. One is to increase both awareness and understanding to enhance the possibility of the parties in the relationship dealing with an issue of potential conflict appropriately, and in

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<sup>86</sup> Rahim's five styles of handling conflict are plotted on two axes: concern for self and concern for others. The five styles are: Dominating, Integrating, Obliging, Avoiding, and Compromising.

a manner which will diffuse rather than inflame the situation. The other is to enable the candidate to be better and more thoroughly prepared to move to his or her own parish.

## 6.2 Conflict Management Styles

Our instinctive response to conflict is “fight or flight” (Proksch 2016, 3). While this may have served our ancestors well, it is inappropriate and inadequate in today’s conflict situations and often leads to an escalation of conflict rather than a resolution. We need “not to follow first impulses and instead to press the pause button. That means gaining time for a considered reaction” (Proksch 2016, 4). For most of us, this is a skill which must be learned. Kraybill (2013, 13) identifies five approaches to dealing with conflict: Directing, which he categorises as “I win, you lose”; Cooperating, “I win/you win”; Avoiding, “I lose/you lose”; Harmonizing, “I lose/you win; and Compromising, “I win some, you win some.”<sup>87</sup> Everyone will tend to favour one of these approaches over the others when they encounter conflict. While these descriptions seem to indicate that cooperating is the most effective style, in fact it is more helpful to have access to all the styles in order to use the most appropriate to the particular situation. Kraybill points out that it can take a long time to achieve a win/win solution and there are occasions when a decision has to be made quickly (directing). Equally, there will be times when the issue is not important enough to argue about and avoiding is the appropriate style to adopt. The key to successful conflict management is flexibility: having a facility in each style and knowing when to use it (Kraybill 2013, 9).

In the study of how individuals approach and deal with situations of conflict “it is generally accepted that conflict management styles would differ per situation/person” (Slabbert 2004, 86). Kilmann and Thomas (1975, 973) highlight the value of a Jungian analysis of dimensions of personality in understanding individual approaches to conflict, finding that they are “exceedingly useful in

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<sup>87</sup> Kraybill’s axes are: ‘focus on the agenda’ and ‘focus on the relationship’, as opposed to Rahim’s: ‘concern for self’ and ‘concern for others’. These axes produce five styles according to Kraybill/Rahim as follows: Competing/Dominating, Collaborating/Integrating, Accommodating/Obliging, Avoiding/Avoiding, and Compromising/Compromising. The two models are different but correlate well with each other.

predicting and explaining the effects of individual personality differences on these interpersonal dynamics.”

The results of Kilmann and Thomas’s research showed that while the *Sensing/iNtuition* element of personality made little difference to the individual’s approach to dealing with conflict, there were clear differences when taking into account the *Thinking/Feeling* element. Those who were strong on Feeling tended towards a cooperative or accommodating approach and were less competitive. Conversely those who were more predisposed to Thinking and analysis as a decision-making tool tended more to assertiveness with a lesser propensity to empathy or identification. Similarly, the *Judging/Perceiving* distinction had little correlation with conflict management style, beyond the fact that there was a greater tendency for Perceivers to be accommodating, while *Introversion/Extraversion* was clearly related. Those who scored highly on Extraversion were more inclined to be integrative, assertive and cooperative, tending towards collaboration rather than avoidance, while those on the Introversion scale tended towards avoiding (1975, 975-978).

These results are echoed, to some extent, in my own research. Of the eight who have a preference for Feeling (Anna, Beth, Charlie, Eric, Katie, Laura, Margaret, and Patricia) seven are avoiding/collaborating with only Charlie describing a confrontational approach. However, of the four who have a preference for Thinking (David, Frank, Neil, and Owen) three report a more conciliatory approach than Kilmann and Thomas would suggest, with only Owen reporting as confrontational. It is perhaps significant that David, Frank, and Neil are Introverts while Owen is an Extravert. Indeed, the results for Extraversion/Introversion were much more closely aligned to Kilmann and Thomas’s research. Of the eight Introverts in the research pool Anna, Eric, Laura, and Neil are avoiders; David is conciliating /compromising; Katie expressed her dislike of conflict but prefers to have it out in the open; Frank described himself as passive-aggressive, which would relate to avoiding, and Beth, although she is now collaborating, was clear that she has become so over a number of years in parish ministry in response to her realisation that her tendency to avoid was unhelpful. As she commented, “*I would say that I’ve moved because I suspect I was probably like Laura [avoiding] at the beginning*

*and I would never have dealt with conflict, in some ways I still don't deal with it, I've just learned different ways of working round it.*" Conversely, of the four Extraverts in the group, Charlie and Owen are confrontational in their approach to conflict, while Margaret is collaborating but more confrontational than she expected and Patricia is collaborative. It would seem, as Kilmann and Thomas note, that the Extraversion/Introversion dichotomy is the most significant in terms of approaches to conflict (1975, 978).

Guerrero points out that "cognition is vital in the interpretation of emotion-eliciting events, including conflict" (2013, 108). This cognition should include an awareness of how both the self and the other in a relationship are likely to approach the issue of conflict, but also an awareness that "many problem behaviours ... are due to personal fears and needs or displaced anger towards someone else" (Silberman and Hansburgh 2005, 15). A wise supervisor has the capacity to understand that there is a great deal going on beneath the surface and to promote self-understanding on the part of the candidate by insightful and judicious questioning (Ward 2005, 160-165; Foskett and Lyall 1988, 119-124). This process is rarely straightforward and can be challenging on several levels: identifying the problem in the first place; knowing how to enable the student to reflect helpfully; enabling a greater degree of detachment and deeper understanding of the dynamics of the situation. The process can also be problematic in that "conflict provides a context that often intensifies negative emotion, thereby making cooperation more difficult" (Guerrero 2013, 108). This puts a significant burden on the supervisor who may have to deal with his or her own emotions as well as those of the candidate. As the more powerful partner in the relationship however, it is the responsibility of the supervisor to take the first step in attempting reconciliation. In other words, given that the supervisor has a duty to manage the candidate: "in a conflict situation, management is responsible for ... taking the necessary steps [to resolve it]" (Proksch 2016, 28).

This however requires a significant degree of personal security and self-awareness on the part of the supervisor in making his or herself vulnerable to the possibility that resolution will not necessarily bring about the result that he or she desires. It requires acceptance of responsibility for aspects of the conflict and there are skills in constructing a mediating conversation. As Proksch



discusses, such a conversation relies on active listening, paraphrasing, I-messages rather than you-messages which seem to apportion blame, meta-dialogue which enables parties to discuss the conflict on an abstract level, and goal orientation which keeps the end result in mind (i.e., what do both parties wish to achieve out of this conversation?) (2016, 61). There is no room here for the language of right and wrong; rather there is an opening up of the issue to discover where the common ground lies and how a mutually acceptable solution might be achieved. Although the relationship between supervisor and candidate differs from that between minister and congregation where there may be neither the possibility nor the necessity for two-way reflection, nevertheless the skills and attitudes required in managing congregational conflict are similar. In the congregation, the minister becomes the non-anxious presence, accepting responsibility yet avoiding language of right and wrong. The supervisor then, in dealing helpfully with any supervisor/candidate conflict, models good practice for the trainee minister.

### **6.3 Theological Considerations**

Conflict is a theological issue. Peace is a fundamental aim of the gospel, and in the new heaven and the new earth, “the wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them” (Isaiah 11:6). In the New Testament, “the person of Jesus [is] central for its approach to ... social ethics” (Thiessen Nation 2006, 51). The birth of Jesus heralded a new age of peace, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!” (Luke 2:14). Nonviolent resistance was a significant factor in his ministry, and certainly of his last days. His message of grace and forgiveness is one that lies at the very heart of reconciliation, while his command to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us is a strategy for conflict resolution rather than escalation (Matthew 5:44). As Thiessen Nation points out, “we are Christians. The shape that our peace-making assumes, and the approach we take to conflict transformation, is determinatively shaped by the community that worships and serves the God revealed in Jesus Christ” (2006, 55). Of course, there is a counter strand in Jesus’ ministry, indicated by his comment, “do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:34), and his violent overturning of tables in the temple

(John 2:15). However, these rather confirm the fact that conflict is inevitable and not necessarily negative; it is not conflict *per se* which is the enemy of peace, but how we deal with it.

In the pursuit of peace, we have to deal with conflict. There is no space here to do proper justice to a theological consideration of conflict, nevertheless, it is important to recognise the place of theology in our exploration of the issues presented by an analysis of dealing with conflict. Related as it is to our personality, the manner in which we deal with conflict is an ontological issue. “As Christians, we often hold a theology (whether implicit or explicit) that conflict is wrong or sinful, instead of understanding that conflict is neutral and that it is our responses to conflict which may be sinful or godly” (McKay 2009, 2). St Paul seemed to understand this: “Be angry but do not sin” (Ephesians 4:26). He also encourages us, (as noted above, pp.85, 168), “if it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18). There are two equal and opposite dangers here. One is that we allow conflict to poison relationships and this is what St Paul enjoins us to avoid. The other is that in our attempt to maintain peace, we suppress conflict. This is equally unhealthy. St Paul recognises that anger can be a positive thing and a force for good, if it is expressed helpfully and not destructively. We all struggle in our relationships with others on occasion and sometimes the more closely we work with other people the more difficult we find it to live at peace with them as our differences - different priorities, different views and different personalities - become a source of tension in the relationship. Yet these very differences are a gift to the Church. It takes the whole body of Christ, in all its myriad expressions, to reflect the image of God in which we are made. Our Father’s many mansions imply that there is room for all our differences (John 14:2). From a biblical perspective, disagreement is not a problem, rather the problem lies in the way we might deal with it.

If we can grasp the fact that conflict can be positive, then comprehending our approach to conflict - which in turn determines to a large extent our response to it - enables us to begin the process of analysing whether our response is sinful or godly, helpful or unhelpful. In considering this, “one’s core identity is not likely to change, but our identities grow every day through experience, and seeing

ourselves through others' eyes can cause our identities to develop" (Saunders 2009, 381). This development can be the difference between war and peace as we learn how to interact with others in a way that uses conflict as a healthy tool for growth rather than an unhealthy weapon for the gratification of selfishness and manipulation.

## **6.4 The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory in Supervision Training<sup>88</sup>**

There are several models for understanding conflict management styles. Lee points out that to simplify the handling of conflict, "researchers in social psychology and organizational behavior have proposed models that reduce the myriad tactics of conflict handling styles" (2008, 12). Such models enable us to navigate the complexities of conflict management in day to day life and enable the acquisition of helpful strategies and behaviours to manage or prevent conflict. Supervisor training in the Church of Scotland currently uses the Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory as its preferred conflict management style analysis tool. This has much in common with the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Instrument, which is "the most common measure of conflict styles" (Olekalns 2014, 358). Both are based on the same framework, a managerial grid model developed by Robert R. Blake and Jane Mouton (1964) which relies on five managerial styles plotted on a grid based on two axes: concern for people and concern for production. Kraybill developed this management model into a similar grid of which the two axes are 'focus on relationship' and 'focus on agenda' (Kraybill 2011, 4-5). Both the Thomas-Kilmann and Kraybill instruments have the advantage of being easily understood. Analysis of the individual's conflict management style is by use of a questionnaire to identify responses to conflict, distributing these within five general modes of operating: directing or competing, cooperating or collaborating, avoiding, harmonising or accommodating, and compromising, (Kraybill 2011, 6, see above, p.178). This makes both instruments useful and accessible in enabling novices to understand

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<sup>88</sup> See Appendix XII for the Kraybill Conflict Styles Inventory

both how people deal with conflict in general and how they respond in specific conflict situations.

The instruments rely on a forced-choice measure of behaviour, offering respondents a simple choice between statement 'A' and statement 'B' which are evenly matched for their social desirability. Forced choice instruments are designed to guard against the possibility that the answers respondents gave will be influenced by a socially acceptable answer rather than a true reflection of their behaviour (Kilmann and Thomas 1977, 312).

The five modes can be plotted along horizontal and vertical axes. They depend on the balance between focus on the relationship (cooperation), which privileges the concerns of the other, and focus on the agenda (assertiveness), which privileges the concerns of the self: "competing is assertive and uncooperative, collaborating is assertive and cooperative, avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative, accommodating is unassertive and cooperative, and compromising is intermediate in both cooperativeness and assertiveness" (Kilmann and Thomas 1975, 971-972; see figure 6).

Kilmann and Thomas argue that "one of the advantages of this classification scheme is that the five specific modes reflect several more basic dimensions of interpersonal conflict behaviour" (1975, 971). This is borne out by other analysts and researchers: Lee (2008, 13: citing Rahim and Magner 1995, 122), suggests that "evidence from confirmatory factor [analysis] concludes that the five-factor model has a better fit with data than models of two, three and four styles orientations".<sup>89</sup> The importance of this for the practice of supervision can be seen when the various styles are analysed in the context of a supervisory relationship. Drawing on a wide range of the work of other researchers, Lee (2008, 14) notes that the supervisor who "exhibits integrating, compromising, and obliging styles [is] more prone to foster ... cordial dyadic relationships among

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<sup>89</sup> Confirmatory factor analysis of data (from 5 samples) on the 28 items of the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory ... The results provided support for the convergent and discriminant validities of the subscales measuring the 5 styles of handling interpersonal conflict (integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising) and general support for the invariance of the 5-factor model across referent roles (i.e., superiors, subordinates, and peers), organizational levels (top, middle, lower, and non-management), and 4 of the 5 samples (Rahim and Magner 1995, 122).

superiors and subordinates. These styles are related to an effective conflict management.” Moreover, further research indicated that “dominating and avoiding [supervision] is linked to negative effect on subordinates’ satisfaction” (Lee 2008, 15).

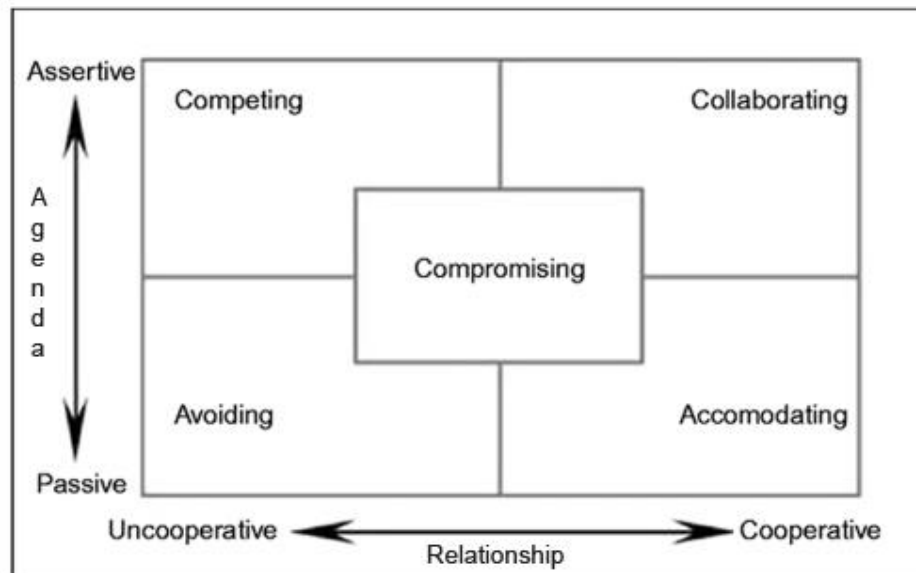


Figure 6 Conflict Styles graph

The importance of understanding this dynamic lies in fostering the ability of supervisors to work against type when necessary, and therefore increase their capability to perceive and apply appropriately a particular conflict management style in supervision. This leads to increased functionality of the supervisor-candidate relationship by understanding and observing “whether [conflict] manifests as functional and contributes to personal ... growth, or whether it is dysfunctional and impedes ... performance” (Slabbert 2004, 84). Where this is explicit and understood, it becomes more possible to negotiate “expected behaviours [which] may be necessary to provide both parties with a comfort zone to sustain their interaction” (Lewicki and Tomlinson 2014, 118-9). This negotiation is most helpful at the beginning of the relationship, before any situation of conflict can arise. Supervisors who state clearly what is expected of the candidate and who give positive as well as constructive feedback are more likely to have a positive effect on the candidate’s learning (Denniston 2014, 112).

### 6.4.1 The Interviews

Both supervisors and probationers had reflected a good understanding of their approach to conflict during the first round of interviews. Nevertheless, the session on approaches to conflict was a popular one, with a number of supervisors and probationers reporting renewed or expanded understanding of the issues, as well as taking from the conference ideas for renewing or developing their practice. None of the probationers or supervisors indicated that they would change their practice as a result of the sessions, but they did think that they had a better understanding of the effect of their practice and of the possibility of using a different approach when the situation warranted it.

In terms of the results of the analysis, Margaret was surprised that she was more confrontational than she had anticipated while Patricia was surprised that her profile was so flat; she scored almost equally in all five aspects but overall was collaborating. Given her personality, ENFP, which is very people-orientated, and considering her previous employment in a large organisation which required her to be quite strong and forceful at times it is possible that she has learned to operate against type to the extent that it has now become part of her conflict management style. Charlie and Owen were the only two who described themselves as being confrontational, while Anna, Eric, Laura, and Neil identified as avoiding. Anna, however, said that she would deal with conflict when necessary, while Eric said he tended to have a long fuse but would eventually erupt. David described himself as conciliatory/compromising while Frank described himself as passive-aggressive although he said that he tended to be a peacemaker with others. Katie admitted that she didn't like conflict but that she would prefer to have it out in the open rather than hidden and unacknowledged.

In terms of the supervisory pairs, Owen, who self-identified as confrontational, was paired with Eric who self-identified as avoiding; they are also very different in personality, sharing only one letter in their MBTI profiles. They reported tension in their relationship and it is possible that if Eric had been more confrontational there might have been a greater degree of friction. Charlie, who self-identified as confrontational, was paired with Margaret who found that she was more confrontational than she had thought, however their personality

profiles matched. Again, we might speculate that if this had not been the case then the confrontational personalities might have clashed. Anna, who self-identified as avoiding, was paired with Katie who doesn't like conflict but prefers to have it out in the open; they shared three out of four aspects in their personality profiles. Beth, who is collaborating, was paired with Laura, who is avoiding, and they share personality profiles. However, Beth indicated that she has become collaborating over the years and her natural instinct would have been avoiding. David who sees himself as conciliatory and compromising was paired with Neil who quite clearly self-identified as avoiding; they also share personality profiles. Finally, Frank described himself as passive-aggressive which, while not one of the Kraybill categories, suggests an avoiding personality who might, if pushed sufficiently far, become confrontational and directive. He was paired with Patricia who is collaborative. While they only share one letter in their personality profiles, and reported a degree of tension in the relationship, Patricia's conflict style inventory produced a very flat profile, implying that she could work equally comfortably in any of the styles. Her collaborative score was only marginally higher than the rest, but this was probably a contributory factor to why the tension in the relationship never seemed to be at risk of developing into real conflict.

Anna describes her approach to dealing with conflict as being one of avoidance until she can no longer circumvent the situation, at which point she becomes quite forceful. This is illustrated in her approach to dealing with difficulties in a relationship with a candidate (not her current probationer):

*Sometimes I've had to deal with candidates ... constantly not turning up on time, so I start off quietly saying, can you just watch your time. Is that a helpful thing to say? I don't know because I have in my head ... what I mean is, you're late, so maybe I need to say you're late, but I don't want to upset them, to make them feel as if they're being criticised.*

However, this approach, Anna confesses, is not always successful and it is possible that her gentle approach does not sufficiently convey the strength of her feelings about the issue. Perhaps a better understanding of how different personalities prefer to receive feedback would enable Anna to be more precise in offering instruction regarding her expectations. However, when it came to

offering feedback on specific tasks Anna was clearly able to offer constructive critique:

*Katie began a sermon the other day by talking about the Israeli/ Palestinian conflict and the congregation spent the first few minutes going 'whoah!' And I was able to say, 'what you said was fine in terms of politically and theologically it was on the ball, but you started in the wrong place', so I would always try to put something positive in as well as the negative.*

Patricia was taken aback by the amount of conflict in the Church, although she says this has had a positive outcome:

*I suppose the thing that took me most by surprise, and I suppose it was maybe my naivety was the amount of conflict in the Church ... It was something I did not expect, and so that I suppose a lot of that coloured how I thought and so to looking back to my ... initial assessment ... and I remember one of the scenarios and I almost couldn't change my thinking in it, and ... I think that the conflict thing has made me far more aware of really how other people see things. So, it came out positively.*

Margaret, with the greatest pre-entry experience of ministry, was well aware of the impact of different personalities on team work, and commented, regarding a previous work situation: *"There was a fair amount of conflict because of personalities. There wasn't so much [conflict] in terms of teaching or methodology or what you were teaching or whatever but there was definitely with personalities."* Neil, who was clear that his conflict management style was avoidance, illustrated this in his comments about his second placement:

*At [my second placement] I sometimes felt, ... I don't know if I'm doing everything I'm supposed to be so I started asking periodically, is there anything that I'm doing that I shouldn't be doing and is there anything that I'm not doing that I should be doing and that's something I suppose that I've continued in.*

In the spirit of his avoiding personality, Neil took responsibility for asking for feedback rather than tackling his supervisor over the lack of it. While this, on the face of it, seems to be a helpful way of opening up a conversation, it is far from satisfactory in terms of supervisory practice as it is the responsibility of the supervisor to offer feedback. Neil's approach is congruent with avoidance;



rather than indicating to his supervisor that he wasn't getting enough feedback, Neil used the less risky strategy of simply asking questions.

Beth was aware that, while her instinctive approach to dealing with conflict had not changed, that her approach in practice was not the same as her instinct, which would be to avoid, (see above, p.182). The fact that her probationer has a similar approach to Beth's instinctive approach has shown Beth the extent to which she has developed coping mechanisms over the years:

*Laura is very definitely, stand at the back and hope it will sort itself out. I was like that but seventeen years has taught me that sometimes you have to be proactive, it just gets worse, and I think it's useful to see that, because my first instinct would be to go and find the corner and curl up, but I think Laura has seen that although I start from that point, I get to the point where I see right we now have to deal with this.*

Laura confirmed this:

*So, I did know how I dealt with conflict but I did find that quite helpful because I avoid conflict so that was actually quite useful to have that written down, it helps to explain why. And the different styles, I could identify different people in my life that use different styles. If I see somebody with a different style I usually admire them, if they do it well, if they don't do it well you think ooh! Yeah, I think that's a thought for the future, trying to find out another way of doing it ... I don't think [Beth] would avoid it as much as I do, I think she would probably head towards it more often. The conflict course was good for that in seeing that is part of life, to get your head round thinking that it can be a good thing.*

Charlie, who came out as confrontational in style, commented, "If a candidate wasn't happy with something I would want them to share it, as with me, if I was unhappy with something, if it was something that they were doing, ... I would bring it out in a way is constructive, you know, as opposed to berating someone." Margaret was aware of the differences between her approach and her supervisor's, despite the similarities in their personalities, although the differences are not large:

*I think his way of dealing with things and my way are slightly different, I will let things go up to a point and thereafter you grab the bull by the horns and you sort it out. For me I think sometimes people think, 'she'll be fine, we'll just keep pushing here', and*

*there is a point at which, [I think] I'm sorry but it's sorted out and that's it.*

Eric was self-deprecating (this was a feature of Eric's self-analysis throughout the interviews). He said, *"I think I'm too lax with [candidates]. I don't demand enough of them, and I don't call them to account maybe, when things are not as I would like them to be. So, yeah, I tend to avoid conflict with [candidates]."*

This was borne out by Owen, who commented:

*I would prefer to have it out in the open but Eric doesn't, so ... I don't think for the benefit of the placement it would be good to have forced [the] issue... At times, as a probationer I would quite have quite liked it if he'd said, 'here's the line'. He's probably more what I want him to be now than he was at the beginning.*

Anna and Katie had discussed the conflict session and found it useful to compare styles. Anna had considered that she was a bit of a weakling when it came to conflict, and she said that Katie thought herself to be quite strong in dealing with conflict; however Anna reported that she had discovered through the 'Approaches to Conflict' session that she *"wasn't quite such a weakling, and I think Katie discovered that she wasn't quite so strong, and actually there's not so much of a problem being a weakling because we are constantly negotiating and compromising and having to carry people along with us."* Katie's comment was, *"I think, you know, I'm more confrontational than she is, and more ... aggressive is the wrong word, but I do like things to be out in the open, so I say things, or I have said things, in the past, where I think oh I shouldn't have said that."*

Neil, although he had approached the MBTI session with some suspicion was very positive about the 'Approaches to Conflict' session:

*I found the questionnaire quite helpful because I'd never even thought about some of the categories before and the different approaches. I think David and I were slightly different in how we handle conflict but again I think avoidance was always quite high on my scale, and again I was able to look at my supervisor and see how in situations he identified areas of friction early and dealt with them before anything happened. It's good to be able to reflect upon that, with the questionnaire on how you handle conflict so I found that particularly useful, and particularly*

*bringing it up at an early stage in probation and then just being on the lookout for these situations.*

Clearly, from the responses to the session and from the individuals' analysis of their conflict management style and description of working practices this is a helpful session.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Given that conflict is part of human relationships it has the potential to be an issue in the supervisory relationship. Even if it is not, and a supervisor and probationer enjoy an amicable fifteen months, a good training will prepare a probationer to deal with conflict in a constructive and helpful way when they are in their own parish. In fact, it can be problematic if a candidate in training for ministry at no point observes any conflict as they go into their first charge unprepared; this was borne out by my original research into candidate training (Denniston 2011, 40). Clearly "people are unlikely to engage in conflict unless they perceive something is at stake" (Guerrero 2013, 108). In the congregational setting, many people have a deep emotional investment in maintaining the status quo; this is their comfort zone. Occasionally, however, there will be congregational members for whom change is the only option; this is their comfort zone. This can lead to problems for the minister, who may be dealing with two factions whose agendas are incompatible; it may particularly become a problem if the minister is instinctively more sympathetic to one side than the other. The problem is then that "when people become so focused on resolving the one issue most important to them, they pay less attention to what is going on around them, and may not have the ability to consider the perspectives of others" (Hayes 2011, 112). The emotional investment that individuals have in 'their Church' may come as a shock to a new minister leaving him or her struggling to cope with the conflict which ensues. If they have neither witnessed, nor had the opportunity to practice, strategies for conflict resolution, or if they have not been given tools to deal with these situations, they may quickly find themselves overwhelmed.

In dealing with conflict, Saunders points to a helpful distinction between debate on the one hand and dialogue on the other:

In debate, one's purpose is to make one's viewpoint prevail, so one listens to other positions only to identify shortcomings in the argument so as to attack them. In dialogue, one's purpose is quite different - to listen to others' views while suspending judgement, recognizing that others' views may deepen one's own thinking and that two sides together may move more deeply toward common ground. (2009, 378)

Dialogue, properly conducted, is good communication. While the key to prevention of conflict, or resolution to conflict once it has begun, is good communication, it is surprisingly difficult to achieve. Burtonshaw-Gunn (2008, 157) suggests six principles which aid good communication:

- See the perceived difficulties as opportunities for creating something new.
- Accent the positive: stage your outcome in positive terms.
- Create an evidence procedure: how will I know it when I see it?
- Institute a measurable outcome.
- Use assumptions: when doubt and distrust are present, check assumptions.
- Get curious, ask questions to gain new information.

In engaging in dialogue, therefore, there is a real desire to see the situation from the other perspective. "What distinguishes dialogue as a process for conflict resolution is the space and encouragement it provides to talk deeply over time about dangerously divisive elements in a relationship" (Saunders 2009, 380). Currently, training for supervisors majors on identifying the trainees' own conflict management style and inducting them into other styles; the importance of good communication is not part of the seminar, although communication issues are referred to elsewhere, for example in the session on Approaches to Learning, (see above, pp.122-123).

We have already considered the difficulty of using management principles in an ecclesiastical context, (see above, pp.12-13). However, perhaps particularly in dealing with conflict, there are helpful concepts which may be adopted:

Applying good management principles in building quality relationships with people will help to prevent or at least lessen conflict. In spite of the best efforts at prevention, conflict does arise. The secret is to learn to cope positively with conflict, and not to see it as an enemy to peace, but an opportunity for growth in relationships. (Lee 2008, 12)

From my research, it would seem that the current training offered in conflict management styles is both appropriate and helpful. It could be more helpful, in that a ninety-minute session can offer only a limited introduction into a very complex issue. In addition, great connections with the session on personality would enhance the learning, (see above, p.173). Nevertheless, creating an awareness of the issues and helping supervisors and probationers to better identify their own approach is a good beginning.

## Chapter 7 Conclusions

“Our vision of ministry, and of leadership within it, should not begin with any picture of heroic activity on the part of those who minister, but of deep and abiding receptivity and attentiveness.

To minister is to be acted upon by God, to be caught up in what God is doing in and through us” (Higton 2016, 189).

### 7.1 Introduction

While on the one hand Christians believe that Jesus is the full, final and perfect revelation of God, on the other hand there is also the paradox that, constrained by the limitations of mortality, we can never fully know God; that is a privilege which awaits us beyond the veil (1 Corinthians 13:12). There is therefore, a sense in which God is in the process of constantly revealing himself while we do our utmost to comprehend the revelation. As Francis notes, “the key notion in the Christian tradition concerns revelation, the way in which God is revealed and made known to men and women. What counts as revelation, however, is itself a highly debated issue, as is also the subjectivity of the recipients of revelation” (2005b, 58). Francis (2005b) argues that many academic disciplines other than theology are fit for use as tools in the study of revelation, including psychology. While Francis here refers to God’s revelation of God’s self, it is equally the case that in getting to know ourselves, in seeking revelation of that unknown part of self which the Johari window illustrates, (p.104), whether known to others or known only to God, disciplines other than theology are helpful tools. As John affirms: “you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (John 8:32, see above, p.84). That this is indeed the case has been an underlying assumption of this thesis. It is not an assumption born out of investment in the psychological tools discussed, but rather a recognition based on the experience of over ten years of using such tools and observing their worth. The purpose of the research was to ascertain whether this experience was echoed by those involved in the training and therefore to assess whether the supervisor training as it is currently configured is worth pursuing, honing and refining or whether it needs to be completely redesigned.

In this chapter, I will reflect on my methodological approach and its successes, as well as its limitations. I will consider, in turn, the Myers Briggs Personality Type Instrument®, understanding our approach to learning, reflective practice including theological reflection, understanding ourselves in conflict, and assess the usefulness of each for supervisor training in formational supervision. I will also consider, in summary, my learning throughout this process. Finally, I will evaluate the conference programme as a whole, identifying areas where the training could be improved, making suggestions for development, and indicating further research possibilities.

## **7.2 The Methodological Approach**

In weaving my tapestry, I have discovered that some threads have been of greater significance than I anticipated, while others have been less so.

In assessing the training offered to formational supervisors, I restricted my analysis to the tools currently offered in training: MBTI, approaches to learning, reflective practice and theological reflection, and approaches to conflict management. I did not consider in any depth the literature pertaining to other forms of supervision such as clinical supervision or pastoral supervision; rather I considered, in the main, literature specifically relating to formational supervision. Therefore, in the body of the research I was not comparing formational supervision with pastoral supervision. Nevertheless, as the research advanced, the differences became more apparent, and these will be considered further in section 7.7, *The Learning Journey*, (pp.196-198).

The size of the research pool proved to be a good decision. Six supervisory pairs, each member of which was interviewed both before and after the supervisors attended training, (see above, p.56), amounted to twenty-four interviews in total. This gave a significant amount of data for the purposes of analysis. In addition, within the spread of six supervisors, it was possible to reflect the diversity of ministry within the Church of Scotland, in terms of gender, age, theological position, and geographical location. A good spread of gender, age, and theological position was also apparent in the pool of probationers.

The semi-structured interview proved to be a good tool to gather the data about the experience of supervision both from the perspective of the formational supervisor and that of the probationer. Through this method I was able to gather useful information relating to the topics under discussion: MBTI, approaches to learning, reflective practice, and approaches to conflict management. From the data I was able to deduce that the training as currently configured is an improvement on what was previously offered, however I did not ask the supervisors for a comparison with their previous training and with hindsight this perspective could have been useful. David, however, offered the comment that the training this time was: *“very different, first time was a day conference if I recall, and there wasn’t that much ... practical stuff.”* My sense that the training represents an improvement on previous models of training is based both on my experience when I took on the role of delivering training and on the fact that all the supervisors indicated that parts of the training were useful, and new to them (see above, pp.59-60).<sup>90</sup> Given that my aim was ‘to discover whether the tools currently offered by the Ministries Council in Supervisors’ Training work in practice’, (see above, p.49), the semi-structured interview gave me sufficient data, especially when combined with autoethnographic reflection, to make an informed judgement on the success or otherwise of the training.

As noted above, (p.59), making the decision to interview the supervisors of probationers meant that none of the supervisors came to the training completely fresh. This undoubtedly affected their response to the training. However, the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is longer and more intense in the probationary placement and therefore gave more opportunity for the probationers to notice changes in their supervisors’ practice. One of the most interesting things I discovered was that the probationers were more aware of their supervisors’ development than were the supervisors (see above, p.157). In addition, as I hoped, the comments of experienced supervisors have been helpful; their reflections have enabled me to evaluate both the usefulness of the tools offered in the training, and the effectiveness of the training. I have discovered that the tools are indeed useful but that the training needs to be

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<sup>90</sup> In 2005 when I took up my role with the Ministries Council, training was a short, day conference, (see above, p.33).



more focused in order to induct supervisors into the most effective use of these tools.

In conducting and writing up the research, autoethnography proved more significant than I had anticipated. My years of experience, both in training supervisors and working with candidates for ministry, became a useful tool to contextualise and deepen the findings from the interviews. It also enriched the data findings, providing depth and colour which complemented the results of the interviews. I began this project assuming that autoethnographical information would be at best peripheral. However, in the end, it became central, although it remained subordinate to the data arising from the interviews.

### **7.3 The Myers Briggs Type Indicator® in Formational Supervision**

That this had the potential to be a controversial session as has already been noted, (see above, p.71). However, the supervisors seemed ready to take part and there was no sense of resistance at the conference; rather the cohort of trainees displayed an interest in what was being said. Indeed, Beth suggested that, *“[training could be improved by doing more on] all the personality stuff, I wonder if there might be something worth, allowing you to work out how you would work with other groups, [with] somebody who is you know, the complete opposite, I didn’t feel there was a lot of inter-relational stuff.”* What Beth suggests makes a great deal of sense but due to time constraints on the conference there is no time to do more than introduce the issues.

The supervisors were asked at the conference to discuss their MBTI profile with the probationer and compare notes to identify areas where they are similar and conversely where there may be the potential for difficulty or friction. Some of them clearly did this, while others did not. David and Neil were aware that they had the same personality type as were Beth and Laura. Anna and Katie were aware of their similarities and commented on the overlap in their personality type. Charlie and Margaret had not compared notes but were aware of their similarities, while Eric and Owen, who had also not discussed their MBTI profiles explicitly, were nevertheless aware of their differences. Patricia and Frank were also aware of their differences, and Patricia put that down to their personalities

whereas Frank had a tendency to assume that differences arose from the fact that Patricia was already very experienced before she came into probation, and therefore had her approach to ministry already formed. David, Beth and Anna saw the value in MBTI in enabling them to quickly get to know the probationer. Eric also, although he was less enthusiastic about it, used it to some extent to understand Owen. Margaret was particularly positive about MBTI, having used it in a previous employment situation where she found it of immense value in containing possible causes of friction by pre-empting any clash.

There was evidence from the research that an understanding of personality is helpful in the supervisor probationer relationship (see above, pp.90-96, 97-100). One interesting result of the research was that the supervisory pairs which struggled most with the relationship were the ones whose personality profile overlapped to the smallest extent. After the training, Neil, who had had a degree of cynicism about it, admitted its usefulness and Owen, who displayed a typical resistance as a self-confessed rebel, may also have found it useful given the extent to which it described the differences between his personality and his supervisor's. Others - Beth, Anna, Katie, Margaret, Patricia, and Laura - were enthusiastic about it, finding it very helpful.

Given this, there is good reason for continuing to include it in the training conference.

## **7.4 Approaches to Learning in Formational Supervision**

As noted above, (pp.123, 127, 128), this was the least popular of the sessions. There are a number of factors which may be the cause of this. Learning styles theory is much less well-known than personality typing or approaches to conflict and although this session did not deal with learning styles, it fell into that category and was dealing with information that was less readily accessible to the trainees and concepts that, unlike MBTI or approaches to conflict, are not yet so much in the public domain. However, despite being less popular (and this should not be overstated; it was not unpopular, simply not as much appreciated as the others) important issues are raised in this session. For example, the competency ladder is a useful teaching tool, and the Johari window, as well as being a helpful illustration, displays a theological truth. In addition, questions of

communication are dealt with, including the use of open questions in supervision, the need to listen more than speak, and the extent to which we can be misunderstood because of our assumptions. These are all important issues to highlight to the supervisor; as the powerful person in the relationship it is incumbent upon the supervisor to take responsibility for ensuring, as far as it lies within his or her power, that the relationship with the candidate runs smoothly.

This session also offers an opportunity to explore some of the difficult issues which arise in the mentoring role. Eric despairs of the task of training candidates: *“That’s one of the things I would say, I find [students] coming into church situations with definite fixed ideas and approaches. I didn’t have that when I was a [candidate], I was very much a blank canvas, but I don’t see that now.”* Supervisors often blame themselves if a candidate refuses to learn. As we noted above, (p.60), only twenty five percent of candidates are likely to be enthusiastic about their learning, while a further twenty-five percent will see no need for any formal ministerial formation through the training process and so will be resistant to learning. The remaining half is capable of being engaged and it is imperative on the learning process to facilitate this.

Whilst in some ways this might seem an obvious session to cut from the programme, it offers the opportunity to raise issues which would otherwise need to be raised elsewhere. In addition, it has become apparent in researching the literature on learning and teaching that these are complex tasks and the supervisors should not be expected to be effective teachers without some training, therefore, it seems that some induction into teaching is required. The question is, how can this session be improved to deliver more effective training in the area of teaching and learning? One possibility would be to abandon the questionnaire which has always been problematic and thereby have more time available for practical exercises.

## **7.5 Reflective Practice and Theological Reflection in Formational Supervision**

This was the core of the conference, and although some supervisors were initially suspicious (Beth, David), the general feedback was that the sessions were useful. Anna found that it affirmed her practice which was based on the

model of her own supervisor when she was probationer: *“I think I had such a good supervisor when I was a probationer that I’ve employed a lot of his tactics, and they’ve done well.”* She describes reflective practice as a regular part of supervision sessions but done in a conversational fashion rather than as intentional reflective practice: *“Mostly, it’s been sitting down chewing the fat and analysing situations and understanding why people do what they do and understanding what our role within lots of different contexts is, school, Kirk session ... the folk at funerals.”*

A major problem of the use of reflective practice in formational supervision is a tendency for the supervisor to assume that they know all the answers and to slip into anecdote instead of problem solving. Experience has shown that effective “practitioners ... are not by definition effective teachers ... Their accounts of the past do not raise awareness; we need exercises to do that” (Meertz 2009, 649). In any situation of dissonance, my solution is not your solution, and the responsibility of the supervisor is to assist the candidate to find their own solution. Only after this should they ground it through reference to their own experience. The sessions on reflective practice, like the session on approaches to learning, endeavour to persuade the supervisors to avoid unhelpful anecdote (‘what I would do is ...’) and to allow the candidate to come up with their own solutions to the issues they are facing. The aim of ministerial formation in the Church of Scotland is to create reflective practitioners, collaborative leaders, and formative learners (Ministers of the Gospel 2000, 2.4.5.3 - 2.4.5.5). Therefore, the sessions on theological reflection are a basic requirement in training for formational supervision. In addition, the supervisors clearly found the Parabolic Loop a useful tool. Notwithstanding this, and the fact that several of the supervisors found these sessions specifically helpful, there is room for improvement, such as more opportunity to practice the use of the Loop in developing skills of reflection.

## **7.6 Kraybill Conflict Styles Inventory in Formational Supervision**

This was a popular session, and in that sense, it was the least controversial. Most of us understand conflict to the extent that we experience it in our daily living and so, in this session, there was no sense of overcoming cynicism or any other

barriers or resistance. The trainee supervisors were open in discussing their approach to conflict as well as their experience of conflict. There was an understanding that conflict is part of Church life, perhaps precisely because so many of us have experienced it in Church life. It is also clear, given the experience of Place for Hope, (see above, p.168), that congregational conflict, if not increasing, is rising to the surface. It is therefore even more important to give new ministers the tools to engage helpfully with conflict. To do this, a key factor is that supervisors are also given these tools and trained in their use. To that extent, it seems clear that this should be retained as part of the training conference, although there remain questions about delivery and specific content in order to make the session more effective, in particular linking the session more effectively to that on personality, (see above, pp.173-175).

## **7.7 The Learning Journey**

In this research, I set out to discover whether or not the training currently offered by the Ministries Council to formational supervisors was fit for purpose. Although, when I began this project, I had a sense that formational supervision and pastoral supervision were different and that therefore different training and different literature would be required for each discipline, I believed that there was a significant overlap between the disciplines and that the differentiation would be a matter of detail. I did not consider at the outset that a comparison of the two disciplines was necessary. At this point in the journey, having completed my process of evaluation, I have made discoveries about formational supervision which have led me to believe that there is in fact a significant difference between the two disciplines and it is the overlap that is a matter of detail.

The point at which I began to pinpoint the difference between the two disciplines was in the recognition of the role of ‘gatekeeper’, (see above, p.40). I had been aware from the outset that the assessing role of a formational supervisor set it apart from the role of a pastoral supervisor, however, I had struggled to articulate this distinction in a manner which gave sufficient weight to the role. In July 2017, in conversation with a friend who is a minister and an experienced pastoral supervisor, I heard the word ‘gatekeeper’. This immediately seemed to resonate with the role of assessor I had been seeking to

articulate and I suspected might help me to delineate this aspect of the role more clearly.<sup>91</sup> On researching the role of gatekeeper I found a body of literature which gave a clear description of the task and nature of the role.<sup>92</sup> The term 'gatekeeper' highlights the fact that the assessing aspect of the supervisor's role in formational supervision is not simply one of commending or otherwise the candidate in training, but carries with it a concomitant responsibility to the college of professionals to which the candidate seeks entry. This makes a significant difference between formational and pastoral supervision, as, in the latter, the supervisee is already a member of the college of professionals.

In writing up my research, I also became aware of the significance of the supervisor's role as line-manager. A formational supervisor has a responsibility to ensure that work is being carried out and the learning covenant adhered to. It is part of the weekly task of supervision to receive reports on work done and delegate work for the weeks to come. This is another important difference between the two roles; while a line-manager may on occasion act as an employee's supervisor, a pastoral supervisor does not normally act as a supervisee's line-manager, (see above, p.25).

My own experience of pastoral supervision served to highlight further differences between the two roles. As noted in the Introduction, (p.28), in pastoral supervision the supervisee is responsible for bringing the work to supervision. However, in formational supervision, while the candidate or probationer may well bring some aspect of their work for reflection, the supervisor may also require the candidate or probationer to reflect on some aspect of work that the supervisor has observed.

A further difference relates to the pattern of meetings. A pastoral supervisor meets with his or her supervisee approximately once a month for an hour. A formational supervisor has a responsibility to meet with the candidate or probationer on a weekly basis, often for up to two hours. In addition, the supervisory relationship is time-limited to the duration of the placement,

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<sup>91</sup> Journal entry, 14 July 2017

<sup>92</sup> For example: Corey, Haynes, and Moulton, 2003; Ziomek-Daigle and Christensen, 2010; Demyan, Abraham and Bui, 2018;

whether that is ten weeks, nine months or fifteen months, depending on the stage of training. Except in the case of an irretrievable breakdown of relationship or a significant change in circumstances, neither supervisor nor supervisee can end the supervisory covenant before it comes to its planned conclusion.

A final difference between the two roles is the extent to which they are pedagogical experiences. While the pastoral supervisor is certainly encouraging the supervisee to learn, in formational supervision there are specific skills to be learned and tasks to be completed before the end of the supervisory relationship. These are defined by the Ministries Council and are non-negotiable. There is, therefore, less freedom in formational supervision for supervisor and supervisee to shape the relationship.

These differences between the two manifestations of supervision have been confirmed to me as I offer my own pastoral supervision to my supervisees. It is quite clear to me that what I am engaged in is very different from formational supervision although it often has formational aspects. The formational supervisor has a complex task with many elements which set it apart from pastoral supervision and require that the training for the role is also very different, indeed, my experience of both confirms to me that neither can be a substitute for the other.

## **7.8 Critical Analysis of the Conference Programme**

Having considered the various aspects of the conference, I now turn to consider the conference as a whole. Whatever each of the supervisors made of the various individual sessions, the overall effect of the conference was to improve their understanding of the task of supervision. Charlie was very explicit in his comments:

*I think it's ... made clearer... I'm much more aware now of what is expected of me as a supervisor ... It's not just simply getting alongside someone and encouraging them along the way, it's helping them to discover, you know, to inform their ministry. I do think the process is much improved ... I'm more confident in knowing this is what I'm meant to be doing.*

He also commented that his congregation and Kirk Session assume that a probationer is like an assistant and was relieved to hear at the conference that, *“if you do your job properly it’s more work.”* Anna affirmed this, although she went on to say: *“[I heard] the phrase at some training ... probation should be carbon neutral, so what you give out to a probationer you should get in from a probationer, and that’s been absolutely the case.”* This is in stark contrast to a comment from a trainee supervisor to one of the trainers at a recent conference, *“this is overkill for what I’m being asked to do”*.<sup>93</sup> That trainee, I suspect, falls into the category of not knowing what he or she doesn’t know.

Margaret felt that overall Charlie’s practice of supervision had improved after the training, *“Yes definitely, because I think to begin with he didn’t give an awful lot of feedback, for example, on sermons, and to be honest, he still doesn’t give a huge amount, but if there’s something he will say.”* On the other hand, she remained frustrated because, *“he wasn’t very good at showing me where his personal life and his family life fitted into his work.”* This highlights the fact that there is a role for transparency in supervision. During my Masters research, a candidate reported to me that her supervisor said he was *“going to take the back off the television and let [her] see how it works”* (Denniston 2011, 40). This is the level of openness and vulnerability that is required if supervision is to properly fulfil its purpose in preparing probationers for parish ministry. While the course aims to make this clear to supervisors it is an intensive course with a great deal of information and not everything can be assimilated, retained, or put into practice. Laura saw minimal change: *“I think, because [Beth has] done other training as the years have gone on, I think it means that when she comes back she is more focused as to what she needs to do, so she might ask me a question that she wouldn’t have asked before, but it’s not changed greatly.”* There is a sense in which it is to be expected that supervision would not change radically after the training conference, given the level of experience and the gifts and skills that the supervisors were already bringing to the task; however, it is interesting that most of the probationers reported a sharpening of the supervisor’s practice after the conference. Some of the supervisors also noted a sharpening of practice, although given that fewer

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<sup>93</sup> This comment was reported to me by one of the supervisor trainers at a Supervisor Trainers Meeting in The Tron Church, 8 February 2017.



supervisors than probationers made this comment, it is possible that some supervisors were not aware that they were putting the training into practice.

Eric commented that his understanding of the role of supervisor has changed, *“although I don’t know if I would be able to do it any better because of my psychological profile, I think I would hope to be more directive than I have been with a [candidate].”* Clearly Eric feels he is insufficiently directive. Owen would say that Eric’s practice had changed after the training, *“Yes, actually after my six-month review, we did tie down supervision much more, so it was happening more than at the beginning, and that did make a difference.”* He also commented on Eric’s openness to being challenged, *“that element of him challenging himself through what others are saying, it’s good, it means you can discuss things.”* Nonetheless, as noted above, (p.126), Owen would have liked more structure and less freedom in his probationary placement.

Patricia also commented that her supervisor seemed to understand more about the process of supervision after he came back from training. *“He certainly changed his views on certain things after he’d had the training, and he said he’d got a better understanding of what was this was all about. He said when he took it on he hadn’t appreciated it was quite as involved as it was.”* Patricia was also aware of the role of the candidate in the learning process, *“it’s not just your supervisor, you’re a [candidate]; if you have a really good professional working relationship there is so much that you can get out of it.”*

While there was no radical change of practice on the part of any of the supervisors after the conference, all of them reported that they had got something out of the experience. For Beth it was increased confidence, *“I probably would say I’m about 7/10 [now] because the reality is it’s a learning process because you got to work out the candidate as well, and that in itself is a huge task.”*

For Frank, the paperwork provided was very helpful, consistent with his approach to learning, which is to reflect: *“I thought the course work was very well laid out, and if I was looking for information, that’s where I’d find it, so in terms of the course materials which you issued I thought they were extremely*

*helpful.*<sup>94</sup> He also pointed out that the conference was very intense, *“I mean in the course of the conference you’re throwing a lot at people so you don’t digest it all, on the other hand you go away with the material which you’ve been through so it’s always there.”* This highlights one of the main problems of the training; how to cover all that needs to be covered within the time frame, whilst ensuring that trainees absorb the information as opposed to suffering from information overload?

For David, it was a useful reminder and encouragement: *“I would say it certainly improved my practice. Would I have managed without it? Probably, yes. So, it did what I guess it was intended to do, which is refresh rather than say you don’t know how to do it and here’s how to start.”* He pinpointed the reflective triad as *“the most helpful aspect of the training,”* on the basis that it was facilitated by someone:

*...who’s come in having thought a lot about the process of training and thought a lot about the theory of what we’re doing as well as the practice ... so that you are sitting with someone who was saying something a bit more helpful and profound, I thought that was very good.*

He also thought it compared favourably with earlier training experiences:

*The first time was a day conference if I recall, and there wasn’t that much ... as opposed to, well, ‘This is the meat and drink of what you do as a supervisor, and so we’re going to come back to this again and again and again.’ Which we did in our small groups, coming back again and again ... I could have thought it was frustrating or we did this yesterday, but actually, having done it two or three or four times now, I see the merit in having returned to the same principles again in what essentially felt like pretty similar sessions. It’s probably telling that the things that stick in my mind are the practical sessions.*

Anna really enjoyed the training, *“I found the training conference very helpful simply from a ministerial developmental point of view, and from personal developmental point of view.”* She felt affirmed in what she was already doing,

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<sup>94</sup> Each supervisor, as well as a Supervisor’s Handbook, available online from the Church of Scotland website, was provided with a pack of handouts, including printouts of the PowerPoint slides, for each module over the course of the three days. See Appendix VII for a note of Frank’s approach to learning.

rather than feeling the need to make radical changes: *“I don’t know that I’ve changed very much in what I do, but I’ve probably had a good think about why I do what I do, and thinking I’m quite happy about what I do.”*

Owen compared his current supervision with previous supervisors:

*I did not like my first supervisor’s style; ... she was my best supervisor but it’s only in hindsight that you think that because she did ask the difficult questions. When I was going through my experience with her I didn’t necessarily enjoy it as much, but with hindsight I learned more there, and it was much more meaningful than other placements.*

He was aware that her constant questioning made him think more deeply about what he was doing than his other supervisors had done: *“It’s not comfortable at the time ... but knowing that it’s coming makes you think a lot more about it than just [telling your supervisor] everything is fine.”*

Each of the supervisors found that meeting with others in the same position and having the opportunity to discuss with people of different levels of experience was a vital part of the learning process. As Meertz observes, “mixed groups are very fruitful: young learns from old and vice versa” (2009, 653). Beth commented, *“I think it was good to be with other people who were having to supervise.”* Frank was equally positive about this: *“I mean in the course of the week the interaction with other supervisors is always a helpful part too ... you’ve got other people in the same boat and meeting other people with more experience which is a good thing.”* Anna was clearly open to learning, and she found that at the conference, *“a lot of the journey ... has been a personal growth journey, affirmation of my character and the way I do things, a few questions of myself, a bit of a recognition that oh, this is quite a good thing and that’s not a very good thing.”* She also commented that having a probationer had been a two-way process of learning. This illustrates formational supervision at its best. When the probationer is able and open and the relationship between supervisor and probationer is good the supervisor finds having someone on placement is a spur to deeper reflection, and it therefore becomes a learning journey for supervisor as well as probationer.

Given that these experienced supervisors found aspects of the conference helpful, it seems safe to assume that a new supervisor would be equipped by the training, as noted above, (p.60). However, as has been stated, (pp.99, 129, 163, 188), there is room for improvement and I now turn to the recommendations.

## 7.9 Recommendations for Development

The task of the formational supervisor is a complex and demanding one. Currently, ministers are trained in formational supervision through sessions over a period of approximately forty-four hours. The research for this thesis has convinced me that this is inadequate.

A more effective training conference would last between four and five days. Over this training period learning could be more helpfully embedded as the conditions for deep learning could be encouraged, (see above, pp.110-111). Such conditions include: greater involvement of the trainees in the learning process through more time for practical exercises rather than input. Time to engage in several sessions of theological reflection practice and result in a deeper embedding of the Parabolic Loop, identified as the most useful tool to come out of the conference, (see above, pp.153, 156, 157, 161). It would give greater opportunity for other practical exercises and individual reflection, dealing with the problem that so much information is communicated in such a short space of time. It would enable a deeper exploration of the effect of personality on teamwork building on Beth's suggestion that it would be helpful to reflect on the interaction between personality types, (see above, p.192). The concept of the formational supervisor as a 'gatekeeper' was a new insight gained while engaged in research (see above, pp.40, 196-197). This is a useful term, encapsulating one of the unique aspects of formational supervision as against other forms of professional supervision. It highlights the importance of the assessing role and would be a useful addition to the teaching materials for the conference.

I have reflected (in chapters three to six) on the necessity to be more intentional about the theological basis for the tools offered in training. I began this thesis by proposing that this is a Kingdom Project; we are engaged in transformational leadership and partnership in the *Missio Dei*. This is, therefore, a fundamentally theological venture and so the theology must be explicit rather

than implicit. To some extent this is simply about communicating in theological language rather than in managerial language, however it would be helpful in each session to communicate at the outset the theological basis for the content of the sessions. This would communicate to the trainee supervisors that the training is not uncritically buying into the use of managerial tools, a perception which can be a stumbling block, (see above, pp.12-13).

Theological reflection is not well understood, (see above, p.135). Apart from the reflection in triads, any theological reflection at the conference is contained mainly within worship, which is led by the trainers and is not necessarily related to the topics being studied. It might be helpful, in encouraging theological reflection, to tailor the worship more specifically to the work of the conference. Theological reflection might also be integrated into teaching the sessions, modelling more effectively the principles being taught.

In my delivery of much of the training, I have found myself drawing on my experience of the student body and the experience of both candidates and supervisors of the supervisory relationship. When questions arise in training my answer would not be, "Well, this is what I think" but rather, after having sought opinions from the trainees: "We had that situation once before and this is what happened". The purpose of such references to experience is not to provide definitive answers to problems but to give life and breath to theory. At one recent conference, I attended the session on MBTI and while the facilitator delivered it extremely well; what was missing was that evidence which grounds theory in practice. Given that learners often struggle to relate classroom learning to real life, practical examples are a helpful way to communicate theoretical truths, (see above, pp.19-20).

I have noted, both over the years of delivering the training and during the research (notably Beth's ambivalence about the conference), the extent to which personality affects the way in which we engage with training, (see above, p.100). It would enhance the training element if different personality types were more intentionally taken into account in constructing the training experience. At a basic level, this means enabling sufficient time for reflection, and including downtime for those who identify as Introverts, while ensuring that those who identify as Extraverts can engage in corporate reflection. It may also mean, for

example, ensuring that the overall context and aim, or the 'big picture' is made clear for those who have a Perceiving preference, while sufficient detail is delivered for those who have a Judging preference.

At one conference during my research I had the responsibility to deliver the sessions on MBTI, Approaches to Learning, and Understanding Ourselves in Conflict. This experience confirmed my discoveries in researching chapters three, four and five; that these issues are interlinked and personality lies at the root of them all, (see above, pp.99, 100, 127-128, 173). Therefore, it would be helpful if all three sessions could be delivered by the same person to ensure a level of continuity as well as highlighting the thread of personality through sessions. Alternatively, those delivering sessions on Conflict and Learning should draw as far as possible on insights from MBTI in order both to construct the sessions in a way that is helpful for people with different personality preferences and to highlight to the supervisors the extent which personality affects everything.

It should be made explicit that the conference itself is an exercise in reflective practice. If trainee supervisors could be encouraged to approach the whole event from this perspective the learning process could be significantly enhanced.

One of the major frustrations of engaging in training is the difficulty of enabling deep learning to take place (Moon 2004, 95-98). This is partly related to the fact that the supervisors, in common with candidates, are not always aware of their status on the competence ladder; in other words, they do not always understand where the gaps in their knowledge lie. However, this could also be related to resistance to learning, due to the significant experience of ministry that the trainee supervisors bring to the conference and the reluctance to return to the status of novice or trainee. In addition, it could be due to the difficulty of properly learning something that you cannot immediately put into practice, or simply the huge amount of information in a variety of disciplines that the training attempts to communicate in a very short period of time. This is the most difficult of the issues to address. It requires much more study of adult learning and further research into the effect of the training, perhaps considering the experience of new supervisors who have not previously undergone training and have no experience of supervising a candidate for ministry. One possibility

would be to run a series of day conferences over the course of a year, but this has other potential problems such as lack of continuity if someone misses a session or the danger of forgetting everything from one session to the next. Moreover, this might prove a more expensive way of training given the increased amount of travel.

Finally, as has been noted, (see above, pp.18, 37), supervision is a task for which not everyone is gifted. Currently, although trainee supervisors submit written exercises and are observed in theological reflection, there is no formal process of assessment. If this task is as important as I believe it to be, ministers should not assume that anyone has the gifts and skills to be a supervisor; some assessment of calling to the role would greatly enhance the process. In addition, good practice suggests that supervisors themselves ought to be supervised. As the report on Supervision Policy to the Methodist Conference of 2017 points out (2.2):

There has been a growing sense over many years of the need for structured supervision for all those engaged in pastoral work and particularly for ordained ministers ... for the sake of ministerial wellbeing at a time of diminishing resources and great challenges in mission and thus for the overall good of the Church. Structured supervision is also for the sake of supported, reflective practice that is able to identify emerging challenges and discern strategies to address them within the horizon of God's justice and love.

The report goes on to suggest that supervision might be a key tool by which the Methodist Church might become a more effective agent of God's mission. This could apply equally to the Church of Scotland. While supervision is currently in place for supervisors of probationers, (see above, pp.158), it should be instituted for supervisors of all placements, and could be more robust even for probation supervisors.

### **7.9.1 Summary**

To summarise, recommendations for development are:

1. To allocate more time to the conference to enhance the quality of the training.
2. To introduce the concept of the supervisor-as-gatekeeper to the training.

3. To be more intentionally theological, both through using more theological language and through prioritising the theological basis for the training in the delivery of the sessions.
4. To create an experience of worship that becomes a journey of reflective practice throughout the conference, drawing on the insights of the training that is occurring.
5. To ensure that teaching, when it happens, is firmly rooted in the context, i.e. supported with evidence from ministerial training and the candidate experience.
6. To ensure that the conference design gives sufficient weight to each of the different personality types in terms of action and reflection, input and downtime, etc.
7. To enable better connections between the sessions, and to make explicit the obvious connections between the session on personality type and the sessions on Approaches to Learning and Understanding Ourselves in Conflict.
8. To frame the conference as an exercise in reflective practice from beginning to end.
9. To consider at greater depth the dynamics of adult learning and whether the conference is a helpful context for deep learning to take place or whether a different model of delivery, encompassing the same elements, would be more successful.
10. To institute a process of assessment of the role of supervisor and to ensure good standards of supervision are offered by establishing a more intensive programme of supervision of supervisors.

## **7.10 Further Research Questions**

It is clear in delivering the training that “practitioners, researchers and trainers do not communicate at the same level” (Meertz 2009, 648). Each category of stakeholder has different priorities and therefore, to some extent, speaks a different language. As a researcher, I am aware of the scope of the various disciplines explored in the training to be transformative if they are properly understood and the skills to use them well developed. It is with a sense of frustration that I read about the transformational possibilities of understanding personality at a deeper level, for example, as I am aware of the difficulty of



communicating this outwith the context of a dedicated training event. In researching these areas, I have become aware of my own ignorance and therefore the ignorance of others who I am expecting to use these insights as a tool. As a trainer, I see the necessity of communicating complex ideas as simply as possible. I do not have the luxury of the researcher to explore widely and deeply. I am also aware, as a trainer, that I am dealing with people of different levels of understanding in each of the sessions, and with different levels of willingness to be challenged and to develop their own understanding. As a practitioner, I am busy getting on with the job of parish ministry and I do not have the time, nor often the inclination, to become an expert in any of these areas. Therefore, I need to be given the information that is useful, and only the information that is useful. Superfluous information is wasting my time. Apart from the training in theological reflection, the conference operates as an introduction to the various tools and the trainers' hope is that supervisors would be sufficiently interested to continue their own education in the various disciplines after the end of the conference. Realistically, however, this is unlikely to happen when set against the background of the busyness of parish ministry.

This leads me to conclude that there is scope for further research in terms of adult learning and effective training methods. The shape and content of the conference could be honed to deliver a more effective learning experience if those with responsibility for the delivery of the training had a more sophisticated understanding of how adults learn and what factors are significant in enabling learning.

## **7.11 Conclusion**

In my introduction, I noted that throughout the research I would bear in mind three questions:

- 1) What constitutes formational supervision?
- 2) To what extent does an understanding of personality types, approaches to learning, and awareness of conflict management styles along with theological reflection assist in effective supervision?

3) Can appropriate skills be taught, and tools given to supervisors, enhancing the quality of their supervision?

In researching this area over five years, and being a practitioner in training for over ten, I have come to the following conclusions about these questions:

1) Formational supervision, in common with other types of supervision, is a safe space where the trainee can reflect, learn, experiment, laugh, grow, and worship. However, there are a number of significant differences between formational supervision and pastoral or clinical supervision, as outlined above, (pp.27-28). These are: the role of gatekeeper and the element of assessment, the significance of line-management, the responsibility for bringing work into the supervisory space, the time limited nature of the relationship and the frequency of meeting, the significance of teaching and training in the relationship, the complexity of the relationship including the scope and nature of the tasks under scrutiny and the extent to which the parties have ownership of the relationship over and against prescriptions from the Ministries Council, (see above, p.39). This makes the role of formational supervisor an exceptionally complex one for which training is necessary if it is to be done to a standard which meets the challenges of preparation for ministry in the Church of today.

2) I began this project with a conviction, based on my experience of receiving and organising training and an awareness of the practice of other Churches, that the training in formational supervision currently offered by the Church of Scotland was good, but could be improved. My research, both in terms of the research pool and my wider reading in these areas, has confirmed me in this perception.

In terms of the research pool, it was clear that most of my interviewees saw the potential in an understanding of personality, (see above, p.99). Equally, all were aware of the value of reflective practice and valued the opportunity to explore this further, (p.135). Although the session on approaches to learning was met with less enthusiasm, some insights were gained into personal approaches to learning, (p.125). The session on approaches to conflict management was well received and its insights appreciated, (p.181).

In addition, my wider reading has persuaded me of the value of these disciplines in enhancing the pedagogical experience. The extent to which research into learning and conflict referred to MBTI was in itself instructive, and my own experience has indicated that factors of personality are crucial to the success or otherwise of a placement.

The extent to which an understanding of these disciplines aids effective supervision is difficult to measure however my research has confirmed to me that such understanding is useful in promoting that self-awareness which underpins all good supervision, (see above, pp.24, 37, 44, 46, 98, 115, 116, 122, 135, 175).

3) The various tools offered to supervisors as aids to supervision cannot by themselves guarantee a good experience of supervision for the candidate, but they can enhance it. Used intentionally they have the capacity to enrich the experience from good to great where the trainee finds the learning experience tailored to their needs.

Excellent tools can be given to supervisors, who can be trained in their use. It is then up to the supervisor to use them. Appropriate skills can be honed or taught, however, this is much harder to do effectively, as this thesis has demonstrated, (see above, pp.108, 162). However, that does not mean that it is not worth making the attempt; the stakes are too high. In these challenging times, our ministers need the best preparation possible for parish ministry and must see transformational leadership modelled if they are, in turn, to become transformational leaders.

A vocation for ministry is a precious thing.

It is clear that both within the Old Testament chosen people of God, and among their Gentile co-inheritors in the New, there is room and need among the people for particular leaders, whom God enlists for special tasks ... it is for the sake of the many that the few are commissioned, and to ensure that the ministry entrusted to the whole is faithfully fulfilled. (Panel on Doctrine 1985, VI.i)

The reformers developed a doctrine of a secular call to service, but even in the midst of this “were emphatic in recognizing the distinctive nature of the

ministry as the Calling *par excellence* ... a 'high' doctrine of the ministry as a Calling is bred in the bones of every true Presbyterian" (Forrester 1951, 197). This is illustrated by the almost priestly view of ministry held by members of congregations throughout the Church of Scotland for whom the minister, in some fashion, represents Christ (Storrar 1990, 88). For many members, there is a sense that somehow the minister, without saying a word, is symbolising Christ and therefore brings blessing and sanctification just by being there. Indeed, "in churches where ... laity lead the worship ... and even preach when the pastor is on vacation, there is still a recognition that professional clergy are somehow special" (Christopherson 1994, 227). Bell and Maule suggest that in the New Testament, "Jesus, when he summoned people to follow him, asked them to go on a journey of risk and adventure. ... It was *en route* to where they did not know that they discovered what they should be doing" (1985, 3). This description of the experience is one that would be familiar to many of our candidates for ministry, and indeed our supervisors, as they seek to follow their call faithfully.

It is a high calling, with a significant degree of responsibility noted by James in his letter to the twelve tribes: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). This applies as much to those who would supervise candidates for ministry as it does those who present for ministry of Word and Sacrament; supervision is also a calling. Indeed, it carries an even greater degree of responsibility in its relationship to the primary calling:

The ministry is the vocation of vocations, not because of any sacerdotal privilege, but because it is the representative calling, the minister is ... set apart ... to be the unique and representative person, to minister to the elect, and to demonstrate in one person the unity of all three meanings of vocation, election, mission and the dedication of daily life. (Forrester 1951, 202-3)

The one who wishes to be a formational supervisor, therefore, aspires to a task that is complex as well as rewarding, demanding as well as satisfying, challenging as well as fulfilling. Supervisors have the responsibility to enable the candidate to develop their sense of vocation while at the same time enabling critical reflection on that vocation without undermining the sense of call. To be a formational supervisor is a difficult balancing act between operating as line-

manager, pastor, counsellor, spiritual director, coach, mentor, gatekeeper and, occasionally, even friend. It calls for a wide variety of skills and a significant commitment to the task.<sup>95</sup> Given this, it is important that those engaged in the task of formational supervision are as well-equipped as possible and supported in the task to a significant degree. As such, training and support of formational supervisors ought to be a priority for the Church today. The Ministries Council is to be commended for the investment of time and resources into this most important of roles; however, it would be regrettable if the principles of reflective practice, adopted as significant for ministry in its widest sense, were not also brought to bear on the training for supervisors. It is to be hoped that the examination of the process of training would continue, and that reflection on the content and delivery would be an ongoing activity on the part of those responsible for ensuring delivery. The research has shown that the current structure of the training conference is good; it has also illustrated that it could be better. It is the responsibility of the Ministries Council to ensure that the training is as rigorous and as enabling as possible; the pursuit of excellence is the key. Our ministers, our congregations, and our Church deserve nothing less.

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<sup>95</sup> See Appendix II, Person Specification: Supervisor.

# Appendix I: Training Programme for Church of Scotland Candidates

## Education and Training for the Church of Scotland Ministry

[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/ministries\\_council/education\\_and\\_support/education-and-training](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/serve/ministries_council/education_and_support/education-and-training)

Having successfully completed the enquiry and assessment process, candidates for any of the ministries of the Church of Scotland have to undertake a comprehensive programme of training and formation. This comprises three strands; academic requirements, a conference programme and a series of practical placements. The precise nature and content of these varies according to the particular ministry. This applies to candidates for ministries of word and sacrament, the diaconate and the readership.

### **Academic requirements**

For each ministry, there is a core curriculum approved by the council and offered by designated academic providers. The course followed will depend on previous qualifications and the ministry for which the candidate is training.

### **Conference programme**

A series of conferences with a comprehensive programme of seminars dealing with various topics related to ministry is provided as part of the formation programme for each distinctive ministry. Topics covered include worship, leadership, preaching, pastoral care, issues of abuse, Church law, and an exploration of different forms of ministry such as chaplaincy and funerals. All candidates undergo speech training and a course in safeguarding (formerly child protection).

### **Practical placements**

Candidates for any ministry within the Church of Scotland have to undertake a series of practical placements during which they are attached to a local congregation under the supervision of a trained and accredited supervisor. These placements vary in length and some are full-time, depending on the course of formation being followed. All supervisors are given full training, including in-service, and are well supported by the staff of the Ministries Council in this most important task.

### **Ministries Training Network**

A 2-hour meeting monthly from October to May, offset against placement time. Small groups of 6 - 8 candidates organised geographically.

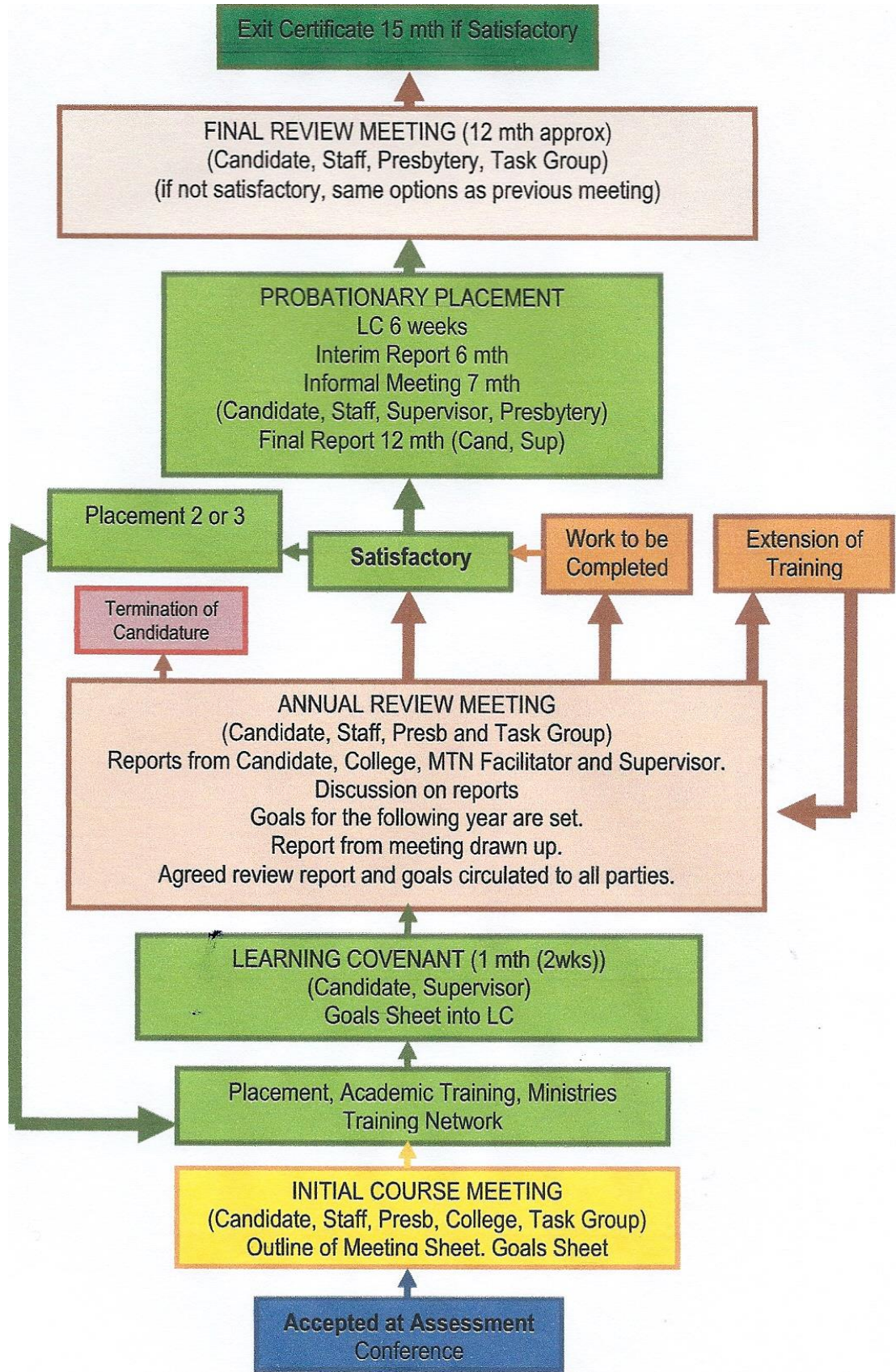
Worship led by each candidate in turn and by the group facilitator when necessary.

One verbatim/case study from each candidate including appropriate scriptural references (in each month one would be provided for discussion, analysis and reflection and biblical reflection).

### **The review process**

Once candidates for the ministries of Word and Sacrament or the Diaconate have been accepted, they are subject to a process of regular review. This is the process by which the council and the nominating presbytery assure themselves that all aspects of training have been completed in a satisfactory fashion. No candidate can proceed to the next stage of training for either of these ministries without the previous year having been commended at the annual review. A final review is conducted and must be completed satisfactorily before candidates can seek a charge or appointment.

THE ROUTE TO MINISTRY - CANDIDATURE TO EXIT CERTIFICATE



## Appendix II: Person Specification - Supervisor

### MINISTRIES COUNCIL SUPERVISION TRAINING PERSON SPECIFICATION: SUPERVISORS

#### Task Description

The Ministries Council is looking for people with appropriate skills to offer themselves for assessment and potentially training to engage in supervision as part of the training of candidates for the ministries of the Church. As an indication of the requirements of the role, the following principles have been identified.

Supervisors will be expected to:

- Meet regularly (generally weekly) for at least one hour, uninterrupted, with the candidate during the placement – this should be given high priority.
- Give ample and appropriate opportunity for the candidate to experience the variety of tasks of ministry
- Give honest and constructive feedback on the full range of ministerial activities, including preaching and public prayer
- Engage in theological reflection with the candidate
- Be flexible in response to the specific needs and experience of the candidate
- Submit clear and full written reports timeously
- Liaise with the appropriate Ministries Support Officer
- Attend all required training
- Engage in a process of self/ peer/ and external assessment

#### Skills and Aptitudes

Supervisors are expected to display the following attributes:

- To be disciplined about personal prayer and reflection
- To be a reflective practitioner with an ability to help the candidate integrate theory with practice
- To be open to new learning and make time for study and reflection
- To have a good level of self-awareness and be able to be appropriately vulnerable
- To be committed to a collaborative style of ministry
- To accept differing theological positions and work creatively with them
- To allow a candidate to develop their own style of ministry
- To have demonstrated good skills of ministry within their own parish or setting e.g.
  - Is responsive to the specific and unique needs of the parish or setting
  - Has developed a strategy for outreach and engagement with the community
  - Is consultative within the leadership structures of the organisation
  - Has successfully managed change with the setting
- To be able to give and receive constructive feedback
- To be committed to giving time to the task and the training aspects of the placement



- To be organised and has an ability to write critically and with sensitivity in an open-reporting system, following guidelines for report-writing and meeting deadlines
- To be willing to give and receive supervision in the task
- To have an ability to set measurable goals and assess whether and to what extent they have been attained

## Appendix III: Candidature Review Process: Indicators for Assessment

SUPERVISOR'S HANDBOOK, CHURCH OF SCOTLAND MINISTRIES COUNCIL, p8

These indicators are used throughout the processes of assessment and training for all candidates throughout the Church of Scotland. The qualities and skills named here are not all of equal importance, nor is the list comprehensive, but it does give supervisors a guide as to the areas to consider when drawing up the final report.

**There is no suggestion that each candidate must meet all indicators!**

The indicators can also be used to identify any areas which could be developed as the formation process continues. The 6 main areas will form the basis of the report discussed at the Review Meeting. This is held at the end of each academic year, and a decision is made jointly by Presbytery and the Training Task Group as to a candidate's continuing suitability. The supervisor's report makes an important contribution to this meeting.

Each of the 6 areas is listed below, along with suggested indicators.

### **Integration of Life and Faith:**

*How and in what ways does the candidate bring together the different parts of life under the heading of spirituality? In what ways has their background and life experience influenced them and brought them to this point?*

The candidate:

- shows commitment to a Christ-like form of service;
- displays a degree of integrity of word and action;
- exhibits balance in talking about faith;
- has a disciplined approach to personal devotion;
- is open to exploring different expressions of spirituality;
- relates well to people with differing expressions of spirituality;
- is able to relax;
- has a breadth of interests other than Church life.

### **Interpersonal, Leadership and Teamwork Skills:**

*How does the candidate relate to and deal with people? What leadership potential is evident? How does the candidate work as part of a team? How does the candidate deal with conflict?*

The candidate:

- generates trust and displays honesty;
- forms positive relationships with a variety of types of people;
- works well in a team setting;
- is able to respond to others with flexibility;
- is patient and tolerant in expressing views;
- demonstrates listening and empathic skills;
- communicates well in language people understand;
- offers appropriate openness and vulnerability to relationships;
- shows self-awareness in relation to verbal and non-verbal communication skills;
- is able to offer and receive feedback in constructive ways.
- demonstrates the potential to offer leadership to others;
- shows awareness and understanding of different styles of leadership;

### **Openness to Learning:**

*How does the candidate learn and how open are they to learning? How does the candidate handle criticism, both just and unjust?*

The candidate:

- shows an aptitude for listening and responds to ideas;
- is able to express themselves well both orally and in written work;
- enters constructively into dialogue;
- shows the ability to live with difference;

- responds appropriately to criticism;
- reads broadly: General: *fiction; non-fiction*;  
Theological: *different stances; different disciplines*;
- is able to formulate a cogent argument;
- shows awareness of the implications of lifelong learning;
- employs different styles of learning;
- works well with others who use learning styles other than the Applicant's preferred ones.

**Preparation and Reflective Skills:**

*How is the candidate preparing? How does the Applicant assimilate, analyse and integrate experience? How does the candidate organise and manage their time and work?*

The candidate:

- is able to make basic connections between different kinds of experience:  
*church; community; intellectual; spiritual*
- generally presents as a well-integrated, holistic person;
- is reasonably self-aware and can recognise strengths and weaknesses;
- exhibits awareness of the global context and can relate it to the local;
- shows creativity analysing and interpreting experiences;
- gives proper space and time to the reflective process;
- shows the aptitude for coping with the intellectual demands of ministry;
- can assimilate and deal appropriately with negative or difficult life experiences;
- encourages others to engage in the reflective process.
- possesses good administrative and organisational skills;
- is able to manage time reasonably;
- copes adequately with stress.

**Handling and Facilitating Change:**

*How does the candidate initiate and respond to change and help others deal with it?*

The candidate:

- collaborates well in drawing up plans for change;
- works willingly at addressing identifiable weaknesses;
- is motivated towards the implementation of goals in an action plan;
- is able to offer and analyse differing perspectives on problems;
- tries to elicit and investigate alternatives;
- can assess the benefits and costs of change;
- demonstrates awareness of issues arising from the transition to the role of minister.

**Discernment and Affirmation of Call:**

*How does the candidate view their call? In what ways has their call been affirmed? What is their understanding of the Ministry for which they are applying in the life of the Church of Scotland?*

The candidate:

- can clearly articulate a sense of call towards ministry;
- is positively motivated towards fulfilment of ministry;
- demonstrates knowledge of the life and structures of the Church of Scotland.

# Appendix IV: Training Conference Programme

## Supervisors' Training Programme

### Day 1

10.00:	Arrivals, registration, coffee	
10.15:	Opening worship	Trainer
10.30:	Introductions	
10.45:	Personality types	
	How do we identify, recognise and work together across styles?	Trainer
11.45:	Peer group learning in reflective practice	
1.00:	Lunch	
2.00:	Peer group learning in reflective practice	
	▪ Triads and facilitators	
4.15:	Coffee	
4.45:	1 <sup>st</sup> Assessment:	
	▪ Goal setting – meet Alan Kennedy	
6.00:	Dinner	
7.00:	Issues in Supervision	
8.30:	Worship	Trainer

### Day 2

8.00:	Breakfast	
9.00:	Worship	Trainer
9.30:	2 <sup>nd</sup> Assessment:	
	▪ Report writing (Worship)	
11.00:	Coffee	
11.30:	2 <sup>nd</sup> Assessment:	
	▪ Report writing (Pastoral Care)	
12.30:	Lunch	
1.30:	Peer group learning in reflective practice	
	▪ Triads and facilitators	
3.30:	Coffee break	
4.00:	Writing up time / Triad time	
6.00:	Dinner	
7.00:	Worship	Trainer
	Free time/ follow up time	

### Day 3

8.00:	Breakfast	
9.00:	Worship (communion)	Trainer
9.45:	Understanding ourselves in conflict	Trainer
10.45:	Coffee break	
11.15:	Approaches to Learning	Trainer
12.15:	Feedback sessions / Follow up time	
1.00:	Lunch	

## Appendix V: Ordination Vows

Do you believe in one God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord?

**I do.**

Do you believe the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to be the supreme rule of faith and life?

**I do.**

Do you believe the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith contained in the Confession of Faith of this Church?

**I do.**

Do you acknowledge the Presbyterian government of this Church to be agreeable to the Word of God; and do you promise to be subject in the Lord to this Presbytery and to the General Assembly of this Church, and to take your due part in the administration of its affairs?

**I do.**

Do you promise to seek the unity and peace of this Church; to uphold the doctrine, worship, government, and discipline thereof; and to cherish a spirit of love towards all your brothers and sisters in Christ?

**I do.**

Are not zeal for the glory of God, love to the Lord Jesus Christ, and a desire for the salvation of all people, so far as you know your own heart, your great motives and chief inducements to enter into the office of the Holy Ministry?

**They are.**

Do you engage in the strength of the Lord Jesus Christ to live a godly and circumspect life; and faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully to discharge the duties of your ministry, seeking in all things the advancement of the kingdom of God?

**I do.**

Do you accept and close with the call to be pastor of this charge, and promise through grace to study to approve yourself a faithful minister of the Gospel among this people?

**I do.**

## Appendix VI: Questions for Interview

### Areas for questioning in semi-structured interviews (Supervisor: pre-training)

1. Gender/age/experience in ministry.
2. How would you describe your theological position?
3. What is your previous experience of supervision?
4. Do you know your MBTI profile and if so what is it? Can you see a relationship between your profile and your approach to ministry?
5. How would you describe the way in which you prefer to learn?
6. How would you describe your approach to dealing with conflict in the supervisory role?
7. What do you understand as the role of a supervisor? How equipped do you feel in fulfilling this role?
8. How comfortable are you in terms of goal-setting and report writing? What do you understand by these roles?
9. What is your aim in training the candidate with whom you are working? Would you have different aims for a different candidate?
10. What do you understand by the term “reflective practice”?
11. How do you measure your success in supervision?
12. What do you think would enhance your experience of delivering supervision?

**Areas for questioning in semi-structured interviews (Candidate: pre-supervisor training)**

1. Gender/age
2. How would you describe your theological position?
3. What did you do before training for ministry and how would you describe your pre-entry level of knowledge about the task of ministry?
4. Do you know your MBTI profile and if so what is it? Can you see a correlation between your profile and the way you approach the training process?
5. How would you describe the way in which you prefer to learn?
6. How would you describe your approach to dealing with conflict?
7. What do you understand as the role of a supervisor? What is the aim of supervision?  
What do you hope to get out of supervision?
8. How were the aims of your placement formulated? How do they inform the supervisory process?
9. What has been your experience of receiving supervision?
10. What do you understand by the term "reflective practice" and what role do you think it plays in training for ministry?
11. What do you think would enhance your experience of receiving supervision?

**Areas for questioning in semi-structured interviews (Supervisor: post-training)**

- 1) How would you describe the demographic of your parish?
- 2) What have you learned about your MBTI profile and what difference if any has this made to your understanding of how you approach the tasks of ministry including supervision?
- 3) What have you learned about your approach to learning and how has this altered your approach to teaching/mentoring?
- 4) How would you describe your approach to dealing with conflict? How do you think this influences the way you deal with people, including the candidate you are currently supervising?
- 5) What do you now understand to be the role of reflective practice in the training process?
- 6) Has your understanding of the process and purpose of goal-setting and report writing changed and if so, in what way?
- 7) How has your understanding of the role of a supervisor changed or developed?
- 8) What do you know about the candidate's personality and how has this affected your supervision?
- 9) What would make it more helpful?
- 10) Overall, how helpful would you say the training was?
- 11) Is there anything that would make the training more helpful?



**Areas for questioning in semi-structured interviews (Candidate post- supervisor training)**

1. Now that you have experienced several months of ministry is there anything that has surprised you about full-time ministry? How would you describe your experience?
2. Did you re-visit or change any of the learning goals after the supervisor had gone through the training?
3. What have you learned about your MBTI profile and what difference if any has this made to your understanding of how you approach the training process?
4. What have you learned about your approach to learning and how has this altered your approach to the training process?
5. How would you describe your approach to dealing with conflict? How do you think this influences the way you deal with people, including your supervisor?
6. How has your understanding of the role of your supervisor changed or developed?
7. Has your experience of supervision changed or developed since your supervisor undertook the training?
8. What part does reflective practice play in your supervisory relationship and is that in any way different from the beginning of the placement?
9. Is there anything else in terms of the way your supervisor supervises you that you would like to comment upon?

## Appendix VIIa: Analysis of Interviews: Table

Name	Anna (Katie)	Beth (Laura)	Charlie (Margaret)	David (Neil)	Eric (Owen)	Frank (Patricia)
Age	45	45	56	49	57	63
M/F	F	F	M	M	M	M
Theol position	Liberal	Liberal	Charismatic Evangelical	Conservative Evangelical	Charismatic Evangelical	Conservative Evangelical
Ministry/ Supervisor Experience	2 charges Enquirers: 2 Student placement: 3 Probationers:2	3 charges/ 1 <sup>st</sup> woman in each charge  Student placement: 1: Probationer: 1	3 charges plus time abroad  Enquirers: 1 Probationers: 2	2 charges  Enquirers: 2 Student placement: 1 Probationer:1	2 Charges both working class  Steady stream of enquirers, students and probationers	Mission Field, 4 charges  Reader placements: 2 Student placement: 1 Probationers: 2
Geographical location	Suburban	Town centre	Country town	Suburban	Inner city	Remote rural including small island community, covers 350 mi. <sup>2</sup>
Church Profile	Old parish church – traditional, suburban, some young families	Single parish, civic responsibilities, Congregation: 700	Outskirts of city, has a village feel. Mixture of farming, industrial, and rural urban housing. Majority privately owned	Mainly suburban with pockets of council housing	Working class, students, first time buyers, progression of members	Two centre union, ten communities population total 1300, Congregation: 134
MBTI	INFP	INFP	ENFJ	ISTJ	INFP	INTJ
Approach to Learning	Learning by doing. Trial and error, but perfectionist	Learning by reflection. Begin by reading, lectures, discussion	Learning by doing, likes to be shown not told	Learning by doing. Gain broad picture from instructions then just "have a go"	Learning by doing but reflects with other. Collegial, in discussion, jump in and try it out	Learning by reflection. Begin by reading
Reflective practice Before/after	Questioning what you're doing and why. Relate to biblical models. Incarnational theology what does that actually mean?/  more reflection on practice	What went well and what causes dissonance. Are there different (better) ways of dealing with issues? /  no change	What went well and what could have gone better/  recognising importance of theological reflection, enabling candidate reflection	Why do we do something, what went well and what could have gone better/  Challenge to reflect theologically	Learning from your mistakes/  sharpened practice, appreciated the Parabolic Loop	What went well and what could have gone better/  appreciated the triad work
Conflict Management Style	Avoidance, but will deal with it when necessary	Collaborating Being prepared, finding common ground	Confrontational	Conciliate/ compromise Only confront as a last resort	Avoiding. Long fuse and then erupt	Avoiding. Passive aggressive, peacemaker with others
Supervisory Style/ Confidence	To enthuse  Reasonably well equipped	Expect pro-activity  4/10 before 7/10 after	Enabling  Reasonably well equipped	Enabling, reflecting  5-6/10 before 8-9/10 after More prepared	Enabling, not challenging, relationship building, accompanying  Little confidence despite experience yet feels equipped	Enabling, reflective, encourage learning by doing, self assessment  Very confident

Name	Katie (Anna)	Laura (Beth)	Margaret (Charlie)	Neil (David)	Owen (Eric)	Patricia (Frank)
Age	32	46	51	31	39	58
M/F	F	F	F	M	M	F
Theol position	Liberal	Centre	Evangelical	Conservative	Evangelical	Liberal
Previous employment	Worked in Church Offices	PhD in microbiology then stay-at-home Mum	Nurse/teaching nurse Mission Aviation Fellowship	Process design engineer	Civil engineer / social work	Nurse
Pre-entry experience / knowledge	Involved in a vacancy and work in church offices gave good insight	Good. Family member is a minister.	Mission work, adult Christian education, self-help groups/ Sunday work, lots of people work, not 9.00 – 5.00	Leading worship, pastoral visiting, schools	Task-based approach	Aware of the pastoral care. Knew would have to learn about worship and mission
Post-entry Experience/ knowledge	Variety of approaches of different ministers	No real surprises	Surprised by the complexity	Surprised by variety of tasks	Breadth of topics in training and speed of transition from one task to another.	Amount of conflict in the Church
MBTI	INFJ	INFP	ENFJ	ISTJ	ESTJ	ENFP
Approach to Learning	Learning by reflection. But work it out in a practical way.	Learning by reflection. Solitary study, observe, reflect before action	Learning by reflection. Like to understand what's required before trying anything out	Learning by reflection but with others. Interpersonal	Learning by doing. Jump in, see how it goes, understand the theory in practice	Intrinsic motivation. Lifelong learner, believe in the importance of learning
Reflective practice Before/after	What went well and what could have gone better, Essential to learning	Going away and thinking about things. Journaling. Theological and societal issues	What went well and what could have gone better, why things got tricky, skill deficit	Evaluating an event, how might it be done differently and what does it say about me and apply to other areas of work Vital in ministry training	Consider what went well and what did not – learn from both	Essential to learning and a journal helps to record progress and development
Conflict Management Style	Confrontational Don't like conflict but prefer to have it out in the open	Avoidance	Collaborating but more confrontational than expected,	Avoidance	Confrontational	Collaborative
Role of supervisor	Guiding, enabling, teaching, balance shifts as you go through training	Offer experience, encouragement, feedback	To come alongside, to get to know the student, make student a priority	Facilitate growth, offer opportunities and guidance, Getting to know student	Line-manager, make you think, keep you in check Support	Enabling role, feedback on progress, strengths and weaknesses

## Appendix VIIb: Analysis of Interviews: Text

### 1.1: Anna (Supervisor) and Katie (Probationer): First Interviews

#### 1.1.1 Anna: Interview 1

Anna is 45 years old and has 17 years of experience in ministry. She is now in her second charge. Demographically the two charges are very different, the first a large village church, the second a traditional suburban congregation with an aging congregation but with some young families. She described herself as theologically Liberal. She loves being a parish minister and does not get involved in things that take her out of the parish.

She has had a number of candidates-in-training to supervise, including probationers.

Anna did not know her MBTI profile at this point. She described her approach to learning as liking to get things right and commented that sometimes that stops her from learning new things, although if she really wants to learn something she will persevere. She doesn't like to look inadequate and so will ask others for help rather than learn herself. She described herself as self-analytical, "*probably to a fault.*" Things that she learns have to be relevant or she is not interested. Anna noted that she doesn't like conflict but said that she has passive-aggressive approach. She will not confront someone as she doesn't want to hurt people's feelings, or have them think badly of her, but when the issue escalates she will suddenly want to deal with it. She described herself as a peacemaker. On occasion, she has had to deal with situations involving candidates which might have given rise to conflict. However, she tends to indicate her feelings in a very gentle way, not liking to criticise, and feels that she does not always get across how seriously she views the issue. She is prepared to be constructively critical when dealing with concrete issues, such as timekeeping or preaching, but finds it more difficult to identify underlying issues when there are problems.

Anna bases her understanding of supervision on her own experience of supervision as a probationer. She felt that her supervisor enabled her to convert her weaknesses into strengths and gave her the confidence to stand on her own feet as she went into the parish. She finds it frustrating that students now don't want to do the things that she thinks they ought to be doing as a parish minister, such as routine visiting. She understands supervision as encouraging candidates in their development, helping them find their understanding of ministry, and developing awareness of all the different relationships within ministry. She feels reasonably well equipped in being a supervisor and will ask for help if necessary. She commented that she was looking forward to the conference and to understanding more about her personality as her friend, Beth, has said how useful that is.

Anna hates report writing and finds it boring as, in common with other administration, it gets in the way of being a minister. She finds it difficult to put goals into specific terms although she sets goals for herself. She understands the need to set goals for students but does not find it very interesting.

Her aim in training candidates is to show them what a great job parish ministry is, and to enable them to get a feel for its disadvantages and advantages, to create a sound foundation for when they go into a parish of their own. She reflected on the different personalities, and of the different stages of life that people have been at, in terms both of their own ministry and of life in general, as they come into training for parish ministry. They bring all this with them when they come into training. Supervision is not about uniformity but rather enabling people to find their own way.

Anna described reflective practice as, "*thinking about what you're doing.*" She suggested that it is questioning what you're doing and why, and how it could be changed to make it more effective in the future. She also considered how that relates to the gospel message. She spoke of incarnational theology and what that means in terms of being a minister.

For Anna, success as a supervisor would be that rough edges were refined, and candidates have the confidence to go on to the next stage of training, or at the end of the probationary placement, into the parish. She is aware of the responsibility of supervision.

As a supervisor she would find it useful to be supervised.

### **1.1.2 Katie: Interview 1**

Katie is 32 and describes her theological position as liberal. Before training for ministry, she worked in the central offices of the Church. Through that, and through her involvement in her own congregation as an elder and part of a worship team during a vacancy she felt she had a good understanding of parish ministry before she began her training. One thing that surprised her during training was how different ministers approach the task of parish ministry from very different perspectives and have very different emphases.

Katie was not aware of her MBTI profile but was aware that she needs time on her own to re-energise after spending time with people. Her approach to learning is to think it through for herself. She tends to try things out but prefers to do this before she has to do it in reality. She likes to be clear about the expectations on her. Katie does not like conflict but prefers to have things out in the open. She describes herself as being quite happy to stand up for herself.

Katie sees the role of the supervisor as being different at different stages of training, from enquiry through to probation. The level of teaching increased through the placements and later placements had more of an enabling element. Katie hopes to get a clearer idea of the full range of parish ministry from her placement and from that to be able to work out what kind of ministry she would like to operate. She expects to get an increasing amount of independence over the 15 months.

Goals were formed through feedback from previous placements and conversation with her supervisor depending on the specific nature of the parish and congregation. Her experience of supervision has been of a variety of approaches but all good. Some supervisors, she noted, were more thorough than others in the reflective process. For Katie, reflective practice is thinking about what she does beforehand and reflecting back on it afterwards. She sees its importance in training, especially when things don't go well. Being very positive about her supervisors, she couldn't think of anything that would improve her experience except possibly more exposure to practice of the sort of things that only ministers do, such as celebration of the sacraments.

## **1.2 Anna (Supervisor) and Katie (Probationer): Second Interviews**

### **1.2.1 Anna: Interview 2**

Anna's MBTI profile is INFP. She described her motivation as to keep people happy which she thought was negative but discovered that it is positive because she wants to encourage people and keep them on board. She is not good on detail in contrast to her probationer who is very clear about her own agenda. Anna was surprised to discover that she is an introvert as she thinks of herself as a bit of a performer but now understands that the introvert/extravert axis relates to where we get our energy rather than how we behave. She and her probationer are very similar in lots of ways, but she feels that her years of experience have mellowed her. She is not so demanding of herself or of other people.

Anna commented that she learned a lot at the conference, particularly about her approach to learning. She used to learn through reading but has become aware that her learning now is more informal, more skills based, and needs based. She and her probationer spend a lot of time discussing, reading together, and reflecting. She commented that having a probationer is a two-way process of learning and commended her probationer for her proactive approach to learning.

Anna felt that the conference confirmed her approach to dealing with conflict as avoiding but found it was not as extreme as she had feared when she compared herself with others. Again, she found herself affirmed and commented that the conference was very pastoral. She noted that having a tendency to avoiding means that that you are constantly negotiating and compromising and trying to carry people along with you.

Anna reported that her understanding of reflective practice had changed as a result of the training. She is not sure that her practice of reflection has changed but she has thought more deeply about what she does and why she does it.

The conference did not change her understanding of report writing or goal setting. She commented that her probationer is gaining in confidence and will get more confident still when she is no longer supervised, *"because with the best will in the world they know you are there to assess them."*

Anna thought her understanding of the role of supervisor has changed only slightly. She describes the conference as a personal growth journey and the training as an affirmation of her character and the way she does things. She felt affirmed in realising that some things that she thought were not good about herself have, in fact, positive outcomes. She described her own experience of supervision as being so excellent that she modelled her practice of supervision on that. She found the training very helpful from a personal and ministerial developmental perspective and reported that she enjoyed it as a supportive experience.

### **1.2.2 Katie: Interview 2**

Katie felt well prepared for full-time ministry before she entered probation but was slightly surprised by the extent to which issues which seem small to her are important to congregational members and the extent to which they are reluctant to embrace change, giving examples of this. She was also surprised by the sheer range of tasks in which a minister can be involved depending on what happens in the parish, again giving examples of this.

Goals throughout the placement were worked on and no changes made to those set out at the beginning, except to add one or two.

Katie's MBTI profile is INFJ. This has confirmed for her that she needs time by herself to recharge. She is aware of the differences between herself and her supervisor and comments that they get the same result but go about the task differently. She found the results of the questionnaire about her approach to learning made sense and she recognised herself in them. In terms of approaches to conflict she is aware that she is more confrontational than her supervisor in that she likes things to be out in the open but also realises that sometimes because of this she rushes in when she would be better to take some time to reflect first. She feels she is learning a different approach through observing her supervisor.

Katie commented that her supervisor's role has changed over the course of placement. To begin with Katie was expected to shadow her more and they did a lot together but more and more as the placement went on Katie was acting independently and offering holiday cover for her supervisor and for a neighbouring minister.

After her supervisor had attended the training conference, they discussed it. Katie didn't think there was much difference in the way supervision was offered but thought that was because the conference had confirmed her supervisor's practice.

Reflective practice plays a big part in the placement. It begins with reflection on what has happened, what went well, and what might have been done differently, but goes much deeper very quickly. Katie commented that she is on the same wavelength as her supervisor and that this makes it easy to reflect, but also makes for a good working relationship. Katie also found MTN a good place to reflect. She said of her supervisor, "*we just really get on.*"

## **2.1 Beth (Supervisor) and Laura (Probationer): First Interviews**

### **2.1.1 Beth: Interview 1**

Beth is 45 years old and has been in ministry for 16 years. She is now in her third parish. She has always been the sole minister in the charge and the first woman in every charge. The first charge was a former mining community with around 400 on the roll and her tenure was five year terminable. She chose to demit in favour of readjustment. Her second charge was a suburban congregation in a city also with around 400 on the roll. While this was in some respects a difficult congregation she reports that she had 10 very happy years there. The third charge is a city centre parish with a mixed demographic and around 700 on the roll and a number of civic responsibilities. One significant difference from her other charges is that people join the congregation regularly without any effort on her part. She feels most at home here as she grew up in a city centre gathered congregation. Beth considers that she is liberal to almost very liberal but with odd moments of being conservative.

Beth trained as a supervisor in 2002. It was a three day residential course looking at models of supervision, including clinical supervision with opportunities to practise. Beth was not only the youngest person on the course but also the only woman.

Beth has had one student and foreign minister on a familiarisation placement. She has a good relationship with both of them now they are in ministry on their own and they still keep in contact.

At this point Beth was able to identify herself as an INFP and sees a close relationship between her profile and her approach to ministry. She describes this as having to play-act being minister as she is not naturally a people person. She is careful to build in time to withdraw and re-energise. She is also careful to indicate to her students that she needs this time. If she sees it as necessary in order for her to do her job better, both as minister and a supervisor.

In terms of her approach to learning, Beth was not looking forward to the conference because of her discomfort with what she saw as role play. She prefers lectures, to be able to absorb and then sit and reflect and read. However, she also enjoys discussion.

Beth deals with conflict through humour or otherwise deflecting. She prepares well so that she is reasonably sure that she knows what the objections are likely to be and can deal with them. One recent significant conflict situation was dealt with using a collaborative/compromising approach. The relationship has improved as a result.

Beth's approach to supervision is to create an independent person. If the student does things differently she wants to understand why. She will comment more on the style of the sermon than the content, unless the congregation have problems with the content because ultimately she has



responsibility for the congregation. She expects a student to take initiative alongside the tasks she sets. At this point Beth did not feel very equipped to be a supervisor. On a scale of 1 to 10 she placed herself at 4.

Beth is comfortable with goal setting as this is something she does for herself. She struggles more with report writing: making the report both fair and realistic.

Beth's approach to reflective practice is to look at situations which she found difficult and consider how she could have behaved differently. She is clear that she does this with the student as well. Although she was concerned about the conference she was also looking forward to it as a refresher, and also to meet other supervisors.

### **2.1.2 Laura: Interview 1**

Laura is 46 and while she grew up in an Evangelical church and is doing her probationary placement in a theologically liberal context she feels she straddles the two positions. Immediately before she began training for ministry she was a stay-at-home mum and before that was studying for a PhD in microbiology. Her pre-entry level of knowledge of ministry was quite good as she has a sister who is a minister. She considers that there have been no huge surprises as she came in without rose-tinted spectacles.

While never having done an MBTI assessment to this point, she thought she was probably INFP, however she did not know enough about it at this stage to draw a correlation between her profile and the way she approached the training process. However, she did realise that as an introvert she has enjoyed being able to read things on her own. In her PhD she had to have a very planned approach to her studies and she also enjoyed group work. She commented that being organised and meeting deadlines would be a struggle to some extent.

Her approach to learning is to observe first, then reflect, then try it out for herself.

Laura commented that she does not like situations of conflict and she would prefer to avoid them. She noted that sometimes avoiding can prevent conflict if lines of communication can be kept open. Laura has done some studying of conflict through a course she took at university. She observed that conflict is a part of life and has to be accepted.

Her view of supervision is that its purpose is to give the student experience of church and of leading worship and as many aspects of church leadership as is possible. The supervisor should also be an encourager and help the student to improve. She sees the supervisor as an experienced guide and for her it is about tapping into the knowledge and experience that her supervisor has. She wants to grow in her ability to minister to others and in leading worship during this placement.

Laura set goals in response to her annual review and the specifics of the learning base. Throughout training she chose placements that she thought would help her to do kind of things she wanted to do. Her first supervisor enabled her to do her first funeral by talking her through the process in advance, including the funeral visit. Laura found this helpful.

Laura considered that all her supervisors have been good. She found a weekly meeting with her supervisor and the feedback offered helpful. She noted that the best placements were the ones where the congregation also took part in supporting and teaching. She also noted that being trusted by her supervisor was helpful to her learning. Supervisors have offered constructive criticism in a helpful way.

Laura's approach to reflective practice is to go away and think about things. She makes a habit of journaling finds that useful as a learning process. She noted that this reflection can be quite deep and raises theological issues, however at this point she was not taking these issues to supervision. She thinks that reflective practice has a big role to play in training for ministry as you develop as a person through it. She noted that she could see her own development.

## **2.2 Beth (Supervisor) and Laura (Probationer): Second Interviews**

### **2.2.1 Beth: Interview 2**

Beth struggled with being assessed at the conference. She found her triad facilitator's criticism unhelpful as she said she is very aware of her own flaws. She found it helpful that a fellow delegate who was, as she put it, "*even more introverted than me*" leave suddenly halfway through the first triad.

Her MBTI profile was confirmed as INFP. She discussed her profile with Laura because Laura's introversion seems to Beth to manifest in the way her own introversion did at the beginning. She commented that being a minister is in some ways like being an actor; you are not the same person in public as you are at home. She has encouraged Laura to be goal orientated because neither of them are, in her opinion, yet in ministry goals are necessary. Beth thinks it's a positive that she and Laura share an MBTI profile. She has a good friend who is very different, and she thinks she would find that friend very difficult to work with.

She found the session on approaches to learning made sense to her. She noted that she and Laura were quite similar in their approach to learning although they have not spoken about it. She would love to be able to have a plan but in ministry finds that difficult. However, she noted that she has only been in her present charge for three years, and so feels she is still learning herself. She has invited Laura into her learning as an additional learning experience.

The conflict questionnaire result was an accurate portrayal of Beth's approach to conflict. However, she is aware that she has changed during her time ministry. As a younger person she would have avoided conflict but over the years has learned different ways of working round it. She sees Laura as someone who stands back and hopes it will resolve. In the last year there has been a significant amount of conflict in the congregation which considers helpful for Laura to observe.

Beth is of the opinion that her current understanding of reflective practice had not changed since the training because she always thought she was quite reflective anyway. She describes herself as hypersensitive and hyper-critical and sees reflection as a way of dealing with that.

In spite of the fact that she had recently attended a session on report writing she found the session on report writing helpful especially with regard to the language used.

She feels that Laura has made it easy to be a supervisor because Laura respects her as the Minister. This does not mean that Laura does not challenge Beth, but that she has engaged positively with supervision.

After the conference Beth now would give herself a 7/10 in terms of confidence as a supervisor. She sees it as a constant learning process. She found the training helpful partly as space to reflect and to be with other people who were training. She felt the conflict session was worthwhile and probably the learning styles as well. She considered that training like this is worthwhile because it removes you from your situation and helps you to think and to get a broader perspective. She considers as a church we are not good at allowing ministers to admit that they are not good at something. At the time of the conference she didn't realise how much it would influence her but later realised that it had been helpful. She would like to see more personality analysis in the conference, especially in terms of how you would work with someone who is very different in terms of personality from herself.

### **2.2.2 Laura: Interview 2**

Laura has enjoyed probation. Her choice of placement was a big step for her, due to the size and nature of the charge, but she feels that it has given her much more confidence than she had before.

Her MBTI profile has been confirmed as INFP. She and Beth have not spoken about the profile in depth but have discussed the impact of being introverted on ministry, both as a positive and negative. One particular positive highlighted is that in pastoral situations and introvert is less likely to jump into the conversation, leaving time for the person being visited to say more. It is also helpful for her to know that some situations are tiring. It has been helpful for her that her supervisor shares a personality profile although she noted that they still do things in different ways.

The results of the learning questionnaire were what Laura would have expected. While the results showed that Laura didn't like feedback, nevertheless she responds well to it and is keen to learn.

The conflict questionnaire confirmed what Laura had understood of her approach from her university course, but she found it helpful to look at why she liked to avoid conflict. It was also helpful to look at the different styles and she was able to identify people she knew who used the different styles. She noted that, in observing how different people use different styles, she would learn from them. She was aware that her supervisor would not avoid conflict as much as she does. She also thought the course was good in that it explained that conflict is part of life.

Laura has found her experience of supervision changing over the year. Beth has, she thought, relaxed more over the year and that has helped Laura to relax also. She noted that although she doesn't like feedback Beth has balanced critical feedback with positive feedback in a helpful way. She is aware that too much positive feedback can be a bad thing because there is a lack of incentive to develop. She noted that after Beth came back from the refresher conference she was more focused about what she needed to do in supervision, otherwise there was not much change. She appreciated the way her supervisor filtered congregational comments and passed them on in a helpful way.

For Laura, preaching to a large congregation was the most daunting thing in her placement but she felt much more comfortable as the placement went on. From a practical perspective she considers that she has done everything she needs to do before going into her own congregation and so she feels comfortable about her level of experience. Her placement has been good preparation.

## 3.1 Charlie (Supervisor) and Margaret (Probationer): First Interviews

### 3.1.1 Charlie: Interview 1

Charlie is 56 and has been a minister since 1992. He was in his first charge for five years. This was a small country parish quite near to the sea. He then spent two years as a youth minister in the United States and served as a locum when he returned to this country. His second charge was a large country parish with a number of young families, where he served for seven years. He has been in his current parish, a large country village on the outskirts of the city which is slowly absorbing the parish, for six years. There is a mixture of farming, industrial, rural and urban housing. Theologically he describes himself as evangelical with a bit of charismatic.

In terms of supervision, Charlie has had two applicants for ministry going through the discernment process and, in terms of candidates for ministry, he has had one probationer.

Charlie was not aware of his MBTI profile.

Charlie noted that he has a hands-on approach to learning. He likes to be shown how to do something and rather than reading the manual will simply try something out.

In terms of dealing with conflict Charlie likes to get things out in the open and confront the situation. He thinks it's important to be honest, perhaps, agree to disagree, but never just sweeping things under the carpet. He noted that if you avoid conflict it's just going to get worse.

Charlie sees the importance of the final placement, the last stage before entering ministry. He sees the role of the supervisor to give the student opportunities to do things they haven't done previously but also simply helping them to get on in ministry, building their confidence. He likes to give students space to be themselves and to do things their own way. He considers that he has an enabling approach to supervision. He would allow the candidate to make mistakes, opening them up to situations that might make them feel uncomfortable, and sometimes surprising them because in ministry you have to expect the unexpected. His approach with Margaret was to have her shadow him to begin with before allowing her to go off and do things on her own. He sees the importance of feedback, reviewing what has happened, and forward planning.

Charlie finds forward planning difficult but puts this down to some extent to the parish as he can sometimes have five funerals in a week. He feels relatively equipped as a supervisor as he has done an initial training and also a few day conferences. The aspects of supervision that Charlie finds most troublesome with most are goal setting and report writing.

Charlie defines reflective practice as looking back at what you have done and trying to critically evaluate to see what went well, what could have been improved, and how you might do things

differently the next time. He was aware of the theological aspect of reflection through being part of a probation supervisors' triad. At this stage he considered that using the Parabolic Loop sometimes made you look for hidden meanings when there were none. For Charlie, success in supervision means the candidate had grown in confidence over the period of the placement. He noted that the congregation are good at encouraging students.

### **3.1.2 Margaret: Interview 1**

Margaret is 51 and describes herself as being evangelical but not conservative. She was a nurse before training for ministry and for a time worked for a missionary organisation. During this time she was heavily involved in the local Church and some of the self-help Christian groups that were emerging in that place at that time. Margaret considers that she had a fairly good understanding of what ministry involved before she came into training in that it wasn't a regular Monday to Friday job and involved a lot of interaction with different people.

Margaret was aware at this point that her MBTI profile is ENFJ. She had already done the analysis before she went to work in the mission field. She finds it interesting that her profile has not changed. Margaret is very definite about the correlation between her MBTI profile and the way she approaches her training. However, her description of her personality in training, the reflective aspects of it, have more in keeping with an Introvert than an Extravert. She went on to say that her preference for Extraversion over Introversion is quite slight.

In terms of her approach to learning, she is aware that she likes to get a good grasp of what she is learning by herself first before trying it out.

Margaret notes that because she is a reflective person she is not quick to step into a situation of conflict but will wait until she sees how strongly people felt about the issues and had reflected herself on the situation before engaging with it. (Margaret had actually completed the conflict questionnaire at this point) Margaret was slightly surprised by the results of the questionnaire in that she realised that she does use a confrontational style more often than she thought she did. Her score in the questionnaire was quite evenly balanced with a slight leaning towards collaborating. Avoiding, however, was the lowest. Margaret here drew a distinction between being reflective about a conflict situation and avoiding. She describes using an avoiding tactic if the conflict was not a particularly important issue. Margaret was clear that in her previous roles conflict had always arisen as a result of personality clashes rather than teaching or methodology.

Margaret felt her work with the missionary organisation prepared her well for ministry because she had to get on with a lot of different people very quickly and learned to see things from a variety of different perspectives. She also observed the different ways that people handled conflict.

Margaret was clear about what she wanted in a supervisor. The supervisor should accept her call and, through coming alongside her, discern what she wanted to learn and how they could help. In

her experience of training she discovered that the supervisory role is very dependent on the individual supervisor. She had a difficult experience with her third supervisor whose expectations of her seemed different from her expectations of the placement. She found that supervisor not supportive and very negative.

Margaret found that in her placements she had good opportunity to provide input into setting goals.

At this stage Margaret describes reflective practice as: reflecting back on the situation, what happened, what went well, what didn't go well, what could you improve on. She described it as analysing the tricky bits and why things didn't turn out the way you might expect. She went on to say that it's a way of discovering whether there is a skill deficit, or something you didn't feel comfortable with, and why was that; what does the Church say about that as well as bringing to bear things you gain from other walks of life.

Margaret has reflected a lot on supervision, especially having had a difficult placement. She thinks it's important for a supervisor and a student to get to know one another as well as give a dedicated time to supervision. In her difficult placement the supervisor was always very busy, and she never felt that that she had his full attention.

## **3.2 Charlie (Supervisor) and Margaret (Probationer): Second Interviews**

### **3.2.1 Charlie: Interview 2**

Charlie found the Parabolic Loop the most helpful aspect of the conference and he describes using it, almost subconsciously. He found the training in general really helpful and worthwhile, although he was feeling unwell for the duration of the conference. He thought the group gelled well.

Charlie struggled to remember his Myers Briggs profile although he decided that he is ENFJ. In answering the questions in the questionnaire, he felt he struggled however he is very clear that he is an extravert.

He is aware that he and Margaret are very similar; although she is less competitive than he is, when it comes to values they share a lot in common. Charlie thought that helped supervision; they are very open with one another and spend two to three hours in supervision every week. Part of this will be theological reflection.

In his approach to learning, Charlie repeated his views from the first interview, noting that he likes to be shown how something is done rather than to read the manual. He noted that this also affects how he works with students, asking them to shadow him to begin with, then reflecting upon what they have observed before trying it out for themselves. He noted that Margaret has clearly copied some of his approaches but not all and he is happy for her to do that.

In terms of his approach to managing conflict, Charlie was very clear about where he stood. He has experienced a lot of conflict throughout his life, in his childhood home, and while he wants, if at all possible, to live at peace with others, his desire to have the conflict out in the open results in what appears to be a confrontational style. He noted that he is very direct with candidates in training and would expect them also to be open and direct with him if there was something about which they weren't happy. However, Charlie had not directly raised with Margaret the issue of her timekeeping, which, while not dreadful, was not up to his high standards.

Charlie found the Parabolic Loop particularly useful in reminding him to consider the theological aspects in reflection.

Charlie found the sessions on goal setting and report writing at the conference particularly helpful because these are the areas of supervising that he finds most difficult. It was helpful for him to know what sort of thing he should be including in the report and how to express himself. He also appreciated being told that having a probationer is more work rather than an extra pair of hands as the congregation sometimes assume.

Charlie felt the training made his understanding of the task of supervision clear. He realised after the training that it wasn't just getting alongside someone and encouraging them but was helping them to develop in their own ministry and where that might lead them in the future. He considers that ongoing training and refresher courses are useful reminders.

### **3.2.2 Margaret: Interview 2**

Margaret reported that she has been surprised by the complexity of full time ministry. The intensity of the relationship between the probationer and the supervisor was greater than on placement. She noted that any difficulties had to be dealt with because you are working with your supervisor on an almost daily basis. She commented that working with your supervisor is not like working with someone in a 9-to-5 job. Margaret found that she and Charlie had very different patterns of working. She felt that he wasn't good at showing her where his personal life fitted into ministry and she would have found that valuable. At this point, towards the end of the placement, she is beginning to see more of this.

Margaret commented that although she didn't notice any change immediately in her supervisor's supervision after the training, she did notice once they were into the New Year. She thought that in December, because things were so busy, they had just gone on as before, but once into January, Charlie was much more intentional about giving her time and coming to supervision with a clear idea of the kind of things that he wanted to deal with. He mentioned the Parabolic Loop to her. She commented that Charlie tends not to be very upfront about things and she sometimes wondered why he was doing something, and then realised that it was probably from the course.



Charlie and Margaret revisited the learning covenant at the point of the interim review. She found it helpful reminder of things that she'd wanted to learn.

Margaret thought the fact that she and Charlie share a personality profile was helpful although even within the same profile she was aware of differences. Charlie is more outgoing than she is.

Margaret thought that her approach to learning was consolidated by the learning questionnaire. She is aware that she likes to go and be thinks for herself and is happy that in probation she's been able to do that, including, with her own ideas and initiatives.

Margaret reported an incident where Charlie "*dropped her in it*". He was due to lead the meeting of some of the Presbytery and called off at last moment, leaving Margaret to lead. After an initial feeling of panic, Margaret coped well and realised that it was a constructive learning experience.

Margaret is very aware of the differences between herself and Charlie with reference to conflict management as she will let things go initially, taking time to reflect, before getting involved in sorting things out. Charlie on the other hand, can sometimes jump into a course of action without thinking through the consequences. She spoke of a situation where an intervention with an organist on Charlie's part had not gone well. She described him as finding it difficult to apologise. Although she believes that he is aware of this she also thinks it's probably too late for him to change.

Margaret was very clear that Charlie's supervisory role had changed since he had been at the training conference. She gave an example of supervisory meetings where previously the agenda would have been very much more *ad hoc*; now she is much more aware of Charlie having an agenda in his head and supervisory meetings becoming more focused.

In terms of reflective practice, she also saw that Charlie had become more focused. He was much more inclined to give feedback after the training conference. Margaret felt that she didn't want to much in the way of critical feedback as previous placements have provided quite a lot and she just wanted to get on with it. Charlie's encouragement, therefore, has been very helpful for her giving her the reassurance she felt she needed.

## 4.1 David (Supervisor) and Neil (Probationer): First Interviews

### 4.1.1 David: Interview 1

David is 49 and has been in ministry for fifteen years. His first charge was a Priority Area comprising multi-storey flats and was in an area which was multi-ethnic with a lot of asylum seekers. The congregation was predominantly elderly with about 150 people on the roll. He is currently in his second charge which is mainly suburban although with some council housing within the parish. There are about 600 on the roll and the congregation has a good range of ages, although probably more over 60 than under. He describes his theological position as evangelical leaning towards conservative.

In terms of supervision he has had a number of applicants going through the assembly process but no candidates in training until Neil who is a probationer. David trained as a supervisor about eight years previously on a one-day course which lasted from 10 AM in the morning until 3 PM in the afternoon.

At this point David did not know his MBTI profile but was aware that he and Neil are very similar in personality. He has completed an MBTI questionnaire in the past and sees a correlation between his personality and the way he approaches ministry. He describes himself as cautious and *"maybe in the middle of lots of places"*.

David described his approach to learning as beginning with reading, then getting impatient and just having a go.

He dislikes conflict but doesn't totally avoid it. He described his default position as being conciliatory rather than confrontational and would tend to look for a compromise. David would confront if he saw damage being done. In supervision he has never had outright conflict but has had to address situations. This is one thing that he does not like doing.

His description of the role of supervisor is that the supervisor helps the student to learn in the context, that is, helping them to work things out for themselves in terms of appropriate action in the particular situation. Success in supervision would mean that Neil had had the opportunity to try everything that's available within the placement and that he would have honed his skills and improved his weaknesses. In a first charge Neil should feel that he has experience to fall back on.

David feels reasonably well equipped as a supervisor through having enough students on placement to keep exercising his skills and also having benefited from good supervisors himself.

David feels reasonably comfortable in setting goals and writing reports although this is not his favourite part of the placement. He sets goals along with the candidate and considers that a candidate with whom he gets on makes the job much easier.

David's understanding of reflective practice is to think before he does something as to why he's doing it and plan well, and then after he's done it analyse it; what went well and what didn't go well. In an ideal scenario he would do this in collaboration with someone.

### **4.1.2 Neil: Interview 1**

Neil is 31. He describes his theological position as being conservative evangelical. Before training for Ministry, he worked as a process design engineer. Before entering training, he had a rudimentary understanding of ministry as involving leading worship, pastoral visiting and school chaplaincy. It has surprised him that the ministry is a lifestyle not a job and can be extremely busy with a huge variety of tasks.

Neil's MBTI profile is ISTJ although he scored the same for T and for F. He sees a clear correlation between this and his approach to training which has been very methodical. He noted this methodical approach was helpful in enabling him to separate the demands of training and the demands of family life; setting good priorities.

Neil likes to learn in discussion, bouncing ideas around. He thinks the training for ministry is quite isolating but that probably prepares you for ministry. When it comes to learning practical things, he likes to try things out with other people who have more experience and then to try on his own. His approach to learning might vary depending on the environment.

Neil is very clear that his approach to conflict is avoidance, or accommodation, unless there is a conflict of integrity within him in which case he would have to work out some way to deal with it. When he could not avoid dealing with conflict he has faced up to his responsibilities but found it deeply uncomfortable.

Neil understands the role of the supervisor as facilitating the candidate's growth into the role of minister. A supervisor should ensure that the student gets the unique opportunities offered by each placement, to offer guidance, and to reflect. He thinks encouragement from a supervisor is important, along with insight into the experience of the supervisor in dealing with the congregation and its politics. He has been surprised by the kind of politics evident in the placement congregation which, on the surface, seem very petty.

Neil set goals by looking at what he had done in previous years but he also asked students who were ahead of him in training what they had done, as well as getting ideas from this supervisor. The learning covenant continued to inform his placement and he and David would look at the agreement once a month to see how they were progressing.

Neil noted that all his supervisors have taken very different approaches to supervision, from very laid-back and informal to much more structured. On one placement he felt he was not getting the feedback he needed and resorted to asking his supervisor if he was doing everything that he should. He commented that his experience of supervision on this placement was that sometimes it felt quite rushed although they have never spent less than an hour in supervision. He also wondered whether he should be more directive about the shape of supervision.

Neil describes reflective practice as thinking over what you have done, or an event, something that has happened that you have been involved in and thinking over all the different aspects of that. He described it as evaluating the incident and then looking at what might be done differently in the future as well as reflecting on why things went in a specific way. He sees reflection as having implications for him personally, asking, 'what is it about me that pushed me in that particular direction, to do that, what does that say about me and how does that apply to other areas of training'. Neil considers that reflection has a vital role to play in training.

Neil would have liked a much more rigid structure for supervision but commented that that may be just his J personality coming out. He wondered whether he over analyses things. He wondered, about the place of prayer in a supervision meeting and described different practices on the part of different supervisors. In addition, he wondered about the place of family life and hobbies in his relationship with his supervisor, commenting that knowledge of and interest in those things are essential to build trust and to develop the relationship.

## **4.2 David (Supervisor) and Neil (Probationer): Second Interviews**

### **4.2.1 David: Interview 2**

David found the group work particularly helpful at the conference. He noted that what was helpful was almost at a subconscious level rather than huge new insights. In other words, there were little bits and pieces which he subconsciously applied subsequently.

David's MBTI profile is ISTJ. This is the same as Neil's, but this was not a surprise as from early on he thought they were very similar. While he has found this helpful he did wonder whether being so similar could have caused problems. However, he thought it had helped to understand Neil more quickly.

There were no surprises in the approaches to learning session and David was confirmed in his approach which is to just get on with it rather than to think too deeply about it. He noted that Neil's approach to learning is slightly different and more reflective and this has in turn sharpened his own thinking. It has been a helpful challenge in terms of his own practice.

David noted that there have been few or no situations of conflict in the congregation. He puts this down partly to his personality and Neil's personality, noting that with a different personality some situations might have escalated into conflict.

David has continued to keep the Parabolic Loop his mind throughout the year. He found the challenge to think theologically on everything helpful. In supervision sessions he kept in mind that it was important to go right round the Loop rather than skip straight across.

The goal setting and report writing sessions were less memorable for David. However, he did see the value in writing a report.

David would say his understanding of the role of supervisor has developed over the course of the placement. He didn't think there was anything he didn't know but putting it into practice has been a different issue. In the past he would have drawn back from offering critical feedback but with Neil found himself more confident in his own supervision and more relaxed about doing constructive criticism as well as praise. At the beginning of the placement David would have given himself 5/10 in terms of being equipped to be a supervisor. At this point in the placement he would give himself 8/10.

David appreciates the healthy intensity of probation and the way a probationer is enabled to be part of the congregation because they are full-time on placement. He considers that the training improved his practice. He noted that he would probably have managed without it but that it did what it was intended to do, that is refresh. He particularly appreciated hearing from the trainers, who had clearly thought a lot about the theory of supervision as well as the practice and having their feedback on his practice.

He compared the training this time favourably with his last experience. He commented that the conference focused on *"the meat and drink of what you do as a supervisor"* and appreciated the opportunity to practise the Parabolic Loop more than once.

### **4.2.2 Neil: Interview 2**

Neil has been surprised by the number of different things that happen in a short space of time in ministry requiring the minister to jump from one thing to another very quickly. Three quarters of the way through his placement he has a much greater understanding of all the different aspects of church life and how they relate to one another. This experience has enabled him to think through his approach in his first two to three months in his own charge when that day comes. He sees building up a support network both within and outwith the congregation as being vitally important. He noted that, with fewer people training for ministry, stronger relationships are forged with other candidates from years above and below as well as the same year.

Neil and David have reviewed the learning covenant but have not changed any of the goals. Although there are some goals they have not managed to meet, Neil is not uncomfortable with this as the majority of the goals have been met and he has found it all very worthwhile.

Neil's MBTI profile is confirmed as ISTJ. He noted that the fact that this is the same as David's has been obvious as they struggle in the same areas. He found being able to observe his supervisor deal with things that he finds difficult very helpful. He has learned a lot from this supervisor's practice in dealing with people on a daily basis from the place of having an introverted personality. He reflected that if he was with a supervisor whose personality was very different he might have found it equally useful, observing that he would see how not to do it, knowing that he was different. However, he commented that understanding your supervisor and understanding yourself and seeing practically how that affects the way you go about ministry is useful.

Neil found the approaches to learning questionnaire the least useful because he felt that he knew how he learned already, however the questionnaire affirmed the way in which he likes to learn.

Neil found the approaches to conflict questionnaire helpful because he had never before thought about the different categories and approaches. Here, he and his supervisor were slightly different, but he was able to look at his supervisor and observe how he identified areas of friction early and dealt with them before they escalated into unhelpful conflict. He noted that he found it good to reflect upon his behaviour when conflict arises and that he would handle things differently in his own context than he does on placement as he is only there for a short period of time.

Neil did not note a particularly significant change in his supervisor when he came back from the training. The format of supervision meetings did not change, and they continued the practice of reflecting on what had happened since the last meeting before going on to considering what needed to be done in the future. Time spent in supervision had increased since the first interview.

Neil considers that his experience of supervision has been good and that he and David are good match.

## 5.1 Eric (Supervisor) and Owen (Probationer): First Interviews

### 5.1.1 Eric: Interview 1

Eric is 57 and has been a minister for 30 years. Eric's theological position is conservative evangelical but he noted that he has opened up over the years and broadened his point of view. He reads the Bible literally and applies it with compassion and openness. He is sympathetic to charismatic and Pentecostal worship. His first charge was in the east end of a large city, a linked charge which was quite unusual at the time, with a congregation which was mainly working class. His current charge is very similar although in a different city and has a number of students and single people in the area as well as a significant working-class population. Because of the student population and young people who live in the area, people don't stay for long and so there is quite a turnover in the congregation.

Eric has had a number of applicants on enquiry placement and candidates and probationers over the years. Despite his experience, however, he expressed a feeling of inadequacy in offering supervision.

At this point Eric was not aware of his MBTI profile.

Eric prefers to learn with other people. He likes to learn by bouncing ideas around and learns practically rather than through reading books. He would tend to try something out and then reflect upon it. Eric would encourage his students to jump in at the deep end because he considers that's the best way to learn. In his opinion, the placement is the place to make mistakes and he is there to pick up the pieces.

In terms of dealing with conflict, Eric says he has a long fuse and would suffer in silence but would then erupt. He rarely loses his temper but when he does he says it's very damaging. Nevertheless, he aims to continue personal interaction with anyone with whom he has had a blowout, maintaining the pastoral link and has found that successful. However, sometimes he finds that he and his protagonists just avoid one another. He considers that the gospel of grace means that he should keep holding out the hand of friendship and he tries to do that and encourage his candidates to do that. However, he finds that his candidates often come with a lot of baggage related to conflict in relationships that has not been resolved. Increasingly he finds himself in conflict with candidates and probationers. Many are very different from himself in their theology and approach to scripture and ethics. While he thinks this is a good thing it has produced friction. Eric then went on to speak at length about his relationship with Owen. They disagreed about a number of things from the outset although Eric did not challenge Owen because he thought him justified in having his point of view. He went on to reflect, however, that as a supervisor that might have been a helpful thing to do.

Eric takes a very collegial approach to the students he works with. He does not see any imbalance in the relationship and likes to learn as much from them as he gives to them. He thinks this is risky and sometimes they have not done what is asked of them. He noted that he doesn't meet often enough with his current probationer. He puts this down to his assessment of the probationer as being extremely competent.

Eric feels quite well equipped as a supervisor and considers the training is really good. He doesn't consider the form filling (learning covenants and reports) very helpful but realises why it's important. He enjoys meeting with other supervisors.

He considers that drawing up the learning covenant comes too early in the relationship, before you get to know student, and the final report possibly comes too late when nothing can be changed.

He likes his candidates to adopt a project but finds that they can be resistant to that, depending on what the project is. He finds candidates are also reluctant to do pastoral visiting.

In supervision, Eric aims to enable candidates and probationers to understand where their strengths and weaknesses lie and how these things will affect their relationships with others.

Eric considers that reflective practice means learning from your mistakes and realising there's always a different way of doing something.

Eric considers success in supervision is if the candidate has changed and developed through their time on placement. He noted that it's helpful when a candidate goes on a placement which takes them outside their comfort zone and both candidate and supervisor learn through this process.

### **5.1.2 Owen: Interview 1**

Owen is 39 and describes himself as theologically conservative evangelical on some things and liberal on others. Before training for ministry, he was a civil engineer and also worked in social work. His understanding of ministry is that it is relatively task-based; before coming into training he had not considered that there is a "*being side*" to ministry. He now appreciates that this exists but reflects that understanding it and doing it are different things. He has been surprised by the number of topics covered in training and that very different things can be addressed in juxtaposition with one another.

At this point Owen does not know his MBTI profile.

He describes his approach to learning as doing and experiencing rather than being overly theoretical. The theory follows the practice.



Owen is confrontational in conflict, wanting to meet it head-on and deal with it. His fear of conflict simply relates to leaving it to simmer as it would then later explode.

Owen's view of supervision is that his supervisor should give him direction and act as his line-manager. He would want degree of accountability to his supervisor and want them to make him think about the consequences of what he's doing. From his supervision he would like to get a sense of support even if the supervisor doesn't agree with what he has done or thinks he has made a mistake.

Owen set his own goals for the placement.

Owen's experience of supervision has been very varied. His first supervisor was very challenging which he didn't like the time but has appreciated in retrospect as he learned a lot. In probation he feels supervision is becoming more focused as the placement progresses.

Owen's understanding of reflective practice is thinking about what you've done, learning from the good and the bad so that you can take good practice forward and understand and learn from bad practice. He also noted the necessity to understand when you are pushing boundaries with issues that you personally struggle with. He sees its importance in training for ministry although would not always have acknowledged this. He comments that a good supervisor will challenge and grow a student.

Owen would have liked a more rigid framework on going into placements, at least to begin with, which would then develop as supervisor and student got to know one another better.

## **5.2 Eric (Supervisor) and Owen (Probationer): Second Interviews**

### **5.2.1 Eric: Interview 2**

Eric struggled with the MBTI questionnaire but has identified himself as an INFP. He considers that his personality makes him a weak leader but compares himself favourably with some biblical leaders who share some of his characteristics.

His approach to conflict was confirmed by the questionnaire. He is conciliatory to the point of avoiding in situations of conflict although less so than he used to be. He feels more confident in handling conflict now.

He finds students nowadays difficult to teach. He sees them coming to placement with fixed ideas and gets frustrated with their lack of openness to different ways of doing things. Although his way of dealing with conflict has changed over the years he still considers he is too lax with students and doesn't demand enough of them. He avoids conflict with students and wonders if students come to

him because *“they know they’ll get an easy ride”*. He also realised that there is a lot going on in his congregation and that may well be part of the appeal.

Eric found the session on approaches to learning very good and it confirmed that he doesn’t learn from reading although he considers he should be reading more than he does. He learns through relational activities and what he found best in the conference was getting alongside people who are also experienced supervisors.

He admits that his nature is to put himself down and recognises a certain false humility in himself.

Training sharpened his understanding of reflective practice and he found the Parabolic Loop a helpful tool. However, he found it difficult to use with his current student who he observes is much more of an activist than he is reflective. He considers that Owen is a great man to have in a team but also that he might struggle to work comfortably with him long term because they are so different.

Eric sees the point of goal setting but finds it difficult. His view of supervision has changed since the training and he considers that he should become more directive. He found this particularly difficult with Owen and thinks it might have improved the situation if someone else had acted as Owen’s line-manager. He felt there was a lack of accountability in the placement. To this end he would prefer if the Ministries Council was more prescriptive about what was expected from a placement.

Eric was aware that he and Owen were very different in terms of their personality. He also thought they were theologically more or less on the same wavelength although Owen would be slightly less evangelical. In terms of personality Eric expressed the view that he is quite in touch with his feminine side while Owen is very masculine in his approach.

### **5.2.2 Owen: Interview 2**

Owen thoroughly enjoyed his probationary placement. However, he has been surprised by the difficulty of managing all the different calls on his time. He observed that his whole training had been good, not without challenges, but that was a good thing.

Owen commented that there was some tension between himself and his supervisor’s wife, so he tended as far as possible to avoid her. He felt that there was an extent to which this did impact on his relationship with Eric, but he has tried hard to just *“bite his tongue”*. Although he prefers to have conflict out in the open, he is aware that Eric does not, and so for the sake of the placement he has not forced the issue. At one point there was the possibility of a full-time job in the congregation after the placement came to an end and he was not sure how that would have worked out as he had struggled with the different approaches of himself and Eric. He could cope with these differences in the context of the placement but would have found them more difficult in a permanent post.

Owen commented that Eric had given him as much rope as he wanted to find out what his passion is in ministry. In previous placements he had far less freedom and scope and found the freedom in this placement a good learning experience, although he also would have preferred tighter boundaries on supervision.

Owen and Eric did not discuss their MBTI profiles. Owen admitted that he is not a fan of MBTI and can never remember what his profile is, but he does see where he and Eric are different, different learning styles, different needs, different approaches to things. He is aware that Eric tends to avoid conflict and has found that frustrating, especially when it came to giving negative feedback because Eric would not give it. Owen found himself trying to draw the feedback out of Eric and that was successful to some extent.

Owen felt that structured supervision from the beginning would have enhanced his learning process and found it frustrating that it tended to be sporadic. However, by the time of this second interview, and near the end of the placement, Owen felt that Eric was much more structured in his approach, and this was helpful.

Owen was frustrated too that there was no social interaction between himself and Eric. He was of the opinion that this would have enriched the supervisory relationship. Instead he felt there were barriers between them and a limit to the issues that he would discuss with Eric. He noted that his first supervisor was the best although he didn't like her style at the time, being uncomfortable with all the questions she asked. In retrospect he notes that it was because he found it too challenging but in fact he learned a great deal. On the other hand, she was not quick to praise which was not helpful.

Owen found it difficult to pinpoint whether Eric had changed after the supervisors' training because they were not meeting regularly but Eric did comment that he thought he should be meeting with Owen more often. This took a little time to arrange.

Owen commented that despite their differences he and Eric do respect one another and get on well. There has been no overt conflict in the placement in spite of Owen's relatively high levels of frustration from time to time.

Owen characterises himself as reflective although he also says he does not journal. He has wondered however, if he is "*doing any good*". Eric however, does help Owen to reflect. He finds conversation helpful to reflection. Later in the placement reflective practice became a more established part of supervision.

Owen's final comment was, notwithstanding his enjoyment of freedom that Eric gave him, that he would have liked less rope in the placement. He considers that the training experience more control from this supervisor would have made more sense.

## **6.1 Frank (Supervisor) and Patricia (Probationer): First Interviews**

### **6.1.1 Frank: Interview 1**

Frank is 63 years old. Theologically he tends towards conservative evangelical although is wary of being too dogmatic. After 5 years in his first parish, Frank spent some years abroad as a Church of Scotland mission partner and has had three parishes since his return. The first was in a small country town with a population of about 8,000. The next was a country parish in the north of Scotland, and his current charge is a remote rural multiple union in the North West of Scotland, including several islands, and uniting ten different communities and covering 350 mi.<sup>2</sup> but with an overall population of less than 3000.

Frank has had three candidates on placement and one full-time probationer before Patricia came to him on placement.

At this stage Frank does not know his MBTI profile.

Frank admitted to a limited awareness of how he approaches issues of conflict or disagreement. He noted that his counselling training had given him skills that were useful in terms of supervision.

For Frank, the role of the supervisor is to journey along with the probationer, to be supportive, to listen to their concerns and respond to their questions. At this stage he noted that there is always a tendency for a supervisor to want to move in try to solve the problem and his counselling training was useful in highlighting that this was not appropriate.

Frank likes to learn by reading up about something he wishes to learn. He commented on a recent course which he had attended, on managing change in the Church, as being the best course he had been on in a very long time and in reflecting on this course commented on the book on which the course was based rather than the course itself.

Frank struggled to articulate an overall aim of supervision but was aware that in probation the trainee minister is at the last stage of training before going into the parish on their own and that, therefore, this placement was particularly important. Frank reflected on his experience of receiving supervision as being very different as the probationer was effectively an assistant. Notwithstanding this he met with his supervisor every week and would reflect on what Frank had done in the previous week as well as setting tasks for the coming week.

Frank reflected that Patricia is a very good candidate and simply lacks experience in one or two areas. They meet regularly together, aiming for once a week, although with the huge distances involved in travelling around the parish this does not always happen. Reflection consisted of considering what Patricia had been doing and issues that she was raising and discussing them.

Patricia would often bring something specific to consider. They also explored areas with which Patricia was struggling such as children's talks.

### **6.1.2 Patricia: Interview 1**

Patricia is 57 and describes herself as theologically liberal. Before training for ministry, she was a nurse. Her pre-entry knowledge of ministry was mainly to do with pastoral care and she describes mission and teaching as being new to her. The thing that most surprised her about the church and ministry is the amount of conflict in the church.

Patricia's MBTI profile is ENFP. When she considered what those four letters indicated about her preferences she was surprised to see how closely they described the way she approaches tasks.

Patricia describes herself as a lifelong learner. She likes to push boundaries and learning fascinates her. She thinks keeping up to date with new ideas is important.

At this point, Patricia had completed the conflict questionnaire was interested to note that she got a similar score in every category, giving her a flat profile. Her preferred styles are collaborating, accommodating, and compromising, although when necessary she will use avoiding or directing. She considers that this is down to her experience of life and work to date.

In her placements Patricia spends most of her time in one of the church centres where there is still some underlying conflict resulting from a forced union some years ago. The congregations concerned voted against the union but were obliged to accept it. She has found this a helpful experience, enabling people to speak about their hurt and have their stories heard.

Patricia considers that she is in a privileged position as a student because she will get the chance to do things that she won't be able to do in her own charge due to pressures of work. She finds Frank an enabling supervisor who helps her to be realistic about what she can achieve and checks on her progress. She considers that the relationship is very open and that there is nothing that they can't discuss. At the outset they set ground rules and boundaries and Patricia is clear that she would not take offence at anything Frank said to her. She sees supervision as an opportunity to have her strengths and weaknesses drawn out in a safe environment. In the learning covenant, Patricia and Frank set out her goals for the placement; where there were goals which could not be met in the learning base arrangements were made for her to get experience in the neighbouring parish. Patricia thinks supervision is essential in training for ministry.

Patricia also thinks reflective practice is essential in training. As a nurse she was used to journaling and being a reflective practitioner and she has continued that into her ministerial training. She takes aspects of her journal into her supervision. She sees the benefit of journaling in enabling you to see where you're developing or whether you're just making the same mistakes over again.

## 6.2 Frank (Supervisor) and Patricia (Probationer): Second Interviews

### 6.2.1 Frank: Interview 2

Frank considered that there weren't any surprises in the training conference, particularly as he has been at day refresher courses previously and having done counselling training in the past.

Otherwise there would have been new ground. Nevertheless, there were elements that were a useful refresher and others that were new such as the session on personality types. He felt that it was helpful to understand that we are all different and, in a team setting, there could easily be someone with a very different personality type. He commented that Patricia sometimes uses the expression, *"it's all a question of style"* as reflecting different personality types. He considered that it made him explicitly aware of what he already understood that he wants people to be themselves.

Frank thought the course work was well laid out and the handouts very helpful. He was impressed by the clarity of the course materials and the amount of information contained within them. He realised that if he needed to refer back to them the information was there.

Frank has attended other courses covering similar ground to the approaches to conflict session but felt it was helpful to think through the issues again. He also found it helpful to have interaction with other supervisors. Meeting other people with more experience is always a good thing. He also commented that the triads and the practice of the Parabolic Loop was helpful.

Frank, in common with all supervisors of probationers, meets regularly with two other supervisors and a facilitator for reflective work. He found it quite helpful but wondered whether justified the time and the travel involved as, located in the north of Scotland, it meant a whole day travel for members of his triad to get there and back. He commented that none of the supervisors in his triad were having problems with their probationers but that if they were he might have found it more obviously helpful.

Frank found the sessions on goal setting and report writing helpful and referred to his notes and handouts when it came time to write Patricia's final report. He also commented that the conference contains a lot of information and so it's impossible to digest it all at once.

Frank and Patricia have discussed personality, and how it affects their supervision. Despite not always seeing eye to eye they have a good relationship. Reflecting on personality enabled Frank not to feel threatened by Patricia when she did things very differently from him.

Frank commented that the training was very comprehensive.

## 6.2.2 Patricia: Interview 2

Patricia had worked as a part-time, non-stipendiary minister before entering full-time ministry. She was surprised by the difference and quantified it as a greater acceptance from the congregation but also greater expectations. She saw a clear transition between one and the other and appreciated the 15 month probation.

Patricia set learning goals at the beginning of the placement and regularly reviewed them to see how she was progressing, particularly after her interim review at the 6 month point. She assessed her goals to see whether she could be more effective, particularly in pastoral visiting. She also saw a need to work on her time management because she and Frank were both fearful that if she went to a large parish and tried to do the same work that she was doing on her probationary placement she would be overworking.

Patricia realised that she and Frank were different personalities and yet they had to work together. She considered that realising that made her less likely to react negatively, understanding that his personality made him react in certain ways and she shouldn't take it personally.

Patricia has had several different experiences of supervision through her different supervisors. She and Frank meet every week and she felt that initially Frank found the openness that she wanted too challenging. She considers that supervision is a two-way process and that it has worked well. She can see progression and development in areas where she was weaker.

Patricia is very open to learning and Frank has been very open to allow her to try things out although on occasion he would say no, that he didn't think a particular idea would work in the context, and Patricia was happy to accept that. She felt that she knew exactly where she stood and that was a good basis for supervision.

Patricia noted that Frank seemed to understand more about supervision after he came back from the training. He hadn't realised how involved it was, nor the depth that he needed to achieve. The fact that Patricia came with such a lot of experience also was a big difference for Frank.

Reflective practice plays a huge part in supervision. Patricia noticed that Frank took reflection to greater depth after the training, considering meaning in any event as well as just what happened. She found supervision more challenging after Frank had been to training. She considers that reflective practice is essential for learning.

Patricia found herself adapting to complement Frank's personality and found that Frank's personality complemented her as well.

## Appendix VIII: MBTI Questionnaire

### MBTI Personality Type Test

1. At a party do you:
  - a. interact with many, including strangers
  - b. interact with a few, known to you
  
2. Are you more:
  - a. realistic than speculative
  - b. speculative than realistic
  
3. Is it worse to:
  - a. have your "head in the clouds"
  - b. be "in a rut"
  
4. Are you more impressed by:
  - a. principles
  - b. emotions
  
5. Are more drawn toward the:
  - a. convincing
  - b. touching
  
6. Do you prefer to work:
  - a. to deadlines
  - b. just "whenever"
  
7. Do you tend to choose:
  - a. rather carefully
  - b. somewhat impulsively
  
8. At parties do you:
  - a. stay late, with increasing energy
  - b. leave early with decreased energy
  
9. Are you more attracted to:
  - a. sensible people
  - b. imaginative people
  
10. Are you more interested in:
  - a. what is actual
  - b. what is possible
  
11. In judging others are you more swayed by:
  - a. laws than circumstances
  - b. circumstances than laws
  
12. In approaching others is your inclination to be somewhat:
  - a. objective
  - b. personal
  
13. Are you more:
  - a. punctual
  - b. leisurely
  
14. Does it bother you more having things:
  - a. incomplete
  - b. completed
  
15. In your social groups do you:
  - a. keep abreast of other's happenings



b. get behind on the news

16. In doing ordinary things are you more likely to:

- a. do it the usual way
- b. do it your own way

17. Writers should:

- a. "say what they mean and mean what they say"
- b. express things more by use of analogy

18. Which appeals to you more:

- a. consistency of thought
- b. harmonious human relationships

19. Are you more comfortable in making:

- a. logical judgments
- b. value judgments

20. Do you want things:

- a. settled and decided
- b. unsettled and undecided

21. Would you say you are more:

- a. serious and determined
- b. easy-going

22. In phoning do you:

- a. rarely question that it will all be said
- b. rehearse what you'll say

23. Facts:

- a. "speak for themselves"
- b. illustrate principles

24. Are visionaries:

- a. somewhat annoying
- b. rather fascinating

25. Are you more often:

- a. a cool-headed person
- b. a warm-hearted person

26. Is it worse to be:

- a. unjust
- b. merciless

27. Should one usually let events occur:

- a. by careful selection and choice
- b. randomly and by chance

28. Do you feel better about:

- a. having purchased
- b. having the option to buy

29. In company do you:

- a. initiate conversation
- b. wait to be approached

30. Common sense is:

- a. rarely questionable
- b. frequently questionable

31. Children often do not:

- a. make themselves useful enough

- b. exercise their fantasy enough
- 32. In making decisions do you feel more comfortable with:
  - a. standards
  - b. feelings
- 33. Are you more:
  - a. firm than gentle
  - b. gentle than firm
- 34. Which is more admirable:
  - a. the ability to organize and be methodical
  - b. the ability to adapt and make do
- 35. Do you put more value on:
  - a. infinite
  - b. open-minded
- 36. Does new and non-routine interaction with others:
  - a. stimulate and energize you
  - b. tax your reserves
- 37. Are you more frequently:
  - a. a practical sort of person
  - b. a fanciful sort of person
- 38. Are you more likely to:
  - a. see how others are useful
  - b. see how others see
- 39. Which is more satisfying:
  - a. to discuss an issue thoroughly
  - b. to arrive at agreement on an issue
- 40. Which rules you more:
  - a. your head
  - b. your heart
- 41. Are you more comfortable with work that is:
  - a. contracted
  - b. done on a casual basis
- 42. Do you tend to look for:
  - a. the orderly
  - b. whatever turns up
- 43. Do you prefer:
  - a. many friends with brief contact
  - b. a few friends with more lengthy contact
- 44. Do you go more by:
  - a. facts
  - b. principles
- 45. Are you more interested in:
  - a. production and distribution
  - b. design and research
- 46. Which is more of a compliment:
  - a. "There is a very logical person."
  - b. "There is a very sentimental person."
- 47. Do you value in yourself more that you are:
  - a. unwavering

b. devoted

48. Do you more often prefer the  
a. final and unalterable statement  
b. tentative and preliminary statement

49. Are you more comfortable:  
a. after a decision  
b. before a decision

50. Do you:  
a. speak easily and at length with strangers  
b. find little to say to strangers

51. Are you more likely to trust your:  
a. experience  
b. hunch

52. Do you feel:  
a. more practical than ingenious  
b. more ingenious than practical

53. Which person is more to be complimented – one of:  
a. clear reason  
b. strong feeling

54. Are you inclined more to be:  
a. fair-minded  
b. sympathetic

55. Is it preferable mostly to:  
a. make sure things are arranged  
b. just let things happen

56. In relationships should most things be:  
a. re-negotiable  
b. random and circumstantial

57. When the phone rings do you:  
a. hasten to get to it first  
b. hope someone else will answer

58. Do you prize more in yourself:  
a. a strong sense of reality  
b. a vivid imagination

59. Are you drawn more to:  
a. fundamentals  
b. overtones

60. Which seems the greater error:  
a. to be too passionate  
b. to be too objective

61. Do you see yourself as basically:  
a. hard-headed  
b. soft-hearted

62. Which situation appeals to you more:  
a. the structured and scheduled  
b. the unstructured and unscheduled

63. Are you a person that is more:  
a. routinized than whimsical

- b. whimsical than routinized
64. Are you more inclined to be:
- a. easy to approach
  - b. somewhat reserved
65. In writings do you prefer:
- a. the more literal
  - b. the more figurative
66. Is it harder for you to:
- a. identify with others
  - b. utilize others
67. Which do you wish more for yourself:
- a. clarity of reason
  - b. strength of compassion
68. Which is the greater fault:
- a. being indiscriminate
  - b. being critical
69. Do you prefer the:
- a. planned event
  - b. unplanned event
70. Do you tend to be more:
- a. deliberate than spontaneous
  - b. spontaneous than deliberate

## Appendix IX: Learning Questionnaire

Everyone has a different approach to learning. Where this differs radically and people have to work together this can cause problems therefore it is helpful to get an idea of how you approach learning and how others might differ from you. The aim of this questionnaire is to help learners make sense of factors which underpin their own successful learning. It aims to help you to find out more about your own learning – in other words to become more aware of how it works – and how to make it work better. The end result should give you a picture of what motivates you to learn (whether it is external factors for example), how you are most likely to approach the task of learning (e.g. through research or “jumping straight in”) and the extent to which other people can affect your learning (through feedback etc.). There will be an opportunity to analyse your scores and get a picture of their meaning at the conference.

The five sections of the questionnaire relate to:

- 1) Wanting to learn – self-motivation
- 2) Needing to learn – taking ownership of targets set by others
- 3) Learning by doing: practice, trial-and-error, repetition
- 4) Learning from feedback: other people, scores, marks, grades
- 5) Making sense of what I’m learning – getting my head round it

Think of any of the following – and it doesn’t have to be academic learning; it could be a new skill or something practical:

- Something you’re presently learning;
- Something you’ve recently learned;
- Something you may be about to start learning;
- Your own ways of learning in general.

In other words, it doesn’t matter, as long as it’s about how **you** learn, and how you feel about learning. In the questionnaire which follows the word ‘programme’ means this piece of learning. This could be a whole course or equally a small bit of learning that has nothing to do with a formal course. So, every time you see the word ‘programme’, just think of the bit of learning you’re thinking about – past, present or future. The questionnaire is written in the present tense, however, so whatever the case, try to capture each situation as if you were right in the middle of learning whatever it is, will be or was.

The questionnaire consists of 80 statements, sixteen each grouped more-or-less round the agendas of the five factors underpinning successful learning mentioned above. There are four columns for you to select;

- This is very like me;
- This is often like me;
- This is sometimes like me;
- This is not like me at all.

Sometimes ‘this is very like me’ may seem to be a good choice relating to a particular statement, but on other occasions the same choice may be felt to be an unsatisfactory one, so don’t be tempted just to tick the same column each time. Remember that only **you** know which column is the most appropriate one to tick. Don’t just try to tick the ones that you think are the best ones to tick. This is **your** questionnaire.

<b>1) Wanting to learn: self-motivation</b>					
	<b>Statements</b>	This is very like me.	This is often like me.	This is sometimes like me.	This is not at all like me.
1	I'm really eager to get everything I can out of anything I'm learning.				
2	I always put everything I've got into anything I'm earning.				
3	When I'm learning something, I'm doing it for me, not just because other people expect me to do it.				
4	I don't worry about what anyone else thinks regarding whether I succeed or not.				
5	I usually get involved in learning things because I have to do it in order to achieve something else.				
6	I'm learning because other people I know have done similar programmes, and I want to keep up with them.				
7	I'm doing this programme because other people I know said they found it really useful.				
8	Once I start on learning something, I keep going, even when the going gets tough.				
9	I'm very good at starting things, but I tend to give up on things if I don't like them much.				
10	I'm a finisher. When I start something I finish it, even if I'm not enjoying it.				
11	I need quite a lot of encouragement to keep me going when I'm learning something new.				
12	I'm perfectly happy learning on my own, and it doesn't matter to me if no one else I know is learning alongside me.				
13	I might find myself rather lonely learning on my own, and prefer other people around me to be learning too.				
14	I'm always learning something or other - life without learning is just not possible for me.				
15	I'm doing this programme because I'm really fascinated by the subject material.				
16	I'm doing this programme because it's a challenge to me, and I can't resist challenges.				

<b>2) Needing to learn: taking ownership of the targets</b>					
	Statements	This is very like me.	This is often like me.	This is sometimes like me.	This is not at all like me.
17	I'm doing this learning because I need to do it in order to achieve something else.				
18	I'm doing this programme because it will be useful in my career.				
19	I find it essential to have clear targets, so that I know all along what I'm aiming to achieve.				
20	I'm doing this programme because I need to keep up with other people in the same job.				
21	I'm doing this programme because I need to keep up with other people around me at home.				
22	I'm not actually very keen to learn this programme, but I know that I'll need it.				
23	I'm doing this programme because I have a weak spot, and this will help me to put this right.				
24	I'm doing this programme to keep up with someone else who is better at the subject than I am.				
25	I'm doing this programme to prove to other people that I can do it.				
26	I'm doing this programme to prove to myself that I can actually do it.				
27	I really like to know in advance exactly what I'm going to become able to do.				
28	I've started this programme, and I'm the kind of person who finishes what I've started.				
29	Although I need to complete this programme, I may give up if I get bored with it.				
30	Although I need to complete this programme, if I get discouraged I'm quite likely to quit.				
31	I'll be perfectly happy as long as I get by with this programme, I'm not aiming for the skies with it.				
32	This programme is exactly what I need, it could have been designed just for me.				

<b>3) Learning by doing: practice, trial and error, repetition</b>					
Statements		This is very like me.	This is often like me.	This is sometimes like me.	This is not at all like me.
33	I need to do things over and over again to keep them in my mind.				
34	For me, I don't learn much just by looking at a book or handout.				
35	I need to be making my own notes to learn anything really well.				
36	I can look at a piece of paper for ages, but not actually take anything in from it.				
37	I learn most by getting things wrong, then finding out why they were wrong, and trying again till I get them right.				
38	I learn a lot from other people's mistakes, and I try to avoid making the same kinds of mistake.				
39	I don't learn much from listening to teachers or trainers talking about it, I've got to have a go myself to learn.				
40	I like learning at my own pace, rather than when the pace is set by teachers or trainers.				
41	I like the comfort of privacy to make mistakes, and to learn from my mistakes without anyone else seeing them.				
42	I like to press ahead with whatever I'm learning, without going back and polishing up what I've already covered.				
43	I prefer to get one thing really mastered, and don't like to go on to new stuff until I'm sure I've cracked the old stuff.				
44	I'm not at all happy working just with learning materials; I prefer to get my hands dirty and put theories into practice.				
45	I only feel I've learned something when I go away and have a go at it for real.				
46	I prefer to learn things with other people rather than sitting on my own.				
47	I never remember what I'm told, but usually remember things I've done.				
48	I only really understand things after I've done them again and again.				



<b>4) Learning from feedback: other people, scores, marks, grades</b>					
	Statements	This is very like me.	This is often like me.	This is sometimes like me.	This is not at all like me.
49	When I get something right, I really like to be told 'well done'.				
50	When I get something wrong, I like people to explain exactly what was wrong, and what I can do about it.				
51	I don't like to be told I've got something wrong, I'd much rather find out for myself.				
52	When I've had a go at something, I want to find out straight away whether I've got it right or not.				
53	Once I've done something, that's it, I'm not particularly bothered to find out whether it was bad or brilliant.				
54	If I have to wait for days to find out how I did, I'm past caring, and don't take much notice of any feedback I get.				
55	I like there to be a tutor or trainer around, someone to ask, when I don't understand things.				
56	I prefer not to ask people when I'm stuck, but to try everything to sort it all out for myself.				
57	The first thing I look at when I get marked work back is what score or grade I was given.				
58	I like to find out how I'm doing very soon after I start learning anything.				
59	I prefer to wait till I've finished something before finding out how well I've done - or not.				
60	I prefer to forge ahead with the programme, rather than stopping to explore my success with each bit I tried.				
61	When I get things wrong, I want to know why I got them wrong, not just what the right answer might have been.				
62	For me, feedback is the most important thing, I need to know how I'm doing every step of the way				
63	It really cheers me up every time I get something right and get this confirmed.				
64	When I do something for the first time the most important thing is that I feel I've done a good job				

<b>5) Making sense of what I'm learning: getting my head round it</b>					
	Statements	This is very like me.	This is often like me.	This is sometimes like me.	This is not at all like me.
65	I'm never really satisfied until I feel that I really understand what I've been learning.				
66	I don't worry too much about whether I understand something or not, as long as I can do what I need to do with it.				
67	I'm worried that I may be sailing along without understanding what I'm learning.				
68	I find that I need other people around me to talk to, to work out whether I've understood something or not.				
69	When I can't understand something, I tend to get stuck and can't press on until I've sorted it out.				
70	When I can't understand something, I simply press on, and often the understanding comes along quite soon as I continue learning.				
71	It really annoys me when I can't get my head round a particular idea.				
72	I find that some things have to be lived with for a while before the light really dawns.				
73	Understanding things is overrated! All I want is to be able to be good at doing what I need to do.				
74	I sometimes feel that I understand something, then get disappointed when I realize that I hadn't yet understood it properly.				
75	I feel really great when the light dawns on something I've been struggling with for ages and ages.				
76	I'm patient with my brain, and don't try to force it to make sense of everything all at once.				
77	I find that one day I've got my head right round something, then next day it's gone again, and I have to start all over again.				
78	For me, something has got to have gone through my brain several times before it really stays there.				
79	I'm worried about how much I forget.				
80	I no longer worry about forgetting things, as next time round it takes far less time to get to grips with them again				

**Self-evaluation questionnaire scoring grids:** transfer your ticks into the grid below by circling the appropriate letter according to your answers

**1) Wanting to learn, self-motivation**

1	a	b	c	d
2	a	b	c	d
3	a	b	c	d
4	a	b	c	d
5	d	c	b	a
6	d	c	b	a
7	d	c	b	a
8	a	b	c	d
9	d	c	b	a
10	a	b	c	d
11	d	c	b	a
12	a	b	c	d
13	d	c	b	a
14	a	b	c	d
15	a	b	c	d
16	a	b	c	d

**2) Needing to learn: taking ownership of the targets**

17	a	b	c	d
18	a	b	c	d
19	a	b	c	d
20	a	b	c	d
21	a	b	c	d
22	a	b	c	d
23	a	b	c	d
24	d	c	b	a
25	d	c	b	a
26	a	b	c	d
27	a	b	c	d
28	a	b	c	d
29	d	c	b	a
30	d	c	b	a
31	d	c	b	a
32	a	b	c	d

**3) Learning by doing: practice, trial-and- error, repetition**

33	a	b	c	d
34	a	b	c	d
35	a	b	c	d
36	a	b	c	d
37	a	b	c	d
38	a	b	c	d
39	a	b	c	d
40	a	b	c	d
41	a	b	c	d
42	d	c	b	a
43	d	c	b	a
44	a	b	c	d
45	a	b	c	d
46	d	c	b	a
47	a	b	c	d
48	a	b	c	d

**4) Learning from feedback: other people, scores, marks, grades**

49	a	b	c	d
50	a	b	c	d
51	d	c	b	a
52	a	b	c	d
53	d	c	b	a
54	a	b	c	d
55	a	b	c	d
56	d	c	b	a
57	a	b	c	d
58	a	b	c	d
59	d	c	b	a
60	d	c	b	a
61	a	b	c	d
62	a	b	c	d
63	a	b	c	d
64	d	c	b	a

**5) Making sense of what I'm learning — getting my head round it**

65	a	b	c	d
66	d	c	b	a
67	a	b	c	d
68	a	b	c	d
69	a	b	c	d
70	a	b	c	d
71	a	b	c	d
72	a	b	c	d
73	d	c	b	a
74	a	b	c	d
75	a	b	c	d
76	a	b	c	d
77	a	b	c	d
78	a	b	c	d
79	d	c	b	a
80	a	b	c	d

Now add up the total number of each of the letters that you have circled in each section of the scoring grid above and enter the totals in the grid below. Do not add up rows or columns in the sections. Take the total number of 'a's, 'b's, 'c's and 'd's in each section and enter them in the appropriate column below, as it relates to the scoring chart above. There is no need to add up the rows or columns here either. This should give you an idea of what motivates you to learn, (1 & 2), and what matters to you while you are learning (3, 4 & 5). A high score in the 'a' column means that that is a significant factor in your approach to learning while a high score in 'd' would mean that this aspect is not so significant. However, the picture that this gives you of your approach to learning will be more fully explored at the conference.

<b>Section:</b>	<b>Total 'a's</b>	<b>Total 'b's</b>	<b>Total 'c's</b>	<b>Total 'd's</b>
<b>1) Wanting to learn: self-motivation</b>				
<b>2) Needing to learn: taking ownership of the targets</b>				
<b>3) Learning by doing: practice, trial-and- error, repetition</b>				
<b>4) Learning from feedback: other people, scores, marks, grades</b>				
<b>5) Making sense of what I'm learning — getting my head round it</b>				



# Appendix X: Outline of Reflective Session

## Church of Scotland Ministries Council Supervision Training

### GROUP SUPERVISION AND ASSESSMENT Group Supervision Sessions (45mins)

1. While in the practice of educational supervision, the focus is on the supervisee, for this event, we are training supervisors and so the focus of the Group Supervision session is to provide feedback to the supervisor, not to solve the issues and dilemmas of the supervisee.
  
2. A suggested time frame and process is:
  - Supervisee leaves the room
  - 5 mins**
    - supervisor indicates what s/he hopes to accomplish and areas where feedback is desired.
    - the observer is to keep time
  
  - Supervisor and supervisee engage in supervision
  - 20 mins**
  
  - Facilitator leads the supervisor and supervisee in debriefing from the experience. This is to allow them to leave the supervision behind and move to the next section.
  - 5 mins**
  
  - Observer invites the supervisor to reflect on his/her goals and how they were met in the session. (At this point the supervisor needs to listen to the feedback from the others and not engage in offering explanations or defence of what happened in supervision session.)
    - observer invites supervisee to give some feedback about the supervision – how it felt; what was helpful; what was not helpful.
    - observer gives feedback about the supervision
    - facilitator gives feedback about the supervision
    - general discussion about the supervision and the feedback that includes the supervisor
    - Wrap up – what did we learn from this session?
  - 15 mins**
  
3. It is important to keep alert to the fact that a tendency is for the Supervision Group to try to solve the issues and dilemmas raised by the supervisee. The focus of the discussion needs to remain on the goals of the supervisor and learning about supervision from the practice session.
  
4. It is also important to remember that the 45 minutes is not flexible. The time frame is tight and needs to be honoured.

Assessment has three parts:

Self-assessment: how has your understanding of the reflective cycle developed over the period of training; how effective do you think your performance as a supervisor in reflective practice was and in what areas do you need to improve? What gifts and skills do you bring to the ministry of supervision and where are your weaknesses?

Peer assessment: (supervisee/observer) in your assessment, how well has the supervisor understood reflective practice and how accomplished was s/he at guiding the supervisee through the reflection? What areas of strength and weakness do you observe?

Facilitator assessment: in your assessment, how well has the supervisor understood reflective practice and how accomplished was s/he at guiding the supervisee through the reflection? What areas of strength and weakness do you observe?

Assessment covers all the components of the programme and reflects a person's readiness for the ministry of supervision.

In triads, each person in turn assumes the role of Supervisor, Supervisee and Observer. This cycle will be completed twice for each person. You should take brief notes during or immediately after each session to facilitate your report writing later. All reports focus on the supervisor. Although each person acts as supervisor twice, there is only one report which is discussed at the final session and submitted both to the supervisor and to the final assessment conference.

# Appendix XI: Triad Briefing Document

## MINISTRIES COUNCIL

### Probation Triads

Supervisors' Triads have a threefold purpose.

1. To act as a support mechanism for supervisors in what is sometimes a lonely task.
  - a. Meeting, chatting and sharing in fellowship together over coffee and/or a meal provides mutual support.
  - b. The chance to reflect on an issue in depth in the presence of experienced peers is an opportunity to be supported.
  
2. To provide a safe place to bring issues from your supervision of your candidate – this is peer supervision, something with which counsellors and healthcare professionals are very familiar and is basic good practice in any situation where you are working with people in a situation of vulnerability, however slight that vulnerability may be.
  - a. Issues should be real and should arise from your practice of supervision with your candidate. This is not role-play. What issues have arisen for *you* as a result of supervising your student? Have you been challenged? Puzzled? Dismayed? Are you rejoicing?
  - b. In exploring the issues in this context, you are given the space to reflect in depth and hopefully identify options for renewed practice.
  
3. To exercise your practice of supervision in a context where you can receive helpful and constructive feedback
  - a. In supervising your peer, you should use, as far as possible the techniques and practices you employ with your candidate. This enables helpful feedback on your practice and hopefully provides both affirmation, leading to greater confidence, and constructive feedback, leading to improved practice.

To this end, while the general chat and conversation of the meeting is a vital part of the support mechanism, there is also a need to focus intentionally on supervision both as supervisee and supervisor. This intentional space is facilitated by the use of the Parabolic Loop. While this is only one tool among many, the Ministries Council has agreed that this is the most appropriate for the purpose. It has the advantage of simplicity; it is easy to become familiar with. It makes explicit what many do implicitly and provides a helpful framework. It facilitates focus on the issue in hand preventing the temptation to drift off into problem solving. It should be noted that the purpose of supervision in this context is *not* to solve the problem but to allow the supervisee to explore the issues, theological, spiritual, biblical and emotional, which the problem raises, although this exploration may well lead to renewed practice on the part of the supervisee.

The personnel involved in this process are; the Facilitator, the Observer, the Supervisee and the Supervisor. The roles of Supervisor, Supervisee and Observer rotate through the triad during the meeting.

**Facilitator:** The facilitator is responsible for coordinating the meetings, arranging the venue and any catering and ensuring that expense forms are provided for travel. In addition, at the meeting, the facilitator will enable the smooth operation of the triad by:

- 1) Ensuring that each person gets the opportunity to act as Supervisee, Supervisor and Observer.
- 2) Keeping the group to time so that all parties have the opportunity to act in each role
- 3) Enabling feedback to the Supervisor from Supervisee and Observer, and offering his or her own.

**Triad members:** Each of the triad members has the opportunity to act as Supervisee, Supervisor and Observer.

The Supervisee is responsible for:

- 1) Bringing an appropriate incident from supervision of his or her candidate for guided reflection.
- 2) Giving appropriate feedback to the Supervisor on the experience of being supervised.

The Supervisor is responsible for:

- 1) Guiding the Supervisee through reflection on the incident. This does not mean finding a solution to the problem or resolving the issue.

The Observer is responsible for:

- 1) Noting how the supervisor deals with the supervisee.
- 2) Offering appropriate feedback on the supervisory style.

Please note that the purpose of these meetings is support and learning; there is no element of assessment.

**Meetings:** These should happen at least three times during the probation, but can happen up to five times if desired. It can be helpful to rotate the location so that each supervisor gets the opportunity to act as host and the others get the opportunity to gain a sense of the location.

## Appendix XII: Kraybill Questionnaire

### Adult Personal Conflict Style Inventory

*This survey will calculate your preferred method of dealing with conflict*

**Please Note:** The reflection this inventory can create is more important - and more reliable- than the numbers calculated from your responses to this form. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, nor have we "standardized" this instrument. Some takers agree with the results; others disagree. Whether you like the results or not, you should rely on them for an accurate picture of yourself only after further self-scrutiny and discussion with others. The inventory is merely a tool to enable these larger tasks.

**Instructions:** Consider your response in situations where your wishes differ from those of another person. Note that statements A-J deal with your *initial* response to disagreement; statements K-T deal with your response *after the disagreement has gotten stronger*. If you find it easier, you may choose one particular conflict setting and use it as background for all the questions. Circle one number on the line below each statement.

#### When I first discover that differences exist...

- A** ...I make sure that all views are out in the open and treated with equal consideration, even if there seems to be substantial disagreement.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- B** ...I devote more attention to making sure others understand the logic and benefits of my position than I do to pleasing them.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- C** ...I make my needs known, but I tone them down a bit and look for solutions somewhere in the middle.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- D** ...I pull back from discussion for a time to avoid tension.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- E** ...I devote more attention to feelings of others than to my personal goals.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- F** ...I make sure my agenda doesn't get in the way of our relationship.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- G** ...I actively explain my ideas and just as actively take steps to understand others.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- H** ...I am more concerned with goals I believe to be important than with how others feel about things.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- I** ...I decide the differences aren't worth worrying about.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*
- J** ...I give up some points in exchange for others.  
*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**If differences persist and feelings escalate...**

**K** ...I enter more actively into discussion and hold out for ways to meet the needs of others as well as my own.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**L** ...I put forth greater effort to make sure that the truth as I see it is recognized and less on pleasing others.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**M** ...I try to be reasonable by not asking for my full preferences, but I make sure I get some of what I want.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**N** ...I don't push for things to be done my way, and I pull back somewhat from the demands of others.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**O** ...I set aside my own preferences and become more concerned with keeping the relationship comfortable.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**P** ...I interact less with others and look for ways to find a safe distance.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**Q** ...I do what needs to be done and hope we can mend feelings later.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**R** ...I do what is necessary to smooth the other's feelings.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**S** ...I pay close attention to the desires of others but remain firm that they need to pay equal attention to my desires.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**T** ...I press for moderation and compromise so we can make a decision and move on with things.

*Not at all characteristic* ← 1 \_ 2 \_ 3 \_ 4 \_ 5 \_ 6 → *Very characteristic*

**Style Inventory Tally Sheet**

When you are finished taking the inventory, write the number you circled for each situation beside the corresponding letter on the tally sheet below. Add each of the 10 columns of the tally chart, writing the total of each in the empty box just below the double line.

A __	K __	B __	L __	C __	M __	D __	N __	E __	O __
G __	S __	H __	Q __	J __	T __	I __	P __	F __	R __
Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm	Calm	Storm
<b>Collaborating</b>		<b>Forcing</b>		<b>Compromising</b>		<b>Avoiding</b>		<b>Accommodating</b>	

Now list your scores and the style names in order from highest score to lowest in both the calm and storm columns below.

**Calm**

Response when issues/conflicts first arise.

Score	Style
_____	_____ Collaborating _____
_____	_____ Forcing _____
_____	_____ Compromising _____
_____	_____ Avoiding _____
_____	_____ Accommodating _____

**Storm**

Response after the issues/conflicts have been unresolved and have grown in intensity.

Score	Style
_____	_____ Collaborating _____
_____	_____ Forcing _____
_____	_____ Compromising _____
_____	_____ Avoiding _____
_____	_____ Accommodating _____

**When I first discover that differences exist...**

This exercise gives you two sets of scores for each of the five approaches to conflict. **Calm** scores apply to your response when disagreement first arises. **Storm** scores apply to your responses if things are not easily resolved and emotions get stronger. The higher your score in a given style, the more likely you are to use this style in responding to conflict. The highest score in each of the columns indicates a "preferred" or primary style. If two or more styles have the same score they are equally "preferred." The second highest score indicates ones' "backup" style if the number is relatively close to the highest score. A fairly even score across all of the styles indicates a "flat profile." Persons with a flat profile tend to be able to choose easily among the various responses to conflict.

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