

NEW BRUNSWICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**SUPERVISED MINISTRY  
SUPERVISOR'S HANDBOOK**

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## INTRODUCTION

As a pastor, I've had two different stints in supervising seminary students. The first occurred in 1987 when my associate left to pursue a PhD in ethics. Frankly, our congregation needed some help with Christian Education and youth work and New Brunswick Seminary was just down the road so we asked for a student. She worked with both youth groups, taught an adult elective, met with the staff in evaluations and planning and participated in worship each Sunday. For my part, I met with her occasionally and can't, for the life of me, remember any supervision I gave her that was worthy of the name. More in spite of my supervision than because of it, she has become an excellent pastor and a significant leader in our denomination.

The second occurred in 1995 when my associate left to accept a single pastorate. Frankly, our congregation needed some help with Christian Education and youth work and New Brunswick Seminary was just down the road so we asked for a student. By this time, New Brunswick Seminary had invested some serious time, money, and energy in the Supervised Ministry program. The faculty, staff and board of the seminary recognized the importance of experience in theological education and the need to integrate learning and serving, so Supervised Ministry was a natural bridge. My predecessor, The Rev. Dr. Robert Hoeksema, had worked extensively with Andover-Newton Theological Seminary and had helped to make the Supervised Ministry program at New Brunswick Theological Seminary a vital part of the total seminary curriculum. Included were training sessions for lay committees, and, of course, for supervisors.

I signed up for the Foundations in Supervision class and found that it made a world of difference. I had a structure to supervision. I learned helpful techniques in supervision. I began to think about the odyssey from the pew to the pulpit in new ways; in deeper ways and I found that the hour and a half I spent in supervision with our student was one of the most rewarding and challenging times in my ministry. My sense is that those students who ministered with me in my last church are stronger because of my supervision. I also found that, in supervising them, I was helped to think about my own calling and my own ministry.

My hope and prayer is that your experience in supervision will be such that those you supervise will be strong leaders in the Kingdom and that you are stronger in your ministry as well.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

As a supervisor of a seminary student, you have become a "Teacher in the Field;" something along the order of an adjunct professor at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. In fact, you will be listed as a Teacher in the Field in the seminary's yearly catalogue. From the seminary's perspective, the focus of Supervised Ministry is the student's integration of classroom learning and actual ministry experience. The primary responsibility for learning in Supervised Ministry lies with your student and will be articulated in the Learning/Serving Covenant.

As a supervisor, you have two foci. You are the pastor of a congregation or a minister in a specialized setting. You need to be concerned that ministry in your part of the Kingdom is carried out effectively and with integrity. **Ministry is your first focus** and our student is expected to help you with that ministry. (That's the "Serving" part of the Learning/Serving Covenant.) **Your second focus is on teaching.** The kind of teaching you will do will focus much less on lectures and formal settings and more on opening yourself to the student and letting your student walk in your footsteps. From my own experience and from talking with supervisors, having a seminary student in your ministry setting will not save you time. At best, you will break even, considering the time you will spend in formal and informal supervision. That means that you need to sense that mentoring a seminary student is a part of your gifts and calling in ministry. (The same needs to be true of your congregation.)

This handbook is designed to help you make sense of supervision. There are parts of it that are identical with the student's handbook. There are parts that are unique to supervisors. My hope is that it will be reader-friendly enough that it will be "a good read" and will give shape and direction to your calling to mentor a seminary student. While it will be repeated, please be aware that I am always available to you and your ministry setting. Generally, I will visit new supervisors in the field. This helps me to meet you face to face and also gives me a feel for the setting in which our students will be ministering. I hope it also opens the door so that you will feel free to call me if I can be of any help whatsoever.

Finally, as you know from the Introduction, I am first a pastor myself. As I live out this calling from God as the Director of Supervised Ministry, I have found that I am not a teacher but rather someone who pulls together people in ministry and we learn from each other. I invite you into this adventure, with our students, with other supervisors, to teach and learn in the broader Church of Jesus Christ.

## MISSION STATEMENT

New Brunswick Theological Seminary is a teaching institution of the Reformed Church in America, called by God to be a servant of the whole church of Jesus Christ. The Seminary's mission is to continue the ministry of Jesus in our time and place by enabling persons to translate their calling and gifts into faithful Christian ministry.

## THE PURPOSE OF SUPERVISED MINISTRY

Supervised Ministry is one of the ways that New Brunswick Theological Seminary carries out its mission statement. Our curriculum provides a solid foundation in the classical theological disciplines and offers a wealth of practical courses that enable students to learn the skills of ministry. Supervised Ministry offers students an opportunity to reflect on hands-on experiences in actual ministry settings and "...to translate their calling and gifts into faithful Christian ministry." With the guidance of trained supervisors and lay committees, the students **integrate classroom learning with the practice of ministry.**

Supervised Ministry has three major goals.

- ❖ *To help students develop the skills for ministry,*
- ❖ *To teach the art of theological reflection, and*
- ❖ *To enable students to grapple with ministerial identity.*

In many cases, Supervised Ministry also helps students **discern God's particular call to a specific ministry.** By experiencing service in the pastorate, students continue to weigh if the pastorate is their particular calling. When students experience ministry in a college or hospital setting, when they work in a social service agency or with a local police force, when they minister in a hospice or in an interfaith, ecumenical ministry, they more clearly listen to God's call in their life.

Finally, Supervised Ministry enables students to **learn about other denominations and other expressions of the Christian faith** as they minister in

settings that go beyond their particular religious background. In such a light, we see the power of the one Church of God in Jesus Christ.

## **SUPERVISED MINISTRY OVERVIEW**

### *General Expectations*

If, as some claim, it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a parish to raise a pastor. To carry out the purposes of the seminary and graduate with an understanding of and experience in the actual practice of ministry, all students enrolled in the Master of Divinity degree must participate in Supervised Ministry. This is a partnership between the seminary and actual ministry sites. Generally, Supervised Ministry happens in a church setting, but some of the most exciting growth in ministry happens wherever ministry happens and wherever a caring supervisor can be found. The student needs to enter the Supervised Ministry setting with an enthusiasm to do actual hands-on ministry but an openness to learn about the subtleties of serving among the People of God. The supervisor must appreciate the service the student provides but must also be excited about helping to shape one who is called to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. The church must look forward to the ministry of the student and it is hoped will pay the student for her or his ministry. (See "Remuneration") The church must also accept the calling to be a teaching church; a setting in which one who is called by God can be shaped by God's people into a worthy servant and pastor.

### *Expectations of Supervisors*

Specifically, you will be expected to:

- ❖ Work with your student to **finalize the Learning/Serving Covenant**.
- ❖ If you are in a parish setting and it is appropriate for your tradition, **form a lay committee** of three to six people to help supervise your student.
- ❖ **Prepare the way** for your student to join in your ministry setting. (See Appendix D.)
- ❖ **Read the text for supervisors**. (See "Text.")

- ❖ **Commit an hour to an hour and a half each week to supervision.**
- ❖ If you have had no training in theological supervision, **attend the Foundations in Supervision Course** offered for supervisors by New Brunswick Theological Seminary. (For more details, see "Foundations in Supervision.") New Brunswick Seminary recognizes the supervisory training offered by the other fine seminaries in the area, so if you have taken a course in supervision from another seminary, it meets this requirement.
- ❖ When possible, attend the **Supervisor's Update** offered quarterly. (See "Supervisor's Update.")
- ❖ **Make a wide range of ministry experiences available** to your student.
- ❖ Provide to the Director of Supervised Ministry **written evaluations at the end of each semester.** (See "Evaluations")
- ❖ **Contact the Director of Supervised Ministry** if there are any difficulties with the student during the Supervised Ministry placement.

## Placements

Placements in Supervised Ministry settings generally begin in one of two ways. First, the student may have a likely Supervised Ministry site. If so, the student will discuss the possible site with the Director of Supervised Ministry and together they will determine if this is an appropriate setting for the student. Then the student will contact the pastor of that setting so see if the arrangement can be finalized. If the student does not have a likely Supervised Ministry site, the Director of Supervised Ministry will suggest a placement.

While it is not prohibited, **it is strongly suggested that a student not do Supervised Ministry in the student's home church.** Roles, responsibilities and expectations can easily become blurred when a student does Supervised Ministry his or her home congregation and often learning can be limited. **It is also not recommended that a student's pastor become the student's supervisor.** In such a relationship, the pastor necessarily ceases to be the student's pastor so the student is without a home pastor as the student progresses through seminary training. Every student (and every pastor, for that matter) needs a pastor.

## Remuneration

The suggested rate of remuneration for a student is as follows:

- ❖ For a junior student (from 0-32 hours of academic credit) \$50/week
- ❖ For a middler student (from 33-64 hours) \$75/week
- ❖ For a senior student (from 65-96 hours) \$100/week

Reimbursement for mileage and expenses incurred as a result of service required in the Learning/Serving Covenant. The mileage is to be at the rate established by the IRS for business travel.

While it should be noted that the above rates are suggested, any deviation from these rates needs to be negotiated with the Director of Supervised Ministry. While Supervised Ministry is certainly a leaning situation for the student, it is also an arena in which the student will perform significant ministry and issues of justice require some recognition of this ministry.

A Supervised Ministry assignment requires:

- ❖ A **supervisor** who is both engaged in some kind of ministry and has a theological degree.
- ❖ A **setting** (church, institution or an agency) where a student can practice ministry in its many forms and functions and a setting in which the student and the supervisor can negotiate a supervised ministry covenant. Congregations that assume this calling are recognized as Teaching Churches.
- ❖ A **lay committee** whose members agree to meet regularly with the student. (While there is always value in having a lay committee, this requirement may be waived in certain specialized ministries.)
- ❖ A **Learning/Serving Covenant** that outlines the goals and objectives of the student
- ❖ **Approval** from the Director of Supervised Ministry.

## How Supervised Ministry Units are Earned

- ❖ A unit of Supervised Ministry carries no academic credit toward the completion of the Masters of Divinity Degree but six units are required for graduation.
- ❖ A Supervised Ministry unit is 128-196 hours of involvement per semester. This equates to about 8-12 hours per week in a parish/site for each of the following:
  - September through December
  - January through May
  - June through August

## Texts

Supervisors are required to read *The Supervision of Ministry* by Regina Cole, CSJ, {The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN}, 1992. This can be ordered through the seminary's bookstore.

## Foundations in Supervision

**"Foundations in Supervision"** is a formal course offered for pastors serving in ministry who hope to grow in the art and skill of supervision. In the best of all worlds, you will take this course before you begin supervising a student from the seminary. In the real world, you will probably take this course at the same time that you are supervising the student. This course is required for all supervisors with two exceptions:

- ❖ those who live more than an hour's drive from the course site (Each fall, courses are held at the New Brunswick Campus of the seminary. It is anticipated that there will be a Foundations course offered at the St. Johns Campus in the future), and
- ❖ those who have completed a comparable course at another seminary.

This course offers three Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) to participants who wish to receive this credit. The course meets:

- ❖ The **first Monday** of each month
- ❖ For **six months**, beginning in October and concluding in March
- ❖ From **9:30 AM until 2:30 PM**

Formally, the course offers training in supervision. This is not much different from the kind of supervision taught in a good social work school. This supervision will help the student hone the particular **skills** for ministry that the student identified in the Learning/Serving Covenant. But supervision of seminary students needs to also include a healthy helping of **theological reflection**. For those engaged in the Gospel ministry, theological reflection is a staple of who we are and what we do. Therefore, the class examines various models and methods of theological reflection so that the supervisor and the student will have the tools to delve into the depths of ministry in God's Kingdom. Finally, the Foundations in Supervision course will help the supervisors to help the students explore **ministerial identity**; what it means to be a called minister of the Gospel.

As was noted earlier, there is a thin, almost non-existent line between instructor and participant in the Foundations class. This class has become a marvelous example of group learning. It has also served as something of a support group for all the participants as pastors in various fields share the joys and struggles of ministry.

### Learning/Serving Covenants

In many ways, Supervised Ministry is like an independent study. As a supervisor, you are appropriately known as the Teacher in the Field. The Learning/Serving Covenant becomes the curriculum for the course. In the Learning/Serving Covenant, you and the student formulate learning goals and objectives. (See "Learning/Serving Covenants") These goals and objectives are based on the areas of learning needed by the student and the areas of service needed by your congregation as a Supervised Ministry setting.

Realistically;

- ❖ the student will develop a rough draft of the Learning/Serving Covenant
- ❖ you and the student will develop the final form.
- ❖ The student will submit it to the Director of Supervised Ministry for approval,
- ❖ Who will submit it to the Academic Dean for approval.

The student, supervisor and chair of the lay committee should all keep copies of the Learning/Serving Covenant. As a supervisor, it is wise to take the Learning/Serving Covenant seriously. It will be a valuable tool when it comes time to evaluate the student. (See "Evaluations.") The Director of Supervised Ministry and the Academic Dean of the Seminary must approve all Supervised Ministry covenants.

Learning/Serving Covenants must be completed, signed by the student and the supervisor, and, where applicable, by the chairperson of the lay committee, and returned to the Office of the Director of Supervised Ministries according to the following schedule:

- ❖ For the **Academic Year**:
  - By June 30<sup>th</sup> for all students except new students.
  - By October 15<sup>th</sup> for new students matriculating in the fall semester.
- ❖ For **Summer Assignments**: by May 1<sup>st</sup> prior to the summer of service.

## Evaluations

As a supervisor, at the end of each semester, you will be asked to fill out an evaluation form. These evaluations help the Director of Supervised Ministry to catch a glimpse of the student's progress through your eyes and to monitor the fulfillment of the goals and objectives included in the Learning/Serving Covenant agreed upon by the student, supervisor, and lay training committee. As such, evaluations are a critically important component of Supervised Ministry. While copies of all evaluations are included in this manual, (See Appendix B) all evaluations will be mailed to students, supervisors, and lay training committees at the appropriate time.

- ❖ **Mid-year evaluations** will be mailed to supervisors and students the Monday following Thanksgiving. These mid-year evaluations will be due in the Office of the Director of Supervised Ministries *the last day of classes of the First Semester.*
- ❖ **End-of-the-year evaluations** will be mailed to supervisors and students the last Monday of April. These end-of-the year evaluations are due in the Office of the Director of Supervised Ministries *the last day of classes of the Second Semester.*
- ❖ **End-of-the-summer evaluations** will be mailed to the supervisors and students during the first week of August. These end-of-the-summer evaluations are due in the Office of the Director of Supervised Ministries by the *first day of classes in the subsequent fall term.*

#### Documentation Responsibility

**EACH STUDENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL DOCUMENTATION** in his or her file in the Office of Supervised Ministry.

While each student is responsible for all documentation in his or her ministry file in the Office of Supervised Ministry, as a supervisor, you can help your student by **finishing all evaluations and mailing them in on time.** The Director of Supervised Ministries will conduct an annual review of each student's file and will inform the student if any necessary documentation is missing.

#### Course Credit

***Students receive credit for the Supervised Ministry units only after the Office of Supervised Ministry receives all the required documentation.*** The Director of Supervised Ministry is responsible to give each Supervised Ministry student a pass or fail for the unit. Much of this determination comes from the written Learning/Serving Covenant and evaluations the director receives. Therefore, failure to submit a Learning/Serving Covenant and/or evaluations is the equivalent of failing a course. It is imperative, then, that students, supervisors and members of lay training committees return their evaluations to the Office of Supervised Ministry by their due dates.

## Other Policies

- ❖ No supervised ministry units will be awarded for ministry that a student does with a relative.
- ❖ Students are required to engage in Supervised Ministry assignments in at least two different settings with two different supervisors.
- ❖ A student who fails to maintain the Supervised Ministry responsibilities as set forth in an approved Learning/Serving Covenant will receive no credit for that Supervised Ministry unit. This determination will be made at the discretion of the Dean of the Seminary, in consultation with the Director of Supervised Ministry, the student, and the student's supervisor. Such action usually includes the termination of the relationship between the student, the supervisor and the ministry setting.
- ❖ A student's Supervised Ministry files are confidential. No information from them may be released without the written consent of the student. All such files are in the custody of the Director of Supervised Ministry. (See the policy entitled "Faculty Access to Supervised Ministry Reports.")
- ❖ Persons supervising New Brunswick Theological Seminary students, including members of lay training committees, are subject to the Seminary Sexual Misconduct Policy. (See Appendix C)

### Faculty Access to Supervised Ministry Reports (This is an official policy of the seminary)

*Supervised ministry evaluations will be available to the faculty for the purpose of assessing a student's development in preparation for pastoral ministry and determining overall suitability for the pastoral office except when a student refuses faculty access by signing a statement of confidentiality. In such a case, the faculty will waive its right to review the student's supervised ministry reports, which then will be available only to the Director of Supervised Ministry. A student claiming confidentiality will be notified that other kinds of evidence demonstrating satisfactory progress in the preparation for ministry may be required, e.g., vocational testing, psychological assessment, additional supervised ministry assignment, CPE. The director will offer the student the option of confidentiality each time supervised ministry evaluations are reviewed (for the assignment and*

*period covered by the review.). The names of student electing to keep their supervised ministry evaluations confidential will be reported to the faculty.*

## **GETTING STARTED**

*If you are this far into the supervisor's handbook, it means that it's likely that you've talked with a student who wants to do Supervised Ministry with you and your ministry setting. Let me assume that that's where you are in the process. How do you discern if this ministry (supervising a theological student) is a part of God's calling to you and to your congregation (or ministry setting)? If you determine that it is, how do you begin? Once you begin, how do you determine your responsibilities and once you've determined your responsibilities, how do you proceed so that it is a fulfilling experience for you, your student and your ministry?*

*In the next pages, I hope to help you answer some of these questions.*

### Questions to ask yourself

Before you look at the student and how well the student may meet your ministry needs, I need you to look at yourself.

- ❖ ***Am I called to the ministry of supervision?*** I believe that it is a calling from God to be a supervisor and mentor to someone called to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Is this your calling? To help you answer this question, let me ask some other questions.
  - ***Biblically, whom do you identify with?*** If you can identify with Elijah or Dorcus, you may be called to the ministry of supervision. If you identify with Esther or Samson, you may want to think about it some more.
  - ***What's your style of ministry?*** Are you a "Lone Ranger," most comfortable operating on your own? Are you an entrepreneur, forging new ministries, throwing off ideas like a wet Golden Retriever throws off puddles? Are you a communitarian, excited by what you can do to build a sense of community within your ministry setting? Are you energized by working with others? How will your ministry style help?
  - ***What's your personality type?*** (Let's not get too intense here!) Are you a nurturer; a confronter; a parent; a prodder? Can you affirm the student when it's appropriate and discipline (in the best sense of the word) the student when it's needed?

- ❖ ***Is this the right time for you to become a supervisor?*** What's going on in your life that will help you to be a mentor? What would hinder?

### Questions to ask of your ministry setting

If you're still reading, I'm going to assume that you've come to peace with your answers to all those pesky questions and are ready for the next set.

- ❖ ***What ministry will the student be expected to do?*** While this seems like an obvious question, let me ask a few other questions that may effect how you answer it.
  - **Is this the most appropriate ministry for a seminary student?** If you read my introduction, you noted that, when my congregation went looking for a seminary student to help fill in some of our staffing needs, we looked for someone to help with the youth groups. If I was faced with the same situation now, I would not expect a seminary student to do youth work. One of the needs of the young people of the church is a sense of continuity and a growing familiarity with adults (other than their parents) that they can trust and with whom they can feel secure. It is probably too much to expect of a seminary student to meet these needs, particularly if the student is only at the ministry site for two years. Some ministries cannot be done well by seminary students.
  - **Can the total ministry of the church (or ministry site) "endure" the ministry of a student.** There are some areas of the church's life that should not be left to a student. Sharing experiences with the student is an important tool in learning but when it comes to the on-going life of the congregation and setting the direction for your congregation's ministry, for example, that's up to you and your church's leaders.
  - **Can the student do what's expected in the time allotted?** Remember, the unit of Supervised Ministry is 8-12 hours a week.
- ❖ ***Is yours a Teaching Congregation?*** Actually that's the wrong question to ask. (That instills confidence, doesn't it?) Every congregation teaches. To assess just what your particular congregation teaches, ask yourself what you've learned from this congregation. It would also be interesting to look at previous pastors to see what they've learned, where they've gone in their next calling, and what kind of pastors they have been after serving where you are now.

- ❖ Actually, the appropriate question to ask is, ***Does your congregation see itself as a teaching congregation?*** The answer to that question focuses on whether your congregation sees itself as ministering to the student or receiving ministry from the student. Obviously Supervised Ministry is a combination of the two, but for it to be a healthy experience for both the student and the congregation, both sides of the equation need to be there. (This paragraph identifies the "Teaching Congregation." While there is not a direct parallel, similar questions can be asked for those in specialized ministry settings.)
- ❖ ***Who, from the members of the congregation, can the student best learn from?*** This may indicate who will comprise your Lay Committee.

#### Questions to ask of the match

- ❖ ***Is this place too familiar?*** Your home church is likely not the best place for you to do Supervised Ministry. (See "Placements")
- ❖ ***Can we give the student the kind of breadth of experience she or he needs?***  
Throughout the Supervised Ministry experience, the student will need exposure to six basic areas of ministry. They are:
  - Worship and Preaching (Including all the special services such as weddings, funerals, the sacraments and others in the church year.)
  - Pastoral and Church Administration
  - Christian Education (children, youth, and adults)
  - Pastoral Care and Counseling
  - Outreach and Evangelism
  - Personal Nurture (all that it takes to remain physically, emotionally, and spiritually healthy as well as caring for family commitments)
 Churches, particularly, think of seminary students as youth workers and children education specialists. That's okay for a beginning but the church or Supervised Ministry site needs to recognize that each student will need a much broader exposure to ministry than simply youth work and education.
- ❖ ***Will this position make the student uncomfortable?*** If so **IT SOUNDS PERFECT!** Growth necessitates change and change is uncomfortable. If, as a Supervised Ministry site, you will make your student feel uncomfortable, you

are providing your student the opportunity for growth. Which leads to my last point.

- ❖ *Does this Supervised Ministry site fit?* The flip side of the coin is this: If "uncomfortable" is all your student feels, or if that's all you feel, talk to me. That's not healthy either. You and your student need to find enough security to reach out into the unknown.

## THE LEARNING/SERVING COVENANT

### The Name

It's called a Learning/Serving Covenant. In times past here at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, we've called it a Learning Agreement. At other seminaries, it's called everything from a Work/Learning Agreement to a Covenant of Agreement to a Learning Contract. All these names are appropriate and helpful in their own way. I have chosen Learning/Serving Covenant because it captures what I hope will happen in your Supervised Ministry setting.

In a healthy setting, the student will *learn*. In fact, the Learning/Serving Covenant form asks the student to plan for learning and it forces the student to give some shape and direction to what you hope to learn. This is the formal part of the Supervised Ministry assignment. It is the curriculum of Supervised Ministry. It is also the basis for evaluations and the grist for much of what the student will do in Ministerium, a class taken in conjunction with Supervised Ministry.

In a healthy Supervised Ministry setting, the student will also *serve*. In many ways, this can be the most satisfying part of Supervised Ministry. Your student is in seminary because he or she is called by God to serve God's people in a unique way. The Supervised Ministry site is a major part of your student's present ministry. It is doing what God has called your student to do.

Finally, because we are together the People of God, you and your student, your lay committee, the people of your Supervised Ministry site, and I believe God as well, have all entered into a *covenant* relationship. It is a relationship that reaches beyond formal written contracts. It is a representation of what it means to be the Body of Christ and is a sign of the Kingdom of God. (Reflect theologically on that, for a while!)

## The Learning/Serving Covenant

- ❖ As I noted before, one of the purposes of Supervised Ministry is to “enable persons to translate their calling and gifts into faithful Christian ministry.” With that in mind, I expect that, over the total of six Supervised Ministry units, each student will have had **experience in all the major areas of ministry**. Restating them, these areas are:

- Worship and Preaching
- Pastoral and Church Administration
- Christian Education
- Pastoral Care and Counseling
- Outreach and Evangelism
- Personal Nurture

Notice, I said, “experience in all six.” I didn’t say that the student was expected to learn all there is to know about all six areas. That takes a little longer than a semester each. However, it is important that each student have experience in all six areas so that he or she will have a taste of what ministry is like and how the student’s classroom learning can apply. It should also help you to help your student to identify you’re her or his passion in ministry and those rough areas that need some additional work.

- ❖ I’m not going to say much more about the Learning/Serving Covenant. Your student has detailed instructions and it is the student’s responsibility to see that it’s filled out and returned to me in a timely fashion. You can help, however, by helping your student identify clear objectives. I’m sure that this is stuff you’ve dealt with before but I look for objectives that are:

- Achievable
- Specific
- Measurable
- Time-bound

You can help the process by asking one simple question of each objective in your student’s Learning/Serving Covenant. Read each objective and ask, “*At the end of the year, how will I know if he or she has met this objective?*” If the answer is clear to you, it’s probably a good objective. If you’re not sure, work with your student a little more until you are.

- ❖ The Learning/Serving Covenant covers four (and sometimes five) areas. These are:
  - Personal Growth and Faith Development
  - Relationships with Others
  - What it means to Function as a Minister
  - Developing Skills for Ministry
  - The Problems and Opportunities present in Non-parish Organizations. (This is the "sometimes" one. It's designed for students working in specialized ministries.)

I look for one and perhaps two objectives in each of these areas. Therefore, your student will have four and perhaps as many as six objectives for the duration of the Supervised Ministry covenant. Any more than six is more than most students can hand. You can help by ensuring that your student limits her or his objectives to six and that the four (and sometimes five) areas mentioned above are represented.

- ❖ Here's one final word about the Learning/Serving Covenant. It is certainly a tool for learning and measuring that learning in the seminary setting, but it also functions as a tool to instill healthy practices for pastors and ministers in ministry. My brother-in-law, who knows a lot about golf, tells me that the muscles learn to repeat a particular swing. It's almost like you've imprinted the pattern in them and they will then automatically follow through. That means that if you teach your muscles right, you'll hit your drive straight and far and you won't have to think much about it along the way.

Through the Learning/Serving Covenant in Supervised Ministry we hope to teach that same kind of imprinting in our students. It offers a systematic approach to ministry. The Learning/Serving Covenant can become a way of approaching projects and problems that are a part of ministry. I advise our students that the more seriously they take the Learning/Serving Covenant, the more likely that this particular pattern of planning ministry will be second nature to them. And the more planning they put into ministry, the more likely they will be to find it blessed by the Holy Spirit and enriching for their own spirits.

## LEARNING/SERVING COVENANT (Sample)

### **General Goal**

Through this year of Supervised Ministry, I will develop my understanding of and practice in pastoral care.

### **Learning Objective, Area A: Personal growth and faith development**

By the end of the year in my Supervised Ministry, I will have researched and articulated my understanding of death and life after death.

#### **Tasks:**

1. Research social science and theological writings concerning death and life after death.
2. Conduct a biblical study of death and life after death.
3. Discuss eschatology with my theology professor.
4. Interview three older people from the congregation concerning their understanding of death and life after death.
5. Write a detailed outline of my understanding of death and life after death.
6. Make my report the focus of at least two supervisory sessions.
7. Share one of my interviews with my Ministerium.

#### **Resources:**

1. Consultation with my biblical professors concerning the relevant passages about death and after life in the Old and New Testaments.
2. The Bible
3. Review Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's On Death and Dying.
4. Examine Jürgen Moltmann's writings concerning the issues of death and the after life.
5. Review The Focused Interview, by Merton, Fiske, and Kendall.

#### **Oversight and Feedback:**

1. My Supervisor
2. My Ministerium
3. The older interviewees from the congregation

## THE SUPERVISORY SESSION

### Your Student's Role in Supervised Ministry

Your student has entered into a Learning/Serving Covenant with you and your ministry setting. That means that your student can and should expect to:

- ❖ **Learn.** Your student is called a student but is an adult learner. That means that your student will learn from every aspect of your experience together and will learn best when challenged and then given the freedom to meet that challenge.
- ❖ **Serve.** Your student is a skilled person in ministry. He or she has come into your ministry setting with gifts for ministry therefore will contribute to the total ministry of your Supervised Ministry setting.
- ❖ Your student is not a staff member but in many ways, she or he will fill this role. Your student will not have the longevity of a staff member and, ironically, will probably be evaluated more closely.

### Getting Started

More than likely, the first agenda that you and your student have is getting to know one another. Here are some questions that may be helpful. If you use them, it's important for both of you to share your answers. Take the first two or three sessions together to explore:

- ❖ What's your sense of **call to ministry**?
- ❖ What's your **spiritual and intellectual journey** been like?
- ❖ What's your **family** like? (Remember to use a broad definition of "family.")
- ❖ What **courses** are you taking? What's your **growing edge**?
- ❖ What do you **hope to be** when you grow up? (Okay, what do you hope to do when you graduate or what kind of ministry do you see yourself in in ten years? Is that better? )

After the "getting to know you," phase, you need to move into a more formal method of reviewing skills in ministry, growing in theological reflection, and exploring the meaning of ordained ministry.

### The Supervisory Conference

The weekly Supervisory Conference is the heart of Supervised Ministry. It's here that ministry is examined. It's here that the learning proposed in the Learning/Serving Covenant is most intentionally pursued. It's here that you and your student will delve more deeply into the theological heart of the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. It's here that you'll talk about what it means to be an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament.

With such high expectations on the Supervisory Conference, it's important that they are scheduled weekly and that there be some structure to them.

- ❖ Your Supervisory Conferences should be **routinely scheduled** so that both you and your student know exactly when they will happen. In this way, very little will get in the way.
- ❖ This time should be **dedicated exclusively to Supervised Ministry**, not for staff planning, or informal, friendly chats.
- ❖ Having said that, if you haven't done so before, I believe it's a good thing to take a little time at the beginning to **check in**; to ask, "How are you doing?" and "What's happened in your life over the past few days?"
- ❖ The bulk of your time will focus on your **Ministry Reflection**. (See below.)
- ❖ I also believe that it can be helpful to take some time during your session or at the end to **pray** for each other and your mutual ministry.

### Ministry Reflections

One of the cornerstones of your Supervisory Conference is theological reflection. In the words of Robert L. Kinast, "...experience and reflection, faith and works, personal conviction and official doctrine. The goal of theological reflection is to integrate these pairs rather than divide them."<sup>1</sup> Such theological reflection begins with experience. It is a requirement of the Supervised Ministry experience that your student write a Ministry Reflection each week. This

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Kinast, *Let Ministry Teach*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1996, p. xii.

reflection will become the starting point for each week's supervisory session. I have included the instructions I've given to your student so that you will know what to expect from your student.

A significant Ministry Reflection follows these steps:

1. Your student's Ministry Reflection should grow out of your student's ministry. For this to be a substantial learning experience, Kinast rightly insists that the experience should be of importance to your student.<sup>2</sup> It should have **significance** in her or his life and it should be **related to your student's Learning Objectives**. At times, it will be important for you to simply ask your student, "*Why is this important to you.*"
2. Each report should be a **brief, (two or three paragraph) "Ministry Reflection."** Each reflection, should give adequate room along the right side for your written comments.
3. Occasionally your student may choose to write a longer reflection but generally Ministry Reflections will be **one to two pages at most**.
4. The format suggested here is a suggestion. From time to time your student may want to take the freedom to change how he or she reports. You may also wish to have a reflection in a different form. **Do what works well for you.**
5. Electronic reporting may be used once in a while to deal with a given situation but they are not practical for regular use. It simply takes too much time to review and digest their material.
6. The Ministry Reflection will help you and your student **develop an analytical lens through which you will view your total ministry**. Through Ministry Reflections, you stop what you're doing in order to look at what's happening around you. That's not an easy thing to do when you're in the middle of meaningful ministry. You often get so caught up in the doing, that you don't take time to ask "How am I doing?" or more importantly, "Why am I doing what I'm doing?" Ministry Reflections also help you to identify experiences in ministry that are significant to you and then to begin to ask questions about why they are significant and if they are as significant to God and the Kingdom

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<sup>2</sup> Kinast, pp. 2-4.

as they are to you. This is the heart of the supervisory session and it can be the source of remarkable energy for you as a supervisor as well as instruction for your student.

7. Ministry Reflections should help your student find **intersections** between seminary classes, her or his life in the Christian Community, experience in the world, and service in your Supervised Ministry setting. This is integration and it is one of the most important aspects of seminary education.
8. A couple of days before the Supervisory Session, your student will **give you a copy of the reflection**. This will give you a chance to read it, digest its wisdom, marvel at its eloquence, and identify the most important theological issues raised. While it's not always possible, it is often helpful if you can return the report to your student with a written commentary. This gives you both time to prepare for your session.
9. Finally, this weekly supervisory session can help your student develop a **pattern of regularly consulting with a trusted colleague** in ministry for mutual evaluation, support, and encouragement. As ministry becomes more and more complex, it is clearer and clearer how much those of us doing ministry need each other. The pattern developed in weekly supervision is a healthy pattern for every Minister of Word and Sacrament. Through this kind of pattern, we become accountable to each other and better learn to share one another's joys and sorrows. This is a gift you can give your student through supervision.

### Content of the Theological Reflection

In its simplest form, theological reflection asks you to:

- ❖ **Stop** what you're doing,
- ❖ **Describe** what's happening,
- ❖ **Ask**, in the context of faith in God, why you're doing what you're doing.
- ❖ Finally, you need to ask what you need to **do differently** to be faithful to what God expects.

Robert Kinast offers a model for theological reflection based on the acronym NAME.<sup>3</sup> In it, he offers four relatively understandable steps I'd offer to you as a pattern for theological reflection in your Ministry Reflections.

1. **Narrate** the experience. Your narration should be factual and, as much as possible, value-less. Deal with basic information questions. ("Who?" "When?" "What?" "When?" "How?" Save the "Why?" for later.) In your narration, deal with "Just the facts, Ma'am. Just the facts."
2. **Analyze** your story. Look for the "Why?" of it all. Look at the story from different angles and from the perspective of those involved. There may be a lot of reasons for the events to unfold the way they did. Where do the issues of faith intersect with your narration?
3. **Look for the heart of the Matter.** What's the primary issue, theologically and relationally? It's in this step that you will incorporate all that you've learned from your Christian tradition, including the Bible, Christian history, your particular tradition, and the thinking of the world's greatest theologians. (We're packing a little in here, aren't we!)?
4. Finally, you're ready for **Enactment.** Now that you've identified the heart of the matter and you've consulted the depths of faith and have heard God call anew, what are you going to do about it? What new steps do you need to take?

### Ministerial Identity

The third major goal for Supervised Ministry is helping you develop and grow in Ministerial Identity. What does it mean to step from the front pew as a faithful parishioner to stand behind the pulpit as the pastor? What's the difference between doing ministry and being the minister? Why should people listen to you even if you put on the robes and stand in the pulpit? These are all questions of ministerial identity.

You and your student will need to talk about issues such as:

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<sup>3</sup> Robert L. Kinast, *Making Faith-Sense*, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press, 1999, p. 20.

- ❖ **Role Expectations.** What do boards of congregations or ministry organizations expect of you when you come in as an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament? Which expectations are fair? Which are not? Which are realistic and which are not? It would be good to share the expectations placed on you and let your student grapple with them.
- ❖ **Boundaries.** Role expectations naturally lead to an examination of boundary issues. Ministry can fill up a minister's life with expectations. It can be a 24/7 kind of responsibility. Most ministers also have family privileges and responsibilities. Also, ministers are real people with real needs, so being responsible for your own health and wellbeing is a part of the equation. All of this needs to be discussed with your student. Once again, it would be wise to share how you juggle all these responsibilities and still maintains healthy boundaries. (You do, of course!)
- ❖ **Calling.** Expectations and boundary issues theologically relate to calling. What does it mean to be called by God to be a Minister of Word and Sacrament? How does this calling fit with the calling to be a spouse, a parent, or a child responsible for a parent's wellbeing? If these are all callings from God, which takes precedence? It's wise for you and your student to periodically look at your calling to ministry. It's a part of continuously testing the Spirit.
- ❖ **Authority.** Seriously, folks, why should anyone listen to you when you say, "Thus says the Lord..." How is your calling to ministry verified by the community to which you are called? What can you do with the authority that comes when you don the collar and robes? What authority do you need to earn? What are the ethical exercises of that authority and what are misuses of it? All these authority issues need to be addressed through your student's ministry experiences.

### Odds and Ends

- ❖ Obviously, the Ministry Reflection is the primary focus for the session but it may move out of the spotlight if deeper issues arise. Often Ministry Reflections act as springboards to other topics.
- ❖ You should keep copies of all your student's reports and the written commentaries. By looking back over these reports, you'll get a chance to see patterns emerge, themes reoccur, and you'll be able to get a longer perspective

on your student. This material also is the foundation for your evaluations at the end of each semester.

Following, you will find three samples of weekly Ministry Reflections with the format that I've found helpful.

### Sample Ministry Reflections<sup>4</sup>

#### *#1 "I don't understand myself."*

#### **Student's Report**

I don't understand myself. Sometimes I really want to be super minister, dynamic ministerial leader, pastoring the most spiritual (sic) alive church in the East, and sometimes I feel so weak and passive and want someone to take care of me and not to expect anything out of me. I am so reluctant to accept what I really am, which is somewhere in the middle. Is it that way for everybody? I guess what I'm really afraid of is waking up in 10 or 20 years and realizing that my ministry has been shallow, lukewarm, for reasons I can't even discern.

#### **Supervisor's Response**

#### *#2 "Ministry of Presence"*

#### **Report**

Thursday began when you showed me the set-up for the bazaar. You will recall that we chatted with some of the women who had come in to set up and decorate, and you introduced me to a few of them. As we headed for the office to work on planning a program together, I commented that it was time to end our playing and get to

#### **Response**

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<sup>4</sup> Permission to use the following samples is granted by Andover-Newton Theological Seminary Field Education Department. These are actually portions of students' weekly reports. They have been disguised and are used with the students' permissions.

work, and you responded that what we had been doing was our work-it was ministry. I'm not quite sure how it was ministry...you keep talking about a 'ministry of presence,' but I'm never sure when my presence is a ministry and when it is just presence.

*#3 "God doesn't want me!"*

**Report**

**Response**

I started my weekend with a visit to the nursing home where I called on several of the parishioners. One of them was a lady whom I've seen several times and who seemed very lonely. She has had the flue and didn't feel very well. We chatted about this and that for a few minutes, and then she began to tell me about her granddaughter who had just come from England with her three children. She became very animated and pointed to her pictures and told me about them. Suddenly she started to cry and said that God didn't want her. She didn't know why. The people at the next bed stopped and frankly stared. I was dumbfounded and totally unable to respond verbally. I took her hand and held it but felt inadequate and clumsy. Later I thought of all sorts of things I could have said but at the time, I was speechless and very aware of the fact that the room was so crowded that the people nearest us were only a bed width away.

## THE LAY COMMITTEE

### Who?

In the best of all worlds, before your student begins formal Supervised Ministry, you will have selected a group of *three to six people* from the congregation or ministry setting to serve as your student's Lay Committee. This

group needs to be composed of people who are **knowledgeable of the people** with whom your student will work and sensitive to what **adult learning** means. It's also helpful if they have some acquaintanceship with **pastoral responsibility** and possess something of a **pastoral nature** themselves. These are people who will need to be able to "tell the truth, in love," and will need to be able to support your student through the ups and downs of parish work.

In the best of all worlds, early in your student's time with the Supervised Ministry site, you and your student will invite me to meet with your Lay Committee. Obviously this should be done at a mutually convenient time. For parishes, I like to do it on a Sunday so that I can worship with the congregation before or after I meet with the Lay Committee. I also appreciate this meeting so that I can get to know your ministry site, get to know your Lay Committee members (at least a little) and help train them in their responsibilities.

Below I've listed some of the details you will need to know to do a good job of selecting the Lay Committee.

#### How?

*Once a month*, I expect that the student to have a **supervisory session with your Lay Committee**. These are the characteristics of this session:

- ❖ **The student sets the agenda**. I suggested that these sessions include a ministry reflection, distributed ahead of time. The issues for discussion are set by the student.
- ❖ As a supervisor, **you are not a part of the discussion**. This means you don't have to go to Lay Committee Meetings. As the pastor of the church, your voice carries a great deal of authority and what you say and think can skew the discussion of any meeting. That's particularly true with your lay committee. Therefore, your student needs an opportunity to meet with and to hear from the lay committee on a face to face, one on one (or three to six, as the case may be) basis.
- ❖ The session should last at least an **hour and a half** but could easily go to two hours.
- ❖ Some students and Lay Committees include a **shared meal**. I like the sacramental feel of this.

- ❖ I encourage your committee to **save all written material**. Once again, this material will be helpful in identifying common themes or issues and is very helpful when it comes time to fill out your formal evaluation.
- ❖ Everything the committee does and says must be held in **strictest confidence**.

### Why?

The Alban Institute studied the work of Lay Committees and seminarians in over 80 parishes and summarized the results in this way:

- ❖ The seminarian receives experience in having theological dialogue with lay persons in the congregation. She or he learns to articulate issues of faith in a manner that promotes clarity and understanding and that does not rely simply on textbook, in-house seminary jargon.
- ❖ From the lay training committee, a seminarian can learn a sense of the history of the parish and an understanding of the community in which he/she is to minister. The seminarian can learn how to go about understanding the community in later placements.
- ❖ The committee is a vital link between the seminary and the local parish. Faculty, seminarian, supervisor, and congregation all have an investment in the process of theological education.
- ❖ Lay members of the committee begin to see the complexity involved in the various roles that the clergy person must assume and there is an appreciation that develops for high professional standards in the ordained ministry.
- ❖ The congregation gains a better understanding of itself, in discussing and facing realities of parish life rather than holding on to mythologies of the community.
- ❖ Lay persons make discoveries about their own vocations and ministries in the church.

- ❖ Having a student operating with a lay committee can give the supervisor the opportunity to observe someone else in the role she/he normally fills. New visions for ministry can emerge from such an experience.
- ❖ Lay members of the committee develop relationships and networks with each other that are often deeper and more meaningful than routine committee work in the parish.

### Entry<sup>5</sup>

In the best of all worlds, your Lay Committee will be intimately involved in your student's entry into the ministry setting. This should include:

- ❖ Announcing to the congregation or the ministry site that a student will be coming on board and explaining to them why.
- ❖ With your help, explaining to the congregation or those served in your site what they can expect from the student.
- ❖ Interpreting to the congregation or ministry site their role as a "Teaching Congregation" or a "Teaching Site."
- ❖ Introducing your student (and your student's family, if that family will be involved)
- ❖ From a lay perspective, discussing with your student:
  - The purpose and scope of the ministry and those with whom the student will work
  - The mission and goals of the church or institution
  - Your student's roles and expectations
  - How your student will fit into the mission of the church or ministry site
- ❖ Orient the student to the structures and systems of your setting, including:
  - The layout of the facility

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix D contains a number of very helpful, concrete suggestions for this process. I've included this page in the Supervisor's Manual as well, but you might want to make a copy of this page and give it to your Lay Committee.

- Various committees, organizations, and key lay people
- Community people

### What?<sup>6</sup>

It's helpful to think of the Lay Committee's responsibility in four areas:

- ❖ **Covenant-building.** The Lay Committee will bring to the covenant-building process the following gifts and skills:
  - Knowledge of and commitment to the church or site and its mission
  - Openness to your student's unique gifts for ministry
  - The ability to set realistic priorities
  - The willingness to work with the student in forming the Learning/Serving Covenant that brings together the church's mission and the student's learning needs
  - The capacity to be accountable to the student, you, as a supervisor, and the people of the site and to be able to hold the student accountable as well.
  
- ❖ **Feedback.**<sup>7</sup> This is the "telling the truth in love" part. To do so, the lay committee must have a number of gifts and skills.
  - They must be familiar with your student's ministry and they must participate in it in some constructive way.
  - They must be able to think reflexively (in the model of theological reflection) rather than in preconceived ways.
  - Your Lay Committee must be willing to level with the student, to share honestly and openly what's happening and how your student's ministry is impacting (positively and negatively) the mission of the church.

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<sup>6</sup> This section is adapted from the Field Education manual of Union Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.

<sup>7</sup> Appendix E offers specific criteria for helpful feedback.

- Your Lay Committee must be willing to learn as well as to teach. (In a healthy relationship we are all adult learners.)
  - Your Lay Committee must be patient (with the congregation, and at times with your student and perhaps, even with you).
- ❖ **Evaluation.** There is a formal evaluation your committee will fill out at the end of each year, but there is the informal evaluation that should take place throughout your student's ministry with this Supervised Ministry site.
- They should help your student to find her or his "growing edges."
  - Your committee needs to be sensitive to your student's values and opinions but also be able to express the values and opinions of the congregation.
  - Your Lay Committee must be able to hold in confidence what is said and done in the monthly Lay Committee Session.
  - Your committee must be willing to challenge as well as affirm your student.
  - This committee can be a resource to help your student make responsible decisions about his or her future ministry.
- ❖ **Support.** In many ways, this is the most important aspect of the Lay Committee's responsibilities.
- The Lay Committee should help your student keep a healthy balance between personal needs, family responsibilities, seminary education and work in the ministry site.
  - If your student's family is involved (and often, even if it is not) your Lay Committee can be of support to them.
  - Your committee can become a trusted group within your site and this is always an important part of ministry.
  - Through working with the Lay Committee, your student will grow in the ability to share personally and spiritually.
  - Through your Lay Committee, your student will experience the ministry of the whole people of God; a ministry of laity and clergy, working together.

## SUPERVISOR'S UPDATE

In addition to the Foundations in Supervision course, in order to support the ministry of supervision that you carry out in your Supervised Ministry setting, I offer periodic "Supervisor's Updates." Attendance at these updates is completely voluntary but from my own supervising days and from conversations I've had with present supervisors, I believe these to be helpful sessions. The format of these updates is the same as for the Foundations course. We meet on Mondays from 9:30 AM until 2:30 PM. The content of these meetings is determined by the expressed needs of the supervisors. I will send notices to all supervisors concerning the Supervisor's Updates.

### **INTERSECTIONS**

*"Intersections"* is an occasional newsletter that I put out to publish due dates, reminders for students and supervisors, and to wax eloquently about issues that may or may not relate to Supervised Ministry. Remember I am a pastor at heart and what pastor worth his or her salt does not write newsletters? Notice, I said that it was an "occasional newsletter." I don't have a set schedule. I may in the future but at the present, *"Intersections"* generally shows up in your mailbox the middle of September, sometime in November, perhaps in March, and at the end of the year in May.

### **CONCLUDING WORDS**

One of the great gifts from God that I have received since joining the faculty here at New Brunswick Theological Seminary is the inspiration I get from hearing the stories of our students. Almost all of our students are second or perhaps third (occasionally fourth) career people. They are responding to a call from God that they heard years ago in their younger days or they are responding to a call that has grown out of their life and service in the Kingdom. They are making tremendous sacrifices to answer that call from God. And they bring into ministry a wealth of life experience that begs to be used in the service of God.

As you supervise a student from this fine, old institution, I believe that God will give you the same kind of gift that God has given me. From your life and experience, you have much to teach our student. As a seminary, we thank you for your willingness to enter into this adventure in teaching. On the other hand, as you supervise, I pray that you will be open to the gift your student can be for you and for your ministry setting. There is a sense of mutual ministry that happens in this

miracle of teaching and learning that comes only from the hand of *God*. Look for that miracle and enjoy the ride!

*Grace and Peace,*