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## Pastoral supervision for safe churches

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**Abstract**

This essay will examine the role of pastoral (professional) supervision in enabling and ensuring the contemporary practice of clergy and church workers is safe. Pastoral supervision is the regular, planned, safe space where clergy (or, church workers) bring issues related to their ministry practice to the supervision session with a trained pastoral supervisor. The present article emerges from consultation across the national Anglican church during 2019 based in recommendations made by the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse*. It concludes that the properly Christian way to change the culture of the Church is through a rigorous grounding of pastoral supervision in the story of Jesus Christ.

**Key Words**

Pastoral Supervision, Royal Commission, Clergy, Church Worker, Recommendations, Culture, Christology

## Introduction

Naughty, weak or stupid. It is easy to (wrongly) assume that clergy and ministry workers in Australia have been naughty weak or stupid given recent media attention to the criminal convictions of some occupying the highest offices in the Church. As the national Anglican Church in Australia seeks to introduce and implement standards for pastoral supervision, professional development and ministry reviews without won't these unfounded assumptions simply be confirmed? The final report of the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* concluded, after careful listening to victims' testimony, considering the responses of Church leaders, with the legal verdict, that clergy and church workers (termed 'religious leaders' in the reports) had been nefarious, not just naughty; wanton, not just weak; and scandalous, not just stupid.<sup>1</sup> For too long the Church has allowed wrongdoers and perpetrators to exist in our midst, exercise ministry on our behalf and be elevated to senior roles of leadership. The reputation of the Anglican Church is diminishing, the witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ is devalued and the morale of faithful Christians and leaders is declining. A friend and colleague recently wrote an article on social media that was then published in *Eternity News*,

It seems the job of leading the local church – 'parish ministry', as it is called in my denomination – has never been under as much fire as it is at the moment. Stories of clergy burnout seem to be everywhere. Or worse: of clergy sin, or of clergy marriages falling apart. Good people seem to be leaving the trenches of parish ministry and finding work in a variety of parachurch jobs ... there seem to be fewer and fewer students at our theological colleges. And fewer of those students seem to study theology with a view to being senior minister in a church.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Hon. Justice Peter McClellan AM, et. al., 'Final Report', (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017). Full report available <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/final-report>. Accessed 18 December 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Michael P Jensen, 'Why would anyone be a pastor today?', *Eternity News* (Sydney, Australia), November 22, 2019, <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/australia/why-would-anyone-be-a-pastor-today/> Accessed November 22, 2019.

This essay will examine the role of pastoral (professional) supervision in enabling and ensuring the contemporary practice of clergy and church workers is safe. Pastoral supervision is the regular, planned, safe space where clergy (or, church workers) bring issues related to their ministry practice to the supervision session with a trained pastoral supervisor.<sup>3</sup> Pastoral supervision has three main goals of being a formative, normative and restorative conversation which promotes faithful practice. Pastoral supervision is emerging at the intersection of major cross currents for the Church and related faith-based organisations such as education, social welfare and aged care. Clergy and church worker burnout have raised new and urgent questions about ministerial well-being and flourishing. Clergy-abuse scandals such as the ones the *Royal Commission* have put oversight and accountability in the spotlight.<sup>4</sup> For many at the coalface of ministry, theological education and formation was insufficient for the challenging demands of a life-long vocation in the contemporary world. These challenges are not new, there is indeed nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9).<sup>5</sup> Why, then, have church workers and clergy been slow to embrace pastoral supervision? Why is there pockets of resistance to an idea that promotes well-being and flourishing in ministry?

### **The travesty and tragedy of un-safe churches: how did we get here?**

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<sup>3</sup> J. Leach, and M. Paterson, *Pastoral Supervision: A Handbook*. (London: SCM, 2015), pp. who differentiate the term ‘professional’ from ‘pastoral’ supervision to ‘presuppose the spiritual or religious orientation of the supervisor... belief systems and faith commitments of those who come for supervision.’ I will adopt this differentiation while admitting that it often functions as a distinction without a difference.

<sup>4</sup> McClellan AM, et. al., ‘Final Report’. See below, *Recommendations: criteria and compliance for a safer Church*.

<sup>5</sup> Arcana Caelestia, *The spiritual hazards of ministry*. (c 900 AD) warns against those shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep through hypocrisy, obstinacy, adultery, justifying evil, speaking from their own heart and not from the Word, a desire for glory, drunkenness and a lack of mercy

The quest to make churches safe begs the question, how did churches become unsafe, particularly for children and other vulnerable people called the little ones (*to mikro*, Matt 18:14)? How did the Church, founded on Jesus Christ, who said ‘let the little children come to me’ (Mk. 10:14) become guilty of sexual abuse of little children? There are many troubling answers to this question ranging across the very different contexts of the worldwide Anglican communion. For Anglicans in Australia, several friends and colleagues have already made some important contributions in addressing these questions.<sup>6</sup> The present article is another contribution emerging from my consultation across the national Anglican church during 2019. What shaped a church culture that was unsafe for many? I begin with a brief sketch of two strands of Australian history that often remain hidden and unacknowledged: settler stories and larrikin stories. These stories sketch a particular cultural milieu and are not an argument for causality. These Australian archetypes, however, have influenced both national and ecclesial cultures that remains unsafe for some.

### **Settler stories: the making of an un-safe Australia and Anglican Church**

The stories of European settlement, from convicts and soldiers arriving on the first fleets from England, to explorers, pioneering settlers, and roaming swagmen commonly invoke legendary tales of bush ingenuity. In the rugged outback of bush and desert, Australians pride themselves for being canny and creative. A common bush trope teaches that ‘there is nothing a farmer can’t fix with a bit of fencing wire’. The people of the land we now call Australia are marked with a strong streak of self-sufficiency: stockmen, swagmen and

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<sup>6</sup> See further ‘Remembering our future: The response of Australian churches to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse’, *St Marks Review* 245:3 (2018), particularly G. Blake, ‘The Anglican Church of Australia under the spotlight of the Royal Commission: its systemic failure to protect children and a catalyst for its transformation’, pp. 6-24; and H. Blake, ‘Finding voice: what it means to “be the church” after the Royal Commission’, pp.38-55

the superwomen of the outback. This self-sufficiency is also found in Anglican stories of pioneering priests, bush brothers and remote missions. A number of stories involve the former bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, Ernest Burgmann from the rural area of the Manning Valley. Pickard notes:

There is a photo of the young Burgmann felling trees. He was an educationalist, institutional builder and prophetic ... the Prime Minister of the day referred to him in Parliament as 'that meddlesome priest'.<sup>7</sup>

Settlers stories, however, are neither as romantic nor as innocent as many Australians think. The vast interior parts of the continent remains rural and remote country which leaves a more sinister legacy: out-of-sight, out-of-mind. As I write towards the end of 2019, Australia is only beginning to break its silence on the atrocities committed during settlement: Aboriginal dispossession and the frontier wars (including hundreds of documented massacres of Aboriginal men, women and children).<sup>8</sup> The violence of powerful men perpetrated on vulnerable children, followed by silence and cover-up, is a deep stain in the Australian soul, almost as old as settlement itself. Again, there are Anglican atrocities that must be faced. Too many Aboriginal missions were complicit with government policies of separating families (the stolen generations) and assimilation.<sup>9</sup> We must not delude ourselves with reassurances that these were isolated incidents. Systemic abuse has been an integral – if invisible – thread woven through Australian and Anglican occupation.

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<sup>7</sup> S Pickard, 'A dangerous idea: why private religion is bad news for the good news', *St Marks Review* 237: 3 October 2016, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> B. Pascoe, *Convincing Ground: Learning to Fall in Love with Your Country*. (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007), pp. and H. Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2006), pp.

<sup>9</sup> R. D. Wilson, 'Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families', *Report for Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission* (April, 1997), available from [http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social\\_justice/bth\\_report/report/index.html](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/report/index.html) (Accessed: 3 January 2011).

**Larrikin stories: the merrymaking of un-safe practices in Australia**

A related archetype in Australian mythology is the larrikin (a person with apparent disregard for convention; a maverick). Australian larrikins, while sometimes associated with boisterous (or even bad) behaviour, have an obvious and outward disdain for authority. This includes authority figures (employers, police, government officials etc) and extends to the authority of traditions and received wisdom. The larrikin spirit, embodied by the former Prime Minister Robert J Hawke, prizes pragmatism over policy or procedure. When Australia won back the America's Cup yacht race after more than century of losses, the entire nation began its celebration over breakfast. Hawke announced – on live television 'I tell you what, any boss who sacks anyone for not turning up today is a bum'.<sup>10</sup> Australian Anglicans, particularly the more conservative one such as the Sydney Diocese, have long preferred 'what works' in mission and church practice over and against Anglican custom. It's quite easy to imagine Hawke's ghost speaking through successive generations of Anglicans that celebrate growing churches: 'I tell you what, any bishop who sacks someone for not wearing their robes (or not using an authorised liturgy or church-planting in a neighbouring diocese) is a bum'. In 2019 those occupying the progressive wing of the national Church have similarly demonstrated their disregard for national policies and procedures when it suits them. The larrikin spirit, it seems, transcends ecclesial and theological boundaries.

These stories underpin a belief that, here in Australia, we are not naughty, stupid nor weak. We have convinced ourselves that we have made a country and Church of likeable larrikins, cunning and clever, who proudly assert our

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<sup>10</sup> Robert J. Hawke, <http://bobhawkelibrary.weebly.com/quotes.html>. Accessed 16 May 2019.

autonomy. The royal commission has put an end to such wildly romantic, national – and ecclesial – delusions.

### **Royal Commission stories: the un-masking of the un-safe Church**

The horrendous accounts of child sexual abuse within the Church, heard as victims' testimony during the Royal Commission, unmasked the un-safe Church. While significant changes had already been made to current practices of child safety – the worst cases were mostly historic – many Anglicans were horrified to discover the errors of past inaction and the extent of priestly cover-up. I do not need to rehearse those shameful details here.<sup>11</sup> In the previous section I offered two storylines that shaped the Australian Church: settler stories that silenced systemic violence and abuse and larrikin stories that disregards authority and received wisdom. These sins were mostly celebrated and rarely confessed. The Church was wilfully insulated from what was happening in its midst: out of sight and out of mind. The Church was too slow in take responsibility – both care and compensation for the victims and in reforming its policies and procedure – to make churches safe. Enough Australian Anglicans, it appears, prefer to give larrikin clergy enough leeway. An ignorant Church is an unsafe Church, what Martyn Percy has termed, 'institutional narcolepsy'.<sup>12</sup> An irresponsible Church is an unsafe Church, what Percy provocatively describes as, 'the best Petri dishes for developing and growing cultures of abuse'.<sup>13</sup> Additional factors must be named.

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<sup>11</sup> V. Miller, 'Speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15): An analysis of the findings of the Royal Commission into institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse' in 'Remembering our future: The response of Australian churches to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse' *St Marks Review* 245:3 (2018), pp.72-98.

<sup>12</sup> M. Percy, 'Risk, responsibility, and redemption: remembering our future' in 'Remembering our future: The response of Australian churches to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse' *St Marks Review* 245:3 (2018): 99-114, p. 103.

<sup>13</sup> Percy, 'Risk responsibility, and redemption', p. 111.



For decades those working in the clinical professions had been studying the factors that precipitate crises in ministry.<sup>14</sup> Some factors include longstanding ministry pressures such as expectations of the role (particularly the lack of clarity of the minister's role); changes due to contemporary society; and, faith-related crises such as spiritual burnout, a breakdown in spiritual discipline, spiritual neglect, poor development of spiritual practices, a personal crisis of faith, and even a loss of faith. Three factors, however, deserving attention were routinely neglected. Firstly, the misuse of power demonstrated by more reports of abuse and bullying.<sup>15</sup> Ministers experiencing interpersonal difficulties were not adequately supported nor supervised often resulting in misconduct, sexual impropriety, abuse and bullying by clergy. Second, a widespread lack of self-awareness in clergy produced a lack of confidence in some, a lack of self-care in others contributing to the rise in mental health issues among clergy.<sup>16</sup> Insufficient and ineffective strategies existed for managing stress, overwork, burnout, and regular exposure to the burdens of others. Third, calls for professional development and support through mentoring, pastoral supervision and coaching were ignored.<sup>17</sup>

Lack of caring support from others, the lack of structured mentoring including spiritual mentoring and mentoring in initial placements, the lack of appropriate supervision. The church had become un-safe, not only for the vulnerable, but for many clergy and church workers. The sense of isolation and insecurity experienced by many clergy and church workers is another facet of what it means to be out-of-sight and out of-mind, even in the midst

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<sup>14</sup> B. Fallon S. Rice, and J. Wright Howie, 'Factors that Precipitate and Mitigate Crises in Ministry' *Pastoral Psychology*, 1:62 (2013), pp. 27-40.

<sup>15</sup> Fallon. et. al., 'Factors that Precipitate', Table 3 Identified factors that contribute to crises in ministry, p. 33

<sup>16</sup> Fallon. et. al., 'Factors that Precipitate', p. 33.

<sup>17</sup> Fallon. et. al., 'Factors that Precipitate', p. 33.

of a large city or multi-staff ministry team. What, then, is the way out of the miasma?<sup>18</sup> The recommendations of the *Royal Commission*, summarised in the next section, were based on an emerging recognition of the role for pastoral supervision.<sup>19</sup>

### **Recommendations: criteria and compliance for a safer Church**

One of the key recommendations to the Anglican church is in Book 16:5:

The Anglican Church of Australia should develop and each diocese should implement mandatory national standards to ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry (bishops, clergy, religious and lay personnel):

- a. undertake mandatory, regular professional development, compulsory components being professional responsibility and boundaries, ethics in ministry and child safety
- b. undertake mandatory professional/pastoral supervision
- c. undergo regular performance appraisals.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> A. Cameron, 'Out of the miasma: a way to children's safety' in 'Remembering our future: The response of Australian churches to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse', *St Marks Review* 245:3 (2018), pp. 25-37.

<sup>19</sup> K. Pohly, *Transforming the Rough Places: The Ministry of Supervision* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2016). The first edition (2001) was an updated version of K. Pohly, *Pastoral Supervision: inquiries into pastoral care* (Houston: The Institute of Religion 1997).

<sup>20</sup> McClellan AM, et. al., 'Final Report: Volume 16, Religious Institutions Book 1, (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017), pp.72-82, 556-757. A summary of these three recommendations to all religious institutions in Australia is: *16:45 (The Professional Supervision Recommendation)*: consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, have professional supervision with a trained professional or pastoral supervisor who has a degree of independence from the institution within which the person is in ministry; *16.43 (The Professional Development Recommendation)*: each religious institution should ensure that candidates for religious ministry undertake minimum training on child safety and related matters, including training that: a. equips candidates with an understanding of the Royal Commission's 10 Child Safe Standards, b. educates candidates on: i. professional responsibility and boundaries, ethics in ministry and child safety ii. policies regarding appropriate responses to allegations or complaints of child sexual abuse, and how to implement these policies iii. how to work with children, including childhood development and iv. identifying and understanding the nature, indicators and impacts of child sexual abuse; and *16.44 The Oversight/ Appraisal Recommendation*: consistent with Child Safe Standard 5, each religious institution should ensure that all people in religious or pastoral ministry, including religious leaders, are subject to effective management and oversight and undertake annual performance appraisals.

The Safe Ministry Commission, on behalf of the General Synod, implemented a phased approach throughout 2019 for developing the mandatory national standards for Professional Development, Professional/Pastoral Supervision and Performance Appraisals. I was seconded to the General Synod office to undertake this work and here I will focus here on pastoral (professional) supervision, while noting that the three strands should be nested together. The consultation canvassed four, broad groups: the national consultation with Anglican bishops; other large gatherings of senior clergy and parish clergy; individual consultations with Anglican bishops and diocesan representatives; individual consultations with other denominational leaders and representatives; individual consultations with experienced supervisors, mentors and coaches; and, individual consultations with clergy with experience of mandatory supervision.

I have already outlined above how the oversight of clergy and church workers has declined, some might argue disappeared, in the Anglican Church of Australia. First was the out-of-sight and out-of-mind feature of settler stories which perpetuated systemic abuses and their cover-up. Second was the disregard for tradition and authority in the larrikin spirit which dismisses any notion of oversight. For these reasons, the responses to the *Royal Commission* have focused attention on changing culture and not merely mandatory compliance. How far have we come?

### **Reaction and responses: culture change for a safer Church**

In March 2019, more than two years after the final recommendations were made, a survey of twenty-one diocesan Bishops found the extent of professional (professional) supervision is greater than anticipated, yet remaining inconsistent across the national church. The result from those dioceses with greater resources and those who implemented earlier tend to mask the reality for many rural and remote diocese that had little or no

existing supervision. A phased introduction of minimum standards became a practical necessity which encourages those dioceses well underway to continue and those only beginning to prioritise its implementation. A second question regarding what was learned during implementation resulted in two, common themes of adequate resourcing ('the issue of supply of supervisors and the cost of supervision is significant') and anticipated resistance ('importance of accountability with respect to engaging in supervision and reporting on this. Clarity of the expected boundaries. Having good orientation and engagement with our team of supervisors').<sup>21</sup> These comments capture the recurring theme from the entire consultation regarding resources for implementation: both diocesan and individual capacity constraints were consistently raised as the primary barriers.

The widespread support for minimum standards was perhaps the most surprising and encouraging aspect of all the consultations. There was not a single *in principle* objection to pastoral supervision becoming a national standard. Considerable explanation and interpretation of the phrase 'degree of independence from the institution' was also a feature. The call for external regulation has come from various voices.<sup>22</sup> Many in the consultation phase had interpreted this to exclude other Anglicans. I offered an interpretation, based on the established practice of social work supervision where professional supervision is provided by someone in the wider institution. This approach is common, for example, within *NSW Health*, and replicated in most hospitals and aged-care facilities. Critically – even in these contexts – professional supervision is never provided by the line manager. Another potential impediment to consistent national standards is that some dioceses have already adopted mandatory supervision (e.g. Perth, Newcastle), while

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<sup>21</sup> G. Broughton, 'First report to the Safe Ministry Commission of the General Synod: Implementation of Royal Commission recommendations', 2 May 2019

<sup>22</sup> Percy, 'Risk responsibility, and redemption', pp. 113-4.

the larger (metropolitan dioceses e.g. Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane) are close to adopting, or strengthening, local standards. An audit is proposed in the canon as a necessary process for ensuring locally adopted standards for pastoral supervision meet the minimum national standards.

The draft standard states that accredited supervision can be delivered by a person who: i. provides a formal, written agreement (contract, covenant) for supervision; ii. is approved by the bishop (or delegate) to provide pastoral supervision in the diocese; iii. undertakes regular supervision; iv. for a minimum of six hours (individual) or twelve hours (peer/group).<sup>23</sup>

Discerning the criteria for these standards, in order to comply with the recommendation of the *Royal Commission*, was only the first step to a safe Church. How will pastoral supervision be implemented at the local, diocesan level and will individual clergy and church workers embrace this relatively new ministry practice? The process for implementing pastoral supervision will, necessarily, vary from diocese to diocese: from large and well-resourced contexts on the east coast (e.g. Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane) to the remote and under-resourced north (e.g. Northern Territory and North-West Australia). The guidelines developed for diocesan implementation of pastoral supervision include: i. authorise a diocesan representative for implementation and oversight of supervision; ii. resource the cost of Supervision through diocesan budgets; iii. establish and publish a register of approved supervisors; iv. maintain a log of supervision received for clergy and church workers; v. Resource the training, support and supervision of approved

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<sup>23</sup> *Minimum Standards for Professional Development* Professional development is accrued through a points system across three spheres of activity: i. self-directed reading, reflecting and study ii. course enrolment, conference attendance and formal studies iii. peer engagement and equipping *Minimum Standards for Ministry Reviews* Ministry reviews are conducted on a three year cycle: i. self-reflective review ii. informal, peer-based review iii. formal diocesan (parish, Church body) review.

supervisors; vi. larger dioceses (or General Synod) consider establishing a HELPdesk in the first two years.

Another significant aspect of the consultation phase was education: that pastoral supervision has a threefold restorative, formative and normative function according to Leach and Patterson, who have translated the traditional functional model of supervision into the ministry context. The first main function of pastoral supervision is formative: an educative process which may include skill development or guidance on handling difficult situations, developing self-awareness introducing new areas of knowledge, suggesting different perspectives encouraging growth and change and rehearsing new strategies or roles. The second task is restorative: a supportive role enacted through active listening, encouragement and feedback, an opportunity for expressing feelings, helping supervisees to connect with their vision or sense of vocation, assisting with re-discovering the self that can be lost in the work (i.e. being themselves in their ministry role), recharging energy and sharing ideas and creativity. The third – and most distinct – function of pastoral supervision is normative: dealing sensitively with boundary and ethical issues, matters of the supervisee being safe to work, issues of competency, consideration of codes of conduct and ethics and boundary violations.<sup>24</sup>

Misconceptions about pastoral supervision were commonplace. Professional supervision is properly understood as the supervision of professionals and does not infantilise clergy as naughty, stupid or weak. Only those with knowledge of the clinical and social work practice of professional supervision readily understood the purpose and practice of pastoral

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<sup>24</sup> Leach and Paterson, *Pastoral Supervision*, 2015.

supervision.<sup>25</sup> Often the question concerned the differences (and similarities) between pastoral supervision and other one-to-one activities that clergy and ministry workers access such as coaching, mentoring, and spiritual direction. Some, with a background in line management (normative) or spiritual direction (formative) understood one key function of pastoral supervision but not its broad scope. Others, with a background in mentoring and coaching better appreciated the scope of pastoral supervision (e.g. supporting and educating) but often lacked the necessary structure (e.g. many mentors are not supervised for their work with those being mentored). A recent graduate from a supervision training course summarised the differences as:

Writers on supervision recognise the danger of self-deception and the tendency we have to hide the truth from ourselves. Private reflection isn't enough because we rationalize and defend ourselves against what is painful. We need others to speak into our thoughts. Supervisors can challenge and provide a different perspective.<sup>26</sup>

Education about, and equipping for, pastoral supervision remains the unfinished business of the culture change required to enable and ensure faithful and safe practice by clergy and church workers. First, locating pastoral supervision within the broader biblical and Anglican practice of oversight demystifies what first appears to many clergy an alien activity. Second, developing deeper theological roots for the theory and practice of pastoral supervision. In the final section I sketch the way forward for each of these.

### **Pastoral supervision as the biblical and Anglican practice of oversight**

What is pastoral supervision and is there an existing, Anglican tradition of pastoral supervision? The New Testament does not provide any real sense of

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<sup>25</sup> See further Karvinen-Niinikoski, Liz Beddoe, Gillian Ruch, and Ming-Sum Tsui. *Professional Supervision and Professional Autonomy*, (Policy Press, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> Personal communication from course graduate, paraphrasing Michael Carroll, 'From Mindless to Mindful practice: on learning reflection in supervision' in *Psychotherapy in Australia* 15:4 (August 2009): 38-49.

the kind of supervision practised among the first and second generation of Christian pastors and leaders. We find there are certain people commended for their maturity who are promoted as faithful guides to holy living. For example, approved workers (2 Tim 2:15) are appointed as overseers (*episkopos* 1 Tim 3:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 5:2). The biblical language of oversight (*episkopeo*) fits nicely with the concept of pastoral supervision. Historically, this has developed within the pastoral office more generally and orders of ministry more specifically. During the 16th century the role of the priest is declared in the bishop's exhortation in the ordination service to include the work of spiritual and moral oversight. Taking sin seriously, placing an emphasis on repentance and absolution, a commitment to personal holiness and transformation through the counsels of Scripture and prayer – these became the evolving hallmarks of an Anglican practice of oversight that continue to shape individual pastoring, discipling, mentoring and coaching into the present. Contemporary challenges of both ministry burnout and clergy abuse require an integrated approach that includes best practice from the clinical and social work theory and practice of supervision without abandoning the rich, Anglican practice of oversight. Further, the overseer is called to the reading, diligent study and teaching of Scripture, and the interpretation of the Gospel, according to the Anglican Ordinal. Such clear and uncompromising engagement with the Word of God and the Spirit of God equips, enlighten, stirs up and encourages the people of God. These commitments are reflected in the tasks of the pastoral supervisor who enables priests, deacons and other church workers to fulfil their vocation through critical reflection that enables faithfulness to Christ in the world.

The emerging theory and practice of pastoral supervision is indebted to Scottish scholar-priest Michael Paterson who has been the main pioneer in



the United Kingdom.<sup>27</sup> Paterson lays out clearly how he sees pastoral supervision differing from supervision as it is used in other professions.<sup>28</sup> Paterson highlights the focus as being on vision and the vocation to which God has called the supervisee.<sup>29</sup> He does not set out to reinvent supervision but instead to look at how the practices of supervision can be used to serve the aim of attending to the Christian call in the supervisee's life.<sup>30</sup> One of the great strengths of Paterson's pioneering work is the broad range of different approaches to supervision, abundantly clear that supervision is not simply about thinking. Good supervision, in the tradition of wise oversight, pays attention to what is not said as much as what is said, and understands the place of the story being told in supervision within the framework of the Christian story.<sup>31</sup> This, in fact, is the goal of pastoral supervision, that to help supervisees examine the story out of which they live so that they may minister more profoundly the good news of Jesus Christ.<sup>32</sup>

### **A Practical Theology for Safe clergy and church workers?**

Leading theological ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas, would grumpily insist that 'safe' is not a theological category. He has a point. The Christological focus of the ordinal noted above reflects the view that the Church is largely understood in Christological terms and, so too, are the manifold ministries of Christ – both lay and ordained. There is very limited extent to which pastoral supervision has been understood in Christological terms. Friend, colleague and pastoral supervisor Bishop Stephen Pickard has noted a worrying trend in the Anglican communion where the management or therapeutic paradigm of the episcopate too easily eclipses a theological and scholarly expertise in the

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<sup>27</sup> See also M. Paterson, and J. Rowe., Ed. *Enriching Ministry: Pastoral Supervision in Practice*. (London: SCM, 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Leach and Paterson, *Pastoral Supervision*, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Leach and Paterson, *Pastoral Supervision*, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Leach and Paterson, *Pastoral Supervision*, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Leach and Paterson, *Pastoral Supervision*, pp. 145–146, 167.

<sup>32</sup> Leach and Paterson, *Pastoral Supervision*, p. 92.

office and functions of the overseer.<sup>33</sup> A Scripture-formed ministry of oversight calls people ‘to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ ... to the truth as it is in Jesus’ (Eph. 4: 13b, 21) – the faithful practice which lies at the heart of the overseers’ vocation. The overseer is always the leading disciple of Jesus.

The God of biblical revelation has a character. Divine action flows from that character. God is love and he is light. This is the story of both Old and New Testament, centred on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>34</sup> The love and light of God is Jesus Christ. In the reformation this was expressed through Martin Luther’s Jesus as revelation and redemption; in the twentieth century articulated through Emil Brunner’s Jesus as mediation and mercy; and, more recently, James McClendon’s reclaiming of a radical reformation Jesus as risen and reconciling.<sup>35</sup> Here I offer a glimpse of how these theologians might ground pastoral supervision in a richer Christology as hinted at by Alister R. McGrath in recent works on Luther and Brunner. Luther’s theology of the cross, according to McGrath, is a theology of revelation not speculation.<sup>36</sup> Luther’s Jesus is the source of both revelation and redemption, because of the paradox at the heart of Christology. Jesus’ parables both reveal and conceal. Jesus’ death both redeems and condemns. Luther’s Christology enables pastoral supervision to navigate light and shadows, to heal and to harrow. Brunner’s Christology also emphasises the personal nature of Luther’s divine self-disclosure. Like Luther before him, McGrath notes Brunner declares faith to be ‘seeing in the dark’ because ‘faith

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<sup>33</sup> S. Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 169-180.

<sup>34</sup> G. Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009), p. 52

<sup>35</sup> G. Broughton, *A Practical Christology for Pastoral Supervision* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> A. McGrath, *Luther’s Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther’s Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

is able to recognize and take hold of the reality in the shadows'.<sup>37</sup> Brunner's Christology of personal encounter ensures pastoral supervision explores the shadows and deficits of ignorance and forgetfulness. McClendon's Christology insists God's way – God's *only* way – is God's sign of self-identification with Jesus who had taken the nonviolent way of the cross. In meeting Jesus as the risen Lord do we indeed meet true man and true God, so that Jesus Christ can rightly be the center of Christian theology?<sup>38</sup> McClendon's Christology enriches pastoral supervision with this present Christ with whom supervisees must come to terms; it is in him that supervisees must seek their answers.<sup>39</sup>

A practical Christology provides the emerging theory and practice of pastoral supervision a grounding in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christ event – revealing, remembering and restoring – provides the theological basis necessary for the collaborative conversations at the heart of good supervision practice. The gospels provide a specific, narrative-based account of Jesus' interaction with those who follow him because supervision practice is grounded in specific, relational narratives of mission and ministry practice. Both the exegesis and the engagement with three theologians (Luther – reformed, Brunner – 20th century and McClendon – radical reformation) deepen and extend the insights gleaned from the core passage into wider Christological themes (revealing, remembering and restoring), which then inform and inspire various practices for pastoral supervision.

## Conclusion

Safe clergy and church workers are not achieved through mere commissions and compliance. The properly Christian way to change culture is through a

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<sup>37</sup> A. Mc Grath, *Emil Brunner: A Reappraisal* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

<sup>38</sup> J. W. McClendon, *Systematic Theology: Ethics*. (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2001), p. 238.

<sup>39</sup> McClendon, p. 239.

rigorous grounding of pastoral supervision in the story of Jesus Christ. The faithful practice of clergy and church workers is secured and shaped by an identity in Christ, not out-of-sight, out-of-mind. The light and love of God-in-Christ redeems the isolation of bush clergy and the insecurity of burnt-out church workers. The *telos* (faithful practice) of church workers and clergy is found in the Lordship of Jesus Christ, at which every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, not in the larrikin spirit.

For Peer Review