

Taking Stock

In the United Reformed Church, those who are called by God to the ministry of Word and Sacraments have that sense of call tested and acknowledged by the Church. The Church also gives the authority for the exercising of that ministry.

The basic theological concept behind a scheme of ministerial review is that we are all accountable to God for the discharge of the ministry graciously given to us. A framework in which we regularly stand back and reflect can be seen as our recognition of that basic accountability.

There are other New Testament themes behind this scheme. These include the full use of gifts and talents in God's service; the concept of stewardship; and the need for each of us to play our proper part in the life of the Body so that it grows and develops.

It is appropriate, therefore, that those called to ministry should regularly 'take stock' of that ministry, and to do so as objectively as possible. It might be reasoned that such 'taking stock' could best be achieved through personal prayer and reflection. But we are not always the best people to appraise ourselves without support. It is hard to be objective and it is not always easy to discern God's intention in our lives.

This booklet has been designed as a means of helping those in all types of ministry to reflect on that ministry and to strengthen and develop it.

In the light of discussions which you will have had with those most closely involved with you in the exercise of your ministry, you should try to answer all relevant questions fully but concisely; this will certainly help you and your trained appraisal partner in the session where you consider what can be drawn from your reflections about the past and your hopes for the future.

The goal of this process is the mutual enrichment of your ministry as an individual and, just as importantly, as part of a collaborative team; this reflects the assumption accepted by the Church that the ministry and mission of a local church is a collaborative partnership of the members and the minister, not the sole responsibility of the minister. For this reason the review takes place in the context of your current role description and of the church's developing mission strategy.

As background information for your partner, please provide the following details:

Name

Church(es) or post

Family situation

Part 1: Personal reflection

As you work through this section, please write your thoughts down or, if you are working from an electronic copy, type them in. Whether you wish to discuss these questions with you partner or not, it will certainly assist your partner to know your thoughts when Part 2 is under discussion.

1.1 What have been the highs and lows in your personal life in the last two years?

1.2 How does your 'job' affect your personal life? Do you have enough time to relax? Are you able to spend an adequate amount of time with your family?

1.3 Do you feel that 'the job' makes unreasonable demands on you, or that your church(es) have unreasonable expectations? Alternatively are your church(es) supportive and encouraging and concerned that you should not be overburdened? Is it a bit of a mix?

1.4 Are there pressures on you - finance, health concerns, family - that impact negatively on your Ministry?

2.1 Do you feel that you have matured spiritually in the last couple of years, or just stagnated? Why do you think this is?

2.2 In terms of spiritual and personal development, which study days/ retreats/ workshops/ summer schools that you have attended in the last two years that have been of real benefit? Which haven't? Why?

2.3 Are you happy with your prayer life?

2.4 Has your theological perspective or have your personal priorities changed in the last two years? If so, what prompted the change?

3.1 What have been the highs and lows of the last two years in your church(es)? What are their good points, what are their bad? Do you feel optimistic or pessimistic about your church(es)? Why?

3.2 Are there individuals, either in your churches, other organisations with which you are involved, or colleagues with whom you find it difficult to get along? What is the core of the problem? Is there anything you could or should do about it?

4.1 Have you felt a need for support from outside your congregation(s)? Was it forthcoming? Where did it come from? If a similar situation recurred again, where would or could you seek help?

5.1 Are there other personal issues that trouble you?

Part 2: Your Assessment of your ministerial activities

The function of this section is to review what has happened in your Ministry in the last couple of years, and then to compare the reality with the expectations of two years ago, as embodied in your role description. We have attempted to provide a reasonably exhaustive list of your potential activities but you may wish to add to it.

Under each heading or sub-heading, please

- look at the amount of time that you spend on this activity.
- consider whether it is reasonable, in proportion to your other commitments
- consider whether it is adequate: is it a source of frustration that you cannot give more time to this area of Ministry?
- rate your effectiveness in this area of Ministry

When considering the 'time' aspect, take into consideration the preparation time required for a particular activity

Worship leading and Preaching

In my own church(es)

Elsewhere

Teaching and Nurture

Children and young people

Elders and other church leaders

Other groups

Facilitating the training of others in this area

Tutoring or mentoring

Pastoral care and support

Home/ hospital visiting

Marriage/ baptism preparation

Bereavement/ relationship/ family support: counselling

Handling spontaneous pleas for help e.g. from the homeless

Speaking to church groups

Business Meetings (e.g. Elders meetings, Synod committees, governors' meetings, trustees/ directors meetings)

Chairing

Participation in other ways

Evangelism

Events, projects

Personal

Speaking to groups outside the church

Training and encouraging others

Social functions

within the church

organising

attending

elsewhere

organising

attending

Other activities

Chaplaincy

Writing

Private study

Prayer

Ecumenism

Vision building

Your buildings!

Political issues

Social work within the local community

Plugging the gap, when tasks are not done, or inadequately done by others

Having reviewed your activities for the last couple of years, please note below your current role description and the priorities implicit within it.

Have the emphases in your Ministry reflected your role description? If, in reality your time usage and priorities has differed significantly from that anticipated two years ago, why has this happened? Are the reasons good (a growing church requiring more emphasis on teaching!) or bad (too much gap plugging)?

Your church is now reviewing its Mission Strategy. Do you see a need for changes in your role as a result of this review? Are there changes that you should be pressing for, both in the Mission Strategy and in your role description, to address the problems that have hampered your Ministry in the last two years?

Are there areas of your Ministry where you believe that additional training would increase your effectiveness?

And finally.....'TAKING STOCK' 20...

Please complete this section at the end of, or soon after, the meeting with your Appraisal partner.

You should then have a clear understanding as to whether you should suggest to the Elders/colleagues that your role description and key responsibilities and objectives should be amended or redefined. You should also know what additional training you might seek in your discussion with the Synod Training Officer.

As a result of this process I perceive my strengths to be:

The special skills/knowledge/aptitude/interest I would like to use more and share in my ministry are:

The areas I would like to reflect on or discuss further are:

I would like further support and EM3 training in:

The key responsibilities and objectives which I believe are appropriate for the future/next two years, and would like to discuss with Elders/colleagues are:-

My role description should be amended(as indicated)/is still valid.

Signed

Date