



Peer Support Trios

A Model for Pastoral support in NWBA

An Important part of the task of a Regional Association is to seek to ensure the wellbeing and development of ministers within our churches. NWBA is principally a network of local churches, not an institution in its own right, so it follows that the bulk of responsibility for the wellbeing of ministers lies with the ministers themselves. Peer support trios (PST's) is one model of enabling this that we are keen to implement and develop.

How the trio works

The idea for PST's is based on the training model developed by BUGB for Appraiser guides. Three individuals (normally three local ministers) form a trio who meet regularly (6 times per year) following a structured programme that is outlined below. The aim of the trio is to provide safe space where an individual can reflect on their ministry and personal & spiritual development, while at the same time honing their skills in listening, one-to-one pastoral support etc.

Each participant in the trio takes a specific role:

Interviewee: Prior to the meeting, the interviewee will use a brief questionnaire to help them reflect on the strengths of their ministry and areas for development

Interviewer: The interviewer leads the interviewee in a guided reflection on their answers to the questionnaire, particularly giving opportunity to share frustrations and to identify areas for personal development.

Observer: The observer does not participate in the interview, but feeds back their observations at the end. Their principal focus is the interviewer, helping them to reflect on their role as a listener and facilitator. Although this is led by the observer, all three participants are able to join in at this stage.

Each session should last 1½ hours adhering to the following programme

- 15 mins: Coffee and informal time together. Although not highly structured, these needs to be a time when participants hold each other to account for implementing actions agreed in previous reflections. (e.g. last time we met you said you were going to take more time off – have you done this?)
- 45 mins: Interview
- 15 mins: Feedback
- 15 mins: prayer for one another

The group should plan to meet once every two months, changing roles on each occasion. This means that each participant has the opportunity to reflect intensely on their ministry every 6 months. In addition, by participating in the feedback session, participants will develop listening skills, and their own self-awareness.

Initial Questionnaire

The questionnaire is not intended as a formal document, but rather as a stimulus to help reflect on particular aspects of an individual's ministry. It does not so much focus on "activities" (e.g mission, worship services etc.) but the qualities and skills that are exercised in leading a church in those activities.

Participants are invited to reflect on 6 key aspects of ministry, 3 relating to the exercise of public ministry and three relating to personal well-being and development.

Leadership
Pastoral Care
Preaching and Teaching

Personal Spirituality
Learning and professional development
Work-Life balance

Two questionnaires, one focussing on "public" skills and the other on "personal", are used alternatively. This means that each aspect is reviewed every 12 months.

The process culminates in participants reflecting on their overall sense of call, both to ministry in general and in the specific context in which they are currently engaged. This is an important part of the process, research has shown that indiscretion leading to personal difficulty or sometimes leaving ministry, is often preceded by the loss of a sense of call in the months prior. It is hoped by particularly focussing on call we may more effectively "watch over one another"

Basic Parameters

It is recognised that the effectiveness of the group will depend to some degree on the rapport between participants. Ministers will be invited where possible to set up their own trios prior to enrolling in the scheme. Where this is not possible, assistance will be given and an initial training conference will allow trios to "trial" working together.

By forming a trio, participants "give permission" to one another to explore relevant personal issues. This requires a commitment to confidentiality from all concerned.

The purpose of trios is for personal reflection and no formal recording process is involved. While participants might make notes for personal use, they would not make notes on others. The only exception to this, might be where an individual asked the others to hold them to account to take a certain course of action (e.g undertake a piece of training, drop a particular responsibility). Participants may well need to jot this down as an aide-memoir.

Although the trio scheme is based on some of the principles used by BUGB for guided self-appraisals, the two should not be confused.

Participants will be asked to complete an evaluation each year and return to NWBA. This will not be a disclosure of information shared, but an evaluation of the process and the materials used to resource it. It will also seek confirmation that the trio has operated effectively and whether or not participants wish to continue.

Although developed in a Baptist context, there is no reason why ecumenical colleagues might not be included in a trio, especially where geographic difficulties require this.

Training Day

A training day is offered at the outset for those who take part in the programme. This highlights some basic listening and reflection skills as well as providing "hands on" experience of working in the trios. The training day forms the first trio meeting, so participants have the opportunity to experience the dynamics of a specific group, before embarking on the programme.

Self Reflection Exercise 1

Leadership

What do you see as your strengths in this area – where have you seen this evidenced in your ministry?

What are the aspects in which you feel the need for further support and development – what has led you to this conclusion?

How do you seek to reflect Christ's model of servant leadership?

How do you feel you have developed since you last reflected on this aspect of your ministry.

Pastoral Care

What are the key features of your approach to pastoral care?

What proportion of your time with people is proactive/reactive?

What do you see as your strengths in this area – where have you seen this evidenced in your ministry?

What are the aspects in which you feel the need for further support and development – what has led you to this conclusion?

How do you feel you have developed since you last reflected on this aspect of your ministry.

Preaching & Teaching

What would you see as the key objectives/features of your preaching and teaching?

What do you see as your strengths in this area – where have you seen this evidenced in your ministry?

What are the aspects in which you feel the need for further support and development – what has led you to this conclusion?

How do you feel you have developed since you last reflected on this aspect of your ministry.

Your sense of call

In what ways do your answers to the above confirm/challenge your sense of calling to ministry in general?

And your present situation in particular?

Self Relection – Exercise 2

Personal Spirituality

How do you arrange your prayer life, in what ways does it enrich/impact your ministry?

How do you engage with God's Word at a personal level?

In what other ways do you seek to nourish yourself spiritually?

What resources/approaches have you found particularly helpful/unhelpful?

What steps do you intend to take to sustain/develop your spirituality?

Learning & Professional Development

List any books you have read, courses/conferences attended etc. in the last 12 months – in what way have each of these informed/resourced your ministry.

How have you sought to develop your awareness in the following areas:

Mission in contemporary society

Church life

Biblical Studies & Theology

In what other areas have you sought to develop your knowledge and ability

Work/Life Balance

What is the average length of your working week – is your perception shared by your family?

How much holiday did you take last year – how did you spend it?

What do you do to relax?

Where are the boundaries between your home life/work life – how do you guard them?

What are the principal barriers that prevent you from taking time off/leisure?

Do you feel you have got this balance right – do you need to take any steps to redress this?

Your sense of call

In what ways do your answers to the above confirm/challenge your sense of calling to ministry in general?

And your present situation in particular?