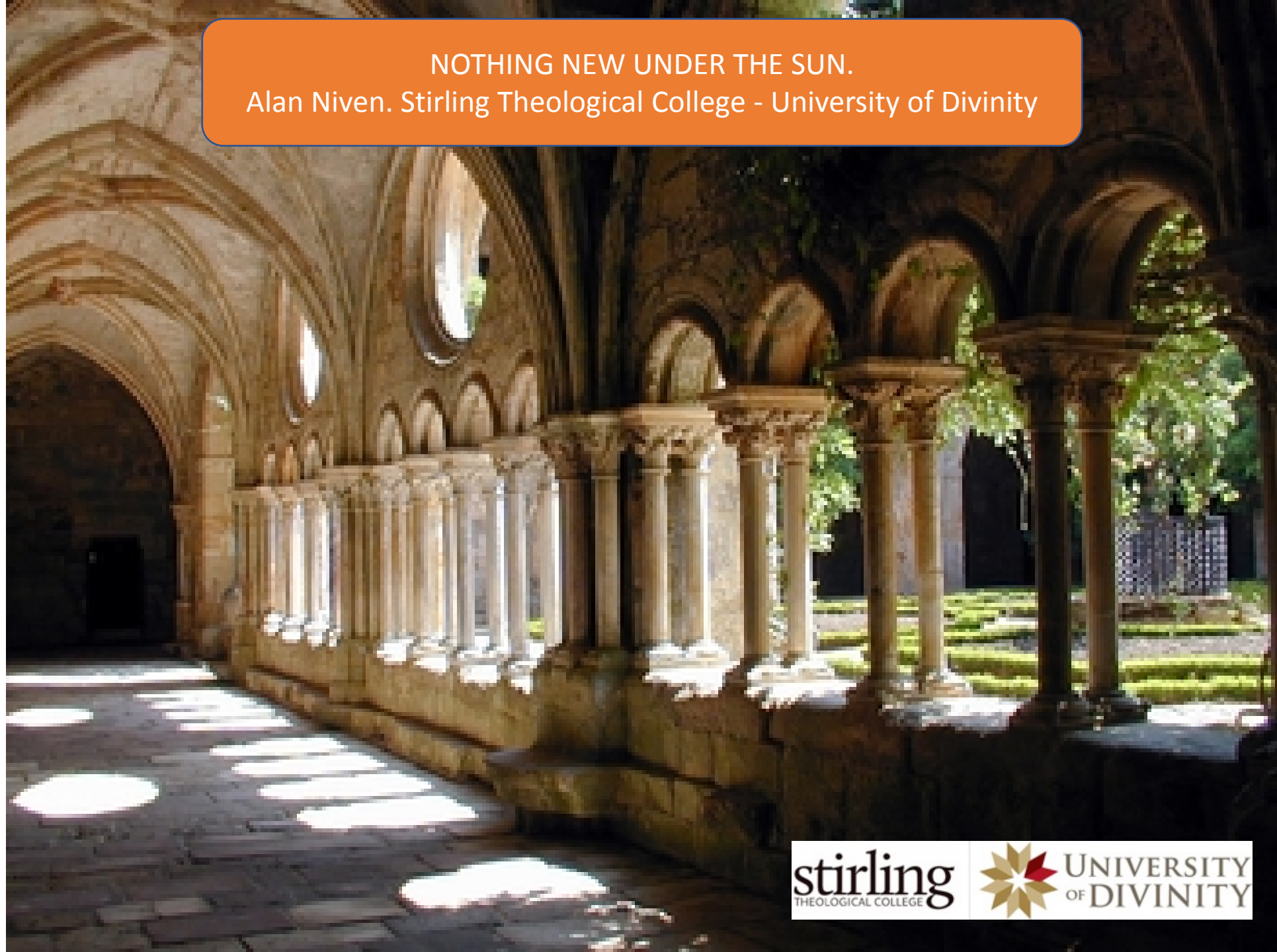


NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN.  
Alan Niven. Stirling Theological College - University of Divinity



Effective supervision for those in ministry settings embodies:  
**Individual Responsibility; Collegial Responsibility; Ecclesial  
Responsibility.**

I will propose that:

- (i) the provision of supervisory structures,
- (ii) training for supervision,
- (iii) and the development of a culture of supervision-awareness

exemplifies the very best of what has traditionally been recognised as Pastoral Care, where the individual, systems (both ecclesial and other) and spiritual care coincide.

The provision of skilful, trained and accredited supervision for ministers, priests, pastoral/spiritual carers and chaplains can best be seen as

**an act of thoughtful, responsible, compassionate and practical pastoral care – not just as an instrument of compliance, legal constraint and duty.**

I am suggesting that supervision should be reframed consistently as a ministry of **pastoral care and compassion** by accrediting bodies and **as a spiritual discipline to be embraced** by the practitioner. This is the ‘ought’ of appropriateness not the ‘ought’ of obligation.

How supervision is framed theologically and pastorally by accreditation bodies and practitioners is

- (i) critical for acceptance, reception, effectiveness and sustainability and
- (ii) essential for supervision to be an authentic experience of spiritual growth and maturing.

## A QUICK NOTE ON RESEARCH

- We are obviously moving into the development of courses in Pastoral Supervision – an evolutionary process. Education must be ecumenical and closely allied to research. The teaching-research nexus will be critical over the next five years.
- Remember that the Church is already doing some good work. Let's use (i) Appreciative Inquiry to evaluate and improve and (ii) set up culturally and demographically diverse pilots to help us understand where to go.
- Piggy-back on the work that our colleagues in healthcare have been doing as they faced the challenge of evidence-based practice. Their knowledge and skills in research will be transferable and it will be a good bridge between domains of service.
- Good mixed methods research will enable the voices of those on the ground to be heard. This will help us avoid the danger of top-down (here's the program, get with it!) planning and implementation.

# ACCIDIE

The holy men of the desert called him the *dæmon meridianus*; for his favourite hour of visitation was in the **heat of the day**. He would lie in wait for monks **grown weary with working too long in the oppressive heat** ... And once installed there, what havoc he wrought! Suddenly it would seem to the poor victim that the day was intolerably long and life desolatingly empty and often given over to despair. He would go to the door of his cell and look up at the sun and ask himself if a new Joshua had arrested it midway up the heavens. Then he would withdraw into the shade and **wonder what good he was doing or if there was any object in existence**. The eternal round of the day was no longer joyful or fruitful. Then he would look at the sun again and find it indubitably stationary, and the hour of the communal repast of the evening as remote as ever. Even **the good he did was dry** and devoid of joy in service so he hid away lest people ask more of him.

(Aldous Huxley – On the Margin: Notes and Essays)

# Anthony of Egypt

1. When the holy Abba Anthony lived in the desert he was beset by 'accidie' (spiritual fatigue or exhaustion), and attacked by many sinful thoughts. He said to God, 'Lord, I want to be saved, but these thoughts will not leave me alone. What shall I do in my affliction? How can I be saved?'

A short while afterwards, when he got up to go out, Anthony saw a man like himself sitting at his work .... getting up from his work ... to pray .... then sitting down ... and plaiting a rope .... then getting up again ... to pray.

It was an angel of the Lord sent to correct and reassure him. He heard the angel saying to him, "Do this and you will be saved from accidie." At these words, Anthony was filled with joy and courage. He did this, and he was indeed saved from himself. (Sayings 1-5)

# Classic Modes of Pastoral Care ...

(Clebsch and Jaekle, 1965; Clinebell, 1966, 1984; Lartey 2003, 2006)

Guiding (2000 years of pastoral care)

Healing

Sustaining

Reconciling

Nurturing (Clinebell etc.)

Empowering (Lartey etc.)

Advocating





In one of my earliest encounters with writing in Field Education and pastoral supervision the 80s, Kenneth Pohly set the parameters for supervision within a **ministry** frame he described as **“collegial, mutual, holistic and inclusive”** and

... to speak of supervision as a way of doing ministry, is to declare that supervision is both integral to and formative for ministry. There has been a tendency, at least in practice if not also in theory, to see it as something external to ministry, occurring somewhere outside of ministry and in control of it. Much of the baggage that is brought to supervision is the fear that some person or institution ‘out there’ is in charge. I am suggesting, rather, that there is a particular kind of supervision that is ministry. Theologically this kind of supervision can be described as being **relational, covenantal, incarnational and grace-full.** (1988, 125)

## **(PASTORAL) SUPERVISION – SOME KEY DESCRIPTORS**

Extended, intentional relationship ('journey metaphor'); mutual agreement; story; theological reflection/critical reflection; concrete practice; contextual awareness; case study; culture and contextuality; knowledge of the human sciences; personal growth and integration; contextually integrating and reconciling inner and outer worlds; nurturing spirituality and spiritual identity; community; self-care/self-compassion; whole person; spiritual care and guidance; formational; soul care. (Pohly 1977, 42-51; Steere 1989, 65-68; Pyle & Seals 1995, 8-17; Carroll 2009, 210-220; Leach & Paterson 2010; Hawkins & Shohet 2012, Gardner 2014, 51ff; Falender & Shafranske 2016)

### **POHLY'S KEY TERMS – QUALITATIVE CATEGORIES**

collegial, mutual, holistic, inclusive, relational,  
covenantal, incarnational and grace-full

(For more comprehensive meta-analysis, whole texts can be analysed using NVivo just as we use this software to analyse the text of transcripts of interview)

Pamela Cooper-White's (*Use of self in Pastoral Care and Counselling*) relational paradigm and internalised self-supervision echoes important themes in the supervision literature:

... effective pastoral care includes giving close attention to one's own thoughts, feelings, fantasies and behaviours. This 'use of self' is not a matter of self-preoccupation, but, on the contrary, a healthy utilisation of one's own responses to enhance the quality of pastoral care.

Appreciation of the complex, affect-laden nature of the intersubjective relationship between helper and helpee can deepen understanding, strengthen empathy and increase the mutuality of respect, even as it enhances the creation of a safe space with healthy boundaries (2004, 128).

Pamela Cooper-White is writing for me as a Pastoral Carer, Judy Rigby writes for me as a supervisor and helps me understand some of the dynamics (and effectiveness) of self-reflexivity.

“If I know my sense of self, spiritual life, faith, hope and love, I am more likely to listen to the [supervisee’s] worldview, hear their need, help them to sort out their feelings, values, hopes, and spiritual values” (2010, 14).

The supervisory dialogue, as in a pastoral care encounter, is cyclical and iterative as well as expressive of the guest-host motif where the roles can be sometimes, with care, interchangeable.

Spiritual/Pastoral Care begins when we connect as people. It is about making space that people can use themselves. Sometimes making space means doing whatever we can to keep people in touch with experiences, places and things that are important to them.

Sometimes it's making the space to listen to the stories as people review their lives and sort out 'the things that endure', the experiences and commitments that make them truly themselves. Sometimes it is making space for religious observance and ritual activity so that the place they now inhabit can be made holy. (Rumbold 2006)

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I am beginning to understand that life is not so much a search for answers, as it is a search for clearings. Clearings are the required stopping places in our lives when our lives get to be too much. A clearing is a place of shelter, peace, rest, safety, quiet and healing. It is a place where you can get your bearings, regroup, inspect the damage, fill out the estimate and make the repairs. It is a place where mid-course corrections are made – where you can change course, even start over. A clearing is a place where you can see what you couldn't see and hear what you couldn't hear.

(Mike Yaconnelli. *The Door* Jan-Feb, 1995: 5)





# TOWARDS A PASTORAL THEOLOGY OF SUPERVISION: REFRAMING SUPERVISION AS AN ACT OF PASTORAL CARE

“ ... supervision is one of the best theological and pastoral gifts we can offer”

**Emmanuel Lartey summarises core pastoral care themes** that clearly resonate with supervision practice. In somewhat theoretical terms pastoral care is:

- an expression of human concern through activities designed to bring wholeness and healing in a variety of modes as expressed by Jesus in John 10:10 “... life abundant.”
- happens when carers can recognise transcendence leading to exploration of the spiritual dimensions of life;
- happens when the motivation is love; “We love because God first loved us;”
- aims at prevention, fostering and advocacy. The prophetic edge of social justice (2003; 2006).

**In practical mode:** Pastoral care writers such as Robert Wicks and Thomas Rodgerson (1999) John Patton (2005) and Carrie Doehring (2015) identify aspects of practice beyond the expected and basic listening skills.

1. Care concerns whole people –physically , emotionally, socially and spiritually  
(Lk 4:16-21)
2. Care is mutual - we care co-operatively for each other, offer welcome on the journey and express hospitality in our learning together. (Gal 6:1-5; Romans 12:13)
3. Care depends as much upon who we are (integrated life, personality, spirituality etc.) as on what we can do. (Philippians 2:1-11)
4. Care invites us to reflect upon the meaning and purpose of our lives and behaviours. (Matthew 5:1-12)
5. Care creates community in a variety of dimensions. (Jn 13; Jn 21; Jn 15:11-17)

# Challenges to Choosing/Using Supervision (1)

(Church context. Possible interpretation in brackets)

1. Never really considered it ....

(Formation and Culture)

2. Confidentiality confused with confession ....

(Education. My accountability and practice. Wrong focus!)

3. Ignore the signs until we fall over ....

(Culture. No self-awareness. Can't listen. Minimal systemic care.)

4. Programmed to keep going 'no matter what.'

(Theology. Ecclesial Models. Personality)

## Challenges to Choosing/Using Supervision (2)

5. Value boundaries but do not give priority.  
(Discipleship and discipline. Vision. Too tired to discern)

6. Costs too much; don't have time ....  
(Formation and Culture; Systemic)

7. There are not enough (good) supervisors ....  
(Culture. Ecclesial/Systemic Priority. Isolation)

And the very sad “Tried it once .... “

## **An essential mode of care: the invitation to theological reflection.**

John Paver offers a theologically reflective framework:

1. The 'text' of faith experience and contextualised, systems-aware practice;
2. The 'text' of scripture and Christian tradition as related to the person's identity and spirituality both within and beyond their immediate ministry;
3. The 'text' of culture and the context/events/process of ministry (2006, 33-79).

.... And the amazing text of ourselves tells a story to be seen and read as we bring

Experience of life: an event, story or narrative – from conflict to joy to sexuality;

An experience of work or ministry: an event, story or narrative;

An issue in ministry: justice, suffering, inculturation;

A vision of ministry: a personal mission statement (McAlpin 2009, 114)

## **The pastoral ‘diagnostic’ indicators suggested by Paul Pruyser:**

“ ... these used to be the bread and butter conversation pieces of ministry and in any given year of supervision would be touched upon when talking about anything from sexuality and boundaries to conflict with the Church Council.” 73 year old priest.

*awareness of the Holy*

*repentance*

*providence - God’s promised presence is enough for today*

*communion – both liturgical and social*

*faith or faithfulness*

*sense of vocation*

*grace or gratitude* (1976)

The wholeness which pastoral healing seeks to achieve is not simple restoration of prior circumstances, physical or otherwise, but integration with deeper spiritual insight than was previously experienced. In this sense supervision fits well with the pastoral theological enterprise.

Pastoral Care is viewed as a theological discipline. Within the framework of the traditional understanding of pastoral care as cura animarum (care of the human soul), we endeavour to develop Pastoral Theology as a healing enterprise, which focuses on care from the perspective of salvation. Pastoral Care is faith care applied as life care. The main objective is to help people towards a meaningful life with the aid of an appropriate understanding of God and God's presence. The following important existential life issues should be addressed [in addition to celebratory responses to life's passages and joys:

- Our anxiety around rejection, isolation and death - hence the human quest for intimacy and acceptance.
- Guilt, and guilt feelings - hence the human quest for liberation and freedom.
- Despair and doubt - hence the human quest for hope and a meaningful future.

**Professor Daniel Louw**, Practical Theology, Stellenbosch University, South Africa  
(faculty description on his website, 2013)

# Classic Modes of Pastoral Care ...

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Guiding (2000 years of pastoral care)

Healing

Sustaining

Reconciling

Nurturing (Clinebell etc.)

Empowering (Lartey etc.)

Advocating



## HEALING

**Healing** is that pastoral function in which a representative Christian person facilitates another's path towards restoration to a condition of **wholeness, a restoration that also achieves a new level of spiritual insight and wellbeing.**

The wholeness which pastoral healing seeks to achieve is not simple restoration of prior circumstances, physical or otherwise but integration with deeper spiritual insight than was previously experienced. In this sense supervision fits well with the pastoral theological enterprise ....

..... Within pastoral care, both parties are changed as degrees of mutuality build community in a covenantal context that also embraces the presence of Christ in the midst, a liminal space often deemed sacred. Felicity Kelcourse conceives of 'Supervision as Soul Care' within a 'Spirituality of Integrity' suggesting that critical reflection is apparent to both supervisor and supervisee. All of us carry wounded places (loaded with assumptions and expectations) that

continue to suffer from not being seen, known, heard, or respected in the ways we needed to feel whole. The transformative hope of [supervision] is that these wounds will be recognised, explored, and understood by both supervisor and supervisee, soothed by reparative experiences, and healed to a manageable degree over time (2013, 159).

## A VERY BRIEF OVERVIEW OF KEY PASTORAL THEMES (More detailed analysis to come!)

From the Australasian Association of Supervision (AAOS) website:

**Supervision interrupts practice. It wakes us up to what we are doing.** When we are alive to what we are doing, we wake up to what is, instead of falling asleep in the **comfort stories** of our clinical routines and daily practice. The supervisory voice acts as an irritator interrupting repetitive stories (comfort stories) and facilitating the creation of new stories (Sheila Ryan, 2004).

**Sustaining** as a pastoral care definition consists of helping any person with complex or perhaps even threatening challenges (psychological, spiritual, emotional or physical) to **endure and to transcend** a given circumstance rather than sink into old 'comforting' or survival behaviours. Turning back the clock, or restoration to a former psychological, spiritual, emotional or physical state is not realistic and recovery from illness, struggle, or condition is either impossible or is so remote as to seem improbable. The sustaining work goes beyond simple survival reaching toward spiritual growth through endurance and faithfulness in complex, harmful, or challenging experiences.

Within supervision, ‘Sustaining’ can be much more than just hanging on, it is the creation of new stories that give hope for tomorrow, an escatological dimension of care. Supervision enables “translat[ion] usefully into ways of locating how one’s own hidden thinking (and choices about one’s own thinking) helps influence professional practice” (Fook & Gardner 2007, 70). It is understood that supervision involves incremental work that needs time and seasons, but the sustaining, supportive nature of supervision has a vision of transformational learning where

supervisees critically reflect not just on their experience but the way they construct their experience, creating new mental maps or meaning-making frameworks that help interpret their experience, learn from it and go back to their work with new insights and new behaviours. This is supervision at its creative best and most courageous (Carroll 2009, 17).

**Guiding** consists in assisting persons in **making choices between alternative courses of thought and action**, especially when such choices are viewed as affecting the present and future state of the soul. Guidance commonly employs two complementary modes. Eductive guidance tends to draw out of the individual's own experiences and value the criteria and resources for life decisions, while inductive guidance tends to suggest the individual explores an a priori set of values and criteria by which to make decisions. For Christian pastoral caregivers, inductive guidance will usually be grounded in scripture – their 'ministry of availability' being balanced by their 'ministry of introduction'.

**Reconciling** seeks to **re-establish broken relationships between persons (including themselves) and between persons and God**. Reconciliation is the antithesis of alienation, and may be seen to be the ultimate purpose of God (Ephesians 3: 10-11). Both axes of reconciliation function together; i.e., both horizontal and vertical dimensions need to be attended. The Christian disciplines of repentance, confession, and restitution work together with the grace of forgiveness to accomplish this task of interpersonal, intrapersonal and transpersonal reconciliation through reflection on life events and experiences.

**Nurturing** in the context of pastoral care is centred on the birthing and development of persons who witness to the reality of the Reign of God, whose vision is to embody this reality in daily experience, and who continually seek to enlarge the compass of God’s work in the world. As such, it is caring which may be offered to families and to congregations as well as to individuals. It is God’s desire that those who are given the gifts of pastoral leadership should *“prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:11-13). Individuals, families, and churches are always “on the journey” toward such maturity, and those appointed to ministry (in specific roles) and in fact all Christians (in general) through their baptism way have the responsibility and the joy of **nurturing** this growth . . . even as we continue to grow ourselves. Such nurturing requires considerable patience.

## **Empowering and advocacy**

These more modern expressions of pastoral care reveal a commitment to the community wellbeing of a person as they seek to negotiate difficult passages. The opportunity to speak for those who cannot speak, work for those who have been rendered powerless and lend strength to those who have been oppressed will always remind us to be careful to respect the person's autonomy and inner strength and respect and acknowledge their capacities. Co-dependence is avoided and mutuality is encouraged as each person takes responsibility for appropriate tasks. Broader, political and systemic issues must also be addressed through social justice and community development - balanced individual and systemic care

## **We Saw a Vision**

In the darkness of despair we saw a vision of hope. So we lit a light of hope and it was not extinguished. In the despair of discouragement we saw a vision of strength, so we planted the tree of courage and it blossomed.

In the winter of imprisonment and entrapment we saw a vision of freedom. So we melted the snow of lethargy, and the river of resurrection flowed from it. We sent our vision aswimming like a swan on the river. The vision became a reality. Winter became Summer. Imprisonment became Freedom. And this, our children, we leave to you as your inheritance.

(Liam MacUistin)

A message to the children of Northern Ireland so that they might live in hope. Found in Hannah Ward and Jennifer Wild *Human Rites: Worship Resources for an Age of Change*. London, Mowbray, 1995



# Spirituality and Religion

