

# Ethical Ministry Refresher: Called into being by God

Session One - 2022

Synod of Victoria and Tasmania  
Material for Participants

Expectations for Participation	Ministers, Candidates, Pastors, Chaplains and Lay People engaged in ministry in the VicTas Synod are required to attend two Code of Ethics workshops each year.
Before the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read through this document. It begins with the preparation work you will need to complete to attend this Ethical Ministry Refresher (EMR) session and is followed by the session outline.</li><li>• Ensure you have a current copy of the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice and bring it to the refresher session. You can find a copy of the Code of Ethics here: <a href="https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/assemblies/appendixdcoe.pdf">https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/assemblies/appendixdcoe.pdf</a></li><li>• Review the 'Ground rules for Workshop discussions' and 'Safe shared pairing' and be ready to participate.</li><li>• Complete the preparation outlined in the next section.</li></ul>
Prepare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Re-read the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, paying particular attention to Section 1 and 2 (Introduction and Pastoral Relationships), 3.1 (Relationships with colleagues), 3.8 (self-care).</li><li>• Read the article "Values and Principles in the context of a pandemic" (provided separately) and prepare to discuss the article in a small group.</li><li>• Read all of the case studies, select one and prepare to discuss it in a small group.</li><li>• Reflect on an ethical situation related to management of Covid in your local setting from your own ministry experience and prepare notes so as you are ready to discuss this with a colleague. The notes are for your use to assist you to be ready to share so think about the best way to for you write them Options include:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• a brief case study</li><li>• notes or several dot points</li><li>• a mind map of your issue or</li><li>• an image or diagram.</li></ul>What is important is that you reflect on an ethical situation in your own ministry context <b>before</b> you come to the EMR and that you come prepared to share at least some of your reflection in paired sharing. This is the part of the EMR where you are being invited to apply the Code of Ethics to your own ministry practice and this requires some time and reflection before you arrive at the workshop.</li></ul>

(If you would be willing to share your case study or notes for wider use – after ensuring it is unidentifiable - please email Morag.Logan@victas.uca.org.au).

## Ground Rules for Ethical Ministry Refresher discussions

1. Listen. Hear what the other person is saying. Let them finish talking. Think before you respond. The same word or phrase may mean different things to different people, so it may be helpful to ask a question for clarification rather than making an assumption.
2. Talk about yourself and your own experience. You may ask questions of others, but do not challenge the validity of another's personal experience or point of view. Code of Ethics case studies are meant to be used as tools for learning more about how the Code applies to our own ministry practice. Sometimes discussions may need to hold a wide range of views, and guidance may be needed from the Facilitator to ensure that the spirit and intention of the Code of Ethics is being upheld in the discourse.
3. Keep your comments brief and to the point, so everyone has a chance to speak.
4. Do not generalise from your experience and feelings to the experience and feelings of others. Let people speak for themselves.
5. Do not attack, or try to hurt, or pass judgment on anyone, whether or not they are present.
6. Treat this group session as a confidential conversation; do not repeat elsewhere what is said here.
7. Stay on topic.
8. Be responsible in discerning what material is appropriate for you to share in the wider group, what would be better suited to the 'paired sharing' and what should be shared only with your supervisor.

## Case studies and questions for reflection

Before you attend the Ethical Ministry Refresher please read the all the case studies below. Choose one and answer the questions for reflection for that case study. Come prepared to discuss the case study you choose in a small group.

### Case Studies

#### Introduction to the Case Studies

The following case studies form the basis of the program. This is a deliberate choice based on the recognition that ethical issues in ministry often require dealing with complex and difficult situations and people. The way we respond shapes our ministry and integrity.

Hence, the case studies are a construction of de-identified experiences, they draw on real life situations, and therefore offer shades of grey. In each case considered, participants are invited to consider how they would respond in a similar situation.

The case studies reflect varying ministry situations, and are written by people in ministry in the UCA, reflecting real life issues and experiences.

Discussion questions are included at the end of each case study. The questions are generic so as not to lead the conversation, but to provide a framework for a lively and thoughtful conversation.

# Case Studies - Called into being by God

## Case Study 1

Rev Oscar feels like he worked really hard over the last two years. He was meticulous in his pastoral care of the congregation, ensured that worship was provided in some form every week, followed up people who needed help, ensured food was dropped to people who couldn't get out, started a zoom book group that was well attended by the isolated members of his congregation. He took care to stay up to date with changes to restrictions and worked hard with the Church Council as things changed - and changed again, to make sure they were doing the right things, met any requirements and kept the congregation and anyone else who came to the church as safe as possible. He had sat on two JNCs - and was excited for the two new ministers who would be coming to the presbytery.

Oscar had attended Presbytery and Synod online and whilst he marvelled at what they'd been able to get done, he missed the community of meeting face to face with colleagues and other church members. Oscar had worked hard - and he was happy to do so, because his children both lived interstate and his partner worked in hospital management so had worked as hard as he had. The congregation weathered the twists and turns of the past two years well and loved all that Oscar managed to do. Now that they can meet face to face, they are keen to continue with the excellent things Oscar started and get onto some other in-person activities that had been stopped for a while. The Church Council have been working on a strategic plan and have a great list of goals and activities to get going with. But Oscar is tired. He's not had a holiday for two years and he would like to take the next two months off and go on a road trip to visit his children and grandchildren in Queensland and Tasmania.

### Reflection and Interpretation:

1. What ethical issues does this case study present, for you?
2. Whose voices are not heard in this case study?
3. How might the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice relate to this reflection?

## Case Study 2

Johanna is a chaplain in a large public hospital. As part of her role she is regularly rostered to be on the trauma team to support patients, family and staff in the Emergency Department. As a trauma chaplain Johanna was very aware of the need for regular supervision and the need for good self-care, which included spacing her annual leave out throughout the year to ensure she had regular breaks. She had a particular routine she would follow after her involvement in a trauma to help herself debrief, unwind and re-centre.

Johanna was also very self-aware and knew when she had reached her emotional capacity.

Johanna was rostered to be on call during the Christmas New Year period and was called into Emergency numerous times (including after hours). She supported many patients and families through some very challenging times and was very aware of rising numbers of Covid cases. After one particular incident, Johanna realised that her usual routine of self-care was not sufficient to help her recover from what she had witnessed in Emergency and the support that was given to family and staff.

Johanna was unable to see her supervisor during the holiday period. Instead, Johanna spoke to her doctor, who insisted on Johanna taking a week of stress leave to ensure she had adequate time away from the hospital and to seek additional support. Johanna felt relieved knowing she had time to work through all she experienced.

Johanna contacted her manager to advise them of the need to take leave. The manager understood Johanna needed a break from the hospital and saw it as just that- a break from the hospital, not work, and requested Johanna to work elsewhere during her time away from the hospital.

Johanna did not feel at all supported and felt she had failed because she needed time to recover. When Johanna returned to work her manager asked at every opportunity "How are you coping?" This just reinforced Johanna's feeling of not been supported. She did not feel she could share with her manager the unique challenges of her role.

**Reflection and Interpretation:**

1. How might the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice, or Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders, relate to this situation?
2. Could Johanna's manager have approached this situation differently and if so how?
3. As a Church, how do we care pastorally for those we have entrusted to be on the frontline in ministry? How has Covid affected this?

**Case Study 3**

We are a medium sized congregation who has a few young families, a few older families and a majority of retired members. When Covid hit we managed to get most members to connect to an online service via zoom. Members really valued the opportunity to see each other and to chat in breakout rooms after the service. A few members wanted a printed sermon delivered as they didn't have reliable internet and the skill to use it.

As time went on and we became more aware of digital safety, we placed a password on the zoom link so only people who received the e-newsletter and link could watch and connect. We wanted to be able to still be a congregation

who was inclusive and was reaching out so we started to live stream the service through Facebook.

Questions were raised during all this change and adaptation as to how can we can be an outward looking community when we lock away connection to our pastoral care and personal connection in a password protected space?

**Reflection and Interpretation:**

1. How do we keep a safe place in a digital space?
2. "The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church is able to live and endure through the changes of history only because its Lord comes, addresses and deals with people in and through the news of his completed work." (Basis of Union para 4)

In the light of this statement from the Basis of Union, where is God addressing and dealing with us in this pandemic and how do we live into this new phase of our history?

**Case Study 4**

Over the last two years Rev Min's congregation at Cherry Blossom Uniting Church had done an amazing job of getting their worship service online each week and organising some great children's programs via zoom. There were a number of volunteers who have revelled in the challenge of providing a creative - and at times interactive - service online each week. And what started with just the local congregation watching grew steadily with new people joining in and watching each week. Rev Min was delighted to have gathered new people who had turned to the church during lockdown and is energised about what the congregation might become 'post pandemic'. Min and the elders are thinking hard about how to maintain the expanded congregation and get some of the new members actively involved in the mission and ministry of the congregation.

At a recent informal presbytery gathering online, two of Min's ministry colleagues, Sione and Ash, started the sharing time with their concerns for their congregations which had not done so well over the past couple of years. They had both managed excellent pastoral ministries during the lockdowns - but did not have anyone with the skills needed to provide online worship. Rather they had been providing a printed or emailed order of service and sermon each week and occasionally having a zoom morning tea with those who could get online. They had encouraged their members to 'attend' the various worship services that were provided online by neighbouring congregations. This year when face to face worship returned, Sione's congregation was a little smaller and a little older with some member still very hesitant about meeting face to face and unwilling to commit to volunteer roles - and the couple of newer people who had occasionally attended were no longer there. Pre-pandemic, Ash's congregation had just got some new families involved, but over the course of the last two years, these families had moved or joined other congregations for various reasons.

Consequently Ash's congregation was feeling small, tired and very sad that their children were no longer present.

Min starts to realise that Cherry Blossom's increased membership may be in part from her colleagues' congregations.

### Reflection and Interpretation:

1. What ethical issues around our call to serve does this case study present, for you?
2. Whose voices are not heard in this case study?
3. How might the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice relate to this reflection?

## Case Study 5

### 사례연구

우리는 목회자들이 소명을 따라 살아가고 이를 기뻐하는 것을 보고 싶어합니다. 호주연합교회의 “목사”는 이러한 소명을 갖고 그리스도의 공동체인 지역 교회나 기관에서 목회자로서의 사역을 감당하는 것을 최우선으로 합니다. 저는 최근 특별한 예배 - 연합교회 목사의 임직식과 카톨릭 사제의 은퇴식에 참석을 하였고, 그 자리에서 우리 목회자들의 소명이 얼마나 중요한지를 거듭 확인할 수 있었습니다. 그 두 명의 목회자는 목회가 무엇인지 알고 있으며, 목회현장에서 일어나는 일들을 믿음으로 보았을 것입니다. 저는 그들이 코로나-19 상황에서 어떻게 성도들에게 행동하고 말하며, 목회하였을지 상상해봤습니다. 그들의 목회사역은 분명 현재 상황 가운데 특별하고 가치있는 것이라고 확신합니다.

코로나-19와 이에 연관된 문제들은 우리의 일상에 많은 변화를 가져왔습니다. 기쁨과 고통, 때로는 갈등도 있습니다. ‘우리가 누가인가?’라는 질문에 대하여, 이를 바라보고 해석하는 방식이 바뀌고 있으며, 이 방식은 여러 방역수칙에 따른 제한들로 인해 새롭게 만들어졌습니다. 이러한 전환은 모든 교회에 영향을 주었고, 선교와 목회의 모든 영역에 있어 새롭게 생각하도록 하였습니다. 예를 들면, 우리가 속한 자리가 대면과 비대면으로 나뉘어짐으로써 목회관계의 영역에 제한이 불분명해지고 목회자로서의 자리가 다양하게 요구되고 있습니다. 목회를 위해 사용하는 시간 역시 스마트폰의 사용 등으로 인해 거의 매일 매시간 접속 가능하고 연락이 가능하게 됨에 따라 개인시간이 보장되지 못하는 문제가 있습니다. 이런 코로나-19와 디지털 시대의 목회 상황의 복잡성과 도전들 가운데, 목회자들은 영성과 목회의 은사를 지켜가는데 어려움을 겪고 있습니다. 그럼에도 지금 이 순간에도 하나님께서 부르시고 사랑해 주셔서 계속해서 목회의 부르심을 따라 살아 갑니다. 우리 자신과 우리의 정체성은 이 시기 도전받을 뿐만 아니라 창조, 부활, 성령 그리고 코로나-19의 경이로움에 의해 형성되고 있습니다. 하지만 교회가 직면한 모든 도전들 가운데, 하나님의 부르심은 여전히 유효하며, 갈등, 불의, 고통과 죽음 가운데 그 부르심을 따라 사라는 우리는 삶의 의미, 소속감, 드림과 용서함, 그리고 감사함에 대한 감각을 찾아가야 하겠습니다. 이는 굉장한 특권이고 책임이며, 이는 부르심을 따라 사는 이들의 것입니다.

작성자: 연승재

We would love to see clergy at work who live and celebrate their call. In the Uniting Church's terminology, "Minister" serves a primarily pastoral role, work, and leadership with the call lived out in local congregations or wider communities. Recently, I joined two significant occasions where I was able to witness 'celebrating our call.' One was a UCA minister's new beginning of specified ministry at a new placement and the other a Catholic priest's retirement celebration. Both clergies may get what the Christian ministry is all about, no matter how long they serve and live their call, and see what is going on there through eyes of faith. I imagine how they responded to people in gestures, words and actions particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic. I believe that their expressions of service are distinctive and have immense value in changing times.

Covid-19 and its related issues have changed a lot in life and brought us to many diverse situations, whether joyous or full of misery and even conflict. Our way of seeing and interpreting of who we really are is shifting and shaped by the restrictions and opportunities. This shift has influenced whole communities of faith to think about all aspects of mission and ministry anew. Places we belong to are divided into two - online and in-person gathering which might require priestly presence in different forms, as well as boundaries.

The time we use for ministry can seem to have no boundaries. Almost everyone is accessible and connected 24/7 by electronic communication devices. In this complexity and challenges between the pandemic and digital era, we might struggle to sustain spiritual well-being and giftedness in our journey as Christian community. Nevertheless, in this moment we continue living and celebrating our call in and through this reality because God calls and loves us. We and our identity are not only challenged but also shaped by the wonder of creation, resurrection, the Holy Spirit and the pandemic. Through every crevice of the church's life in this era, we believe that God's call is ever valid and we, who are called into being by God, may find a sense of meaning, belonging, giving, forgiving and thanksgiving in the midst of conflict, injustice, suffering and ultimately death. It is an awesome privilege and responsibility, and it is ours.

**Reflection and Interpretation:**

1. What ethical issues around our call to serve does this case study present, for you?
2. Whose voices are not heard in this case study?
3. How might the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice relate to this reflection?

## Paired Sharing

### Safe Paired Sharing

Paired Sharing provides an opportunity to engage with the topic on a more personal level, and to integrate your learning with your ministry practice. Participants are requested to keep discussions confidential, but at the same time to remember that paired sharing is in no way intended to take the place of a conversation with your supervisor. We are all vulnerable people. Collegial respect and care for one another are essential elements of Ethical Ministry Refreshers, and of course they are also essential for ministry.

Sharing an example from your ministry could include:

- An actual (de-identified) situation that you feel comfortable to discuss in this setting.
- A 'hypothetical' situation that could possibly happen to you.

What steps would you take to resolve the situation? How might you prevent a breach of the Code of Ethics? What choices might you make in this situation? Where are the grey areas?

You may find it helpful to take some time at the beginning of this session to silently reflect and gather your thoughts. This could be a good way to work through which issues you feel safe about sharing in this context, and which ones you would rather save to discuss with your supervisor.

When you are sharing your scenario remember to try and describe the situation with some detail. In particular try to describe how you were feeling, what you did and why you think you did it, and what next steps you might take. What guidance does the Code of Ethics give you in thinking about this scenario? What new insight have you gained from reflecting again on the scenario?

### Shared Pairing outline

The suggested format for the paired sharing time is as follows:

- **Share** for 10 minutes each: In pairs share the case study or reflection you prepared for this session or think of an example from your ministry that relates to Confidentiality. How did you resolve it? What did you learn from it? How are you practicing ministry differently as a result? (10 minutes each, 20 minutes total)
- **Dialogue** with each other: What insights have you gained about prevention of ethical breaches in ministry practice? (10 minutes)
- **End** with what would you like to bring to the whole group about your own experience, or about this discussion? (Don't discuss the other person's experience with the wider group.) (10 minutes).
- **Thank** each other for the conversation and return to the larger group if your session is doing that.



## Workshop Outline

1. **Some Presbyteries begin with an optional time of collegial catch up**
2. **Acknowledgement of Country, Prayer and Welcome**
3. **Small Group discussions**
  - 3.1 **Discussion** focussing on the article provided and the reflections you have from your preparation.
  - 3.2 **Case Study Discussion** - Discuss each of the case studies chosen by group members from those provided. If group members have chosen the same case study - select another as a group so that at least three (3) case studies are discussed in total.
4. **Plenary**

Whole group feedback regarding any learnings/resources/supports/particular issues that arose during the small group discussions.
5. **Paired Sharing**

See 'Paired Sharing' above.
6. **Regather and Blessing**

## Post workshop reflection and follow up.

### After the workshop...

#### For yourself:

- Please take time to reflect on what you would like to share with your supervisor arising from the preparation for today and the discussion today. Remember that supervision should include regular reflection on the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice.
- You may also like to engage in a time of biblical and theological reflection. What themes from faith stories or bible passages help you work through this ethical issue? Are there any images that come to mind? What theological themes have you brought to mind as a result of the workshop today?

#### With your placement:

##### *For those in congregational placements.*

- Have a conversation with Church Council about what shapes their vision for mission and ministry in the future. What are the Council's expectations of ministry post-Covid? What do they think are the expectations of others in the congregation? How well do they align to your understanding? Talk about the areas where there is a difference in understanding.

##### *For those in non-congregational placements*

Talk with your manager, and team members in your setting. What impacts of the Covid pandemic are you still living with? What were the particular pressures on your ministry, and on the work of your team?

## Acknowledgement

The case studies in this program are an amalgam of case studies provided by ministry agents from a variety of contexts across the Uniting Church. Thank you to all those who provided case studies.