

A guide to Ministerial Development Review

This ministry will make great demands upon you and upon those close to you, yet in all this, the Holy Spirit will sustain you by his grace.

From the ordination services



The Methodist Church

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The **Methodist Church** 

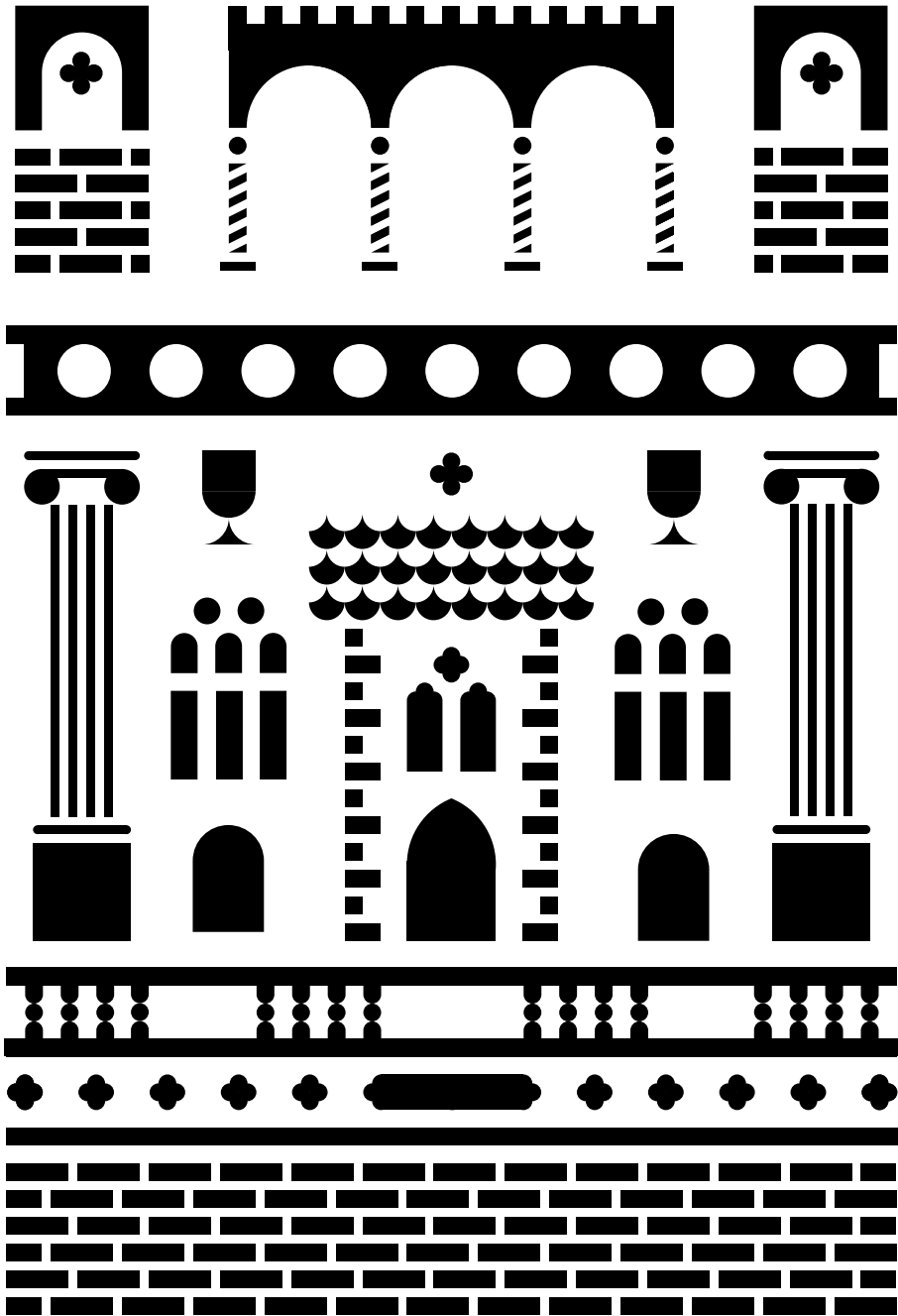
About this guide

This guide is designed for ordained ministers who will be involved in Ministerial Development Review, as well as for those wishing to act as lay contributors. It may also be helpful to those providing administrative support or offering feedback. It offers an overview of Ministerial Development Review, as well as providing supporting guidance and background material which will help all participants to get the most out of the process.

Book One is essential reading. It provides an overview of the principles which form the backdrop to Ministerial Development Review and of the key elements of the annual review meeting.

Books Two and Three provide important supporting guidance. **Book Two** considers those aspects of ministry which may provide a focus for ongoing reflection as part of Ministerial Development Review, with specific suggestions for deacons, presbyters, superintendents and district chairs respectively. It also highlights those areas which should form the focus for the annual review meeting. **Book Three** provides practical guidance about the review meeting. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of the participants and outlines the preparation required for the review meeting, including the gathering and sharing of feedback. There are some suggestions about how to conduct the review meeting, and how to identify hopes, goals and areas for learning and development. This book also offers guidance about recording the key outcomes of the review meeting, and includes report templates.

Book Four provides background material. It looks at some of the skills and best practice which will support Ministerial Development Review and help to enable positive experiences for all participants.



*“They shall build up the ancient ruins”
“In all this the Holy Spirit will sustain you by his grace”*

God has called you into the Order of Deacons among his people.

In his name you are to assist God's people in worship and prayer; to hold before them the needs and concerns of the world; to minister Christ's love and compassion; to visit and support the sick and the suffering; to seek out the lost and the lonely; and to help those you serve to offer their lives to God.

Fulfil your calling as disciples of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve.

In all things give, counsel and encouragement to all whom Christ entrusts to your care. Pray without ceasing. Work with joy in the Lord's service. Let no one suffer hurt through your neglect.

This ministry will make great demands upon you and upon those close to you, yet in all this, the Holy Spirit will sustain you by his grace.

From the 'Examination' of ordinands during the diaconal ordination service

God has called you into the Order of Presbyters among his people.

In his name you are to preach by word and deed the Gospel of God's grace; to declare God's forgiveness of sins to all who are penitent; to baptize, to confirm and to preside at the celebration of the sacrament of Christ's body and blood; to lead God's people in worship, prayer and service; to minister Christ's love and compassion; to serve others, in whom you serve the Lord himself.

These things are your common duty and delight. In them you are to watch over one another in love.

In all things, give counsel and encouragement to those whom Christ entrusts to your care. Pray without ceasing. Work with joy in the Lord's service. Let no one suffer hurt through your neglect.

This ministry will make great demands upon you and upon those close to you, yet in all this, the Holy Spirit will sustain you by his grace.

From the 'Examination' of ordinands during the presbyteral ordination service

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Introduction

Roderic Gray in his book *How people work*³ sets out what he calls “a catechism of excellence” – nine key statements which each of us should be able to make if we are to contribute positively within an organisation:

I know what I’m expected to do.

I want to do it.

I have the ability to do it.

Processes help me to do it.

I have the resources to do it.

The environment is right.

Someone (who matters to me) will notice if I do it.

I know how well I am doing.

I can do it better next time.

³ FT/Prentice Hall, London, 2004

Whilst ordained ministry presents special challenges and a unique focus, the nine key statements of Gray's 'catechism' do, arguably, have application. The statements address, at their core, the familiar and valuable dynamics of call, gifting, context and growth. As we exercise our ministry, we all need to recall our calling and our gifts, and to know what is required of us; we all need and deserve to be provided with the appropriate resources and environment in which to fulfil our ministry; and we all need and deserve to be enabled to grow in God's service. The affirmation which is also implied within the 'catechism' has relevance: although receiving and sharing in the ministry of Christ is the ultimate motivator for the Church's ministry, celebrating the triumphs and joys of ministry with others can make a significant difference and provide renewed energy and focus.

Ministerial Development Review encourages ministers to consider the dynamics of call, gifting, context and growth. It also gives permission to explore the questions which will inevitably arise from such considerations, and to ask the questions in the company of those who have an understanding of the local context and who have a designated role in providing support and oversight. Ministerial Development Review's ultimate objective is holistic growth. It necessarily involves an annual set of processes, but its continuing background is an ongoing process of prayerful and critical reflection and a sustained commitment to learning and self-development.

Three sets of guidance follow. The first, **Reflective practice**, emphasises the importance of reflective practice during Ministerial Development Review. The second, **The focus for reflection**, suggests areas for ongoing reflection on ministry, drawn from Conference reports and from an analysis of some of the dynamics which shape the practice of ministry. These areas will be helpful for reflection both throughout the year and, specifically, in preparation for the review meeting. The third section, **The focus for the review meeting**, highlights the key areas for discussion in the meeting. These discussions will draw on the insights derived from the minister's, and others', reflection on practice.

Reflective practice

One of the key components of Ministerial Development Review is the process of ‘reflecting on practice’ – something which a minister is encouraged to do on an ongoing basis, both on their own and in the company of others. The ‘practice’ in reflective practice refers to the minister’s ministry, while ‘reflective’ refers to the thoughtful consideration of the experiences and the situations which the minister faces throughout the year as they seek to fulfil their ministry. Sometimes the minister may seek the views of others and may form supportive relationships which will help them in their attempts to unpick and understand their experiences. Effective reflection, whether on an individual basis or in the company of others, leads to insights and understanding which can then be applied to future ‘practice’.

This reflection on practice is an important part of Ministerial Development Review: it is expected that each minister will reflect on their ministry throughout the year, not simply immediately prior to the review meeting. This habit of reflection will yield insights which will lead to growth and development outside the review meeting, but it will also add to the information available to the review meeting discussion. How far the minister chooses to reveal the full extent of their insights will be up to the minister concerned – but it is hoped that the insights gained from reflecting on their ministry will inform the minister’s responses to others’ feedback, and will be a useful source of observations and comment in the review meeting, informing conversation about aspirations, future hopes, and areas for learning, development and growth.

For more information, see Book Four | Reflective practice

The focus for reflection

The focus for reflection for deacons

The Conference report *What is a Deacon?* notes that the ministry of deacons can be characterised as “witness through service”. The report goes on to note that this ministry can be expressed in:

- embodied acts of pastoral care, mercy and justice, and being or acting as a prophetic sign
- spoken acts of evangelism, apologetics, theological and prophetic interpretation, teaching, encouragement, the articulation of faith and human experience, and the leading of worship that may include preaching.

The report also quotes *The Windsor Statement on the Diaconate*, in which deacons provided the following valuable description of their ministry:

Christ-focused, people-centred and lived out in a lifestyle both active and contemplative ... We increasingly perceive our role to be pioneering and prophetic, responding to needs, proactive in opportunity through commitment to mission and pastoral care within and beyond the Church. Opening doors of opportunity, encouraging others to take risks, the contemporary diaconate acting in its capacity as ‘agent of change’, engages imaginatively and collaboratively with issues of justice, poverty, social and environmental concerns. We often find ourselves spanning boundaries, especially official ones of Church and society.

These are useful in providing a focus for reflection on diaconal ministry as a foundation for Ministerial Development Review.

Another focus is provided for deacons by their membership of the Methodist Diaconal Order, whose discipline they are required to keep and in whose life they are required to share. The Order’s *Rule of Life* provides a framework for helping to deepen not only individual discipleship, but also for developing the common life and witness of the Order. For deacons, therefore, Ministerial Development Review may also provide an opportunity to reflect on how they have followed the *Rule of Life* and how they have fulfilled their responsibilities as members of the Methodist Diaconal Order. These responsibilities are not only about personal devotion and individual spiritual growth, but also about the recognition and exercise of mutual accountability and interdependence, expressed through nurturing and supporting others and helping to develop the Order and enrich its life. The Methodist Diaconal Order is, by its nature, a learning community, and the *Rule of Life* provides a disciplined framework for reflection. For deacons, Ministerial Development Review will hopefully build on this foundation by enabling specific focus on the way in which spiritual maturity nurtures and supports the public tasks and roles of diaconal ministry in a circuit and district context.

[See also the Template starting on page 19](#)

The focus for reflection for presbyters

The Conference report *What is a Presbyter?* describes as follows the ways in which presbyters are ‘representative’ people:

- Presbyters focus the presence and activity of God-in-Christ in the Church and the world, by both embodying the love of God and also pointing to its otherness.
- Presbyters offer the Church and the world constantly to God through Christ.
- Presbyters help the Church and the world to see themselves and each other more clearly in the light of God’s grace and justice.
- Presbyters represent and act on behalf of Christ and the universal Church (both geographically and historically) in a particular time and place.
- Presbyters lead others to play their appropriate parts in fulfilling the same calling.

The report also provides a list of the tasks of a presbyter (‘public’ activities are highlighted in bold):

- A presbyter **prays** – personally, **representatively and publicly**.
- A presbyter studies the Bible and other sources intelligently and appropriately, in order to “interpret those sacred stories of our community, so that they speak a word to people today”.
- A presbyter is actively involved in **planning, leading and participating in acts of worship and acts of mission, and in developing new forms of worship and mission in ways that are sensitive and responsive to the particularities of the context in which she or he ministers**.

- A presbyter **presides at Holy Communion and at Baptism and Confirmation**.
- A presbyter **shares in pastoral responsibility with other presbyters, usually exercising oversight in Christian communities, offering leadership and vision, and ensuring that decisions are made according to Methodist practice**.
- A presbyter is **responsible, in collaboration with appropriate church bodies, lay officers and any ordained colleagues, for the pastoral care of church members (though not always ‘doing’ the care at first hand)**.
- A presbyter **represents the church in the community**.
- A presbyter seeks to grow as a woman or man of God, and **enables and encourages others to grow in their discipleship, and to be equipped for evangelism and mission**.
- A presbyter ensures that his or her family and personal commitments are not neglected.

These are useful in providing a focus for reflection on presbyteral ministry as a foundation for Ministerial Development Review.

[See also the Template starting on page 19](#)

An additional focus for reflection for superintendents

The Conference report *What is a Circuit Superintendent?* identifies the following responsibilities of the superintendent:

- To inspire people, lay and ordained, to be imaginative and to participate in the development of new vision by empowering them to share their ideas and act upon them
- To encourage and enable colleagues and others to discern the work of God by stimulating theological reflection and helping people to see that they can learn from failure as well as from success
- To provide examples of taking risks, once the realities of a particular situation have been rationally assessed and a commitment has been made to accept responsibility for the results of the action to be undertaken
- To ensure that colleagues enable the voice of the least and lowest to be heard and the poor and disadvantaged to be included
- To provide models of exercising power (not least with regard to the management of resources) with authority, justice and love
- To challenge colleagues and others who exercise power in other ways
- To ensure that after governance decisions are made by the relevant bodies (eg the Circuit Meeting) appropriate people, systems and strategies are set in place to enact them, and proper processes established to review them
- To ensure that human, financial, capital (eg investments and buildings) and technological resources are deployed to fulfil the particular objectives set for the implementation of those strategies
- To help any other presbyters appointed to and stationed in the circuit to fulfil their presbyteral role to the best of their ability and similarly, where appropriate, to help any deacons and lay workers in the circuit to exercise their roles
- To ensure that any probationers in the circuit are appropriately inducted into the exercise of public ministry, and properly supervised, supported and assessed
- To ensure that colleagues are appropriately and adequately supervised in their professional practice
- To ensure that all schedules and other tasks required by Standing Orders are completed
- To ensure that information is coordinated and thereby enable the whole circuit to participate in the processes that lead to the Circuit Meeting making policies
- To enable the Circuit Meeting to formulate policies under the guidance of the Spirit, challenging, guiding and advising it as appropriate
- To ensure that the Circuit Meeting holds itself accountable to churches in the circuit and to the wider Connexion
- To ensure that the circuit adheres to and fulfils its purposes
- To embody in their practice to the best of their ability the values, rules and regulations of the Methodist Church, and thereby to provide a model for colleagues and the circuit
- To help the people in the circuit to develop an understanding of the proper role of presbyters (and, where appropriate, of deacons and lay-people) and of the stresses and strains which it might entail

- To help colleagues to discern which expectations or priorities of members and churches are unrealistic or irrelevant and thereby help to liberate people from them so that they can take imaginative steps of faith in the light of new missionary opportunities
- To help colleagues to inspire confidence in the Gospel of grace through their own spirituality of prayer, confidence, enthusiasm, happiness, and vulnerability and through their Bible study and theological reflection

The report notes that “none of the above is the exclusive responsibility of the superintendent alone, but part of the shared nature of oversight in which he or she has a distinctive role”. These descriptions are, however, useful in providing an additional focus for superintendents as they reflect on their ministry during Ministerial Development Review.

See also the Template starting on page 19

An additional focus for reflection for district chairs

The Conference report *What is a District Chair?* identifies the following qualities of a district chair:

- Spiritually and theologically aware
- Able to inspire people, lay and ordained, to be imaginative
- Able to empower people to develop new vision by sharing their ideas and acting upon them
- Able to create space for creativity, sensitivity and awareness within the district and agencies in the wider community, and to share the fruits of theological reflection with them
- Committed and able to create a culture in which mission is the priority, growth a possibility and the grace of God the focus
- Adept at promoting understanding of both the communities and institutions served by the district and also of the nature and activity of God, so that the district and its constituent parts can decide on its mission priorities, articulate realistic objectives and formulate appropriate strategies
- Effective in encouraging people and groups to review their existing organisation and resources so that they can create structures which enable the mission objectives to be achieved (this includes helping people to have the confidence to tackle long-term issues associated with such matters as staffing levels, redundant churches, ecumenical opportunities, the demographic structures of some congregations and church planting opportunities)
- Highly sensitive to the way she or he interacts with others

The focus for reflection

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- Effective in promoting collaborative working and mutual accountability, whilst also able to cope with the 'lone nature' of much of the work
- Credible as someone who can represent the district, the Conference and the wider Connexion not only within the Church but also ecumenically and in wider society
- Adept at providing models of how power may be exercised (not least with regard to the management of resources) with authority, justice and love, and able to challenge colleagues and others who exercise power in other ways
- Open to the energy of the Spirit; able to inspire confidence in the Gospel of grace through his or her own spirituality, prayer, confidence, enthusiasm, happiness, and vulnerability, and through his or her Bible study and theological reflection; and adept at enabling others to be and do the same

The report reassuringly notes that “because they are human, chairs will not be able to fulfil all that they and others would ideally like”. These descriptions are, however, useful in providing an additional focus for district chairs as they reflect on their ministry during Ministerial Development Review.

See also the Template starting on page 19

'Doing' and 'being'

The focus for Ministerial Development Review is the minister's work – public, representative ministry as manifested in specific actions and activities. The focus should not fall on personality traits or the minister's intimate and personal spirituality, which are more appropriately explored elsewhere (unless a minister chooses specifically to share their thoughts or concerns in this area during the process). In this sense, the scheme is ministry-focused, rather than minister-focused. As a rule, Ministerial Development Review is about those things which ministers are called to do in God's name at their ordination.

Ministry is, of course, never only about actions and activities – it is about 'being' as well as about 'doing'. During the ordination of deacons and presbyters, a description of actions and activities is followed by an injunction to “pray without ceasing” and by a warning that the ministry described “will make great demands upon you”. Ministry is an all-embracing endeavour and encompasses discipleship, character and personal spirituality. However, in the context of Ministerial Development Review, it will be important to differentiate appropriately between the 'public' and the 'private', so that ministers can offer their actions and activities, rather than their personality traits or their intimate and personal spirituality, for constructive feedback, reflection and review.

The focus for reflection

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The local and particular context

Specific areas for focus during Ministerial Development Review will properly be shaped by the minister concerned and their particular context. It will be helpful to identify how the minister's distinctive gifts and graces have an impact on their ministry, and to reflect on how these might best be used and developed in the future. The minister may identify specific areas or topics which have emerged as they have reflected on their practice and which they wish to explore. It will be appropriate, too, to draw on circuit policy documents to highlight areas which need a special emphasis and to enable a consideration of where the individual's ministry fits into the wider vision.

Template

Areas for reflection during
Ministerial Development Review

A Word version of this template is available from:

www.methodist.org.uk/mdr

Consider your contribution in relation to some or all of the areas of ministry below:

- Prayer and worship
- Teaching, preaching and education
- Pastoral care and spiritual guidance
- Community engagement
- Evangelism
- Leadership, vision and oversight
- Organisation, including management and administrative functions

Consider aspects of your ministry which have been particularly fulfilling.

What was a peak experience or high point – a time when you had a particular sense that you were fulfilling your calling as a minister?

What is it that you most value about the nature of your role?

What are the key factors which convince you of your calling?

What are your hopes in relation to strengthening the positive ‘core’ of your ministry?

Identify examples. Highlight areas of enjoyment, fulfilment, and success.

Consider aspects of your ministry in which you feel you have been able to use your particular gifts and graces.

Consider aspects of your ministry which you have found particularly challenging.

Consider if any of your skills and knowledge and gifts and graces are being under-utilised and if you believe they could be exercised more fully. Be specific and consider how this might be addressed.

Consider issues to do with systems, structures and the organisation of work, use of time, etc, which have hindered you. Consider whether or not these issues are within your control. Who or what might be able to help? How might you proceed?

Consider your relationships with other people.

Which relationships have been particularly constructive and affirming? Can you explain what it is that makes these relationships 'work'?

Which relationships have been challenging? What are the issues? Is there anything you or others can do to help these to become more fruitful?

How do these reflections feed into hopes and goals for the coming year?

What areas for learning and development emerge from these reflections?

The focus for the review meeting

The review meeting will provide an opportunity to draw together a range of general and specific reflections by focusing on three areas:

- Reviewing the minister’s work over the past year, in the context of their current appointment, and against the hopes and goals identified at the previous meeting
- The identification of new hopes and goals for the coming year in the context of circuit / district / connexional priorities
- The identification of areas for learning and development to support the minister during the coming year

Reviewing the past year

The meeting will provide an opportunity for the minister to talk about the successes and the high points of their recent ministry, as well as any difficulties or frustrations which they might be experiencing. During the meeting, it will also be appropriate to draw on the feedback received from those who have received and shared in this ministry over recent months.

There should be an opportunity, too, to explore the ‘organisation-wide’ issues which have caused concern or created obstacles for the minister.

A reflection on the minister’s recent ministry will also need to draw upon the hopes and goals agreed at the previous review meeting. During the first meeting in a new appointment, it may be appropriate to refer to the circuit or district profile and the letter of understanding. Identifying the discrepancies between anticipated and actual activities and outcomes, and trying to find explanations for these, may lead to a consideration of structures and systems and of the ways in which these may help or hinder ministry.

New hopes and goals

The review meeting will also focus on identifying or clarifying particular hopes and goals which the minister will wish to fulfil and achieve in the coming year.

While the language of ‘hopes and goals’ may not sit easily with ‘ministry’ in everyone’s minds, it is a way of expressing the notion that ministers will have particular projects, initiatives or aims towards which they want to direct their efforts in the coming year, often, and appropriately, in response to the particular circumstances of the circuit or district. Having a discussion about these hopes and goals will highlight interconnections, inter-relationships and implications, and help to make these ideas take shape.

The particular context and the particular needs of the circuit should explicitly be brought into the discussion, enabling reflection on the ways in which ministry has been and can continue to be oriented towards ensuring that circuit / district / connexional priorities and needs are being addressed. This may yield an exchange about different perspectives and perceptions of what is required – in itself a useful exercise since it may help to reshape perceptions and expectations.

During a discussion of hopes and goals, the review meeting might focus, too, on the particular gifts which the minister brings to their role – and on how these might be utilised both in the local context and also for the benefit of the wider Church. Without creating additional demands, it is possible that a reflection on specific gifts and graces will identify ways in which the circuit, the district or the Connexion more widely might be able to draw upon such gifts and graces, especially through new ways of doing things.

The Conference report *What is a Presbyter?* emphasises that “a presbyter ensures that his or her family and personal commitments are not neglected”. As hopes and goals are identified, care should be taken to ensure that attention is paid to these other commitments. Prioritising some hopes and goals may mean doing less of something else.

Healthy ministry is collaborative. Consequently, as hopes and goals are identified, care should be taken also to identify both appropriate links to the ministry of others within the circuit / district / Connexion, and ways in which the energy and support of others can be sought and appreciated.

A focus on hopes and goals should be creative, optimistic and realistic.

For more information, see Book Three | In more detail... | Identifying hopes and goals

Areas for learning and development

The review meeting will also focus on areas for learning and development. Some of these may arise from the minister’s observations on their ministry and the aspects which they have found particularly challenging. Others will arise from new hopes and goals. Others again will arise from a deeper understanding of gifts and graces which should be allowed to grow and develop.

For more information, see Book Three | In more detail... | Identifying areas for learning and development

The focus for the review meeting

Book Two | The focus of Ministerial Development Review

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