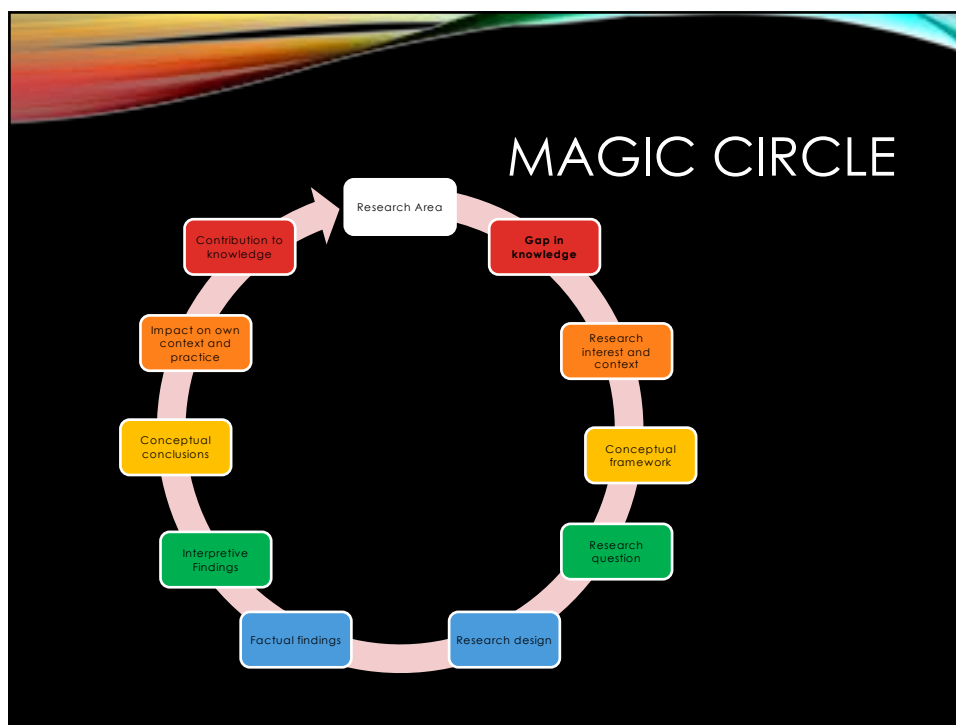


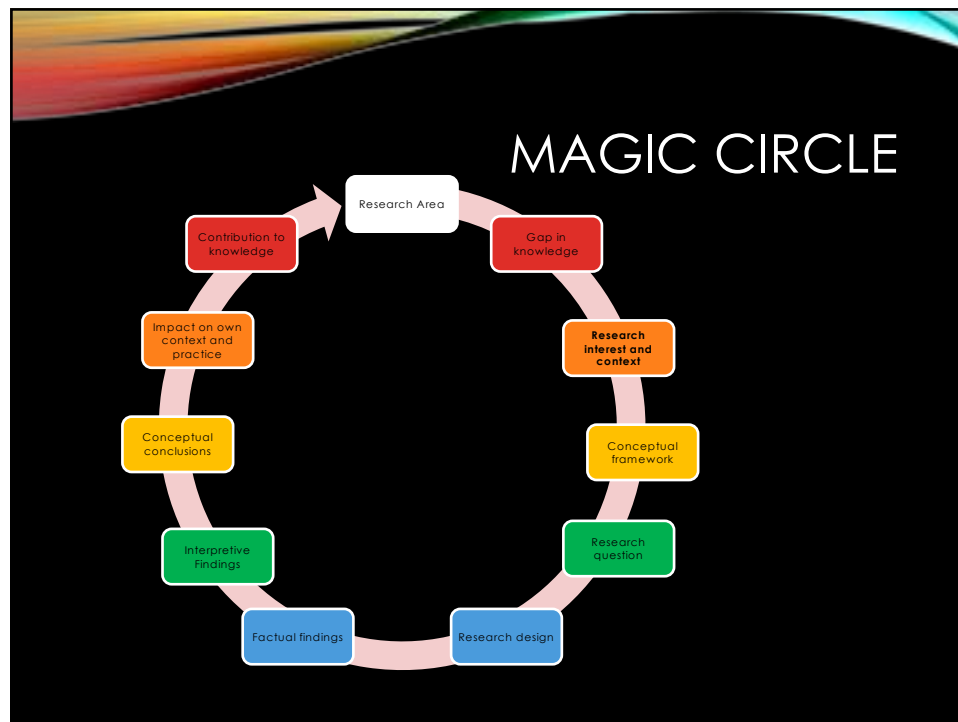
RESEARCH AREA

- Wellbeing in Ministry
- Continuing Development in Ministry
- Accountability in Ministry
- Pastoral Supervision and its role in supporting good practice in ministry
- In context of MCB introducing structured supervision for all clergy



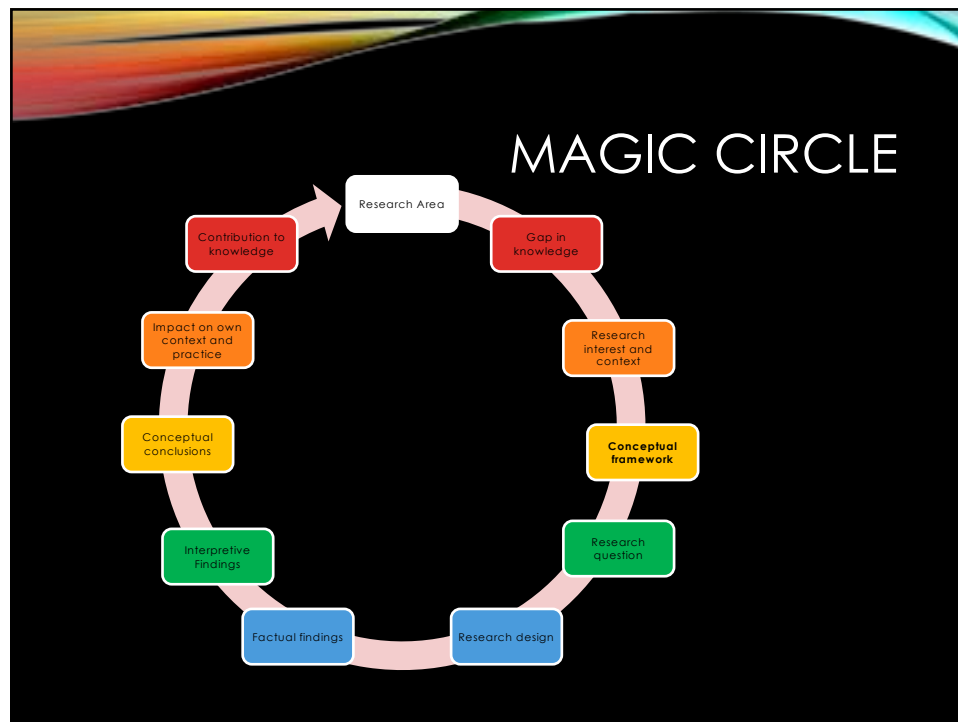
GAP IN KNOWLEDGE

- Lack of data about the impact of introducing structured supervision
- Research needs to establish whether supervision is meeting its stated aims in the MCB in normative, formative and restorative terms
- And what other impacts there might be



MY RESEARCH INTEREST

- Long term commitment to pastoral supervision as an elective support for clergy wellbeing and accountability
- Written key academic text on pastoral supervision with Michael Paterson
- Appointed Connexional Director of Supervision by the MCB in 2017
- A Methodist presbyter concerned for the health and wellbeing of presbyters, but also for the wider church



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK Supervision

- As defined by the MCB
- **Process** (not management)
- Pastoral (theological) but not elective
- **Reflective** and exploratory
- Making a contribution to **oversight**
- Designed to support **accountability**

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Supervision

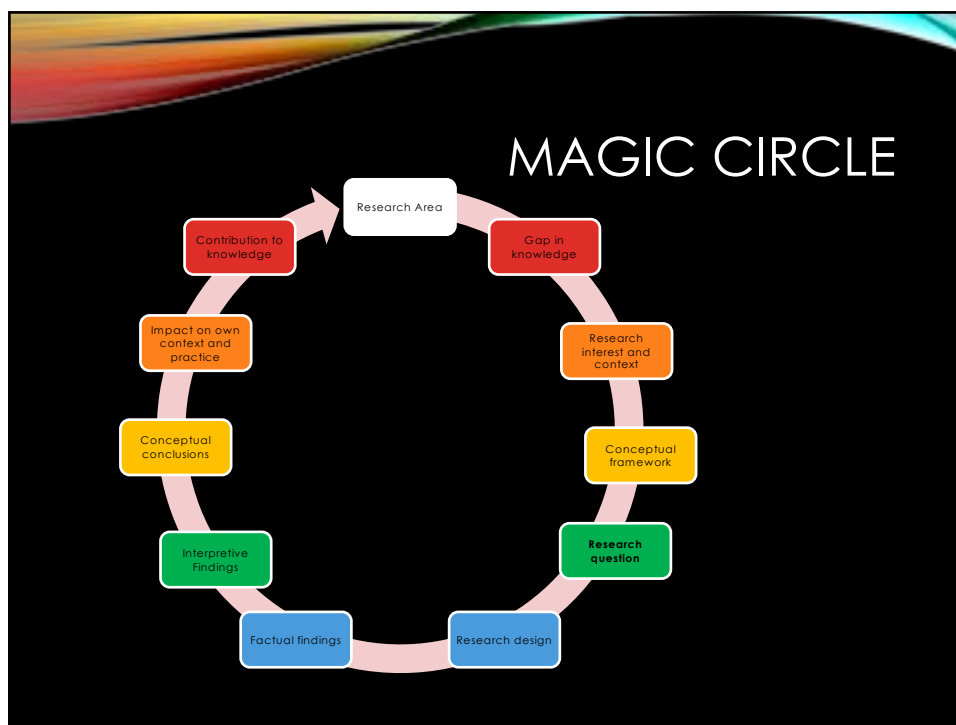
- **Ministry** as responsible exercise of grace
- **Accountability** as recounting (Mark 6)
- **Means of grace**

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Impact

Changes in behaviour and perceptions:

- Amongst those being supervised
- Amongst those supervising
- In the culture of the church more generally



RESEARCH QUESTION

What impact is the introduction of structured supervision having on the Methodist Church in Britain?

Normative impacts to check

- a more robust handling of risks in church life?
- heightened awareness of boundaries, expected conduct, role clarity and the use of power?
- clearer lines of accountability?
- more safety through the opportunity in supervision to explore the unconscious factors that sometimes undermine best intentions?

RESEARCH QUESTION

What impact is the introduction of structured supervision having on the Methodist Church in Britain?

Formative impacts to check

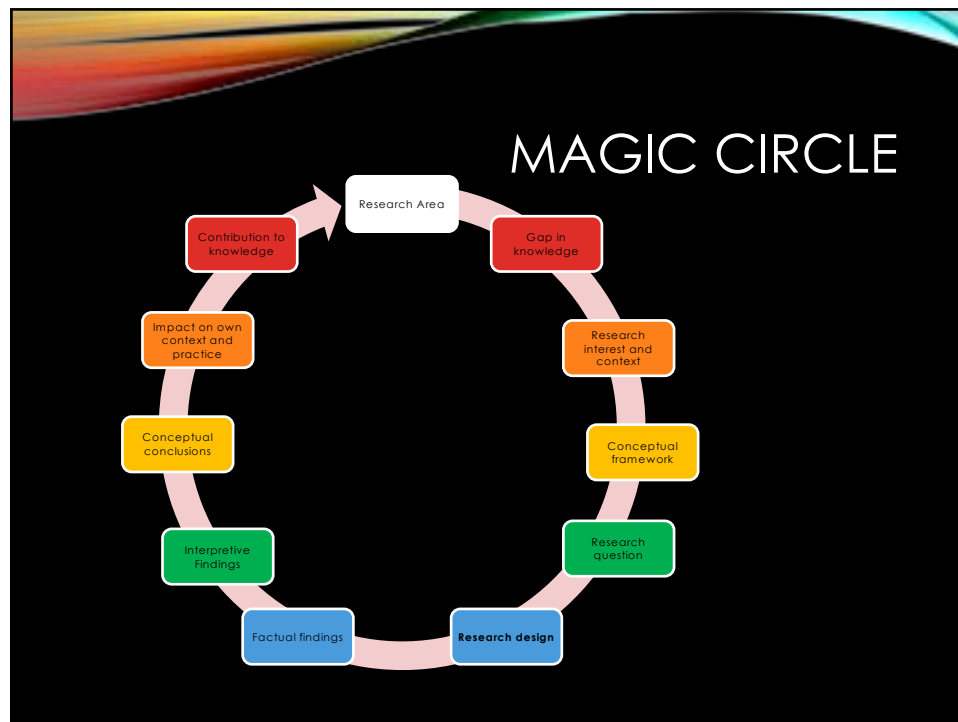
- a more intentional use of ordained ministers' time through the opportunity that supervision provides for ministers to think theologically and practically about priorities?
- better communication as those in oversight become more aware, through supervising others, of the challenges being faced on the ground?

RESEARCH QUESTION

What impact is the introduction of structured supervision having on the Methodist Church in Britain?

Restorative impacts to check

- reduced symptoms of isolation and stress amongst its ordained ministers through a realistic and regular structure of collegiality and accountability in which ministers are regularly sharing the detail of their practice and being listened to?
- less anxiety in the face of change as ministers share responsibility for risks, priorities and hard decisions with their supervisors?



RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative

- Baselines for quantitative measures were not available
- Qualitative methods allow in depth investigation into the meaning that is being made by small numbers of people.
- Articulating a small group's experience and elevating it for others to react to is an effective way of seeing whether or not there is resonance between their experiences and those of the larger group.



RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative

A theological rationale for working in this way within a Methodist context is best articulated by the common Methodist preference for practical divinity. Whilst the Scriptures root and ground our identity and practice, our experience is that reflection on our practices (past and present) can also help us understand afresh the depths of truth to which we believe the Scriptures point and so enable the renewal of our faith and common life.



RESEARCH DESIGN

Focus Group

- Purposively sampled
- 9 senior leaders engaged the longest in reflective supervision (2 years+)
- 200 hours of receiving supervision
- 600 hours of offering supervision
- 2 women; 7 men
- Mixture of those originally keen and those original sceptical
- 100% response rate

RESEARCH DESIGN

Ethical Issues

- Researching my own organisation – risk of being too close to material
- Power in group as teacher and leader in this area – risk of being told what I want to hear
- Confidentiality at risk – not only of 9 participants but of their supervisees and the situations brought to supervision

FOCUS GROUP

2 hour meeting
Conversation flowed easily
High degree of trust and
vulnerability in the group

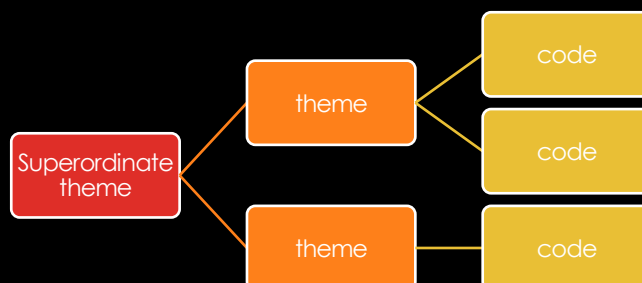
Questions Asked:

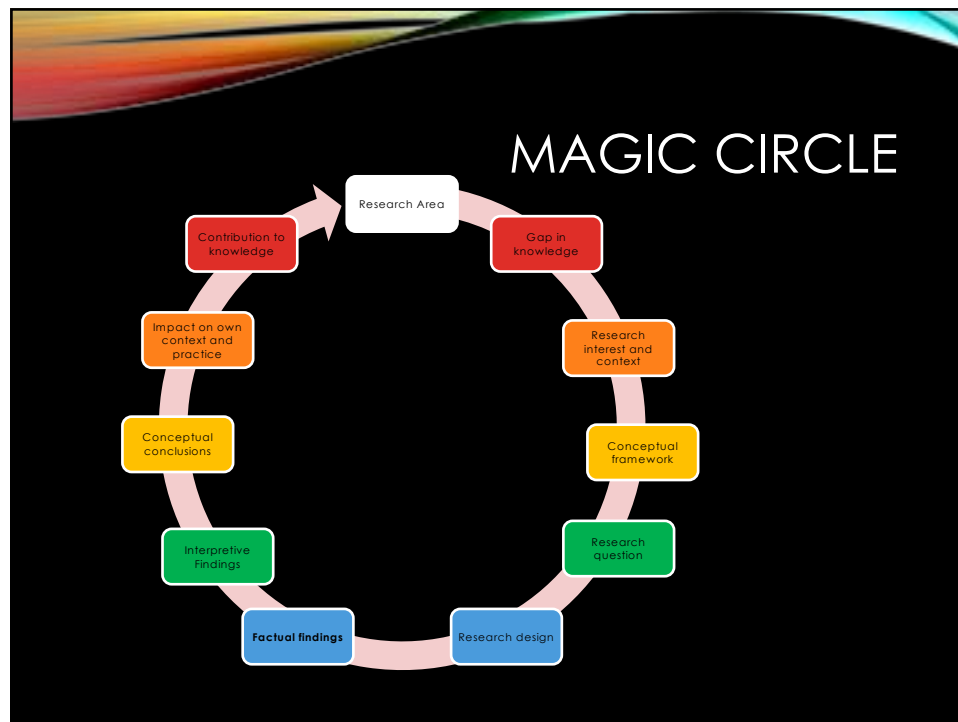
- What has been the impact on you of being in supervision?
- What impacts have you observed upon your supervisees?
- Do you perceive any wider impacts on the MCB as a result of supervision?
- Is anything you have learned on this journey into supervision about the Methodist Church as an organisation?

FOCUS GROUP Process of analysis

- Full transcript
- Identification of all material into codes
- Organisation of codes into themes

FROM CODES TO THEMES





FACTUAL FINDINGS

- All 9 asked took part
- Group were relaxed and willing to be vulnerable
- Expressed the view that the quality of their engagement in the research had been enhanced by their engagement in supervision
- Took a responsible attitude to protecting confidentiality themselves

- In vivo codes (using actual words of participants)
- Selected codes present here relating to impact (23)
- Evidencing 12 themes

CODES 1 & 2

- I think I would say it has probably **improved my mental health** and my resilience, given my ability to fester. Because I am not festering so much. (laughter) and that has made a difference. (2M)
- [In terms of the renewal of energy] for me there is to an extent because rather than debating in my mind for hours, I've actually **slept better** and so in my own personal wellbeing dealing with issues has improved significantly. (6M)

CODE 7

*I think I recognise as I look back over circuit ministry that sometimes things have bled out into the family in ways that have not been happy. And I suspect I have been **emotionally unavailable**. The difference I think now is that in the role of Chair those situations obviously come thick and fast but it feels as though there is a very safe, contained space in which I can speak very very honestly about those things and I know that we'll come back to those there. You'll have to ask my family though but I think I've enough awareness to know that this feels like a really positive development. And I think that's due to supervision. Because it's a different kind of space to where I might have rehearsed those kinds of conversations before. (5M)*

FROM CODES TO THEMES



CODE 9

in casual conversation around they [Superintendents] are saying that the training and the supervision since has given them tools for other conversations at other times – pastoral conversations; line management conversations; they feel as though their **toolkit is much bigger**. (3M)

But I feel that as well. (Yes.. mm Yes) (6M)

CODE 12:

- *I think it's something that crystallised in supervision that I learnt on the conflict course and that is to face conflict head on rather than running away and hoping it won't catch you up. (laughter). And supervision has crystallised in my mind the wisdom of that but also its provided a context in which to wrestle with the conflict and to test out how I might engage with it in a hopefully more creative way that perhaps would have been the case otherwise. So, yes, I think it's crystallised the wisdom of what the course was advising, contrary to my natural inclinations, and material interests probably... (laughter) but actually also providing a context to work it through to provide other avenues of engagement so again a *place of preparation* and not just avoiding it. (2M)*

FROM CODES TO THEMES



CODE 15

It's the accountability that's been really important – that you know that there's the written record; there's the things that you've named – so when you revisit supervision again, there is that **follow up** conversation – you said you were going to have that difficult conversation with this colleague; we were rehearsing it, how did it go? (5M)

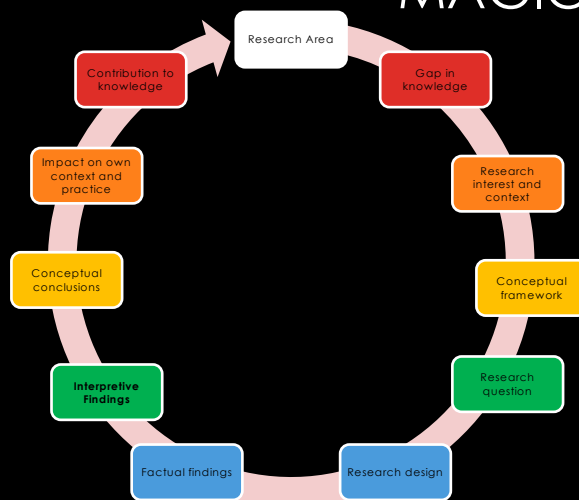
CODE 19

I have really valued supervision but also that everybody knows that I'm having supervision. (Umm, Umm, Umm) And I have said on a couple of occasions: I'm not sure about this I'll take it to supervision. And that actually trying to model something about **not having to come up with instant solutions** to things that are very complex but also that there's another perspective on this that I could make use of that you need to know about because we are all in this together. (umm, ummm) that's been hugely valuable. Hugely valuable. (8F)

FROM CODES TO THEMES



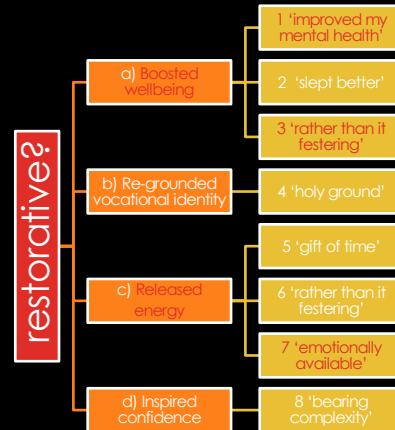
MAGIC CIRCLE



INTERPRETIVE FINDINGS: RESTORATIVE

Restorative impacts to check

- reduced symptoms of isolation and stress amongst its ordained ministers through a realistic and regular structure of collegiality and accountability in which ministers are regularly sharing the detail of their practice and being listened to?
- less anxiety in the face of change as ministers share responsibility for risks, priorities and hard decisions with their supervisors?



INTERPRETIVE FINDINGS: FORMATIVE

Formative impacts to check

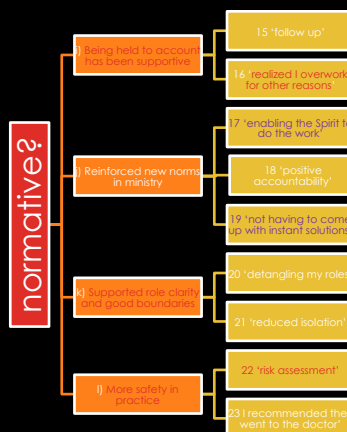
- a more intentional use of ordained ministers' time through the opportunity that supervision provides for ministers to **think theologically** and practically about priorities?
- better communication as those in oversight become more aware, through supervising others, of the challenges being faced on the ground?



INTERPRETIVE FINDINGS: NORMATIVE

Normative impacts to check

- a more robust handling of risks in church life?
- heightened awareness of boundaries, expected conduct, role clarity and the use of power?
- clearer lines of accountability?
- more safety through the opportunity in supervision to explore the unconscious factors that sometimes undermine best intentions?



INTERPRETIVE FINDINGS

Restorative outcomes

renewing energy, confidence and **vocational identity** through...

- **quality attention** through its disciplined and structured approach to intentional time;
- **quality of care** on behalf of the Conference that is helping ministers to feel more connected with colleagues at a deep level,
- **a skilled space** in which complexity and difficult feelings can be borne and disentangled to allow ministers to find and exercise their agency.

INTERPRETIVE FINDINGS

Formative outcomes

renewal is happening through

- the embracing of a realistic learning environment in which **skills and knowledge are embedded** in practice
- **delight** being experienced **in learning** itself
- and a sense of **growing competence**
- the **training itself had enhanced ministerial toolkits** for handling a variety of situations

INTERPRETIVE FINDINGS

Normative outcomes

- a renewed sense of **authority, agency** and role clarity
- **new norms**
- the discovery that the process of being held to account can provide a **secure base from which courageous and risk-taking ministry can be exercised.**

SUMMARY INTERPRETIVE FINDINGS

- Overwhelmingly supervision is meeting expected normative, formative and restorative outcomes hoped for
- More attention could be paid to unconscious dynamics and theological dimensions of reflection
- Beyond anticipated outcomes, the culture of supervision is beginning to shape the culture of ministry through establishing new norms and through changing perceptions of support, accountability and ministry.

NEW NORMS: STOPPING

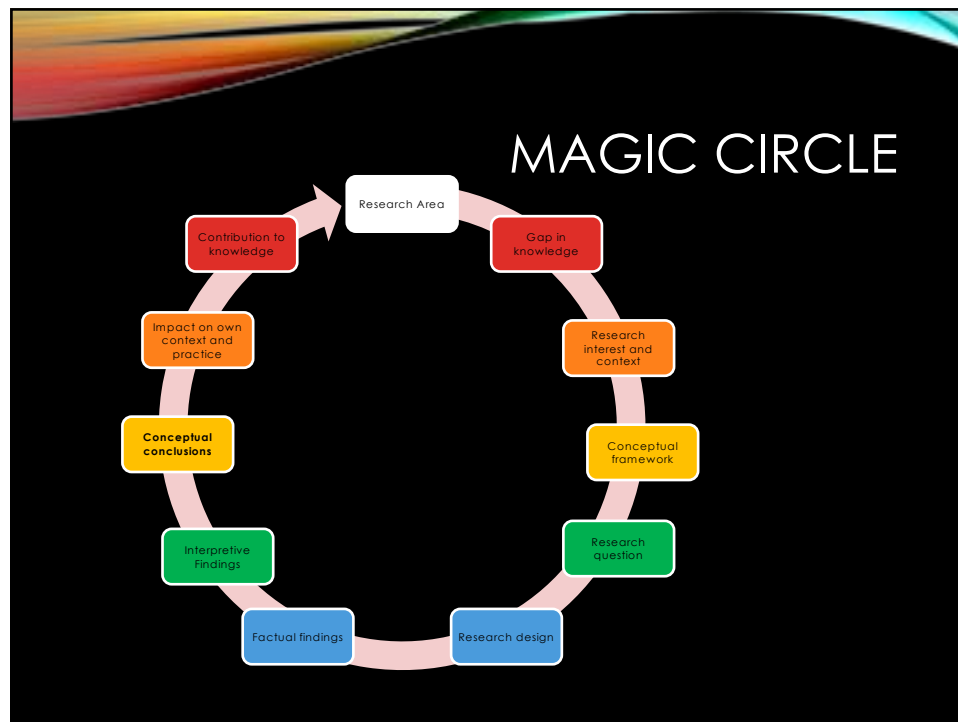
- I find it very interesting that I've had no sessions that have been diaried that have been cancelled. I think I anticipated, 'I've been very busy this week...' there's been none of that and yet I recognise all we're saying about driven people, working very hard; when they're together as a cohort they have a massive capacity to moan; and yet faithfully they are turning out to supervision. **They are stopping. They are attending. They are listening.** (5M)

NEW NORMS: NOT FIXING

- I've only just started to notice this but over the two years I'm becoming much more relaxed about things. I would have always said I was very relaxed about things. So I don't fester... I'll ignore (laughter) and when people are talking about resilience I think I do stoic and there's a real difference between stoicism and resilience and over the two years I think I've shifted into a place where actually I don't have to fix this, and that's fine and actually what's more interesting is not how can this be fixed but how can we live with the brokenness we encounter? Whatever that might be and I'm curious about that... and I've not really thought this through but I think that might be the product of a supervision over a sustained period of time, that I don't feel I have to fix things and that actually I don't even feel they have to be fixed. (8F)

NEW NORMS: LETTING THE SPIRIT WORK

- Actually just by noticing and asking questions and by observing you're enabling the Spirit to do the work rather than the supervisor. (2M)



CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

- Being held and held accountable go together:

'to be let off is also to be let go and let down. Whilst this may be a deeply counter-cultural notion in societies that value individual freedom and choice and reject meta-narratives and institutional forms of life, in fact, to be allowed to go our own way in ministry has been experienced as a form of neglect.'

CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

- The injunction to self care is a form of practical atheism:

'A biblical model of care, whilst it allows humanity our freedom, does not in fact leave us to our own devices but seeks us out, again and again and calls us to our better selves; to the future God has in mind for us. This does not imply that any behaviour or practice is okay. In fact it implies the opposite.'

CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

- The body of Christ needs actual ligaments and sinews to bind its people together in accountable patterns of relating:

'As Wesley knew in the realm of discipleship for which purpose he provided band meetings, holding and holding accountable need bodily form. They are part of the way in which the 'sinews and ligaments' hold us together as a body and allow us to be nourished by Christ, the head (Colossians 2.19).'

CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

If reflective supervision is now a force that is shaping the culture of ministry in the MCB, what is the character of that supervision?

- prayerful and non-anxious,
- collegial and non-coercive,
- embodied and dialogical,
- ex-centric and missional,
- intentional and boundaried,
- compassionate and courageous,
- playful and reflective

CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

Is this appropriate for a practice that contributes to the oversight of the MCB?

- prayerful and non-anxious,
- collegial and non-coercive,
- embodied and dialogical,
- ex-centric and missional,
- intentional and boundaried,
- compassionate and courageous,
- playful and reflective.

CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

Formed by Word and Spirit

- Human beings are formed in dialogue with God (Genesis) so authentic forms of oversight (including supervision), will be **dialogical and relational**.
- Transformational dialogue with God is always embodied. Pregnancies, limps and healings result so authentic forms of oversight (and supervision) will be **embodied and contextual**.

CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

Conformed to Christ

- The leadership of God is paradigmatically seen on the cross (Paul) so authentic forms of oversight (including supervision), will be **non-coercive and sacrificial**
- The movement of God is always towards the flourishing of others so authentic forms of oversight (including supervision), will be **missional** – not only for the sake of those involved but **for those whose lives we are called to touch**

CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSIONS

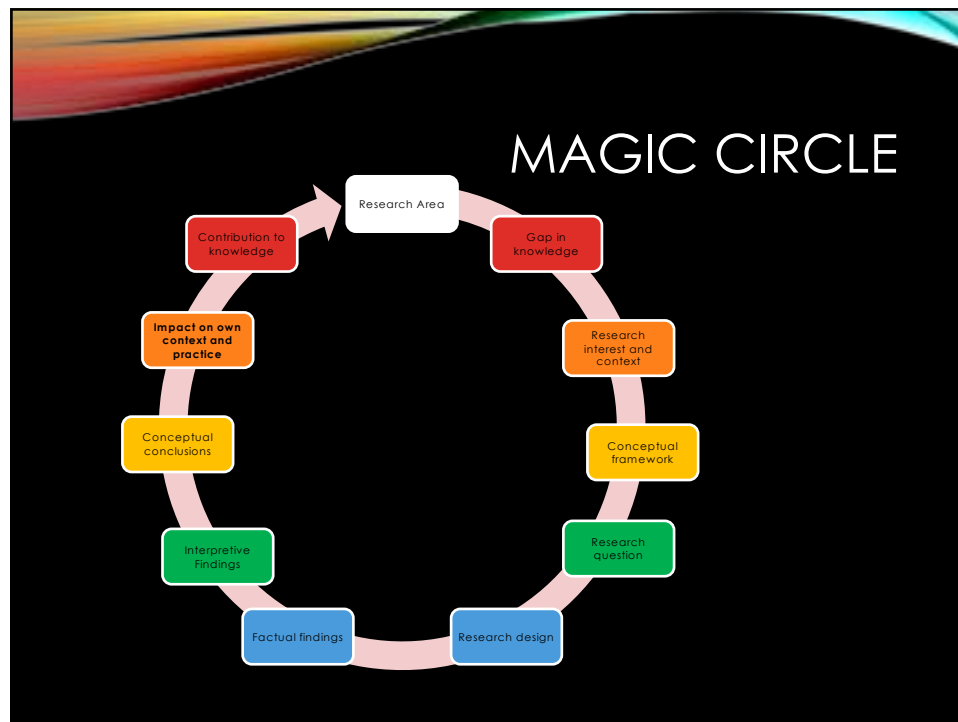
Transformed by Grace

- Means of grace rely on intentionally making space for God to visit - so oversight (and supervision) need to make **intentional space for experiencing God's** presence and leading.
- Acts of mercy rely on a disciplined and boundaried use of time for the sake of the other – so oversight (and supervision) need **clarity about their purpose, processes and boundaries.**

SUMMARY

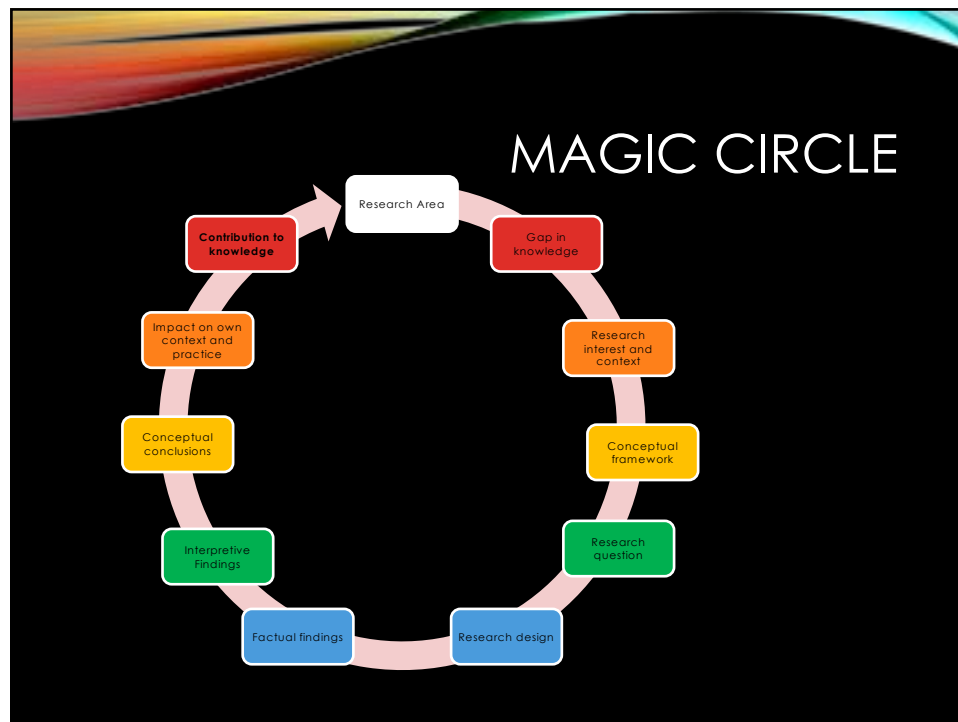
- **prayerful** and non-anxious,
- **collegial** and **non-coercive**,
- **embodied** and **dialogical**,
- **ex-centric** and **missional**,
- **intentional** and **boundaried**,
- **compassionate** and **courageous**,
- **playful** and **reflective**.

- Formed by Word and Spirit
 - **dialogical** and **relational**
 - **embodied** and **contextual**
- Conformed to Christ
 - **non-coercive** and **sacrificial**
 - **missional**
- Transformed by Grace
 - **make intentional space for experiencing God's presence and leading**
 - **clarity about purpose, processes and boundaries**



CHANGED PRACTICE

- Devising new ways to teach unconscious dynamics
- Devising new ways to support theological reflection
- Reflecting on my own relational engagement with colleagues as a benefit of supervision (not just technical or personal benefits)
- Alerting colleagues to issues of culture change



CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

'if any church is going to be the kind of community in which resurrection is taking place or is being offered to others, we need to attend to the kind of spaces that we make for listening. We need to listen to the God who calls us: the God who calls us not only from the past, but from the future; who calls to us to be conformed to Christ, not only as individuals, but as a body; and who will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory (Phil 3.21).'

- Initial understanding of the impact of structured supervision on supervisors and supervisees in the MCB
- Defining of a new denominational practice of reflective supervision and its character
- Location of that practice within the practice of oversight
- A reframing of the nature and purpose of oversight
- Shift from impact of supervision on individuals to contribution in renewing the body of Christ

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