



Supporting Ministers-in-Training with ADHD: A Guide for Incumbents

Introduction

This guide is intended to help incumbents support ministers-in-training who live with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It offers a brief overview of ADHD, outlines common strengths and challenges, and provides practical strategies for inclusive ministry training. ADHD presents differently in each individual, and this guide encourages a flexible, person-first approach that honours the unique gifts and needs of each minister-in-training. By fostering understanding and adaptability, we create space for all to flourish in their vocation.

Understanding ADHD

ADHD is a neuro-developmental difference that affects attention, impulse control, and regulation of energy levels. It is often misunderstood as simply a lack of focus or hyperactivity, but it is more accurately described as a difference in how the brain is able to regulate attention, motivation, and executive functions.

People with ADHD may experience:

- Difficulty sustaining attention on tasks that are not stimulating
- Impulsivity in speech or action
- Restlessness or a need for movement
- Challenges with organisation and time management

ADHD exists on a spectrum and can present differently in different people. Some may be primarily inattentive, others hyperactive-impulsive, and many experience a combination of both. Using person-first language (e.g., “a person with ADHD”) affirms their identity beyond diagnosis.

Common Strengths and Challenges

Strengths Often Seen in Ministers-in-Training with ADHD

- High energy and enthusiasm for ministry and people
- Creative thinking and problem-solving
- Strong interpersonal skills and empathy as well as a strong sense of justice
- Resilience and adaptability in dynamic environments

Challenges That May Arise

- Difficulty with sustained attention, especially in long meetings or study
- Impulsivity, which may affect communication or decision-making
- Time management and organisation struggles
- Emotional regulation, including sensitivity to criticism or stress

These traits are not universal, and each person's experience will differ. The goal is to support individuals in ways that help them thrive.

Ministry Training Context

Ministry training often involves academic study, placements, reflective practice, and interpersonal engagement. These settings can be both energising and challenging for individuals with ADHD.

For example:

- Academic tasks may be difficult to complete without external structure or stimulation.
- Placements may require multitasking and organisation that feel overwhelming.
- Reflective practice may be hard to engage with if it feels abstract or slow-paced.

Incumbents can play a key role in helping ministers-in-training with ADHD navigate these challenges by offering structure, encouragement, and practical tools.

Practical Support Strategies for Incumbents

Here are some ways incumbents can support ministers-in-training with ADHD effectively:

- **Provide structure and clarity:** Break tasks into manageable steps. Use checklists, timelines, and visual aids.
- **Use positive reinforcement:** Celebrate progress and strengths. Offer encouragement rather than correction alone.
- **Be flexible with working styles:** Allow movement, breaks, or alternative formats for reflection and learning.

- **Support time management:** Help with scheduling, reminders, and prioritising tasks. Encourage use of digital tools.
- **Offer consistent feedback:** Give regular, constructive feedback. Avoid overwhelming with too much at once.
- **Encourage self-awareness and self-advocacy:** Support the minister-in-training in identifying what helps them stay focused and regulated.
- **Collaborate with training institutions:** Ensure accommodations are in place and advocate for inclusive practices.

Theological Reflection

The Church is enriched by the diversity of its members, including those with ADHD. Their energy, creativity, and relational gifts reflect the dynamic nature of God's work in the world. Scripture reminds us that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139), and that God equips each person uniquely for ministry.

In a Church that values stillness and contemplation, we must also make room for movement, spontaneity, and passion. ADHD is not a barrier to ministry, it is a different way of engaging with God's call.

Conclusion

Supporting ministers-in-training with ADHD requires understanding, flexibility, and encouragement. Incumbents have the opportunity to nurture vocations and model inclusive leadership that reflects the grace and creativity of God.

By adapting our expectations and practices, we create space for all to grow into the fullness of their calling.