



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

Introduction

This guide supports incumbents in accompanying ministers-in-training who have Dyslexia. It offers a broad overview of the condition, highlights common strengths and challenges, and provides practical strategies for inclusive ministry training. Dyslexia is often misunderstood as simply a reading or writing difficulty, but it encompasses a range of cognitive differences that affect processing, memory, organisation, and communication. By adopting a person-first, strengths-based approach, incumbents can help ministers-in-training with dyslexia flourish in their vocation.

Understanding Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a learning difference that affects how the brain processes language and information. It is most commonly associated with difficulties in reading, writing, and spelling, but it can also impact:

- **Working memory**
- **Processing speed**
- **Organisation and sequencing**
- **Time management**
- **Verbal communication and auditory processing**
- **Visual-spatial reasoning**

Dyslexia varies widely from person to person. Some may have mild difficulties with reading, while others may experience significant challenges with memory or verbal fluency. It is not a reflection of intelligence or capability, many people with dyslexia are highly creative, insightful, and articulate.

Common Strengths and Challenges

Strengths Often Seen in Ministers-in-Training with Dyslexia

- Creative thinking and problem-solving
- Strong interpersonal and pastoral skills
- Big-picture thinking and strategic insight

- Empathy and emotional intelligence
- Resilience and adaptability

Challenges That May Arise

- Reading and writing difficulties, especially under time pressure
- Memory and sequencing issues, such as recalling names, dates, or liturgical order
- Processing speed, which may affect note-taking or responding quickly in discussions
- Organisation and time management
- Verbal fluency, especially under stress or in unfamiliar settings

Each person's experience of dyslexia is unique. The goal is to support individuals in ways that help them thrive.

Ministry Training Context

Ministry training often involves academic study, written assignments, public speaking, and placements. These can present barriers for individuals with dyslexia.

For example:

- Reading theological texts may be slow or tiring.
- Writing essays or reports may require extra time or assistive tools.
- Preaching or leading worship may be stressful if verbal fluency is affected.
- Organising placements or managing schedules may be overwhelming.

Incumbents can help by offering practical support, flexibility, and encouragement.

Practical Support Strategies for Incumbents

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

- **Use accessible formats:** Offer audio versions of texts, use clear fonts and layouts, and avoid dense blocks of text.
- **Allow extra time:** Be flexible with deadlines and allow time for reading, writing, or verbal preparation.

- **Support memory and organisation:** Use visual aids, checklists, and reminders. Help with planning and sequencing tasks.
- **Encourage use of assistive technology:** Tools like speech-to-text, text-to-speech, and grammar support software can be invaluable.
- **Be patient with verbal communication:** Allow time for processing and responding. Avoid interrupting or rushing.
- **Celebrate strengths:** Focus on creativity, insight, and pastoral gifts. Affirm progress and effort.
- **Collaborate with training institutions:** Ensure accommodations are in place. Advocate for inclusive assessment methods and feedback.

Theological Reflection

The Church is called to be a place of welcome and belonging for all. Ministers-in-training with dyslexia reflect the diversity of God's creation and bring gifts of creativity, empathy, and insight.

Scripture reminds us that God equips those whom God calls. Moses, who struggled with speech, was chosen to lead. Paul, who wrote extensively, also relied on others to help communicate his message. Dyslexia is not a barrier to ministry, it is a different way of engaging with God's call.

Conclusion

Supporting ministers-in-training with dyslexia requires understanding, flexibility, and encouragement. Incumbents have a vital role in nurturing vocations and modelling inclusive leadership.

By adapting our practices and listening with compassion, we build a Church where all can flourish in their calling.