

The Parish Church of St Thomas, St Annes on the Sea

PASTORAL CARE POLICY

1 What is Christian Pastoral Care?

Pastoral Care is part of the *shepherding* of the *flock*. (1 Peter 5.2 *Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care...*) Pastoral Care is the responsibility of all Church Members and not just the Church leaders. In the Church today we are challenged to move from a model of ministry in which Pastoral Care is the responsibility of ordained ministers to one in which Pastoral Care is the vocation of the whole people of God.

Christians, committed to the belief that God loves us all unconditionally, seek to reflect that love in their care for others. Pastoral Care happens when Christians help others by listening, responding, praying and providing caring support. The goal of Pastoral Care is to help people live life in all its fullness in the strength of and according to the example of Jesus. (John 10 .10-11 ... *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd.*)

The values of Pastoral Care are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5.22-23), together with compassion, humility, tolerance, forgiveness and thankfulness to God (Colossians 3.12-17). They are practised with an emphasis more on listening than speaking (James 1.19-27).

2 Formal/Official Pastoral Care and Informal/Unofficial Pastoral Care

Much Pastoral Care occurs in the Church in an informal and unofficial way as Christians seek to help in practical ways and to encourage one another in the faith. Formal or official Pastoral Care is Pastoral Care carried out by Church representatives on behalf of the Church community. However, it is not always easy to draw a boundary line between the two. Those holding official positions in the Church, Clergy, Readers, and Wardens are by virtue of the office always acting in an official capacity in their dealings with Church members or attendees. Group leaders such as House Group leaders and leaders of other Church groups such as the Mothers Union or Mens Association would be deemed to be acting in an official capacity in any relations with members of their groups. Those licensed to administer Home Communion are acting on behalf of the Church whenever they are engaged in that work. Those who are Pastoral Visitors are acting in an official capacity when they are asked by the Clergy to undertake pastoral visits. They would not be acting as official representatives of the Church if they decided of their own volition to visit one of their friends within the Church community.

When deciding how much Formal Pastoral Care might be offered to someone the clergy will need to take into account the amount of Informal Pastoral Care already being given by friends within the Church. Indeed in some senses the Formal Pastoral Care might be seen as mainly required to plug the gaps in the Informal Pastoral Care offered. However, it is important to remember that many Church Members will expect someone official to visit when they are ill for more than a few days. Some may even be disappointed if they do not receive a visit from the Vicar, however, with the planned reduction in Clergy in the diocese, Church members

will have to accept a reduction in pastoral visits by the Clergy.

3 Various Pastoral Care Ministries

3a Visits and Other Contacts

Church Members who are suffering illness, are housebound or in hospital need to be offered visits from the Pastoral Care Visitors. It is important that every Church Member understand their duty to report to the Clergy those members who are in need of Pastoral Care Visits.

The Clergy will need to liaise with the Hospital Chaplaincy at the Victoria Hospital with regard to any Church Members who are patients staying in that hospital.

There may be times when telephone calls, emails or written communications are appropriate. One of these is the birthday cards sent to the residents of Care Home in the Parish. Other examples are the birthday cards sent to those children up to the age of 5 who have been baptised at our Church and the letters to the families of the newly baptised.

3b Home Communions

It is important to make clear that these are to be provided for those people who specifically desire to have communion rather than those people who just want someone to visit them. They are also for those who are unable for reasons of age or ill health to get to service held in the church building. It may be more appropriate to provide people with a lift to Church rather than a home communion. Sensitivity needs to be exercised as some elderly persons needs may vary from time to time.

3c Lifts to Church Services

Informal lifts offered to friends within the Church are to be preferred. For legal and insurance reasons the Pastoral Care Team will not formally organise lifts.

3d The Ministry of Welcome

This is officially the responsibility of the Wardens and the Sidespersons. They should provide information about the Church and introduce new people to other members of the Church. However it is also the duty of all Church members to talk to those who are visitors or new to the Church, to make them feel welcome and invite them to coffee when it is provided after the service. Group leaders and members should take opportunities to invite new people to meetings and events.

The next stage is the assimilation of new members and this side of our work needs to be developed. "Churches that make new member assimilation a priority and have a plan for doing it are usually blessed with growth. In contrast, churches that don't care about new members, or are haphazard in assimilating them *don't grow.*" - Rick Warren *The Purpose Driven Church.*

3e The Ministry of Encouragement

One of the best ways to provide pastoral care and growth in the Christian faith is to encourage Church members to join one of the smaller groups e.g. a house group or the Mothers Union. The development of a network of small groups should be encouraged. These can be based on different purposes, interests, age groups etc. "The larger your church grows, the more important small groups become for handling the pastoral care functions." - Rick Warren *The Purpose Driven Church.*

It is important for all Church leaders to continually emphasize the corporate nature of the Christian life to our Church members.

From time to time an individual's involvement with the Church community may change. At these times sensitivity is needed to tell members we are here and care without exerting any form of pressure.

3f The Ministry of Invitation

All Church members should invite family, friends and those on the fringes of the Church to services, events and groups. Formal invitations may be useful from time to time. As part of this ministry we send invitations to the Mothering Sunday service to the families of Children who have been baptised at our Church in the last 4 years. The Pastoral Care Team needs to explore ways in which specific groups of people can be invited to specific events.

3g Church Membership

A specific pastoral task of the Electoral Roll Officer is to keep the official roll of adult members of the Church. All Church Members need to assist the Electoral Roll Officer to encourage Church membership particularly amongst those who regularly attend our services. Clergy and Readers should encourage regular attendees who have not been Confirmed to consider Confirmation.

4 Building on Existing Practice

In the pastoral care ministries outlined above we are seeking to build on the existing Pastoral Care which has been taking place but has had no policy or formal structure. There has been particular good practice in the Mothers Union and we wish to encourage this in other Church groups. All group leaders have a responsibility to provide Pastoral Care for those in their groups.

5 Pastoral Care Visits

Pastoral Care Visits are made to offer friendship, help, support and contact with the Community of Faith. These Visits may include practical help, giving information and helping people to make their own decisions by listening to them articulate their concerns. It is not intended that Visitors should make people's decisions for them. The role of the Visitor is not that of Pastoral Counselling or Spiritual Guidance which must be left to those with appropriate training such as the Clergy. Visitors must not hear Confession in the formal sense of that term.

6 General Advice to Pastoral Carers

Pastoral Carers need to be aware of the danger of becoming overloaded by pastoral demands and of neglecting their own need for rest and leisure and the needs of their own families.

All pastoral care needs to be rooted in a life of prayer.

Listening well is fundamental to all good Pastoral Care.

Self awareness is an essential requirement of anyone engaged in any form of Pastoral Care. Pastoral Carers may find there is a risk of needing others to need them and thereby encouraging inappropriate dependency which they need to guard against.

Many people involved in ministry such as Pastoral Care find it harder to seek or

receive help than to give it and have to learn to seek support for themselves when they need it.

7 Confidentiality

Whatever a Pastoral Carer is told by a person to whom they are offering Pastoral Care must be treated with respect and kept confidential. Pastoral Carers must assume that all personal information given by a person about themselves or others is confidential. The Pastoral Carer must seek specific consent of the person to pass on any personal information to anyone else and must only seek that consent for a particular reason. For example, to pray for someone by name, in the presence of even one other person, invades that person's privacy unless they have asked or given consent to others being aware of their needs and praying for them. Particular care should be taken to seek permission before telling someone else's story, even in disguised form. People's names should not be included in public intercessions or parish publications unless they have given explicit permission.

A Pastoral Carer, however, cannot assume any confidentiality if they share information with someone to whom they are offering pastoral care. If they ask for confidentiality there is a risk of burdening the person with secrets or of creating an inappropriate climate of secrecy between them.

Pastoral Carers should seek guidance from the clergy when faced with ethical dilemmas regarding confidentiality, individuals at risk and the law. If there is a risk of harm, either to the person concerned or to others, Pastoral Carers must consider it their duty to break a confidence. However, in all but the most exceptional circumstances, good practice requires informing and, wherever possible, obtaining permission, before divulging confidential information to the clergy or to statutory authorities.

8 Respect

Pastoral Carers must respect the personhood and the views of every person to whom they provide Pastoral Care. Pastoral Carers must take steps to safeguard the person's safety and not take advantage of a vulnerable person. They will not exploit financially, emotionally or sexually any person to whom they are providing Pastoral Care. Pastoral Carers will treat every person who asks for or is offered Pastoral Care as a unique individual, equal with them in the sight of God. Pastoral Carers will not seek to treat one person with less respect and opportunity than others because of race, language, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, size, income, disability, health, abode or criminal record. They will respect those with whom they disagree. Whilst maintaining set boundaries, they will be patient with those who are aggressive, or unwilling to listen and discuss options. Pastoral Carers will not subject any person to physical, psychological or verbal harassment. Pastoral Carers should be careful to offer a healthy example of personal relationships and self-control.

9 Touch, Sexuality and Intimacy

Pastoral Carers must not be sexually intimate with a person to whom they are providing Pastoral Care. Pastoral Carers always carry the responsibility for safeguarding sexual or emotional boundaries in pastoral relationships. Great care must be taken by those providing Pastoral Care for children and young people. Physical contact between an adult and a young person can often be misconstrued

and should only occur in appropriate public circumstances.

The appropriate use of touch is a key aspect of maintaining ethical boundaries in Pastoral Care. Touch can show care in unique and important ways that communicate much more deeply than words. However, the reality of sexual abuse in our culture increases the need for awareness of how easily physical expressions of care and comfort may be misunderstood. Men more than women may feel that the only safe option is to avoid all but the most formal physical contact. However, at moments of deep human distress, such as bereavement, a rigid avoidance of physical contact may in itself be damaging. If there is hesitation or refusal of touch this should always be accepted without question.

10 The Place of Prayer in Pastoral Care

All Pastoral Carers should pray regularly for those to whom they are offering Pastoral Care. They also need to pray for help and guidance in their delivery of Pastoral Care.

Those who undertake Pastoral Visits should offer to pray with people particularly at the close of a visit. Prayer with an individual should only be offered, never imposed. It requires sensitivity to the individual to decide whether extempore, silent or more traditional forms of prayer will be most helpful. Pastoral Carers should not be afraid to talk about what the Church is doing and about the Faith nor on the other hand should they be overzealous.

11 Boundaries

Pastoral Carers should seek to recognise the limits of their competence and regularly continue their development in the Christian faith and in pastoral care skills. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Sometimes the very best pastoral care simply offers a loving presence, silently witnessing to God's love for each one of us.

Where a person's needs are recognised as being outside the Pastoral Carer's competence they should seek the agreement of the person to refer them to someone who can offer appropriate help. Pastoral Carers must recognise that they are not expected to carry out the role of professional care providers or the Social Services. They must seek permission from the person to involve Social Services, Age Concern, the Clergy etc as appropriate.

Pastoral Carers must take care to deal cautiously with persons who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and persons who are suffering from mental illness or impairment. They must not put their personal safety or that of others at risk.

Pastoral Carers should try to be honest and open.

When making Pastoral Visits it is good practice to suggest how long the meeting might be for and to check whether this is a convenient length of time for the other person. Failure to maintain clear time boundaries can result in both parties feeling unsafe and out of control.

12 Records

The only records which will be kept as part of Pastoral Care will be names, addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, dates of visits, dates of birthdays, dates of baptisms and dates of any other relevant events. Dates of visits need to be

recorded so that it is possible to check that people in similar circumstances are being treated equally e.g. housebound people who have requested home communions are being offered the same opportunities.

13 Selection and Induction

Pastoral Carers will be selected and invited to join the Pastoral Care Team by the Vicar after consultation with members of the Pastoral Care Team.

An informal programme of induction and continuing development will be carried out. New Pastoral Carers will be subject to Criminal Records Bureau clearance.

14 The Role of the Pastoral Care Co-ordinator

The Pastoral Care Co-ordinator will be the Vicar, who together with the other Clergy will be responsible for the selection, induction, support and supervision of the Pastoral Carers. All referrals for Pastoral Care will be made through the Clergy. The vicar will chair the Pastoral Care Team Meetings.

15 The Pastoral Care Team and its Meetings

The Pastoral Care Team shall consist of the Clergy, the Licensed Readers, the Churchwardens, the Pastoral Care Visitors, those persons licensed to provide Home Communions and any other invited members of the Church.

The Pastoral Care Team may appoint an Assistant Pastoral Care Co-ordinator, a Minutes Secretary and any other officers as deemed appropriate at any particular time.

It will be the purpose of the Pastoral Care Team Meetings to pray for the work of pastoral care in the Church and to provide support for Pastoral Carers. The main purpose of the Meetings will be to provide encouragement to the Pastoral Carers. The Meetings will not be a forum for the exchange of news about people for whom the Team are providing Pastoral Care. The Team Meetings will provide a regular opportunity to talk through any pastoral care issues in a confidential setting, although individual carers should be encouraged to speak personally to the Clergy at other times regarding pastoral concerns.

There should be times when others involve in Pastoral Care such as group leaders should also be invited to the Pastoral Care Team Meetings.

Pastoral Care Team meetings will be held every 3 to 4 months.

Sources

Website of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy - Expert Areas - Association for Pastoral and Spiritual Care and Counselling - Christian Pastoral Care Guidance.

“Tend My Flock” Kate Litchfield, Canterbury Press.

Peter D Watson and St Thomas' Pastoral Care Team

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