



wymondham
baptist church

PASTORAL CARE POLICY AND GUIDELINES

AG-PS1

Primary Responsibility	Pastoral Care Lead/Minister
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1. Policy Statement

Throughout the Bible, Christians are encouraged to love and care for one another, particularly other Christians. This is the responsibility of all believers, while God also calls some to go a little further in this service of helping others. In the Church today, we are challenged to move from the model of ministry in which Pastoral Care is the sole responsibility of ordained ministers to one in which Pastoral Care is the calling of the whole people of God. This is reflected in the approach outlined in this policy.

Our aim is that pastoral care at WBC is offered with integrity and in a way that honours God and all those involved. Also that the whole fellowship is aware of how pastoral care is available at WBC and can communicate any need - for themselves or others - to the Pastoral Care Leads.

The person ultimately responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of this policy is the Minister; however the day-to-day organisation, implementation and overseeing of pastoral care - and Pastoral Carers - is the responsibility of the Pastoral Care Lead.

As with any document like this, it cannot cover all scenarios so please do talk to the Pastoral Care Lead if you have any questions or concerns.

2. Pastoral Care in action

Christian pastoral care embraces a wide range of activity in support, in and beyond the Church, i.e. both when we are gathered together and when we are not. For example:

- Christian pastoral care might involve: sustaining others through prolonged difficulty or immediate need, enabling the journey of healing and wholeness, considering the process of reconciliation with God, self and others, offering guidance about other resources and enabling different perspectives.
- Christian pastoral care might take the form of: listening, encouraging, visiting, hospitality, advocacy, mentoring, befriending, celebrating, practically helping, prayer, comforting, or enabling Christian pastoral care might take place formally in planned and organised ways or informally through everyday spontaneous moments.

Christian pastoral care might be offered by an individual, by small groups, through a particular ministry, through an outreach project, by one church or a group of churches.

The church does not provide regular pastoral support for external groups that meet on the premises. However, if any *ad hoc* support is requested by such a group, any support will follow this policy.

3. Christian Pastoral Carers

In the context of the church, a Pastoral Carer is someone who either formally (as part of a pastoral team or network) or informally (as part of their fellowship group or everyday relationship in the fellowship) offers care and support to another, in the knowledge of being loved themselves by God and in the hope of sharing that love with others.

Here is a description of pastoral care at work in the church:

We are ALL called to love, care for and watch out for one another, wherever God places us in the Christian family.	→ WHOLE FELLOWSHIP
SOME are gifted and called to specific pastoral care roles and responsibilities.	→ PASTORAL CARE TEAM AND SOME OTHERS
A FEW are led to enable the ALL and the SOME , organising and guiding, ensuring good safety and guidelines are in place for people who give pastoral care, clarity to the flock where to go for pastoral care and what to expect. They may have specialist skills, training, knowledge and experience.	→ PASTORAL LEADS

Association Of Christians In Counselling: model of pastoral care in the church

Much pastoral care occurs in the church in informal and unofficial ways as Christians seeks to encourage one another in the faith and help in practical ways - this is the '**ALL**' in the diagram above . In some senses, the groups '**SOME**' and '**A FEW**' might be seen as mainly required to plug the gaps on the informal pastoral care offered.

4. Pastoral care ministries

As well as informal pastoral care in the fellowship, there are several groups within the body of the church that have responsibility for pastoral care:

- **Pastoral Care Team**
This includes those who offer pastoral caring ministries such as visiting*/individual support, home communion visits, listening, regular phone calls or cards, welcome team, practical support, referral.
- **Homegroup Leaders**
Homegroup leaders exercise pastoral care for their group members. The elders have oversight of the Homegroup leaders for matters of pastoral care.
- **Prayer Ministry Team**
- **Youth Leaders**
- **Safeguarding Coordinators**
- **Church lifts**
- **The Leadership Team**

*Visiting is meeting with people typically in their own home by prior arrangement, to extend the fellowship of the church to them, to spend time in conversation, to offer companionship, to pray with them and to ensure that if they are struggling with issues that the church could help with, those issues are brought to the attention of the appropriate person. The Pastoral Care Lead will coordinate regular visiting of those in need, those who are sick or otherwise not in routine contact with the church.

5. Biblical Values for Pastoral Care

Pastoral Carers are called to ***value each person as created uniquely in the image of God*** (Genesis 1:27), with purpose, potential and capacity to live life to the full (John 10:10).

Pastoral Care that is inspired and enabled by Christ will contribute towards:

- The ***equipping*** of God's people so they can do His work, so that the Church, the Body of Christ, can be built up, until we come to unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son, that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord so that the whole Body is healthy and growing and full of love (e.g. Ephesians 4:11-16)
- The ***mission*** work of the Church (e.g. John 17:20-23; Acts 2:44-47; Acts 6:1-7)

Pastoral Carers are called to ***love others through Christ-like love*** (John 13:34-35, Romans 12:10; 13:8), led by the Holy Spirit, manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit and informed by the indwelling Word of God (Galatians 5:13-26, Colossians 3:12-17)

Pastoral Carers are called to be burden-bearers and burden-sharers with and for others, ***whilst not creating dependency*** or denying the person their ***responsibilities and capabilities*** (Galatians 6:1-5).

Pastoral Carers are called to relate to others, with an emphasis more on ***listening*** than speaking, being careful of the words that they speak (James 1:19-27; Proverbs 18:19)

Pastoral Carers are ***called to exercise confidentiality and discretion*** (Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 20:19).

6. Ethical Values for Pastoral Care

Pastoral Carers will be careful to respect the rights and dignity of every person as a unique individual, equal with them in the sight of God and regardless of race, religion, nationality, language, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, size, education, employment, income, disability, health, abode, or criminal record.

Pastoral Carers will seek to accept and not judge a person and to allow them the safety, freedom and space to express themselves and to make their own decisions without force or manipulation, even when they disagree with the person's thinking, actions and life style.

Pastoral carers will be careful to ensure that they do not misuse or abuse the trust that is bestowed upon them by others.

Pastoral Carers will not subject any person to physical, psychological, verbal or spiritual harassment and will not tolerate such behaviour by others. Harassment can include physical, psychological, emotional, sexual or spiritual abuse including insults, unwelcome sexual behaviour, language or jokes, display of offensive materials, words, pictures, symbols, behaviour, gestures or signals.

Pastoral Carers will avoid invading people's personal space, and will always ask permission before physical contact. Any physical contact must always be appropriate.

Pastoral Carers will seek to be honest and open and act with integrity. Pastoral Carers will not exploit the people they are helping-financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way.

Pastoral Carers will maintain confidentiality, understanding that confidentiality does not necessarily mean secrecy.

Pastoral Carers will ensure that the person is safeguarded as far as is practically reasonable and that appropriate steps are taken to seek appropriate medical, legal or other professional assistance where required (refer to **WBC Safeguarding Policy** in relation to safeguarding responsibilities).

Pastoral Carers will seek to hold appropriate boundaries and be confidently assertive when required, but without aggression.

Pastoral Carers will be careful not to create unhealthy dependencies for either themselves or the persons to whom they are offering pastoral care.

7. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a critical boundary which protects the privacy of the person and the integrity of pastoral care in our church. It establishes a safe space for a person and for God to work.

Confidentiality ensures the information a person reveals to us is not disclosed to anyone else, without the person's prior knowledge and consent, apart from exceptional circumstances where safeguarding is necessary.

Pastoral Carers working in a formal pastoral care role need to make a person aware of the boundaries of confidentiality from the onset of any care or support offered.

Pastoral Care offered informally in the everyday contexts of life, needs to assume that what is spoken by the person is to be kept confidential. Where there is any doubt, the Pastoral Carer needs to assume responsibility for clarifying this e.g. would the person like their situation to be kept confidential, to be prayed for by a group of intercessors who would keep their details confidential or do they want it in the weekly news sheet.

Confidentiality in pastoral care might need at times to be worked out not only by the Pastoral Carer and the person being cared for but with the Pastoral Care Lead, the church leadership, other Pastoral Carers, the person's family members and friends, the Pastoral Carer's own family members and friends, prayer groups, or home groups.

It is recognised that some Pastoral Carers may need to discuss issues raised with them for the purposes of supervision or seeking advice on how to proceed, but an individual is not to be named or readily identified by the details revealed.

Exceptions regarding confidentiality

Confidentiality, however, does not need to be confused with secrecy (i.e. concealing information when concealment could be significantly harmful to others) or collusion (i.e. explicitly or inherently cooperating with illegal or unethical behaviour).

Exceptions include:

- When the Pastoral Carer has been required by legislation or a Court of Law to disclose certain information either to the Police or the Court;
- When the Pastoral Carer has reason to believe that others, particularly a child or vulnerable person, are or maybe, at risk of harm or injury;
- When the Pastoral Carer has reason to believe that the person is at risk of harming themselves.

In the first two exceptional cases above, the Pastoral Carer, if they are not placing themselves at risk, should encourage and support the person to disclose information themselves to the appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies.

8. Prayer

All Pastoral Carers are encouraged to pray for the people they are seeking to help, not only privately but also when they meet together, within the boundaries of confidentiality ie the Pastoral Carer does not necessarily need to share all the details of a person's situation in order for others to pray.

Praying with the person a Pastoral Carer is seeking to help must only be carried out with that person's permission, and then in a sensitive way, giving due consideration to their spiritual maturity and church background. The church recognises that in this area of people-helping, carers act only as God's assistants; it is only He who achieves change and healing in someone.

9. Records

The only records which will be used and retained as part of Pastoral Care will be names, postal addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, dates of visits, dates of birthdays and dates of other relevant events. These records can only be made and retained if consent has been obtained and such records must be kept secured in accordance with the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations e.g. in locked cabinets or encrypted on mobile phones or laptops.

Dates of visits - who visited and for what reason - 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.

Care should be taken about access to and use of shared computers, backup systems and emails, iPads, mobile phones, social networks, photocopying, and shredding. It can be, for instance, a breach of confidentiality to copy others into certain emails when the person has not given their permission for you to do so and where the emails contain personal content, or to leave a letter inadvertently in the photocopier, or to leave a thank you card visible to others that gives away information about a person cared for.

10. Dual Relationships

There are times when Pastoral Carers may hold another relationship with the person that they are caring for. For example, a pastoral listener might also be a health carer. In such cases, the boundary of this other relationship may need to be preserved by arranging for another Pastoral Carer to be involved.

Alternatively, the dual relationship might be useful in terms of having a holistic overview of the person's situation but in this instance, the Pastoral Carer has the responsibility for ensuring that all involved are comfortable with the dual roles, and for managing confidentiality in the different contexts.

11. Recruitment and Training

The church will exercise reasonable care and diligence in the selection, appointment and supervision of those undertaking pastoral care on behalf of the church.

The church will not seek volunteers for Pastoral Care by general invitation, but will only consider people on an individual basis after due reflection on their gifting in this area and after an interview with the Pastoral Care Leads.

As those ministering in Pastoral Care may well be involved with those who are vulnerable to abuse, it is the church's policy that those members of the following groups obtain clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service:

- Pastoral Care Team

Others may be asked to undertake Safeguarding Training eg Homegroup Leaders

12. Accountability

Wymondham Baptist Church wants all pastoral caring relationships to be appropriate and safe at all times and therefore each member of the Pastoral Care Team must agree to:

- a) Observe all the guidelines and policies in this document.
- b) Report in to the Pastoral Care Leads, to ensure the Lead is kept informed and can discern if further guidance and input are needed.
- c) Attend any meetings that the Pastoral Care lead arranges for further training, updates or general support.

Occasional Pastoral Carers

If a Pastoral Care Lead asks a volunteer to assist in providing Pastoral Care, then they are responsible for ensuring that the volunteer understands and complies with the parts of this policy and guidelines that are relevant to the care that they are being asked to provide, including confidentiality, Data Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Also that they have reasonable skills to deal competently with the situation.

13. Supervision and Support

The Pastoral Care Leads at WBC are committed to supporting and supervising those who minister specifically within the area of Pastoral Care. Help and support can be sought from the Leads at any time, who may in turn seek additional support from the Elders or Minister at any time. In some circumstances the church leadership may recommend support from a person or organisation outside the church.

Meeting for mutual support and updates

The Pastoral Care Lead will meet with the Pastoral Care team to share and discuss these guidelines and how they are working out in practice in their area of ministry. The Lead will get together with others listed in Section to share and discuss these guidelines eg at a Homegroup Leaders' meeting.

14. Boundaries and Self-care

Boundaries are necessary so that we can confidently experience freedom within them. There are many aspects of a Pastoral Care relationship around which we may draw boundaries.

Pastoral Carers should not enter any situation which they are not comfortable with. They need to be clear within their own mind what their boundaries are and to ensure that these boundaries still permit a viable relationship with the person they are seeking to help. Any concern in this area should be discussed with the Pastoral Lead or the Elders.

Pastoral Carers need to ensure they are taking care of their own health and well-being as they offer care to others. This includes ensuring they are obtaining enough rest, exercise and sleep, and that they are looking after their own relationships. It also includes ensuring they have regular space to grow in relationship with God, to mature in faith and to develop self-awareness themselves through reflective practice.

Pastoral Carers need to ensure they are not working out of their depth in a detrimental way to themselves or the person, that they are working within their abilities and competencies and that they are prepared to refer or signpost a person to others when needed.

Pastoral Carers need to take responsibility for ensuring they are identifying and undertaking training which is relevant to their ministry.

Pastoral Carers need to ensure the person for whom they are caring is aware they are not offering counselling and need to be prepared to refer a person to a counsellor where needed and desired.

Pastoral Carers need to feel safe themselves, and therefore in some instances they have a right to decline offering care and or seeing someone on their own e.g. when dealing with a person who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or who is 'acting out' aggressively.

Pastoral Carers should not offer care to a person when their own functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness, medications or for any other reason. Pastoral Carers should make reference to **WBC's Lone Worker Policy** and ensure that a family member, an Elder or the church office is aware when they are visiting on their own. It is ideal to visit with a colleague. As a general rule a Pastoral Carer or the minister should not visit or hold a pastoral care meeting at the church with an individual of the opposite sex on their own.

15. Referral

An important aspect of Pastoral Care is that workers must not offer help beyond their competence or ability. If the issues presented by an individual are beyond their ability to help, then they *must* refer the individual to another carer with suitable abilities.

In particular, the Pastoral Care of children and young people (those under 18) should be referred to the appropriate Children's and Youth Worker or to the designated person for

safeguarding, who will be familiar with the *Safeguarding Children and Young People Guidelines*. Similarly, the *Pastoral Care of Adults at Risk* needs to be offered in a way that meets that safeguarding policy. In practical terms, such situations would normally involve seeking advice from the pastor.

WBC will hold an up-to-date list of relevant helping organisations for referral.

Key reference: This policy has been drawn up with reference to the ACC (Association of Christians in Counselling) '**Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care**'.