



Policy for Pastoral Care

Every member of the church has a general responsibility for the physical and spiritual well-being of the other members. Within the church some are gifted and set apart by the church with particular responsibility for the pastoral care of others.

“Pastoral care” can mean many things and can operate on many levels:

- (A) Friendship – mutual support and encouragement;
- (B) Practical help – for example with household tasks, transport, etc;
- (C) Discipling – guidance and support in the Christian life;
- (D) Guiding– a listening ear and wise advice;
- (E) Short-term Crisis Care and Long-term Special Care in particular circumstances.

In general the Minister’s pastoral role is to give type (E) Crisis Care and Special Care as described below, to offer pastoral care type (D) guidance and to train, equip and support others in the church in their ministries.

Small Group Leaders and those identified as Pastoral Carers share responsibility for pastoral care type (B), practical help and type (C) discipling, drawing in other members of the church where appropriate.

The whole church shares in the responsibility for pastoral care type (A) friendship, caring, sharing and bearing one other’s burdens informally.

Who does the Caring?

The Minister(s) has responsibility for:

- ✓ Short-term Crisis Care of any individuals and families e.g. in the Specialist areas listed below;
- ✓ Long-term Special Care of any individuals and families.
- ✓ Any individuals in special circumstances of e.g. marriage preparation, baptism preparation, bereavement, hospital visits;
- ✓ Any individuals who request the assistance of the Minister(s);
- ✓ The day-to-day care of the Church Officers and their families;
- ✓ The day-to-day care of the Small Group Leaders and their families;
- ✓ The day-to-day care of the Pastoral Carers and their families.

The Deacons have responsibility for:

- ✓ The day-to-day care of the Minister(s) and families ;



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- ✓ Supporting the Minister(s) in offering Short-term Crisis Care and Long-term Special Care.
- ✓ Any individuals who requests the assistance of a deacon

The Small Group Leaders have responsibility for:

- ✓ The day-to-day care of members and regular attenders of their groups and their families;
- ✓ The day-to-day care of other members of church and congregation on their list for which the group has agreed to care.

The Pastoral Carers have responsibility for the day-to-day care of:

- ✓ The day-to-day care of members of the church and congregation on their list who would not usually be covered in other ways.

Interviewers for membership should have an ongoing interest in the person until such a time as they are fully immersed into the life of the church including a small group.

Levels of Care

Day-to-day care involves support and encouragement by fellowship, prayer and practical help. For a housebound or sick person it requires periodic contact by visit and telephone. Note that Small Group members will normally share in the tasks of caring for each other and for others on their Small Group's list - the Small Group Leader coordinates the caring but does not do everything!

A vital part of day-to-day care is to refer situations to the Minister(s). Small Group Leader or a Pastoral Carer has the responsibility of quickly informing the Minister(s) when Crisis Care or Special Care become necessary for someone on their list. All referrals should go through the Team Leader

Crisis Care is the short-term close involvement by a Minister(s) in situations of particular difficulty and delicacy such as the Specialist areas listed below.

Special Care implies regular long-term specialist support and counselling in Specialist areas and will be offered by the Minister(s), other appropriately qualified members and/or outside specialists. If outside specialists are involved some liaison with the Minister(s) or other appropriately qualified member may need to take place in order to ensure consistency in approach and support.



Specialist Areas

Among the circumstances where the help of the Minister(s) must be obtained are any problems connected with:

- ✓ serious illness or accident, and laying on of hands for healing;
- ✓ bereavement;
- ✓ family breakdown;
- ✓ matters related to sex* including child abuse* ;
- ✓ alcohol or drugs;
- ✓ crime;
- ✓ debt;
- ✓ psychiatric problems* ;
- ✓ any aspect of the occult* ;
- ✓ spiritual problems of various kinds;
- ✓ any other serious problems affecting attendance or participation in church life.

A Small Group Leader or Pastoral Carer must ALWAYS inform the Minister(s) when offering care and ministry himself/herself to anyone on his/her list in any of the specialist areas listed above.

A Small Group Leader or Pastoral Carer should not normally offer any ministry in areas marked with a * above, nor to folk not on his/her own list.

A Small Group Leader or Pastoral Carer should not visit or undertake any ministry while alone with a member of the opposite sex.

These common-sense principles are very important to prevent unnecessary duplication of effort, to prevent the damage which may easily be done by inexperienced or ill-informed counselling and to avoid any risk of embarrassment or scandal. If in doubt, seek the guidance of a Minister.

Those not in Small Groups

Ideally all members and regular attenders should be allocated to a small group whether or not they plan to attend but, where practicable, there should be some liaison between the Small Group Leader and the Pastoral Carer to ensure that those who do not attend receive the appropriate pastoral care.

Parkside

Pastoral care from the church to residents and staff at Parkside will be shared among the chaplains of the home and also be given by the Team Minister with a focus on the older generation who usually visits the home on a weekly basis.



Points of referral

All referrals to be passed to the Minister Team leader who will delegate responses as appropriate. Referrals from other channels should be put into this process at the earliest opportunity. The Team Leader's phone number and email address should be widely available. When on annual leave this should be forwarded to another agreed number to ensure a speedy response.

Role of Pastoral Group

The pastoral group is a vital resource in the overall pastoral care of the church. Members of this group referred to as 'Pastoral Carer' should be appointed by the leadership team and its make up reviewed annually by the leadership team. This group will work with the Minister(s) to ensure adequate pastoral support across the life of the church and/or in line to that outlined above.

Visits

Pastoral care is best done face to face, and so the norm for pastoral care is by visiting and meeting with people. Particular priority is given at times of medical or personal crisis and at end of life that visits are made and the ministers go out of their way to be there for people.

It is best practice that someone else is aware of a visit that is to take place and Minister(s) and Pastoral Carers should inform someone of such visits prior to visiting.

Record Keeping

Following a referral as outlined above a process needs to be developed so that if planned visits do not happen for whatever reason this may need to be followed up by someone else. This would be particularly important where bereavement has happened, health issues means a priority visit should take place or a crisis has occurred. All Minister(s) to keep records of all pastoral visits and to put them onto a system for transparency. This to include all visits, all pastoral interactions including those taking place in general conversation or on the door on a Sunday so that referrals or issues raised are responded to appropriately. Pastoral Carers should complete a Visiting Record where appropriate. The Team Leader or an appointed person to monitor that appropriate support is being given. This information will be stored and handled in compliance with current Data Protection legislation and remain confidential to the Minister(s) and reviewed at the regular meetings of the Minister(s).

Discipline and Morality Issues

All matters of discipline and morality issues should be dealt with by a minister. When appropriate the Minister(s) may seek guidance from the Leadership Team.



Prayer Ministry

This is an important ministry of the church and central to our pastoral care.

Occasional offices and rites of Passage

All dedications, baptisms, wedding and funeral request should come through the normal referral route to be allocated by the Team Leader. Particular care will be given to dates and availability within church services and the necessary liaison with musicians and audio/visual operators will usually take place before confirmation of such events occur. The Team leader is responsible for ensuring that any such services are in line with the agreed policies of the church in these matters.

Confidentiality

Any matters discussed with the Minister(s) remains confidential to the ministry team although they reserve the right to seek the advice of specialists completely outside the church if necessary.

Any confidential matters shared with a Small Group Leader or a Pastoral Carer will normally be shared with the Minister(s) and the person informed that this will take place but not with other Small Group Leaders or Pastoral Carer or in any other way within or outside the church. The ability to abide by such confidentiality is an essential requirement for any Small Group Leader or Pastoral Carer.

Gossip

Pastoral Care and gossip are mutually exclusive. If remarks or accusations are made about another person's problems or conduct, the speaker must be invited to repeat them in that person's presence as soon as practical and such matters should be referred to the Minister(s).

This document is a policy document for Romford Baptist Church and not designed as a complete 'How to' guide for Pastoral care. It is important though that it is robustly implemented and monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. All Ministers, Small group leaders and Pastoral care leaders should be aware of this policy.

Signed: Revd Ian Bunce

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1 – new policy April 2020

Policy reviewed January 2025 – no changes required.