

# Policy: Pastoral Care

## 1 Peter 5:2 “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care”

### 1. The purpose and scope of pastoral care

**1.1 Aims:** The purpose of the pastoral care policy is to inform and support the development of best pastoral practice; to ensure the well-being and protection of both those who are giving, and those who are receiving, pastoral care. Inevitably, when people exercise their gifts in helping others they will be interacting with people who are sometimes needy and often quite vulnerable. We want everyone to build and work within safe and appropriate relationships at all times and the goal of this policy is to ensure this. This document should be read and applied in conjunction with the current Safeguarding policy.

**1.2 Definition:** Pastoral care is the term that we broadly apply to a ministry of compassion, encouragement, and transformation within the Christian life. Pastoral care is not professional care provision. Any issues that fall outside the scope of listening, praying, and supporting will be referred on to external specialist agencies.

At St Paul’s Kingston we see pastoral care as part of the calling of all God’s people - to support one another by demonstrating unconditional love, acceptance, and encouragement; to come alongside others informally to offer practical support, a listening ear and prayer. We also enable a number of people to take specific responsibility in the pastoral care of our church family and members of the wider community that we are in contact with, in a formal and organised way.

### 2. Pastoral Care Structure – who this policy applies to

The following teams have specific responsibilities for pastoral care:

- \*the clergy/staff pastoral team (vicar, assistant minister, curate and associate pastors)
- \*the pastoral care visiting team
- \*the prayer ministry team
- \*leaders of home groups, connect groups and ministry teams

The clergy and staff team and pastoral care visiting team are under the guidance of the vicar.

The prayer ministry team leader is responsible for the coordination of the prayer ministry team.

Home group and connect group leaders are under the guidance of the Community Pastor who should be contacted if they need to refer pastoral care needs from their groups.

Ministry team leaders should also refer any pastoral care needs from their teams to the clergy and staff team.

### 3. Policy Statement:

We commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safeguarding of all within the St Paul’s, Kingston community and those in the wider community that we minister among. We are committed to a Code of

Ethics and Practice for Pastoral Care<sup>1</sup>. It is also our intention to support, train and supervise those working in the area of pastoral care.

#### **4. Pastoral Practice:**

**4.1 Informal pastoral care** can be shown in pastoral concern (helping people with a specific difficult issue; offering practical assistance; being a listening ear) where the key aspect involves developing a relationship of trust between the pastoral carer and the person receiving support for a period of time. It can also be shown through prayer ministry when God's intervention is sought with them, through prayer, for a specific situation or issue. In these cases, pastoral carers will have some experience and/or may have received training in good listening skills and prayer ministry, as appropriate. Any concerns would be reported to a member of the clergy/staff pastoral team.

**4.2 Formal pastoral care** can be shown through pastoral support, where individuals need one-on-one support due to a difficult situation such as bereavement or relationship breakdown. There may be regular meetings over a period of time. This pastoral support will usually be offered by the clergy and staff pastoral team or trained pastoral care visitors.

Pastoral care may also be shown through pastoral visiting of people, often in their own home but also in nursing homes, hospitals etc. The aims of these visits are to extend the fellowship of the church to them (including offering home communion) and to understand the issues that a person may be facing to help ascertain whether broader support may be needed from the church or an outside agency.

A pastoral care visit from a member of clergy may also be requested for prayer and anointing for healing or at the end of life.

**4.3** In all formal pastoral care activities the cared-for person has personal responsibility for their own actions and autonomy to make their own decisions and this must be respected at all times. It is important to assess their Christian faith maturity and their state of emotional well-being and care must be taken to consider how the pastoral care being offered will be understood and viewed by the person, their family, and their carers. Permission should be sought before praying, reading Scripture, or initiating physical contact with a person – the laying on of hands, for example.

**4.4** Boundaries must be set clearly in each pastoral care situation. Be aware of issues of sexual attraction and co-dependency. If you sense that a pastoral encounter could prove unhelpful for either yourself or the person needing care, make new arrangements for their support. Pastoral meetings should typically be for up to one hour; keep the frequency and setting the same each time if possible. Any concerns or issues related to breaching of normal boundaries – eg repeated phone calls or messages from the person being cared for – should be raised with a member of the clergy and staff pastoral team.

**4.5** Pastoral care visits must not include the giving of personal or intimate care, for example - helping someone to dress or use the restroom.

**4.6** Any pastoral support that requires or includes any exchange of money, for example – reimbursement for groceries purchased on behalf of someone who is receiving pastoral care – needs written agreement

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.pastoralcareuk.org/public/docs/pastoral-care/Guidelines\\_for\\_Good\\_Practice\\_in\\_Pastoral\\_Care.pdf](https://www.pastoralcareuk.org/public/docs/pastoral-care/Guidelines_for_Good_Practice_in_Pastoral_Care.pdf)

in advance from their pastoral team leader.

**4.7** When arranging a pastoral care meeting, think about the appropriateness of the setting: is it safe, open, populated, quiet and uncompromising? Consider inviting a supporter for the initial meeting or if you are unsure about safety. Always carry a mobile phone or some means of contacting support, even if meeting in a neutral area or visiting someone well-known to you. If home visiting is necessary ensure that the meetings are diarised, that a third party is informed of the meeting length and nature of the meeting. Have a no-tolerance approach to violent, threatening, or abusive behaviour at all times. Terminate any meeting in which you consciously or instinctively sense your safety or well-being is being threatened. Report such activities to your team leader and take further action if required.

**4.8** All pastoral care activities should be conducted safely in accordance with the procedures and guidelines given in the St Paul's, Kingston Safeguarding Policy. This is of particular importance for those working with vulnerable adults or with families with children under 18.

**4.9** All information received by a pastoral carer from a person receiving support should be kept in confidence unless:

- \*permission is given by the person receiving support to share that information with others;
- \*the pastoral carer needs to refer and receive guidance from the pastoral team, in which case permission to share information should be asked for;
- \*a safeguarding issue obliges the pastoral carer to disclose information appropriately;
- \*there is a legal obligation to disclose information (eg for the purposes of a police investigation).

**4.10** Reporting and record keeping are important means of maintaining continuity for people being cared for and personal safety. Records should log the time and date of the meetings held as well as any significant concerns the pastoral carer has about the person's welfare. All reports should be held securely and confidentially on the system set up for this on Church Suite.

**4.11** Every Pastoral Carer should have access to support or supervision from their team leader (see section 2). Those offering pastoral care will meet together regularly to pray and encourage one another and to discuss and action support for those a) requiring crisis care and immediate visits; b) requiring further support; c) requiring prayer; d) who have not been attending church or been in contact recently.

**4.12** We value and aim for person-centred pastoral care, but we also place a high value on the well-being of those on the pastoral teams. Each Pastoral team should encourage developing healthy attitudes towards 'self-care'; pastoral carers should aim to develop high levels of self-awareness and be freed to respond to their own emotional state without concern of letting others down.

## **5. Signposting:**

All Pastoral team members will have access to a signposting contact sheet. This will include the contact numbers of local authorities and other secular organisations that can be used as a referral when there are concerns about an individual's well-being. For example a local G.P., homeless shelter, and NHS referral clinics.