

Pastoral Care at Forefront Community Church

Introduction

What do we mean by 'Pastoral Care'?

The word 'pastor' comes from 'shepherd', which is a metaphor that runs right throughout the Bible to describe the relationship between God and his people. God being the 'chief shepherd' to whom we will give account for how we have been 'shepherds of God's flock' (1 Peter 4:2-4).

Following through that metaphor we can see that pastoral care encompasses a range of actions that seeks to look after and develop the overall health of the individual - spiritually, physically and emotionally. There is an overriding intention to see people mature in every way.

Pastoral Care is holistic - we seek to see people as 'wholes' and become whole. As such pastoral care can not be separated from our mission to reach people with the Good News of Jesus Christ and to see them become His followers.

Who is responsible?

While the church leaders have overall responsibility for pastoral care and teaching, it is clear from the Bible that all of us, as members of the body, have a part to play according to the gifts God has entrusted to us. That may mean providing meals, visiting the sick and lonely, following up people who have not been seen recently, praying with people or even one to one mentoring.

Pastoral Care is not just exercised by a few 'specialists', although there are times when people with particular gifts and abilities will be needed, but by everyone of us.

Who do we care for and how?

While pastoral care is primarily for those in the church family, as part of our mission to the world we also have responsibilities to those outside and for those who have come into contact with the church.

The nature of that care will vary for people depending on where they are on the 'journey'. We also need to recognise that different church members will have different responsibilities. We have therefore sought to identify different groups and different responsibilities.

Although the church leadership have the overall responsibility for pastoral care it will be coordinated on a daily basis by Christine Smith the Pastoral Coordinator. Effort will be made to maintain a two way communication between the Pastoral Coordinator and individuals with responsibility to coordinate and deliver pastoral care to the different groups outlined, so that issues and needs can be shared confidentially.

Coordination of care

1. Life group members

It is the intention that all members of the church belong to Life Groups and that this is where the majority of the pastoral care happens. These groups will encourage care for one another by every member of the group by:

- giving time to share and pray specifically for peoples needs on a regular basis
- encouraging prayer, support and mutual accountability partners
- taking the primary responsibility to provide/coordinate practical help & support at specific times (births/deaths/sickness/hospitalisations)
- following up absenteeism from the group or Sunday, with a phone call or visit
- developing member contact with each other outside of meetings
- showing care for those with connection to the people in group but not part of it eg. Church missionary, student at college, other contacts of the group

To help facilitate this, each group may have a pastoral coordinator(s) who will:

- encourage everyone to be involved in the above
- make needs and issues known within the group or to the Life Group coordinator or leadership where appropriate
- have pastoral gifts themselves but are not necessarily the Life Group leaders.

2. Children and Young People

Includes all children and young people involved in Sunday activities, both church families and those from un-churched families (for other mid week activities see #9).

While Christian parents have a responsibility for the pastoral care of their children through to adulthood, the church family also have an important role to play in assisting parents and providing leadership and structures for the young people to develop through their teenage years. Therefore within the Sunday activities:

- time will be given on a regular basis in the different meetings for the children to share and pray together
- teachers will aim to make time to speak to the young people on a regular basis following up absenteeism with a phone call or home visit where necessary and passing on information to the children and young people coordinators.
- Life Groups will be encouraged to become prayer partners for the different children's groups and are to be passed prayer points on a regular basis by the prayer coordinator of the activity they support. A full, current list of the pray-ers and coordinators will be kept in Forefront Centre.

All people involved in the care of children and young people are to be made aware and agree to act in accordance with the terms of the church's Safeguarding Policy. They will also undergo a CRB check.

3. Staff

They will be an active Life Group member, therefore receiving the support of their group. They will also be encouraged to have a mentoring relationship with a mature Christian of their choice meeting on a regular basis to talk and pray through their ministry and their own spiritual lives. Andrew Conlan as Team Leader will exercise an overall care.

4. People with significant responsibilities within the church

There are many who exercise responsibility in the church. In the majority of cases they will be in 'teams' and also members of Life Groups so pastoral care can be primarily through these means.

For those who carry out significant responsibilities e.g Life Group leaders, service leaders and teachers, leaders of specific ministries, it is the intention that there should be a meeting with one of the leaders twice a year to talk and pray through their ministry and their own spiritual lives. This will most usually be the responsibility of the Team Leader.

5. Church members living away from the area

This includes missionaries and students living away in term time both in the UK and overseas. Each will be encouraged to be as involved as possible in a local church where they are, and on their return to be integrating back into the life of the church and to join a Life Group.

Missionaries

Effort will be made to be involved in both the preparation as the individuals leave, and in the debrief as they return to help them reintegrate and reflect on what they have learnt while they have been away.

Where possible the leadership will seek to be in contact with the missions agency the individuals have gone with so they can be aware of what support they are receiving from the agency and how we can better partner with them in this. As well as this contact will be made at least on a monthly basis by the Mission prayer group to gather prayer requests for the monthly Missions prayer meeting and to see how the missionaries are getting on. Life Groups will also be encouraged to take on a supporting role of individuals.

Students

Where students have been involved in a Life Group effort will be made to maintain the contact and provide support while they are away from home. They will also be sent a card by the church approx once a term.

6. The housebound and hospitalised

The leadership has overall responsibility, however, day to day coordination will be the Pastoral Coordinator's responsibility. Others with pastoral gifts will be encouraged to get take on some of the visiting.

Emergency situations brought to the attention of the Church office will be sent down the Prayer Chain with the person's consent. The Pastoral Coordinator will also be informed. In the case of hospitalisation the chaplain of the hospital will be contacted.

Where the church member is part of a Life Group the group is expected to take primary responsibility to visit. However, where additional help is required this should be communicated to the Pastoral Coordinator.

7. New people (new Christians / visitors / seekers / Christians from other churches)

For all of these subgroups the first contact will most often be with the connect team on Sunday morning who will...

- welcome all new-comers, make an effort to sit them with a regular congregation member and try to discern which of the above categories they best fit into.
- refer any regular new comers to the Connect team coordinator who will refer, where further contact is wanted and appropriate, to the Leadership or the Pastoral Coordinator.

People will then be visited initially by a member of the Leadership team to get to know them and understand what they are looking for. New Christians will then be encouraged to join a Life Group and seekers to participate in an Alpha or equivalent course.

Where a new comer, coming from another church, wishes to become a member of Forefront, contact will be made with their previous church so that the Leadership can understand the situation of why they left their old church, whether there were any unresolved issues and what responsibilities they previously had.

8. Church attenders (no Life Group involvement)

The intention is that everyone in the church is part of a Life Group as this is our primary means of pastoral care. Therefore effort will be made to encourage those not already involved to join groups. The aim is to visit each person or family once a year to encourage this.

All church attenders will be greeted particularly by the Welcome team on Sunday mornings, whose remit includes following up pastoral concerns, giving opportunity for people to pray with them about their own needs or the needs of others, and where necessary passing situations on to the Pastoral Coordinator.

9. Mid-week activities (including Coffee & Co, Forefront centre, Parent & toddlers, Megamix, Messy Church etc. - those with no Sunday connections)

Leaders of these activities will be members of a Life Group. Pastoral care of those participating in these groups should be at the discretion of the activity leaders. It may include offering prayer, home visiting, practical help in terms of meals or food bags from the Lord's Larder.

Activity leaders and volunteers are not encouraged to provide financial assistance on a regular basis to any individual. There is a discretionary fund overseen by the Leadership for this purpose. Need will be assessed on a case by case basis and at the discretion of the Leadership.