

Pastoral Care Guidelines

September 2025

Aims: The purpose of these Pastoral Care Guidelines is to inform and support the development of best pastoral practice at Christchurch Baptist Church.

1. Policy Statement on Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care is the responsibility of all believers, but God calls some to use their gifts of Pastoral Care to serve the church in specific ways. This can, at times, mean interacting with people who are vulnerable and have a variety of needs. At Christchurch Baptist Church we want these relationships to always be appropriate and safe. Therefore, whilst not wishing to restrict or hinder carers, we have provided these guidelines for those serving in this way. Any policy is limited, so please do talk to one of the Ministers should you have any questions or concerns.

As members of this church, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all. Our aim is to offer Pastoral Care with integrity and in a way that honours God and all those involved. It is the responsibility of each one of us to care for one another and to seek to help others when they are experiencing challenges where, at least for the moment, good Pastoral Care would be an enormous benefit. The church is also committed to supporting, resourcing, training and supervising those who minister specifically within the area of Pastoral Care.

2. Definition of Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care is the term that we broadly apply to a ministry of compassion, encouragement and transformation within the Christian life and church. A definition already mentioned in our Pastoral Care Policy is helpful as a summary, although not exhaustive, of what is meant by Pastoral Care. *'Pastoral Care happens when Christians help one another by listening, responding, praying and providing caring support. Jesus came to offer life in all its fulness (John 10:10). Pastoral Care seeks to open that possibility up to all, enabling transformation as we grow in our faith through serving and caring for one another'*. Through Pastoral Care we seek to love one another as Christ first loved us, and as we do enable one another to become more like Him.

3. Biblical Values for Pastoral Care

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). It will also contribute towards 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 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 Carers are called to love others through Christ-like love (John 13:34-35, Roman 12:10; Romans 13:8), be led and living by the Holy Spirit, manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit and informed by the Word of God (Galatians 5:13-26 and 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).

4. 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, employment, income, disability, health or criminal record.

Pastoral Carers will seek to accept and not judge a person allowing 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 lifestyle.

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 or subtle demeaning, 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 any physical contact. Within a pastoral interaction this would be no more than offering to hold a hand or gently touching an arm.

Pastoral Carers will not exploit the people they are helping- financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way.

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

Pastoral Carers will maintain confidentiality, understanding that confidentiality does not necessarily mean secrecy (see section 6-Confidentiality).

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 (see our [Safeguarding Information and Policy](#)).

Pastoral Carers will seek to be honest and open and act with integrity.

Pastoral Carers will seek to hold appropriate boundaries and be confidently assertive when required, but always without aggression. For reference, please see our [Complaints Policy](#).

5. Organisation of Pastoral Care

As well as the expectation of the membership to care for one another, there are several formal groups within the body of the church that have responsibility for Pastoral Care. These groups include:

- Pastoral Care Team (including Ministers & Elders)
- Home Groups
- Prayer Ministry Team

5.1 The Pastoral Care Team

The Pastoral Care Team will:

- When appropriate offer to visit, pray for and offer practical support to those in need.
- Attend bi-monthly team meetings for support, encouragement and training.
- Follow this policy, Adult Safeguarding Policy & Procedures, Good Practice Guidelines (0-18s), Data Protection Policy and Lone Working Policy.
- Seek pastoral advice, when necessary, from one of the Ministers or an Elder.
- Commit to praying for those they're supporting, and for themselves as they deliver Pastoral Care.
- Not take on more than they can manage, recognising their limitations.
- Be accountable to one another by attending Pastoral Care Team Meetings, using the WhatsApp group to keep in touch.
- Communicate with the Pastoral Care Team just before visiting someone and afterwards to give a brief update.
- All Pastoral Carers must be DBS checked and attend safeguarding training.

5.2 Home Groups (see Home Group Facilitators Guidelines)

One of the most effective ways to provide pastoral care is within home groups. Pastoral support will be offered by every home group at CBC where friendships and care already exist. It is hoped that everyone in the group will be involved in this. Within each small group, one person will oversee Pastoral Care. They will ensure group members who have not attended recently are followed up and pastoral issues including those beyond the scope of the small group are communicated to one of the Ministers or Pastoral Team.

5.3 Prayer Ministry (see Prayer Ministry Guidelines)

Believers are encouraged to pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer support is fundamental to Pastoral Care and should always be offered but never imposed when visiting and also during prayer ministry on a Sunday morning.

- Prayer should show great sensitivity and respect.
- When we pray, we are asking God to be at work by His Holy Spirit.

5.4 Home Visits (see [Lone Working Policy](#))

- Make it known that you are visiting on behalf of CBC and are accountable to the Minister with responsibility for Pastoral Oversight.
- Be clear to the person visited that you are offering pastoral support, not professional help or counselling.
- If you are unsure about your safety or the safety of the person you are visiting, do not visit alone but choose an appropriate person to accompany you or meet in a more public venue.
- For your safety home visits should be pre-arranged and communicated with the Pastoral Care Team.
- Do not plan home visits late at night.

- Be aware of sexual attraction. Don't visit alone members of the opposite sex or someone who will make this difficult for you or the person you are visiting.
- Carry a mobile phone so that you can make a call quickly and easily if the situation requires it.

6. Confidentiality

Confidentiality Statement

Information of a personal nature shared within the context of pastoral care will be treated confidentially and with respect. If details are to be disclosed for any reason the permission of the person sharing that information must normally be sought.

Where there is a serious risk of harm or where abuse is suspected, either to the person concerned or to others, then confidentiality must be waived in the interests of those at risk. In these instances, the Pastoral Carer will need to explain why confidentiality will be breached and to who.

Those providing pastoral care at CBC should not feel they do so alone, and any concerns should be discussed with one of the Ministers. Occasionally this may involve sharing confidential information with the Minister. Ministers and Pastoral Carers might, in times of supervision or line management, share pastoral situations. However, good practice is to tell the person why someone else is becoming involved and who.

Breach of Confidentiality

Whatever the information may be, a person's decision to share it may be at great cost to themselves or others and should not be treated lightly. It is a serious issue when confidentiality is broken. If this occurs, the Ministers should be discreetly informed.

Disclosure Requiring Additional Professional Support

In some circumstances specialist and/or professional help is needed and referrals to get that extra help may be necessary. Relevant information for a referral should only be shared with the consent of the person requiring the additional support. It is expected that where further action is being considered one of the Elders will be involved.

Disclosure of Abuse and Further Action

Where abuse or serious harm is suspected or disclosed:

- For adults refer to our Adults Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and speak immediately to the Safeguarding Team.
- For children and young people refer to the 'Good Practice Guidelines (0-18s)' and speak immediately to the Safeguarding Team.
- For reporting a concern to our Designated Person for Safeguarding see [Safeguarding Reporting](#)

Issues of Mental Capacity and Consent in Adults

Please refer to our Adult Safeguarding Policy and Procedures or speak with the Safeguarding Team.

Children and Young People

Parental consent should always be obtained before offering pastoral care to children and young people under the age of 18. Refer to the 'Good Practice Guidelines (0-18s)' or speak with the Safeguarding Team.

Safe Practice

Duty of Care- Duty of Care is *'a moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety or well-being of others'* (Oxford Dictionary). This means that if someone causes loss or injury by failing to carry out his/her responsibilities in a careful way, they (and possibly Christchurch Baptist Church) could be held liable for negligence under civil law. Please refer to 'Adults Safeguarding Policy And Procedures', the 'Good Practice Guidelines (0-18s)' and the [Data Protection and Privacy Policies](#).

Currently, to ensure that personal data is handled in compliance with Data Protection legislation the Pastoral Care Team should only use phones and computers to record information which should be suitably password protected.

7. Minister for responsibility for Pastoral Oversight

The Minister will:

- Be the link between the Pastoral Care Team and the Elders.
- Ensure the Pastoral Care Policy and Guidelines are implemented and reviewed.
- Provide pastoral-related training for the Pastoral Care Team.
- Be clear about the roles, skills and availability of the Pastoral Care Team.
- Provide confidential supervision, advice and guidance to those providing Pastoral Care.
- Take on pastoral referrals that may be complex, sensitive or require planning.
- Contact specialist/professional agencies, make referrals and follow up as necessary.
- Pass on referrals to the Pastoral Care Team where appropriate and follow up.

8. Record Keeping

Record keeping is an important means of maintaining care continuity and personal safety. It is good practice to mention to the person that brief notes may be kept of the conversation. All reports should be held securely and confidentially using a protected password.

9. Support and Self Care

We are committed to caring for Pastoral Carers who serve the church. There may be times when pastoral support is required. This will be provided with either the minister responsible for Pastoral Care or by a trained external supervisor/counsellor. If needed, limited finances can be made available for this.

We encourage Pastoral Carers to have healthy self-awareness and feel free and able to respond to their own emotional state without concern of letting others down. An important part of the self-care and wellbeing of Pastoral Carers is that they are constantly seeking to deepen and experience a rich prayer life, be strengthened by the Scriptures and seek accountable relationships to help sustain their ministry.

Please also refer to our 'Pastoral Care Policy'