



Pastoral Care Policy

Document history

Version	Date	Author/Editor	Approved by
1.0	23OCT24	Kevin Lovell	PCC
1.1	04FEB26	Kevin Lovell	PCC

Next review date: February 2027

Issued by:

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Contents

1	Introduction	3
1.1	Related Documents	3
2	Introduction to Pastoral Care Guidelines	4
3	Terminology	4
4	Pastoral Care Organisation	4
4.1	Recruitment	5
4.2	Provision of Pastoral Care	5
4.3	Supervision and record-keeping	6
4.4	Confidentiality	6
4.5	Dual Relationships	7
4.6	Boundaries and self-care	8
5	Defining Pastoral Care	8
5.1	Biblical Values for Pastoral Care	9
5.2	Ethical Values for Pastoral Care	9

1 Introduction

What is Pastoral Care? We are watchful and support those in the church and wider community who need care; being mindful of the whole person, body, mind and spirit. Christian pastoral care flows from the attitude and commitment to love one another because we ourselves are first loved by God.

When do we care? Christian pastoral care might take place formally in planned and organized ways or informally through everyday spontaneous moments.

Who cares? As members of this church, we commit ourselves to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all. It is the responsibility of all of us to care for one another and help others when they are experiencing hardship or problems. Some of our community are commissioned as ‘Pastoral Care Assistants’: this means that they have been discerned as having particular pastoral gifts and calling, and will undertake additional training to carry out their duties as representatives of St Barnabas’ church.

Why do we care? God provides us with pastoral care (Psalm 23), and so we too offer pastoral care for others as a reflection of his love for us. God gives us the gifts to care and carries this burden with us. “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30.

How is our care conducted? With the oversight of the Vicar, wardens and PCC, pastoral care may be provided face-to-face on church premises, via phone calls and home visits. Some Pastoral Care Assistants may also be authorised to administer Holy Communion by extension, to the sick at home.

1.1 Related Documents

Pastoral Care Assistants, clergy and other licensed ministers will make themselves aware of and follow the guidance within these related documents:

- Pastoral Care Assistant Role Description for St Barnabas Emmer Green and Caversham Park.
- St Barnabas church Safeguarding Policy: <https://www.saintbarnabas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Emmer-Green-St-Barnabas-Safeguarding-Policy-2022.pdf> .
- Please read “Promoting a Safer Church” - House of Bishops Safeguarding Policy statement 2017 found here:
<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/PromotingSaferChurchWeb.pdf>

2 Introduction to Pastoral Care Guidelines

Throughout the Bible, Christians are encouraged to care for one another, both other Christians and our wider community. This is the responsibility of all believers, but God calls some to go a little further in this service of helping others.

Inevitably, if carers exercise their gifts in helping people, they will be interacting with people who are often quite vulnerable and sometimes needy: we want those relationships to be appropriate and safe at all times.

Therefore, whilst not wishing to restrict or hinder carers, we have provided these guidelines for those serving in this way, to help them to work within the policies, advice and procedures that have been agreed and implemented within the church.

Any procedure is limited, so please do talk to the Vicar should you have any questions or concerns.

3 Terminology

Pastoral Care: Care being provided by Christians in a variety of contexts.

Person: For the sake of brevity the word ‘person’ is used to indicate the person being cared for.

Carer: a Christian who provides pastoral care to another person who may or may not hold a Christian faith.

Pastoral Care Assistant: a member of St Barnabas’ congregation who has been selected and commissioned to provide pastoral care ‘on behalf of’ St Barnabas church.

Safely Recruited: Safely recruited as outlined in the Church of England Parish Safeguarding Handbook, section 5.

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/ParishSafeGuardingHandBookAugust2019Web.pdf>

Note on Counselling: Counselling is a specialised activity which requires formal training, involves a contractual agreement between the counsellor and the client. St Barnabas church does not offer or undertake this activity, therefore Counselling falls outside the scope of this policy.

4 Pastoral Care Organisation

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 hardship or problems that, at least for the moment, seem beyond their ability to cope with, as well as providing company and practical support as needed. We recognise that this people-helping is the responsibility of the whole church.

However, we make a distinction for those who offer care formally 'on behalf of the church' at the request of the Vicar. Any who provide such support will be known as Pastoral Care Assistants.

The church is committed to supporting, resourcing, training and supervising all who offer nurture and care. Training may be conducted within the church, from courses provided by the diocese or externally.

The organisation of Pastoral Care given formally 'on behalf of the church' will be done in the following way:

4.1 Recruitment

St Barnabas will exercise reasonable care and diligence in the selection, appointment and supervision of those undertaking pastoral care on behalf of the church and will be Safely Recruited. We 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.

There shall be a process of discernment, including the following elements:

1. Congregation members who show particular gifts in pastoral care may be nominated to the Vicar. There should be prayer and informal conversations with the person to explain the role and understand their willingness to undertake this work.
2. Nomination accepted by PCC (PCC is responsible for all those who may work with children or vulnerable adults).
3. Safer recruitment process, which will include taking-up of references, Confidential Declaration Form, interview (with Vicar and at least one other member of PCC) and DBS check.
4. If accepted at interview, training appropriate to the individual (including relevant safeguarding modules).
5. Commissioning of new Pastoral Care Assistants during a Sunday service.

4.2 Provision of Pastoral Care

This is more fully described in the Pastoral Care Assistant role description, however in summary, care will be provided in the following scenarios:

- In and around events on church premises (that is, Church services, or any of the regular St Barnabas groups like Tuesday Craft, Friday Fellowship or Bereavement Café). Pastoral Care assistants may talk and pray with people in the church, parish centre or church hall. Wherever possible, such encounters would be face-to-face, held openly in a room with other people present.
- Telephone conversations with congregation members.
- Visits to congregation members in their homes (which may include residential care home settings). These visits are typically to congregation members, living locally, who are unable to get to church.
- Visits to congregation members in hospital.

Some Pastoral Care Assistants may also be authorised to administer Holy Communion to the sick.

Pastoral Care Assistants are not expected to visit people who are unknown to the St Barnabas community.

4.3 Supervision and record-keeping

Pastoral Care Assistants will keep notes of their visits: dates, times, who they visited and when. As with all personal data, this should be kept safe and secure.

Pastoral Care Assistants will meet with the Vicar and Parish Safeguarding Officer on a regular basis: to pray; discuss their work; raise concerns; identify training needs and agree future visits.

Any concerns will always be raised immediately with the Vicar and/or the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

Ongoing ministry as a Pastoral Care Assistant will depend upon regular renewal of DBS checks and safeguarding training as required by the Diocesan safeguarding team.

4.4 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a critical boundary which protects the privacy of the person and the integrity of pastoral care in our church.

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.

Confidentiality establishes trust and a safe space for a person and for God to work.

Confidentiality however, must not 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 to confidentiality 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; by way of example where it is legally required such as drug trafficking, crime, terrorist or money laundering
- when the Pastoral Carer has reason to believe that others, particularly a child or vulnerable person, are or may be, 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. If this is not possible, the Pastoral Carer should seek the person's permission for them to pass information on to any appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies. If this is not forthcoming, the Pastoral Carer should disclose information, which is only on a need-to-know basis, to the appropriate bodies, authorities or agencies without the person's consent.

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, for 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 clergy, the one of the Ministry Heads, other pastoral carers, the person's family members and friends, the Pastoral Carer's own family members and friends, prayer groups or home groups.

Confidentiality guidelines for occasional helpers might involve this booklet, explicit verbal explanations, and inherent role modelling.

Confidentiality also extends to any written or electronic records and the safeguarding of these to protect the privacy of the person.

Written or electronic records should only be kept for the specific purpose and time needed. They need to be accurate, up-to-date, adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose for which they are intended and where appropriate without any identifiable information.

Care should be taken about access to and use of shared computers, back-up 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 cared for person.

The desire to uphold others in prayer must not be used to excuse the obligation of confidentiality.

It is recognised that some 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.

4.5 Dual Relationships

There are times when a Pastoral Care Assistant may hold another relationship with the person that they are caring for – for example the Pastoral Care Assistant might also be a health care professional in the community.

In such cases, the boundary of this other relationship may need to be preserved by arranging for another Pastoral Care Assistant 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 Care Assistant has the responsibility for ensuring that all involved are comfortable with the dual roles, and for managing confidentiality in the different contexts.

4.6 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 Care Assistants 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 Vicar.

Pastoral Care Assistants 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 Care Assistants need to ensure they are not working out of their depth in a detrimental way to themselves or the person they are seeking to support. Further, they need to ensure 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 Care Assistants need to take responsibility for ensuring they are identifying and undertaking training which is relevant to their ministry – please ask the Vicar for advice if needed.

Pastoral Care Assistants 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.

Pastoral Care Assistants 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.

5 Defining Pastoral Care

The rest of this document provides some ways of thinking about pastoral care.

Christian pastoral care:

- is the activity which flows from the attitude and commitment to love one another because we ourselves, are first loved by God.
- is ultimately concerned with developing quality relationships and enabling one another to recognise, follow and become more like Jesus.
- participates in God's missional activity to reconcile the world to Himself.
- embraces a wide range of activity in support of one another, in and beyond the Church, i.e. both when we are gathered together and when we are not.
- 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.

- might take the form of: listening, encouraging, visiting, hospitality, advocacy, mentoring, befriending, celebrating, practically helping, prayer, comforting or enabling.
- might take place formally in planned and organised visits or telephone calls or informally through everyday spontaneous moments.

A Christian Pastoral Carer is someone who either formally, as part of a pastoral team, or informally, as part of their fellowship group or everyday relationships in the community, 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.

5.1 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 fully 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; Romans 13:8), led and living by the Holy Spirit, manifesting the fruit of the Holy Spirit and informed by the indwelling 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).

5.2 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, abode or criminal record.
- 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 lifestyle.

- respect the autonomy of each person, and will not offer advice and tell people what to do. Rather they will support and explore with individuals the choices they are making and the consequence of these.
- be careful to ensure that they do not misuse or abuse the trust that is bestowed upon them by others.
- 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.
- avoid invading people's personal space, and will always ask permission before physical contact. Physical contact must always be appropriate.
- not exploit the people they are helping - financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way.
- be careful not to create unhealthy dependencies for either themselves or the persons to whom they are offering pastoral care.
- maintain confidentiality, understanding that confidentiality does not necessarily mean secrecy (see section 4.4).
- 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.
- seek to be honest and open and act with integrity.
- seek to hold appropriate boundaries and be confidently assertive when required, but without aggression.