



TRBC Pastoral Care Policy and Guidelines

Pastoral care happens when Christians help others by responding, praying and providing caring support. Pastoral care is the responsibility of all Church Members and not just the Church Leaders. A healthy Christian Community is one in which people know that they are welcomed, and people of all ages are valued and feel safe.

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Section A - Pastoral Care Policy and Guidelines

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Christians, committed to the belief that God loves all unconditionally, seek to reflect that love in their care for others. Pastoral care happens when Christians help others by responding, praying and providing caring support. Pastoral care is the responsibility of all Church Members and not just the Church Leaders. A healthy Christian Community is one in which people know that they are welcomed, and people of all ages are valued and feel safe. The care that is offered both at times of crisis and in everyday life is an active proclamation of God's love for all the world.

2 What is pastoral care

2.1 Pastoral care may involve

- a) Helping others through prolonged difficulty or immediate need.
- b) Enabling the journey of healing or wholeness.
- c) Considering the process of reconciliation with God, self or others.
- d) As pastoral care is not a replacement for professional support, offering guidance to other agencies as appropriate.

3 Care for one another at TRBC

- 3.1 At TRBC, we recognise that life has both challenges and joys. We can journey together and we want to foster a sense of belonging. Our aim is to encourage everyone to join Small Groups or other groups so that pastoral support can be given where friendships and care already exist. We do understand that not everyone is able to attend such groups, giving rise to a need for Leaders to ensure that those people are also supported.

4 Formal/Official Pastoral Care and Informal/Unofficial Pastoral Care

- 4.1 Much Pastoral Care occurs in the church in an informal and unofficial way as Christians seek to help in practical ways and encourage one another. More formal, or official, Pastoral Care may be carried out by Church representatives on behalf of the Church Community. However, it is not always easy to draw a boundary between the two. For example, those leading Small Groups or other groups in the Church or those taking communion to a home would be deemed to be acting in an official capacity towards the members of the group or those they were visiting.
- 4.2 Pastoral Care ministries might include:
- a) Visits in the home /care home /hospital
 - b) Home Communion
 - c) Welcome to visitors and those new to the church
 - d) Encouragement of existing members through Small Groups
 - e) Invitations to family, friends and those on the fringes of the church to appropriate services, events and groups.

5 Qualities of a Pastoral Carer

- 5.1 All pastoral care should be rooted in a life of prayer
- 5.2 The carer should:
- a) Have an approachable, non-judgemental manner and the ability to listen well
 - b) Be able to exercise compassion and guard confidentiality
 - c) Be accountable and self-aware.

6 Need for Self-awareness and Risk Assessment

- 6.1 Pastoral carers must not put their personal safety or that of others at risk. If they have concerns about a visit, they should talk to the Pastor or one of the Leaders.

- 6.2 Pastoral Carers need to be aware of becoming overloaded by pastoral demands and neglecting their own need for rest and leisure and the needs of their families.
- 6.3 Ideally, visits should be undertaken by two Pastoral Carers together. When this is not possible the Carer should be aware of the dangers of lone working and should take sensible precautions such as telling someone where they are going and when they expect to be back. They should take a mobile phone with them.
- 6.4 If visiting someone with memory loss, a relative or carer of the person should be informed. If that is not possible a "calling card" should be left to avoid confusion of who has been in the home.
- 6.5 Pastoral Carers should have someone within the Leadership of the church to whom they can talk about their concerns without breaking confidentiality.
- 6.6 Pastoral Carers should avoid creating unhealthy dependencies for either themselves or the persons to whom they are offering pastoral care. Instead, they should develop compassionate self-awareness to avoid patterns where e.g. the carer meets their own needs through the needs of others or alternatively feels that other people's needs always outweigh their own.
- 6.7 Many Pastoral Carers find it harder to seek or receive help than to give it and must learn to seek help for themselves when they need it.

7 Pastoral Care Visits

- 7.1 Pastoral care visits may be made to offer friendship, help and support and to maintain contact with the Church community. This may include giving practical help, providing information and helping people to make their own decisions by listening to them articulate their concerns. It is not intended that visitors should make decisions for them.
- 7.2 Parental consent should always be obtained before offering pastoral care to children or young people under the age of 18. Please see guidelines in the Safeguarding Policy.

8 Confidentiality

- 8.1 Pastoral Carers must assume that all personal information given by a person, themselves or others is confidential. The Pastoral Carer must seek specific consent of the person to pass on any personal information to anyone else and must only seek that consent for a particular reason. However, this does not apply in the case of a child protection issue or that of an adult at risk (see Safeguarding Policy).
- 8.2 Care should be taken in telling someone else's story, even in a disguised form. Only when explicit permission has been given should people's names be included in intercessions, on the prayer chain or in the printed or online weekly Newsflash.

9 Exceptions to maintaining confidentiality

- 9.1 There are some situations where information will need to be passed on regardless of the person's wishes.
- 9.2 In adherence with advice from the mental health charity MIND, we suggest that Pastoral Carers can break confidentiality if:
 - a) There is immediate danger. If a person has told you that they plan to take their life in the next 24 hours or has already taken action that puts their life in danger but does not want to seek support themselves and does not consent for you to do so, call 999.
 - b) A person physically present in church or a group is experiencing a crisis. You should act immediately to get them support. This may involve contacting a family member, a mental health support worker, close friend or emergency services.
 - c) The person is planning to take action which will put others at risk (for example stepping in front of a train). In such cases, call 999.

- d) There are Safeguarding concerns involving children, when any concerns should be reported to the Designated Person for Safeguarding at TRBC who can report them to the Statutory Authorities.

Commented [JW1]: For clarity add Designated Person for Safeguarding @ TRBC

- e) There is concern about Safeguarding an Adult at Risk, in which case, the Care Act 2014 states:
"If the Adult has the mental capacity to make informed decisions about their safety, and they do not want any action to be taken, this does not preclude the sharing of information with relevant professional colleagues. This is to enable professionals to assess the risk of harm and to be confident that the adult is not being unduly influenced, coerced or intimidated and is aware of all the options. This will enable professionals to check the safety and validity of decisions made. It is good practice to inform the adult that this action is being taken unless doing so would increase the risk of harm."

10 Respect

- 10.1 Pastoral Carers must take steps to safeguard a person's safety, whilst respecting their views and their individuality.
- 10.2 They will not take advantage of a vulnerable person or exploit financially, emotionally or sexually any person to whom they are providing Pastoral Care. Pastoral Carers carry the responsibility for safeguarding sexual and emotional boundaries in pastoral relationships.
- 10.3 Whilst maintaining set boundaries, they will be patient with those who are aggressive or unwilling to listen or discuss options.

11 The Appropriate use of Touch

- 11.1 Care should be taken by those providing Pastoral Care to children and young people. Physical contact between an adult and a young person can often be misconstrued and should only occur in appropriate public circumstances.
- 11.2 The appropriate use of touch is a key aspect of maintaining ethical boundaries in Pastoral Care. Touch may on occasions communicate more deeply than words. However, the reality of sexual abuse in our culture increases the need for awareness of how easily physical expressions of care and comfort may be misunderstood. People may not feel comfortable being touched and permission should always be sought.

12 Recognising Risks of Offering Pastoral Support

- 12.1 The following risks are suggested in providing Pastoral Care. The list may not be exhaustive and those providing care should consider the circumstances of each care situation.
- a) Inappropriate expectations of the amount of time and support you can give to someone. Give clear boundaries from the start so that 24/7 availability is not expected.
 - b) Some individuals need Professional Support from the start. It is best to suggest this when you recognise the need. Accompanying them may be appropriate.
 - c) Blurred boundaries may occur and pastoral relationships can become confused with personal friendships. It may be necessary for you to step back and ask someone else to take over if it is apparent that the person you are offering support to is becoming reliant on you.
 - d) Romantic attachments- individuals involved in pastoral relationships should take care to ensure that the relationship remains platonic and if they feel that it is becoming intense or intimate, they should let the Pastor or one of the Leaders know as it may be that pastoral care for that person needs to stop or passed to a different carer.

13 Healthy Boundaries

- 13.1 Those providing care should set boundaries on the nature and scope of that care. The following examples are offered, but carers should consider the circumstances of their care situation.

- a) Working in pairs reduces the risk of pastoral relationships being misunderstood.
- b) Consider the best place to meet, suggesting somewhere where you can be seen but not overheard by others.
- c) Meet at an appropriate time, avoiding late evening visits unless in an emergency.
- d) Be mindful of the language you are using; certain phrases or comments may be misunderstood.
- e) Be careful not to get out of your depth. Be aware when it is appropriate to signpost someone to professional support.
- f) Even if you are a professional yourself, in church life you are not working in a professional capacity so you should involve external professionals.
- g) Remember that your role is to support and empower the individual receiving pastoral care, not to do everything for them.
- h) Think about what communication is appropriate outside of the meeting such as text messages, emails or phone calls. Do not use over familiar language or images or send them late at night.
- i) For legal and insurance reasons, those offering pastoral care will not formally organise lifts. Those requiring lifts should organise them informally with friends within the church.

14 Financial Integrity

- 14.1 Those who work with adults at risk may become involved in some aspects of personal finance - collecting pensions or benefits, shopping or banking, etc. If handling money for someone else, always obtain receipts or other evidence of what has been done.
- 14.2 Care should be taken not to canvass for church donations from those adults who may be at risk, such as the recently bereaved.
- 14.3 Pastoral workers should not act as Executors for someone they know through their work or pastoral role, as this may lead to a conflict of interest.
- 14.4 Expert legal advice should be sought on matters such as Power of Attorney and advocacy to ensure that the situation is clearly understood and is the most appropriate course of action for the adult at risk.
- 14.5 If Pastoral Carers come across an immediate financial need, the Pastor can be asked whether it is appropriate to offer help from the church Fellowship Fund, which he is able to administer on a discretionary basis.

15 Recruitment and training

- 15.1 The church Leaders will exercise reasonable care and diligence in the selection and supervision of those undertaking pastoral care on behalf of the church. Volunteers will not be sought by general invitation but only considered on an individual basis after due reflection on their gifting in this area.
- 15.2 They will be asked to have DBS clearing and Safeguarding training and to work in line with our Volunteer Policy.
- 15.3 Church Leaders and those leading groups within the church will be encouraged to attend Pastoral Care training every three years.

16 Other Organisations providing care or support

- 16.1 There are many organisations, both professional and voluntary, that can provide care and support for individuals in need in a variety of situations. Carers should consider the following

- a) NHS 111
- b) Cruse Bereavement Support – call 0808 808 1677.
- c) Mental Health Support (All the following services are free)
 - Call NHS 111 and select the mental health option (also known as the Sussex Mental Healthline (available 24/7). To request an interpreter, please ask someone to call on your behalf and say which language is needed.
 - Call the Samaritans on 116 123 (available 24/7).
 - Visit a Staying Well service (out-of-hours mental health crisis support service for people aged 18+ available in Brighton, Crawley, Eastbourne, Hastings and Worthing). If you need an interpreter, these services can call for interpretation help while you are with them.
 - Text the word SUSSEX to 85258 (24/7 mental health text-messaging support service). If you are using Google Translate, please tell the mental health professional that you don't speak English and they will work with you and support you to feel calmer.
 - Download the Stay Alive app - a suicide prevention resource full of useful information and tools to help you stay safe in crisis.
- d) Anchor Counselling – call 07971 582 718 or email: contact@anchor-counselling.org.uk
- e) Debt Advice – call CAP Horsham on 0800 328 0006 or Horsham Debt Advice Service on 01403 258040 or email advisor@hdas.co.uk.

Section B - Version control

Version	Comment	Date	Approved by
v0.1	First draft of TRBC Pastoral Care policy	07/07/2026	
v1.0	First version approved	21/07/2016	Trustees