

SLOUGH BAPTIST CHURCH POLICY	Pastoral Care Policy and Guidelines
POLICY NUMBER: SBCP-16	



Primary Responsibility:	Pastors
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Thank you for your willingness to serve the Lord and His church within the area of Pastoral Care.

Throughout the Bible, Christians are encouraged to care for one another, particularly other Christians. 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, and at Slough Baptist Church 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 in the fellowship 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 Elsie Fraser or Keith Wilson should you have any questions or concerns.

1. Terms Used

Pastoral Care: Care being provided by Christians in a variety of contexts. In this document it does **not** include the wider secular use of 'pastoral' e.g. as in pastoral tutor.

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.

Note on Counselling: Counselling is a specialised function which requires specialised training, involves a contractual agreement between the counsellor and the client, and is subject to a separate Code of Ethics and Practice – see the [documents produced by the Association of Christian Counsellors](#).

2. Policy Statement on Pastoral Care

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.

We recognise that this people-helping is the responsibility of the whole church.

The church is also committed to supporting, resourcing, training and supervising those who minister specifically within the area of Pastoral Care.

The church is committed to following the *Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care* provided by the Association of Christian Counsellors, and the guidelines relating to Pastoral Care and Counselling provided by the church's insurers. These have been incorporated into this booklet.

Each Carer must agree to observe the guidelines and policies in this booklet.

If a Carer asks a volunteer to assist in providing Pastoral Care, then that Carer is responsible for ensuring that the volunteer understands and complies with the parts of these policies and guidelines that are relevant to the care that they are being asked to provide.

3. Organisation

As well as the membership at large, there are several groups within the body of the church that have responsibility for pastoral care. These groups include:

- Home Groups and Small Groups (online and in person including any groups that meet on church premises.)
- The Prayer Ministry

Pastoral Visitors

Prayer Ministry:

Prayer Ministry is seen as seeking God's intervention in someone's life through prayer with them, for expressed issues and situations. It may involve using Bible passages and verses to encourage the person and speak God's word into their situation.

It is seen as informal, typically brief and *ad hoc* with only informal follow-up. There are no records kept and there is no formal agreement in place.

The Pastoral Care Pastor coordinates the Prayer Ministry.

Those involved would have received some training in good listening skills.

Pastoral Visitors:

Pastoral Visiting is meeting with people, typically in their own home by prior arrangement, to extend the fellowship of the church to them, to spend time in conversation, to offer companionship, to pray with them and to ensure that if they are struggling with issues that the church could help with, those issues are brought to the attention of the appropriate person.

Although any church member may be involved in visiting others, this particularly refers to the regular visiting of those in need, those who are sick or otherwise not in routine contact with the church. The Pastoral Care Pastor coordinates this.

Those involved would have received some training in good listening skills.

Additionally, the church may refer people to external professional counsellors, where their help is believed to be appropriate. These external counsellors would normally be accredited by the Association of Christian Counsellors or by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy or alternatively would be academically qualified, seeking accreditation and satisfactorily interviewed on behalf of the fellowship.

Home group and small group leaders exercise pastoral care for their group members. The Pastoral Care Pastor has oversight of the Home Group and Small Group leaders for matters of pastoral care, and has oversight of the Prayer Ministry and Visiting teams.

The church does not provide regular pastoral support for external groups that meet on the premises (e.g. Foodbank). However, if any *ad hoc* support is requested by such a group, the support will follow this policy.

The people ultimately responsible for the implementation of this policy are the Pastors.

4. Definition of 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.

Christian pastoral care is ultimately concerned with developing quality relationships and enabling one another to recognise, follow and become more like Jesus.

Christian pastoral care participates in God's missional activity to reconcile the world to Himself.

Christian pastoral care 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.

Christian pastoral care 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.

Christian pastoral care might take the form of: listening, encouraging, visiting, hospitality, advocacy, mentoring, befriending, celebrating, practically helping, prayer, comforting, or enabling.

Christian pastoral care might take place formally in planned and organised ways or informally through everyday spontaneous moments.

Christian pastoral care might be offered by an individual, by small groups, through a particular ministry, through an outreach project, by one church or a group of churches.

A Christian Pastoral Carer is someone who either formally, as part of a pastoral team, group or network 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. 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 full 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).

6. 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.

Pastoral Carers will 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 life style.

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, 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 physical contact. Physical contact must always be appropriate.

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 7).

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 (refer to section 8 in relation to safeguarding responsibilities)

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 without aggression.

7. 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, does not need to 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;
- when the Pastoral Carer has reason to believe that others, particularly a child or vulnerable person, are or maybe, 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 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 prayer chain and/or, 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 Pastors, the church leadership, 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, backup 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 person cared for.

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.

8. Dual Relationships

There are times when Pastoral Carers may hold another relationship with the person that they are caring for – for example a pastoral carer 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 Carer 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 Carer has the responsibility for ensuring that all involved are comfortable with the dual roles, and for managing confidentiality in the different contexts.

9. Guidelines provided by the church's insurers relating to Pastoral Care and Counselling

A full copy of these guidelines may be obtained from the Church Office.

The important distinction made in the guidelines is between Counselling and Pastoral Care. The church does not offer Counselling support to individuals other than by referral to an external Counsellor as described in section 3 *Organisation*, and the church does not have the specialist insurance for Counselling.

Even if the church offers some financial support to an attender who is referred by the church to an independent Counsellor, the responsibility for that Counselling lies with the independent Counsellor.

If the church provides one-to-one support to an individual and the matter for which an individual sought help remains unresolved after six such support meetings, the situation must be referred to a one of the Pastors, and the individual may be subsequently advised to seek professional counselling.

10. Recruitment and Training

The church will exercise reasonable care and diligence in the selection, appointment and supervision of those undertaking pastoral care on behalf of the church.

The church 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.

As those ministering in Pastoral Care may well be involved with those who are vulnerable to abuse, it is the church's policy that those members of the following groups obtain clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service:

- Pastoral Visiting Team;
- Prayer Ministry Team.

For those regularly involved in offering help, such as those involved in these groups, and for Home Group Leaders/Hosts, training is important. As a guide, a Listening Skills course would normally be required.

All those who find themselves from time to time in a position where others come to them for help or encouragement should do what they can to ensure they have reasonable skills to deal competently with the situation. This may involve seeking appropriate training, especially around sensitive and responsive "listening" or even counselling skills.

11. Supervision and Support

Support for those specifically involved in Pastoral Care comes via regular contact with those carers. Additionally, help and support may be sought from the Pastors or the church Elders at any time. In some circumstances the church leadership may recommend support from a person or organisation outside the church.

Pastoral Supervision will be available to the Pastoral Care Pastor.

12. Prayer

All Pastoral Carers are encouraged to pray for the people they are seeking to help, not only privately but also when they meet together, within the boundaries of confidentiality.

Praying with the people they are seeking to help must only be carried out with their permission, and then in a sensitive way, giving due consideration to their spiritual maturity and church background.

The church recognises that in this area of people-helping, carers act only as God's assistants; it is only He who achieves change and healing in someone.

13. 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 Carers 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 Pastors or the Elders.

Pastoral Carers 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 Carers need to ensure they are not working out of their depth in a detrimental way to themselves or the person, 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 Carers need to take responsibility for ensuring they are identifying and undertaking training which is relevant to their ministry.

Pastoral Carers need to ensure the person for whom they are caring is aware they are not offering counselling and need to be prepared to refer a person to a counsellor where needed and desired.

Pastoral Carers 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 e.g. when dealing with a person who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or who is 'acting out' aggressively.

Pastoral Carers 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.

14. Referral

An important aspect of Pastoral Care is that workers must not offer help beyond their competence or ability. If the issues presented by an individual are beyond their ability to help, then they must refer the individual to another carer with suitable abilities.

In particular, the Pastoral Care of children and young people (those under 18) should be referred to the appropriate Children's and Youth Worker or to the designated person for safeguarding, who will be familiar with the *Safeguarding Children and Young People* Guidelines. Similarly, the Pastoral Care of Adults at Risk needs to be offered in a way that meets that safeguarding policy. In practical terms, such situations would normally involve seeking advice from the pastors.

At the discretion of the People In Need (PIN) fund trustees the church may agree to offer financial support to a person who is referred by the church to an independent Counsellor. The church may fund up to 50% of the Counsellor's charges for a specified length of time. The Counsellor at all times takes responsibility for their counselling.