

Hearsall Baptist Church

Pastoral Care Matters

Revised 2023 ver VS4

Introduction:

As a church we are committed "to make known the love of Jesus Christ through word and deed". Our work on providing pastoral care to both members and non-members alike is a key way we deliver this commitment.

In this document you will information on:

- What we mean by pastoral care
- Ways we deliver pastoral care
- How we offer support
- Safeguarding
- Useful contacts at Hearsall Baptist Church
- Guidance for members of our Pastoral Care Team

What is Pastoral Care?

Pastoral care, in a church setting, refers to all positive interactions within and around the church community which are designed in whole or in part, to improve the wellbeing¹ of those involved. It may refer to a one-to-one, activity: e.g. person *A gives pastoral care to person B*.

In such a situation where person B has some recognised need, and person A seeks to support them to have that need met. When done in an unforced manner, although B may be the focus of the pastoral activity, A may also experience an improved sense of wellbeing, if only in the satisfaction found in supporting someone else. However pastoral care will be an aspect of all group activities, and the wellbeing of many may be enhanced by a social gathering, a meeting for study or for worship. As a minimum, no church activity should permit harm to be done to another, and the vast majority of activities will in some way promote, or at least protect, the wellbeing of all involved.

Ways We Deliver Pastoral Care

One to One:

This is overseen by our Minister (pastor), supported by the Pastoral Care Team. The team is made up of members of the congregation who offer support on behalf of the church. As such safeguarding and confidentiality policies apply. This is different from the mutual support shared by two friends.

¹ Wellbeing refers to a spiritual standing with God, social connections, material provision, mental and physical health, and any other areas in which peace and fulfillment may be threatened.

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Usually the initial contact will come from the Minister who may then delegate further contact to the Pastoral Care Team.

Pastoral Care Through Involvement In Activities At Hearsall:

As mentioned above, a benefit of being involved in any activity run by Hearsall Baptist Church is to benefit from a sense of pastoral care and wellbeing. This may range from friendship to practical ideas and advice. Below are examples of ways to get involved:

- Bible Study Groups (at a number of different venues and/or on line)
- English Conversation Group (a friendly group for people whose first language is not English)
- Lunch Club (a social group for older people)
- Song and Storytime (for preschool children but parents/carers also find the experience beneficial)
- Sunday Worship at 10:30am (all ages very welcome)

How We Offer Support:

Support may be offered through phone calls, visits, prayers, letters, cards, text messages and, where appropriate, social media. Team members offer support in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. If visiting, this may be carried out by two members of the team (for safeguarding and safety). Visits will normally be carried out between the hours of 10am and 8pm. If notes are made by the visitor(s), these will be anonymous and the person visited has the right to see them. Visits will usually be for approximately one hour. Visits may be at the home address or a meeting can be arranged in a public place such as a cafe or pub or a visit could take the form of a walk in a park.

Safeguarding:

All of our staff, volunteers and groups work to our Policy on Safeguarding which is based on guidelines from the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Our Minister is trained to Safeguarding Level III and all of our Pastoral Care Team to Level II or III. All of the above people have a current DBS check.

Useful Contacts:

Minister (Pastor): minister@hearsallbaptist.org

Designated Safeguarding Officer: songtime@hearsallbaptist.org or 07732446789

Rapid Responder: 07927 451702

Please read this policy in conjunction with our Safeguarding, GDPR & confidentiality policies.

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Appendix A – Guidance for Pastoral Care Team

Although it would be artificial to mention this point on every occasion, the pastoral team member should take reasonable steps to ensure that the supported person is aware that they are acting on behalf of the church and that safeguarding and confidentiality are different in this context to that between two friends.

Values

Team members offer support in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore high standards of integrity should be adhered to. We recognise that team members express their personal spirituality in a variety of ways, but everything they do should be consistent with a general Christian message. It is sometimes, but not always, fitting to share scripture or prayer with the person supported. It is often appropriate to encourage the supported person on their journey of faith.

Focus

The team member should ensure that the focus of the visit is on the supported person. It is good practice to give the supported person an early opportunity to express what they would like to discuss and not to assume that we already know. Well-chosen open questions are very powerful tools. Although some conversation about the team member's own situation may be appropriate by way of example or sympathy, the majority of any interaction should be about the concerns of the supported person. If any third parties are discussed, it is the responsibility of the visitor to exemplify and encourage a positive and kind consideration of others and to avoid anything that could be regarded as idle gossip. If we must talk about a third party, we should talk as if that third party might be able to overhear what we are saying about them.

Record keeping

A team member may keep brief **anonymised** notes to enable continuity of support. These must be stored securely and destroyed after a maximum period of two years, unless safeguarding issues mean a longer period is required. These notes should only be shared with appropriate pastoral authorities. In writing any notes, the team member should remember that notes could be read by the person they concern if they requested this. All such notes should be factual, respectful and avoid opinion and hearsay.

Home Visits in Pairs

Ideally, two team members should visit together, especially if the person is not known to the church. All visits will take place between the hours of 10am and 8pm (apart from in an emergency or exceptional situation). If there seems a slight possibility that the nature of the visit may be misconstrued as personal, romantic, sexual or otherwise

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inappropriate, the team member should certainly take another team member along regardless of the person's familiarity to the church.

Solo Home Visits

Sometimes it seems heavy-handed and insensitive to go as a pair, and often a second team member is not available; therefore solo visits are acceptable. A solo visitor should make another team member aware of the timing, place and general purpose of the visit and should confirm with that team member when the visit is concluded. Again, all visits would take place between the hours of 10am and 8pm (apart from in an emergency or exceptional situation)

Whether solo or in pairs visits will normally last up to one hour and usually will not exceed six occurrences.

Personal Safety on Visits to Well-Known People

The vast majority of visits will be to people quite well-known to the church. In the light of this knowledge, team members need only undertake a simple mental risk-assessment before every visit. Consideration must be given to the physical and mental health of the person; the condition and general safety of their home; and the presence of any third parties. Lighting, animals, trip hazards and any dangers should all be considered. If they do have any doubts about their own safety team members should not go alone, and a written risk assessment should be done and this should be shared with the Minister (pastor).

Personal Safety on Visits to People Not Well-Known to the Church

In addition to the above considerations **two team members** will visit a new person together.

Meeting in Public Venues

If a one-to-one visit seems helpful, a meeting can be arranged in a public place such as a cafe or pub or a visit could take the form of a walk in a park. In such circumstances the team member should make another team member aware of the timing, place and general purpose of the meeting and should confirm with that team member when it is concluded. Reasonable expenses for drinks may be claimed. Team members should also be aware that, in some circumstances, such a meeting may risk feeling like a 'date' to the supported person, so then it becomes especially important to indicate that the team member is supporting on behalf of the church.

Letters, Emails and Private Messages

All team members should write any messages imagining how they would seem if the supported person chose to make them public. No communications should seek to foster

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dependence or inappropriate intimacy. Views which are homophobic, sexist, racist, intolerant of other denominations or religions or of transgender people, or otherwise unfitting with the inclusive call of our church, should not be even hinted at, let alone openly expressed.

Practical or Financial Assistance

Team members may perform simple tasks if requested and the visitor feels able, such as posting a letter or changing a light bulb (if able). Bigger jobs should be avoided as it would be more fitting to explore with the supported person how else they might access the help they need. For example, if a person is having difficulty cooking, it is far more helpful to explore how this problem can be solved generally than it is to cook one meal for them. If asked for financial help, the request should be referred to the trustees/deacons.

Our Minister can provide support or advice. They will also provide 'Supervision' to allow you space to debrief or off-load a situation. Furthermore, all members of the Pastoral Care Team support each other. However, if talking about people you are supporting you are asked to keep this anonymous.