



**PASTORAL CARE**  
**GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES**

*'Building a vibrant, Christ-centred community with a vision for extending his Kingdom'*

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**“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”**

**John 13: 34-35**

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. It is concerned with developing quality relationships, and helping one another to become the people that God wants us to be. It embraces a wide range of activity in support of one another, in and beyond the Church.

These guidelines recognise that Christian pastoral care is relational in nature and practice and is offered from the gift of God’s love for us and our love for one another.

## **1. Guidelines Intent**

1.1 These guidelines are intended to be:

1.1.1 a resource which encourages pastoral care to be offered with integrity and in a way which honours God and all those involved.

1.1.2 a resource which will enable individual pastoral care volunteers to be accountable to RBC.

## **2. Scope of Pastoral Care**

2.1 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.

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

2.3 Christian pastoral care **is NOT**: trying to solve all the recipient’s problems, making judgements about lifestyle and behaviour, counselling or therapy, feeling responsible for the recipient’s decisions or actions, giving advice that is not asked for or creating a dependency on the carer.

2.4 Christian pastoral care might happen: formally in planned and organised ways or informally through everyday spontaneous moments.

2.5 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.

### **3. Definition of a Christian Pastoral Carer**

3.1 A Christian Pastoral Carer is someone who either formally, as part of a pastoral team or informally, as part of their small 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.

3.2 Christian Pastoral Carers may work at different levels:

3.2.1 All Christians have a God given responsibility to care for others. It mostly happens in informal and often unplanned ways. All help to grow pastoral churches which care for others in organic ways, rather than within formalised pastoral structures or systems.

3.2.2 Some Christians are particularly gifted and called by God to provide pastoral care in a more focussed way. At RBC, Pastoral Assistants are appointed to care for specific people on behalf of the church. It might involve the Pastoral Carer undertaking training and or developing knowledge, insights, skills and expertise in pastoral care at a greater depth.

3.2.3 A few Christians are particularly called and gifted to resource, lead or co-ordinate the work of pastoral care in planned, structured and formalised ways. They may have specialist knowledge, experience and skill and enable, encourage and equip the pastoral care work of the All (3.2.1) or the Some (3.2.2) and provide them with for example training, leadership, help to reflect on their practice and support.

### **4. Structure of Pastoral Care at RBC**

4.1 Within RBC pastoral care takes place in several ways:

4.1.1 The Ministers provide pastoral support to those in need, being available to meet with individuals as appropriate.

4.1.2 The Pastoral Care Manager also provides pastoral support to individuals and co-ordinates pastoral care, which is carried out by a team of volunteer Pastoral Assistants, appointed by the Pastoral Team . This care includes on-going support and visiting where long-term care is required. Pastoral Assistants have individuals assigned to them that they care for on behalf of the church. Pastoral Assistants are supported by the Pastoral Care Manager.

4.1.3 In addition, the Pastoral Care Manager works with a team of pastoral volunteers, from the church who are available to visit and provide practical and prayerful support where possible and within the capacity available among the pastoral volunteer team. This may include practical help such as cooking a meal when someone is ill, occasional shopping, gardening and dog walking support.

- 4.1.4 Small groups are a hub for pastoral care as small group members seek to care for one another.
- 4.1.5 The whole church is tasked with pastoral care as individuals look out for and care for one another.

## **5. Biblical Values for Pastoral Care**

- 5.1 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).
- 5.2 Pastoral Care that is inspired and enabled by Christ will contribute towards:
  - 5.2.1 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).
  - 5.2.2 the mission work of the Church (e.g. John 17:20-23; Acts 2:44-47; Acts 6:1-7) .
- 5.3 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).
- 5.4 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).
- 5.5 Pastoral Carers are called to relate to others with an emphasis more on listening than speaking, and to be mindful and careful of the words that they speak (James 1:19–27; Proverbs 18:19).
- 5.6 Pastoral Carers are called to exercise confidentiality and discretion (Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 20:19).

## **6. Ethical Values for Pastoral Care**

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.

- 6.3 Pastoral Carers will be careful to ensure that they do not misuse or abuse the trust that is bestowed upon them by a person.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Pastoral Carers will not exploit people they are helping financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way.
- 6.6 Pastoral Carers will be careful not to create unhealthy dependencies for either themselves or the persons to whom they are offering pastoral care.
- 6.7 Pastoral Carers will maintain confidentiality, understanding that confidentiality does not necessarily mean secrecy (see Section 7 below).
- 6.8 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 10 in relation to safeguarding responsibilities).
- 6.9 Pastoral Carers will seek to be honest and open and act with integrity.
- 6.10 Pastoral Carers will seek to hold appropriate boundaries and be confidently assertive when required without aggression.

## **7. Confidentiality**

- 7.1 Confidentiality is a critical boundary which protects the privacy of the person and the integrity of pastoral work in our church.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 Confidentiality establishes trust and a safe space for a person and for God to work.
- 7.4 Confidentiality however, does not need to be confused with secrecy i.e. concealing information which could be significantly harmful to others or collusion i.e. explicitly or inherently cooperating with illegal or unethical behaviour.
- 7.5 Exceptions to confidentiality include when:
- 7.5.1 the Pastoral Carer has been required by legislation or a Court of Law to disclose certain information either to the Police or the Court.

- 7.5.2 the Pastoral Carer has reason to believe that others, particularly a child or vulnerable person, are or maybe, at risk of harm or injury.
- 7.5.3 the Pastoral Carer has reason to believe that the person is at risk of harming themselves.
- 7.6 In the exceptional cases of 7.5.2 and 7.5.3 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.
- 7.7 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.
- 7.8 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, be prayed for by a group of intercessors who would keep their details confidential or do they want it in the weekly news sheet.
- 7.9 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 church leaders, pastoral team coordinators, other pastoral carers, the person's family members and friends, the Pastoral Carer's own family members and friends, prayer groups, fellowship groups.
- 7.10 Confidentiality guidelines for various individuals and groups, might involve formal written guidelines policies and procedures, explicit verbal explanations, inherent role modelling.
- 7.11 Confidentiality also extends to any written or electronic records and the safeguarding of these to protect the privacy of the person.
- 7.12 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.
- 7.13 Care should be taken about access to and use of shared computers, backup systems and emails, i-pads, mobile phones, social networks, photocopying, faxing and shredding. It can be, for instance, a breach of confidentiality to copy others into certain e-mails when the person has not given their permission for you to do so and where they contain personal content, or to leave a letter inadvertently in the photocopier, or to leave a thank you card visible to others which give away information about a person cared for.
- 7.14 RBC needs to act within current data protection legislation.

## **8. Dual Relationships**

- 8.1 There are times when Pastoral Carers may hold another relationship with the person they are caring for e.g. a pastoral listener might also be a health care professional in the community and the boundary of another relationship needs to be preserved by arranging for another Pastoral Carer to be involved.
- 8.2 In some instances 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 the person is comfortable with the dual roles, they are comfortable themselves with the dual roles and for managing confidentiality in the different contexts.

## **9. Care for the Pastoral Carer**

- 9.1 Pastoral Carers need to ensure they are taking care of their own health and well-being as they offer care to others.
- 9.2 Pastoral Carers need to act to keep themselves safe at all times. They should give due consideration to the situation – the person they are supporting, their circumstances, the location etc. For example when supporting an adult at risk, it is wise to meet with a third person present, and a woman should not visit a man alone. Pastoral carers should give due consideration when deciding where to meet – for example visiting in someone's home or suggesting meeting in a public place.
- 9.3 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.
- 9.4 Pastoral Carers need to take responsibility for ensuring they are identifying and undertaking training which is relevant to their work. They should raise training needs with the Pastoral Co-ordinator.
- 9.5 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.
- 9.6 If the Pastoral Carer is a trained counsellor he/she should discuss this with the Pastoral Coordinator before offering to provide the person with counselling themselves and shifting the relationship into a formal counselling agreement. In such circumstances the Pastoral Carer needs to ensure that the person understands the contractual/formalised boundaries and conditions of counselling.
- 9.7 Pastoral Carers who are regularly providing formal pastoral care on behalf of RBC, should be accountable to RBC and be resourced themselves through regular, appropriate oversight and support for their pastoral care work.
- 9.8 It is essential that confidentiality is maintained within any oversight / support / supervisory arrangement for the Pastoral Carer and therefore careful consideration needs to be given to



the most appropriate source of such support. For some it may be more appropriate to access support from outside their own church congregation to help ensure that confidentiality is not compromised.

9.9 Pastoral Carers need to feel safe themselves and in some instances have a right to decline offering care and or seeing someone on their own e.g. with a person who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs or who is 'acting out' aggressively.

9.10 Carers should not offer care to a person when their own functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness or for any other reason.

9.11 Pastoral Carers who are working formally may want to ensure their church has adequate insurance to cover their activities or to take out their own indemnity insurance with a suitable insurance company.

## **10. Safeguarding Policy and Procedures**

10.1 RBC has a clearly defined and integrated safeguarding policy for children and adults at risk which requires that every person who has been formally nominated as a Pastoral Carer or child / young person's worker, undergoes a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. Any recruitment must be undertaken in accordance with the safeguarding policy and procedures .

10.2 Pastoral Carers who are called to provide pastoral care to Children, Young People and Adults at Risk must do so within the guidelines of RBC's Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Good Practice Guidelines and should be made aware of these and receive appropriate safeguarding training.

10.3 Pastoral Carers need to be aware of the person who holds the safeguarding role at RBC, how and where to access them and when it is appropriate to do so.

10.4 If a Pastoral Carer receives a disclosure of abuse or has any reason to suspect that a child or vulnerable adult has in the past been abused, or might be at risk of abuse or is currently being abused, they must act promptly within RBC's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

## **11. Insurance**

11.1 **Offering lifts to people:** If a Pastoral Carer offers someone a lift in their vehicle, they are required to check with their own motor insurers that they have adequate insurance cover for this purpose. This includes providing lifts to people to and from the church building to other places (e.g. to hospital appointments etc), and running errands (e.g. shopping) for people using their own vehicle. This is required when providing lifts to people on behalf of the church whether the Pastoral Carer has been asked by the church if they could do so; they have volunteered to the church that they can provide a lift or they have chosen to offer a lift independently. The Pastoral Carer is required to hold adequate motor insurance for these purposes as they and the people they carry in the vehicle would not be insured by the church in these circumstances.

**11.2 Offering Practical Help to People:** If the church organises for a Pastoral Carer to provide practical help to someone in need, the church will seek to ensure that that person has the appropriate competencies and tools/materials for the task. Where necessary, Risk Assessments in line with the church's Health & Safety Policy will be carried out. If activities for others are undertaken informally, and not co-ordinated through the church, these are the responsibility of the person undertaking them and are uninsured under the church insurance, even if they have been asked by the church to be in contact with the person for whom the activity is being carried out. Pastoral Carers must only offer practical help to others that is within their own competencies and they have the materials necessary to complete the task. If trained skills are required e.g. plumbing, electrics, only those accredited with the relevant qualifications can undertake the tasks and they would be responsible for ensuring they have their own appropriate professional insurance.

## **12. WhatsApp Guidelines for Pastoral Support**

**12.1 Permissions:** If a WhatsApp group is set up to facilitate communication between pastoral carers and those receiving support and/or to facilitate prayer support for those involved in a pastoral situation, permissions must always be sought from the individuals involved and before the WhatsApp group is set up.

**12.2 Privacy and Confidentiality:** Sensitive information concerning individuals must always be respected and maintained. Do not share any personal or sensitive information about individuals without prior consent and permission inside or outside the WhatsApp group (unless there is a safeguarding concern). Everyone has a responsibility to adopt and maintain best practices when concerning personal data and sensitive information concerning themselves and others. RBC has a Data Protection Policy which must be adhered to at all times and can be found on the RBC website in the 'About Us' section, a paper copy is displayed in the church vestibule.

**12.3 Safeguarding:** Everyone has a responsibility to pass on as appropriate, anything that raises a safeguarding concern via the appropriate channels as set out by RBC's safeguarding policy and procedures.

## **13. Tips for Pastoral Carers**

1. Confidentiality is of utmost importance. It is right to gain the person's permission to do so before sharing any confidential information with anyone else unless a safeguarding issue is raised.
2. Pray for the people you visit and ask the person if they would like you to pray with them when you visit.
3. Your major role is probably as a listener. Try to listen to what is behind the words as much as to the words themselves. Show sympathy and sensitivity, and do not be judgemental. Try to empathise with the person so that they feel you are sincere and genuine in your concern for them.
4. It is often a good idea to repeat back to the person what you think they have expressed both to ensure that you have really understood them and also to reassure them that you are listening and sympathising with them.

5. Watch your body language as well as your words. Tone of voice, the expression on your face, eye contact, how you sit, all affect your relationship with the person.
6. You are there to help the person but try to avoid them becoming too dependent on you. Try not to make decisions for them but encourage them to reach a conclusion for themselves by talking through various options with them.
7. It is important to discern when someone's problem is out of your range and when they should be passed onto someone else who has particular expertise in the matter. Where appropriate, please share difficulties with the Pastoral Co-ordinator or Minister.
8. Ensure that as a pastoral carer you seek to protect yourself by not putting yourself in a difficult position where accusations could be made e.g. handling money.
9. Give due consideration to where you meet the person you are pastorally caring for, and whether you meet them with someone else. For example, if you are meeting someone of the opposite sex, it may be helpful to meet in a public place rather than behind closed doors. If the person you are meeting is vulnerable, it may be wise to meet them with another person in order to protect everyone involved.
10. All pastoral care provision needs to adhere to current government regulations and guidelines relating to Coronavirus. Current Baptist Union guidelines relating to pastoral visiting during the pandemic must also be followed and can be found on their website [www.baptist.org.uk](http://www.baptist.org.uk)

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#### **14. Acceptance of Pastoral Care Guidelines**

##### **Pastoral Carer**

I have read and agree to abide by the good practice guidelines for Pastoral Care at RBCSigned:

Print Name:

Dated:

RBC hugely value your role within the church in providing pastoral care to others and undertake to support you prayerfully and practically in this role. Please do share any concerns or worries with the Pastoral Co-ordinator or Minister as we are here to support you. Thank you for all that you do.