

Please read this before using this Framework

Before offering this Framework we believe it is essential to acknowledge that we recognise and understand that Christian Pastoral Care is provided in many different ways, and that provision of Pastoral Care by the church involves **all** of the church, **some** of the church and a **few** of the church. What do we mean by that?

- **The 'All'** - All Christians have a God given responsibility to 'care' for others – this is a quintessential aspect of the outworking of what it means to be a member of the Body of Christ. Its emphasis is upon growing and maintaining a Christ centred loving relationship with others, and it mostly happens in informal and often unplanned ways. The greater desire here is to grow a pastoral church or community that cares for others in an organic way, rather focussing on constructing and developing complex pastoral structures or systems that can sometimes be overly rigid, create unhelpful dependencies and either prevent or choke 'organic' pastoral care.
- **The 'Some'** – Some Christians are particularly gifted and called by God to provide pastoral care in a more focussed way. This might include offering and providing pastoral care in more planned or formal ways, perhaps as part of a dedicated team of pastoral carers. It might involve the pastoral carer undertaking specialised training and / or developing knowledge, insights, skills and expertise in pastoral care at a greater depth than 'the all'.
- **The 'Few'** - A few Christians are particularly called and gifted to resource, lead or co-ordinate the work of pastoral care. This is often carried out in planned and formalised ways with the aim, ideally, of stimulating, encouraging and equipping the pastoral care work of 'the all' and 'the some', at the same time as providing them with example, leadership and support.

In producing this Framework document, we are very conscious of the fact that it needs God given wisdom for the way in which its elements are applied in practice, and that for some elements the degree and method of application will necessarily differ according to whether or not you are providing care as one of the **all**, or the **some** or the **few**.

One could argue that in God's Kingdom there should be no need for a Framework such as this – that the only Framework or Guide that we need for authentic Christian pastoral care is the Bible and a living personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And, the very existence of a written Framework such as this risks some people being left with a perception that the provision of pastoral care is a 'professional' occupation carried out by 'specialists' - which of course at it's very heart, it most certainly isn't. We believe that authentic Christian pastoral care is fundamentally and intensely relational in nature and practice, and is unashamedly given from a heart of love (the true meaning of what it means to do something as an 'amateur').

Therefore, our greatest desire in offering this Framework is that it will help foster pastoral care that is inspired by God's Word and Holy Spirit and offered to others in an authentic Christ like way.

Glossary of Terms used in this Framework

- **Pastoral Care:** Care being provided by Christians in the context of the Christian church – as used 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.
- **Pastoral Carer:** a Christian who provides pastoral care to another person (who may or may not hold a Christian faith).

Introduction to Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care embraces a wide range of activity in support of one another in and beyond the Church. It might:

Include

- Being a comforter/encourager
- Practical help
- Spiritual Direction * see note below
- Advice and Guidance
- Counselling ** see note below
- Prayer

* **Spiritual Direction:** In some Church / Denominational traditions Spiritual Direction might be seen as a separate function of a few specially trained people some of whom will use the title Spiritual Director

** **Counselling:** For the purposes of this document, we view Counselling as a specialised function which requires specialised training, involves a contractual agreement between the counsellor and his/her client, and is subject to a separate Code of Ethics and Practice – see ACC Code of Ethics and Practise for Counsellors

Involve

- listening
- encouraging
- comforting
- helping / sustaining people through difficulties such as crises, trauma, loss and personal dilemmas
- challenging and admonishing
- offering different perspectives
- offering Biblical Truth
- training / enabling
- pointing people towards Jesus
- offering information and guidance
- promoting the process of reconciliation with God, self and others
- engaging with the journey of healing and wholeness, and 'working' out one's salvation
- visiting people in their home, in hospital, in prison, in residential care homes, in refugee centres etc

Be Offered

- formally by a pastoral care team or by church leadership
- informally in everyday relationships
- by individuals
- by small groups
- through a particular ministry
- through outreach and mission
- by one church or a group of churches
- in the church setting
- in other settings

A definition of Pastoral Care:

Many people have attempted to define Pastoral Care – here is one of those definitions:

"The practical expression of the Church's concern for the everyday and ultimate needs of both its members and the community"

(Roger Hurding: The Bible and Counselling - Hodder and Stoughton, 1993, page 45)

1. Values of Pastoral Care

- 1.1. Pastoral Care that is inspired and enabled by Christ Jesus will contribute towards:
 - 1.1.1. 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 Lordso that the whole Body is healthy and growing and full of love (e.g. Ephesians 4:11-16).
 - 1.1.2. the mission work of the Church (e.g. John 17:20-23; Acts 2:44-47; Acts 6:1-7)
- 1.2. Pastoral Carers are called to love one another through Christ-like love (Matthew 22:37-39; Romans 12:10; Romans 13:8 and many other scriptures), 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).
- 1.3. Pastoral Carers are called to be burden bearers and burden sharers with and for others (Galatians 6:1-5).
- 1.4. 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; and many other scriptures).
- 1.5. Pastoral Carers are called to exercise confidentiality and discretion (Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 20:19 and many other scriptures).

2. Ethical Basis for Pastoral Care

- 2.1. Pastoral Carers understand that they are called to work in relationship with others, where the persons being cared for may develop a trust in and of the Pastoral Carer. Pastoral Carers will be careful to ensure that they do not misuse or abuse the trust that is bestowed upon them by others, and that they do not create un-Godly dependencies for either themselves or the persons to whom they are offering pastoral care.
- 2.2. Pastoral Carers will treat every person as a unique individual, equal with them in the sight of God. They will seek to help each person express themselves and to develop their God given potential.
- 2.3. 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, mental, sexual or spiritual abuse; insults; unwelcome sexual behaviour, language or jokes; display of offensive materials, words, pictures, symbols, behaviour, gestures, or signals.
- 2.4. Pastoral Carers must not exploit people they are helping e.g. financially, sexually, emotionally, or in any other way.
- 2.5. Pastoral Carers must maintain Confidentiality, understanding that Confidentiality does not necessarily mean secrecy (see Section 3 below).
- 2.6. The safety of the person must be safeguarded as far as practically reasonable and reasonable steps taken to seek appropriate medical or legal assistance if appropriate.

2.7. Pastoral Carers who are providing pastoral care as one of the 'some' or the 'few' (see page 1) should receive appropriate oversight and support for their pastoral care work. For pastoral carers whose pastoral care activity is more complex e.g. includes one to one personal support for people who are struggling with difficult personal issues and problems, we recommend a formalised style of oversight and support e.g. similar to 'supervision' that is made use of by counsellors.

NB it is essential that confidentiality is maintained within any oversight / support / supervisory arrangement and therefore careful consideration needs to be given to the most appropriate source of any supervisory support. For some it may be more appropriate to access supervisory support from outside their own church congregation to help ensure that confidentiality is not compromised. See Section 3 below for further guidance about confidentiality.

2.8. Pastoral Carers demonstrate genuine concern about the current needs and concerns of the person, help them to discern and identify their options, and encourage/support them as they seek God's Way.

2.9. Any changes the person makes should be by their own free choice, made after they have had opportunity to prayerfully consider all the issues. Such consideration may include consulting with people other than the Pastoral Carer.

2.10. Pastoral Carers will seek to listen and understand each person's own priorities and concerns such as personal and family needs, work, financial and care responsibilities, and not seek to impose new priority obligations on the person against their will. A person may be invited to re-order their priorities - if they do, it must be with their willing agreement.

2.11. Pastoral Carers do not seek to treat one person with less respect and dignity than another because of their race, language, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, age, size, income, disability, health, abode, or criminal record.

2.12. Pastoral Carers will respect those with whom they disagree and they will be patient with those who are aggressive or unwilling to listen and discuss options.

2.13. Pastoral Carers will seek to be honest and open without compromising their integrity.

2.14. Pastoral Carers will seek to be appropriately assertive but not aggressive.

3. Confidentiality

3.1. Whatever a person tells a Pastoral Carer must be treated with respect and kept confidential unless the Pastoral Carer has received specific consent from the person to pass information to someone else, or

3.1.1. the Pastoral Carer has been ordered by a Court of Law to disclose certain information either to the Police or the Court, or

3.1.2. the Pastoral Carer has reason to consider that someone else, particularly a child or vulnerable person, is at risk of harm or injury, or

3.1.3. the Pastoral Carer believes that the person **intends** to commit suicide (this is not the same as a person disclosing that they have thoughts about suicide)

- 3.2. In the case of 3.1.1 to 3.1.3 above:
 - 3.2.1. The person's consent to break confidentiality should be sought whenever possible (but see 6.4 below) except if there are good grounds for believing the person is no longer able to take responsibility for his/her own action.
 - 3.2.2. The Pastoral Carer should inform the person that confidentiality cannot be assured, and in the case of 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 the Pastoral Carer should tell the person what will happen if the person gives the Pastoral Carer any information that suggests certain criminal activity or risk of harm to others.
 - 3.2.3. Whenever possible, the decision to break confidentiality should be made only after consultation with the person overseeing the pastoral care.
- 3.3. Most pastoral care work happens informally, without a need for Pastoral Carers to make notes that contain personal information about the persons they are caring for. Exceptionally, and usually in more formal pastoral care work, it may be appropriate and helpful for a Pastoral Carer to make notes which do contain some personal information about the person being cared for. If any such notes are made, it is the Pastoral Carer's responsibility to ensure that the notes are kept secure and confidential and must not contain any information such as the person's name or contact details, which should be kept secure and separate from any notes. It is also the Pastoral Carer's and / or church's responsibility to ensure that any personal data that is created or recorded is stored and handled in compliance with current Data Protection Legislation. ACC Members and Affiliated Churches who require further guidance about Data Protection Legislation requirements please contact ACC Head Office.
- 3.4. Pastoral Carers need to be particularly aware that the person's right to confidentiality must not be waived in the context of prayer.
- 3.5. Pastoral Carers should gain the person's permission before conferring with other Pastoral Carers or other relevant workers including professional workers (also see 2.7 above).

4. Good Practice Guidelines

- 4.1. The Pastoral Carer's work begins with their faith in God as revealed through His Word, and seeks, as part of the care they provide, to help persons find their right relationship with God, keeping in mind that the person's right relationship with God may be different from what the Pastoral Carer hopes it might be.
- 4.2. Pastoral Carers will undertake and maintain appropriate training relevant to their need.
- 4.3. Pastoral Carers who are not trained counsellors should ensure that the person understands that the pastoral care being offered is not counselling.
- 4.4. If the Pastoral Carer believes that Counselling may be a helpful option for the person, they can present this as an option for consideration by the person, and support/help the person in finding an appropriate counsellor.
 - 4.4.1. If the Pastoral Carer is a trained counsellor he/she could offer to provide counselling but must enter into a formal counselling agreement with the person and ensure that the person understands the contractual/formalised boundaries and conditions of counselling.
- 4.5. Pastoral Carers should take reasonable steps to ensure that the person they are caring for suffers neither physical, psychological or spiritual harm nor abuse during pastoral caring encounters.

- 4.6. Pastoral Carers are responsible for working in ways which promote the person's control over his/her own life and respect the person's ability to make decisions and change or not change in the light of his/her own beliefs and values.
- 4.7. Pastoral Carers have a responsibility to establish with the person what other helping relationships are current.
- 4.8. Pastoral Carers will proceed cautiously with persons who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and with persons who are suffering from mental illness or impairment.
- 4.9. Pastoral care is not only worked out in the 'dark valley's' of other's lives (i.e. it does not only come into play in response to other people's struggles or problems) but it meets and interacts with people wherever they are at, including on the 'routine plains' and on the 'joyous heights' of life – "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15)

5. Additional considerations when providing Pastoral Care to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 5.1. ACC believes that every church should have a clear, written, Safeguarding / Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, which includes a requirement that every person that the church has formally nominated as a pastoral carer or child / young persons worker, undergoes a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. If you require guidance about this please contact either ACC Head Office or the Churches Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS)
- 5.2. Pastoral Carers who are called to provide pastoral care to Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults must do so within the guidelines of their Church's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.
- 5.3. Physical contact between an adult and a young person can often be misconstrued, and should only occur in appropriate public situations.
- 5.4. Pastoral Carers should be careful to demonstrate healthy examples of personal relationships and self-control, and should avoid any action that might encourage young and vulnerable people to develop addictive habits with alcohol, nicotine or drugs.
- 5.5. If anyone suspects misconduct by a Pastoral Carer that might involve or result in the harming / abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, the person suspecting the misconduct should take the following action:
 - 5.5.1. As a matter of urgency contact the person designated by their church / organisation as the safeguarding / child protection officer. If there is no such officer, or if the person suspecting the abuse is still concerned, they should refer the matter to CCPAS (Churches Child Protection Advisory Service) 24 Hour Confidential Helpline, or their Local Social Services Safeguarding Team.
 - 5.5.2. If the Pastoral Carer is a member of ACC the matter should (in addition to taking the action prescribed at 5.4.1 above) refer the matter to the Chair of ACC.
- 5.6. If a pastoral carer has any reason to suspect that a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or harmed, or there is imminent risk of abuse taking place, the pastoral carer should without delay follow the procedures laid down in their church's Safeguarding / Child Protection policy.

6. Pastoral Carers – responsibility for own fitness to work and for their own welfare

- 6.1. Pastoral Carers should be emotionally equipped for the work they do and should monitor the limitations of their own competence and involvement and work within their own known limits. It is an indication of the competence of the Pastoral Carer when they recognise their inability to help particular persons and make appropriate referrals.
- 6.2. Pastoral Carers should not work when their functioning is impaired due to personal or emotional difficulties, illness, disability, alcohol, drugs or for any other reason.
- 6.3. Pastoral Carers have a responsibility to maintain their own effectiveness, resilience and ability to help persons by seeking help, guidance and advice from the person who provides their pastoral care oversight.
- 6.4. Pastoral Carers should take all reasonable steps to ensure their own physical safety and the physical safety of others is not placed in a situation that presents a level of unreasonable risk.
- 6.5. Pastoral Carers should be trained to identify and assess risks and dangers when visiting homes or other premises when working with volatile or unstable people. They should know what safeguards they should put into place for their own and others' safety.

7. Misconduct and Complaints

- 7.1. ACC can receive and respond to complaints made against its members.
- 7.2. Throughout any complaints proceedings that are instigated the parties concerned must ensure that there are no breaches of confidentiality other than what is necessary for investigating the complaint.
- 7.3. Before a complaint is referred to ACC, the matter should be taken up with the ACC member in the first instance, both verbally and in writing (but see exception at 6.4 above). If the matter cannot be resolved or remedied after discussion with the member concerned:
 - 7.3.1. The complainant should take the matter up with the person responsible for overseeing the member's pastoral care work. If the matter remains unresolved:
 - 7.3.2. The matter should be referred to the member's Church Leader. If there is no satisfactory conclusion:
 - 7.3.3. The complaint should be presented in writing to the Chair of the Association of Christian Counsellors, stating which part(s) of ACC's Framework for Good Practice in Pastoral Care has been breached.
- 7.4. The only complaints that can be dealt with by the ACC are those concerning failure by its members to comply with the ACC Framework for Good Practice.