

TRINITY - DANDENONG

Pastoral Care Program

WHAT IS PASTORAL CARE?

It is a term that expresses the Church's role in becoming a healing, growth-stimulating and redemptive organism in its community and beyond. Pastoral care is a broad, inclusive ministry which assists in the pastoral development of each person and household within a Christian community in a way that Christ may be powerfully known, and made known to all. Under the Biblical motifs of "shepherd" and "servant" the pastoral functions of healing, guiding, sustaining, and reconciling are demonstrated for long term development and intermediate situations.

A pastorally caring Church includes ingredients of:

- * modelling and demonstrating caring action
- * a developed culture and philosophy of care
- * a spiritual environment of pastoral care
- * structures that facilitate pastoral process and accountability

In practical church life, pastoral care can be defined as the sum of actions that encourage all members and regular attendees:

1. to be grounded in the Word of God
2. in the life of the Spirit so that the individual experiences a source of strength and hope.

AIM OF OUR PROGRAM

1. to provide pastoral care and support for every person who indicates an involvement in the life of Trinity - Dandenong by being on one of our rolls.
2. to assist new people to become integrated into appropriate small groups and/or informal networks.
3. to enlist, train and support pastoral care workers in relation to the pastoral needs of the congregation
4. to assist the Minister and Church Council to identify ways and means to provide opportunities for personal growth in worship, witness and service to all.

METHODS OF PASTORAL CARE

1. The teaching ministry of the Church
2. The worship life of the congregation
3. The prayer ministry of the congregation
4. Fellowship - congregational, departmental, small groups and personal friendship networks
5. Pastoral care workers and networks
6. Pastoral visitation by Elders and Minister
7. Counselling appointments Minister for referral to outside professional help

THE PASTORAL CARE PROGRAM

The very nature of God is one of care. To care is provide all the elements that will stimulate life and growth. The mission of the Church will be characterised by the care we offer to each other. The church should be a place of care, i.e. of safety and security where people will not be discriminated against, villified, abused - physically, emotionally, sexually, psychologically or spiritually. People send out signals in a variety of ways and the key clement of our care is to encourage. We all perform so much better when we know we are being encouraged.

Encouragement means that we know our people, their needs, their feelings, their dreams, and then providing a framework of support to enable these things to be achieved. There are a number of elements in our program which inter-relate with each other and are designed to provide various levels of interaction and support for all.

1 The people of " the flock " When a person requests that his or her name be added to one of our rolls then a two-way responsibility has been established. One is that the people are agreeing to identify with and support the life and mission of Christ as expressed through the witness of Trinity - Dandenong. Our responsibility is to provide a safe place where each person is valued and cared for. To this end, each person/family unit is allocated a pastoral care visitor.

2. The Elder as a Pastoral Visitor The Elders care for the people assigned to them. This care may be various and depending on need. Specific responsibilities of the Elder as pastoral visitor is to keep regular contact with their people.

It is suggested that some of the following forms of involvement be considered:

- at least twice a year having a face-to-face intentional visit.
- monthly phone call
- drop in a Sunday Newssheet if it contains information that may be of interest.
- Invite by phone/mail/visit to a fellowship family function
- invite families to a morning/afternoon tea/evening supper/picnic etc
- keep eyes and ears open in conversation to perceived needs.
- support the family at times of joy/grief - eg baptism/funeral with the possibility of some tangible expression: e.g. flowers or plant.
- be the agent of a 2-way line of communication between church and people
- where appropriate, refer any matter that is appropriate to the Minister for more in depth involvement
- meet as Elders over an evening meal and undertake the offerings made for personal caring, sharing and "training" activity.

3. Elders The role of Elder is more fully contained in Assembly documentation which point to broader responsibilities in the life of the church, but one of which is as a group the oversight of pastoral care.

4. The Minister, is not the final point of referral for "difficult situations" but is a resource both in person- experience; material, who can be called upon at any time to assist in the work of pastoral care.

PASTORAL CARE THROUGH VISITING

1. What is a 'visit'?

'Visiting normally means an occasion of conversation and meeting in the member's own home. It is probably better to make an appointment unless the elder knows the member well. Other members of the family may or may not be present. It is good for the elder to at least ask to meet them. With shy people it is usually better to meet them on their own ground, but elders need to be sensitive to the delicacies of the family situation.

But a telephone call, or a letter, or a card, or a meeting in the supermarket, or outside Church on Sunday morning, can be a 'visit'. An invitation to the elder's home to meet other members of the congregation may be a visit. Any, or all of these occasions may be a 'visit' provided it is a significant meeting when the elder ministers to the member, and encourages growth in grace in some way.

2. What should happen on a visit?

There are varied intentions which may find expression in a pastoral visit. Of course, not all these transactions will happen in any given visit, but over a period of time they should provide the agenda for the visitor's pastoral caring.

The visit may:

1. affirm the member's place and worth as a member of the Church (love);
2. deepen the pastoral relationship (friendship);
3. offer resources to assist spiritual goals (support);
4. assist in clarifying personal goals (vision);
5. facilitate the identification of personal gifts (call);
6. encourage Christian service (encouragement);
7. answer self-criticism with forgiveness (forgiveness);
8. establish a pre-crisis relationship (preparation);
9. re-affirm the call to discipleship (affirmation);

A Final Point:

We all need care and encouragement. More especially those who continually give regularly need to be filled in order that we do not run out of resources. Those therefore, who have Elders, whether you are an Elder yourself, a Church Councillor, the Minister, committee person, or you are known to be involved with the care of others by virtue of your vocation need intentional support. But so do their spouses and family.