

## Pastoral Care in the New Testament

When we read the New Testament we see that the church was a **fellowship** in which people experienced God's grace and power in challenging times, through the supportive ministry of their brothers and sisters. This is perhaps seen most clearly in the 31 times the New Testament encourages us to do things for, or with, 'one another'.

In the fellowship of the early church the people encouraged one another to be **faithful**; that is to trust in God in the midst of crisis and to respond to their circumstances in an appropriate way (e.g. 1 Pet 4:19). They **encouraged** each other by reminding each other of God's promises and his faithfulness (e.g. 1 Thess 3:1-3). They **helped** each other and **supported** each other in practical ways (e.g. Heb 13:1-3).

Pastoral care, therefore, has many facets, including:

- **teaching**: helping people understand their situation in light of faith and so how to respond to it
- **encouraging**: helping people to see God at work even at difficult times, reminding them of his promises and faithfulness, and praying with people.
- **meeting together**: pastoral care is a function of the whole fellowship, not a small group within it. Doing things for, or with, 'one another' requires us to build relationships with each other.
- **practical help**: in the New Testament this included visiting the sick, supporting widows, visiting those in prison and giving financial assistance. The practical help we offer each other now will obviously depend on the circumstances.

This is the level of care that we are to show to one another in the fellowship of God's people. Since it is based on reciprocal relationships it is really only possible for such care to be experienced by those who are within the network of relationships in the fellowship. The early church was noted, even by its opponents, for its acts of kindness to all people. Yet it also recognised a

difference in its care for those who were part of the fellowship and those who were not (e.g. Gal 6:10)

## Provision of Pastoral Care in Garnerville

Pastoral care is the natural expression of concern for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. Much of the significant pastoral care within the congregation occurs spontaneously through acts of support, concern and kindness. These flow naturally from the relationships developed as we get to know each other through meeting and having fellowship together.

There are also more formalised ways in which we seek to ensure pastoral care is ongoing:

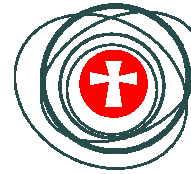
- **teaching and fellowship**: on Sundays and in small groups, which help build our faith so we can respond to crises in faith.
- **prayer**: the prayers for healing after the service on second Sunday of every month, the prayer group on first and third Sunday evenings (requests for prayer can be left in box at rear of church). Prayer can of course be arranged at any time by contacting the minister.
- **crisis situations**: in times of special need people are encouraged to inform the minister or an elder.
- **on-going pastoral needs**: those who are not able to attend church will be visited on a regular basis by Joan and Malcolm Scott. The minister will also visit.

## Elders and Districts

The congregation is divided into districts with an elder (and sometimes and assistant) assigned to each. The districts are based on geographical areas and have no more than 25 households. Recognising that pastoral care should normally be taking place within the fellowship of the church, the purpose of elders visits is to keep in touch with people, especially those who are not regularly attending. These visits will normally happen up to three times a year and will be less frequent for those who live outside our normal

'catchment area'.

When an elder becomes aware of a particular pastoral need they shall provide what care they are able: through keeping in contact, showing concern, praying with and for the person etc. They shall also encourage the person to avail of the pastoral care available within the fellowship of the church (e.g. prayers for healing, prayer group, fellowship groups etc) The elder shall also refer the situation on to the minister if necessary.



Garnerville  
Presbyterian  
Church

## Responsibilities of Members

Pastoral care occurs naturally and best through the natural relationships within the fellowship of the congregation. Therefore each member has certain responsibilities:

- to be an active member of the fellowship: meeting with others, building relationships (by becoming part of a smaller group) and seeking to live faithfully in every situation of their lives
- to offer support, encouragement and help to others within the fellowship
- when needing support to make use of the care activities within the church (prayers for healing, prayer group etc).
- to inform their elder and/or minister if they would like further support

Note: if you are going into hospital and would appreciate a visit from the minister please contact him directly. The information is not always passed on to the minister by the hospital.

# Pastoral Care

Carry each other's burdens, and in  
this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2