

Pastoral Care Policy

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Battle Baptist Church
Being Transformed Together



Battle Baptist Church
Mount Street
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Battle Baptist Church: our Pastoral Care Policy

This document has been created by drawing on the Association of Christians in Counselling's '[Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care](#)'. In addition, guidance has been sought from the following sources:

- The pastoral care policies of [Slough Baptist Church](#) and [Southwell Minster](#)
- The Diocese of St Albans' '[Living God's Love](#)' document
- Mill Hill East Church's '[Discipleship Path](#)' document
- BUGB's '[Being a mental health-friendly church](#)'
- BUGB's '[Mental health and safeguarding: A guide for ministers and church leaders](#)'
- Mind + Soul's '[Pastoral Care Policy](#)'
- '[Organising Pastoral Care in an all-member culture](#)' by John Truscott
- BUGB's '[Guide to Pastoral Practice and Ministry](#)' (p4)

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A Overview

'Jesus said, ... "A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."' John 13:34,35

Christians are called to care for one another, supporting each other through the challenges of life. We are also called to care for those beyond our immediate church family: for our neighbours and our community, and especially for those who are marginalised or disadvantaged.

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.
- Is ultimately concerned with developing quality relationships and enabling one another to more fully recognise and experience God's love.
- Plays an active role in God's missional activity to reconcile the world to Himself.

Christian pastoral care needs to be offered in the light of best practice and biblical principles in order to maintain the integrity and witness of the church. The care that is offered, both at times of crisis and in everyday life, should represent an active proclamation of God's love for all the world, as shown through Christ's sacrifice.

B Biblical values for pastoral care

Christian Pastoral Carers are called to:

1. Value others 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).
2. Love others through Christ-like love (John 13:34,35; Romans 12:10; Romans 13:8), being led, and living by, the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:13-26).
3. Bear burdens with and for others, whilst not creating dependency or denying the person their responsibilities and capabilities (Galatians 6:1-5).
4. Build up the body of Christ in love and with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience (eg Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 3:12-14).
5. Recognise that they are playing a role in the reconciliatory missional work of God (eg 2 Corinthians 5:16-21).

C Definition of terms

Pastoral Care: support being provided by Christians in a variety of contexts (for more detail on the nature of care embraced by pastoral care, see Section F on p4).

Pastoral Carer: in terms of this policy, a Pastoral Carer is Christian who is a member of our church and who provides pastoral care to another person *on behalf of the church*. This is most likely to be members of the church leadership (Elders and Deacons), members of the staff team (including the Pastors), and LIFEgroup leaders.

Christian pastoral care is not 'counselling'. Counselling is a service offered by professionals who are suitably trained and qualified. Typically, it involves a contractual agreement between the counsellor and the client and is subject to a recognised code of ethics and practice.

D What might be the threshold for pastoral care?

1. *Financial or material need*
Any requests for money, food, housing or basic needs. This might include requests for help in accessing eg benefits or other services.
2. *Health need*
Where pastoral care is offered alongside professional care for physical or mental health needs.
3. *Exceptional circumstances*
Bereavement; changes to status of relationships, employment, finance and housing.
4. *Spiritual need*
To stand alongside church family members as they go through times of trial, or as they seek to share their faith and disciple others.

E Statement of Intent

Pastoral Care - within the church family

It is the responsibility of each of our members to care for one another, and to seek to help others when they are going through hardship; significant health issues; traumatic life experiences; or times of spiritual challenge.

Pastoral Care - beyond the church family

We are committed to the nurturing, protection and safekeeping of all people who are associated with Battle Baptist Church regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, faith or no faith, or any personal characteristic which may indicate additional vulnerabilities. As a result, members of BBC may offer pastoral care and support to people connecting with any of our community activities, as appropriate.

Caring for the Pastoral Carers

Battle Baptist Church will exercise reasonable care and diligence in the selection, appointment and supervision of those undertaking pastoral care on behalf of the

church. Pastoral Carers are accountable to BBC for their work, currently through liaison with the Pastors and / or Elders. In turn, BBC is committed to supporting, resourcing, training and supervising those who take on this role as the need arises.

We ask that Pastoral Carers ensure that they are taking care of their own health and wellbeing (physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and relationally) as they offer care for others.

Please note that BBC's [Safeguarding Policy & Procedures](#) should be read alongside this policy as it sets out details of how we protect those who are most vulnerable (children and adults at risk) by having systems in place which ensure that we do all that we can to:

- *Prevent abuse*
- *Report concerns about abuse appropriately and in a timely manner*
- *Recruit volunteers and workers who do not pose a threat to vulnerable people*
- *Create a safe working environment and a safe community at BBC.*

F Pastoral Care at BBC

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.

Christian pastoral care might take the form of:

- listening, encouraging, comforting;
- advocacy, inclusion;
- mentoring, befriending, enabling;
- visiting, hospitality;
- celebrating;
- practical help;
- prayer;
- discipling.

Christian pastoral care might happen:

- formally in planned and organised ways; or
- informally through everyday spontaneous moments.

How is pastoral care organised at BBC?

Pastoral care will usually be provided through:

- *Every Member Ministry*: each member of the fellowship looks out for one another.
- *LIFEGroups*: small groups of between six and twelve people who meet together regularly for fellowship, discipleship and mutual support. When a pastoral need arises, it may be that fellow members of a LIFEGroup can offer appropriate support; LIFEGroup leaders may take on a particular role.
- *Prayer Ministry*: through prayer triplets; prayer ministry during or following Sunday gatherings; support from the prayer ministry team; meetings with church leaders.
- *Connections made through outreach ministries* (such as Caterpillar Toddlers, Renew 1066, BTFC Runners, Coffee Club, Grove After School & Grove Youth)
- *Pastoral visits / meetings*

G Best practice for Pastoral Carers

Pastoral Carers will follow the best practice guidelines for pastoral relationships as set out in BBC's safeguarding policy (pp24, 25):

1. Respect and affirm the rights and dignity of every person as a unique individual, equal with them in the sight of God and regardless of any personal characteristic or lifestyle choice (past or present).
2. Ensure that a person is safeguarded as far as is reasonably practicable and that appropriate steps are taken to seek suitable medical, legal or other professional assistance where required.
3. Be aware of the innate power imbalance within pastoral relationships and the potential for abuse of trust.
4. Seek to accept a person without critical judgement 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 or lifestyle.
5. Be aware of the dangers of 'dependency' or 'co-dependency'¹ developing within a pastoral relationship for either the Pastoral Carer or the person to whom they are offering support. The Association of Christian Counselling recommends that Pastoral Carers 'develop compassionate self-awareness in order to avoid patterns where eg a carer meets their own needs through the needs of others or, alternatively, feels that other people's needs always outweigh their own.' (Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Care, p10)
6. Understand the limits of one's own competencies and abilities: recognise when people receiving pastoral care need to be signposted to organisations

¹ For definitions of these terms and other potential risks in pastoral relationships refer to BUGB's 'Mental Health and Safeguarding' guide pp7-9

with specialist expertise and experience.

7. Listen carefully and act honestly, openly, justly, compassionately, courageously, mercifully and with integrity.
8. Maintain confidentiality, understanding that confidentiality does not necessarily mean secrecy. Exercise discretion.
9. Be mindful of any physical contact or greeting within a pastoral relationship: for example, seek consent before using touch as a means of offering comfort.

Conversely:

1. Pastoral Carers will avoid behaviour that suggests favouritism or gives the impression of a 'special relationship'.
2. Pastoral Carers will never take advantage of their role and engage in sexual activity with someone with whom they have a pastoral relationship.
3. Pastoral Carers will not subject any person to physical, psychological, verbal or spiritual harassment (see safeguarding policy p29)
4. Pastoral Carers should not pastorally minister to anyone whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

H Pastoral Care in action: scope and limitations

When pastoral care is being undertaken on behalf of the church, it is crucial that there is a clear understanding of the scope and limitations of what a Pastoral Carer can offer.

1. The limits of pastoral care
Pastoral Carers can provide a mix of emotional, spiritual and practical care according to need (see Section F above), but cannot offer medical or therapeutic treatments. Carers may need to signpost people to professional agencies or specialist support organisations for the best help. In some cases, pastoral support by itself is not always appropriate: some people may need professional intervention from the start.
2. Confidentiality
Confidentiality is a critical boundary which protects the privacy of a person, establishes trust, and maintains the integrity of pastoral work in our church. However, Pastoral Carers cannot promise confidentiality and, where information that has been shared raises concerns about safeguarding or illegality, it will need to be passed on to the Designated Person for Safeguarding in the first instance. It is the responsibility of Pastoral Carers to make this clear to the person who is receiving support.

Pastoral Carers are responsible for clarifying whether a person would like

their pastoral situation to be shared with anyone else (eg with any member of the leadership team or with the prayer team), and, if so, precisely what is to be shared.

Confidentiality also extends to written and electronic records, which should be kept and stored in line with BBC's Data Protection Policy and Data Retention Schedule.

3. Dual Relationships

A dual relationship is where a Pastoral Carer holds more than one role with a person. For example, a pastoral listener might also be a person's health care professional in the community or may be the friend of a family member.

Dual relationships can also occur specifically within the church. For example, Pastoral Carers may find themselves in the same small group (such as a LIFEgroup or worship team) as the person to whom they are giving pastoral support. Or Pastoral Carers may hold a leadership role where the decisions they make have an impact on the person to whom they are giving pastoral support.

4. Dual relationships are not always avoidable. Where they do exist, the Pastoral Carer is responsible for checking with themselves and the person receiving support whether there are any concerns about the duality. It may be necessary to establish clarity about roles and contexts at any point of meeting. It may be appropriate to discuss the matter with whoever is overseeing pastoral care at BBC.

I **Pastoral Care in action: practical guidelines**

The importance of setting boundaries

Healthy boundaries are guidelines, rules and limits that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for those involved in pastorally caring for others. They exist to protect everyone and are key to achieving healthy pastoral care as they help minimise the potential risks for both parties in a pastoral relationship.

Overarching Principles

1. The role of Pastoral Carer is to support and empower the individual receiving pastoral care.
2. If possible, Pastoral Carers should work in pairs. This reduces the risk of a pastoral relationship being misunderstood or becoming inappropriate.
3. All Pastoral Carers acting on behalf of BBC should:
 - a. carry out a proportionate and practical **risk assessment** for each situation, supported by the Church Administrator where necessary;
 - b. **keep a record** of every interaction they have with the person that they are supporting (jottings in a notebook is fine)
 - c. **be accountable** to an Elder, a Deacon or one of the Pastors;
 - d. **be aware of their own limitations** – ask for help and support where necessary.

In addition to acting in accordance with the best practice guidelines set out in Section G (pp5&6), Pastoral Carers should think about the following practical matters:

Pastoral meetings

1. Consider carefully where might be the best place to meet up. Ideally, meet where you can be seen but not overheard by others.
2. Make sure that any meeting is held at an appropriate time. For example, it is not advised to meet up with someone late at night. If a late-night meeting is necessary, because of an emergency or great distress, make sure that someone else knows where you are and take another person with you.
3. Set appropriate boundaries regarding communicating with the person you are supporting outside of your intentional meetings. Ideally, message or call during 'office hours': don't text, call or respond to messages late at night unless it is an emergency.
4. Be mindful of the language that you use when meeting in person or digitally. Do not use terms of endearment. Avoid 'banter' and never make comments of a sexual nature. Do not be overly familiar in your language. Do not sign off messages with 'love' or by texting 'x' or 'lol' as this could be misconstrued.

Pastoral Visits

In addition to carrying out a risk assessment (see 'Overarching Principles on previous page), Pastoral Carers should:

1. Call by appointment - don't call unannounced. Take a fully charged mobile phone with you and tell someone where you are going and when.
2. Rearrange a visit if, on arrival, it is discovered that the person they are supporting is ill.
3. Never offer 'over-the-counter' remedies to people on visits or administer prescribed medicines, even if asked to do so.
4. Politely refuse to accept any gifts from adults other than token items. If someone wants to make a financial donation to the church, put it in an envelope, label it and obtain a receipt from the Treasurer or Treasurer's Assistant.
5. Tell one of the Pastors or Elders who you have visited and say what is concerning or going well if appropriate.

Transport

All cars that carry adults at risk must be comprehensively insured.

1. Pastoral Carers should inform their insurance company if they give lifts to people on behalf of the church.
2. Pastoral Carers need to be DBS checked if they are going to take people to medical or adult social care appointments or facilities, as this is legally designated as 'regulated activity'.

When boundaries are difficult to delineate...

Sometimes, it might be difficult to define the point at which the scope of 'pastoral care' has evolved to also include 'practical support'. For example, in a time of crisis, providing someone with a meal can be enormously supportive. However, taking on a person's regular shopping falls beyond the remit for Pastoral Carers as this is another example of 'regulated activity'. Pastoral Carers should be mindful of the risks of dependency or co-dependency (see Section G, point 5 (p5)) and always seek advice from the DPS or person who oversees Pastoral Care if they are unsure whether requests for support made of them are reasonable or not.

If requests for help are made which fall beyond our definition of Pastoral Care, or which are unreasonable, this may indicate that a person needs more support from their own family and / or outside agencies. In such circumstances, a member of the Safeguarding Team or the person with responsibility for overseeing Pastoral Care at BBC will talk to the individual concerned. Likely courses of action would be to signpost the person to appropriate support agencies and / or to encourage him / her to talk to other family members about their needs.

Revisions

- i. Addition of final para (06.06.25).
- ii. Revisions 15.07.25.
 - a. Additional sentence re accountability inserted in 'Caring for the Pastoral Carers' p5.
 - b. 'Christian pastoral care is not counselling' para moved from p6 to section C, 'Definition of terms'.
 - c. 'What might be the threshold for pastoral care?' moved from Section E p 6 to new Section D p 4. Section labels updated where necessary.
 - d. Expansion of first sentence of 'The limits of pastoral care' p8 for greater clarity.
 - e. Drafting refinement of first sentence in point 2 on p9: want to avoid using term 'pastoral support'.
 - f. Inclusion of new point 4 under 'Pastoral Visits' (p9).
- iii. Revisions 25.09.25
 - a. Softening of wording in Section E para 3 to reflect fact that we do not currently have a Pastoral Coordinator in position; neither do we have a system of training in place yet.
 - b. Removal of drafting comments in 'Overarching Principle' number 3 on p9.
- iv. Revisions 23.10.25
 - a. Section H 'Pastoral Care in Action' divided into H 'Pastoral Care in action – scope and limitations' and new Section I, 'Pastoral care in action – practical guidelines'.
 - b. Section on confidentiality (p6) strengthened to address need for written and electronic records to be kept and stored in line with BBC's Data Protection Policy.
 - c. General tweaking of layout.
- v. Revisions 20.08.26
 - a. Amendments to page refs as necessary.
 - b. Revision of groups listed in 'connections made through outreach ministries' on p5 to include all current BBC groups.
 - c. Redrafting of points 3 and 4 under 'Overarching Principles' (p7) to reflect the four step process we ask Pastoral Carers to follow (cf film for church leaders and LIFEgroup leaders).
 - d. Pastoral Visits section on p8: edited to reflect reference to risk assessment earlier in the document and to ensure consistency in numbered list following sentence starter 'Pastoral Carers should...'
 - e. Strengthening of sentence in first para on p 9: replace 'would usually fall...' with 'falls' and further minor edits to ensure it makes sense.