

Pastoral Care System

South Gippsland CRC

Biblical and Theological Foundations

Pastoral Care is rooted in biblical thought both in the Old and New Testaments. Throughout the Bible we see the care that God has for people. The main image in the Bible that reflects that care is that of a shepherd and his flock. Besides the well-loved and much quote Psalm 23 we have these words in the book of Ezekiel:

- "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? ... you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd.... "For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness." Ezekiel 34:2-12 (NIV)

Jesus takes this image of the shepherd caring for his sheep and not only applies it to his ministry (see John 10) but also the ministry of the church in the parable of the lost sheep (see Luke 15:3-7). Jesus says, "Does the shepherd not leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it." (v. 4). And in another parable, the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25ff) Jesus calls us to care for others, our neighbour in these words: "Go and do likewise." The pastoral care offered within and by the Church is grounded on the life and ministry of Jesus and as it was lived it in the early church as recorded in the Bible. Here are a few key Bible verses recorded in the New Testament:

- "The parts [of the church] should have equal concern for each other." 1 Corinthians 12:25 (NIV)
- Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' ... 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'" Matthew 25:35-40 (NIV)
- "From [Jesus] the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." Ephesians 4:16 (NIV)
- "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Philippians 2:4 (NIV)
- "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:1-2 (NIV)
- "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Galatians 6:10 (NIV)
- "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:27 (NIV)

The CRCA recognises in importance of pastoral care in the church. In the church order we read: “The session shall ensure that pastoral care is extended to all members and regular attenders, with particular attention given to the sick, the distressed, the aged and the erring, and it shall encourage the members of the congregation to be faithfully involved in mutual care.” (Art. 66a).

Desired Outcomes

In the gathering of members of SGCRC on Sunday 18 November a number of desired outcomes were identified as we seek to develop effective pastoral care in and through the church:

- We see spiritual growth among our membership.
- We reach out to those who strayed away from church/faith.
- We meet the needs of the elderly, the lonely, those facing serious illness.
- We encourage one another within the body of Christ.
- We minister to the whole person, meeting spiritual, emotional, and physical needs.
- We care for one another as the family of God.

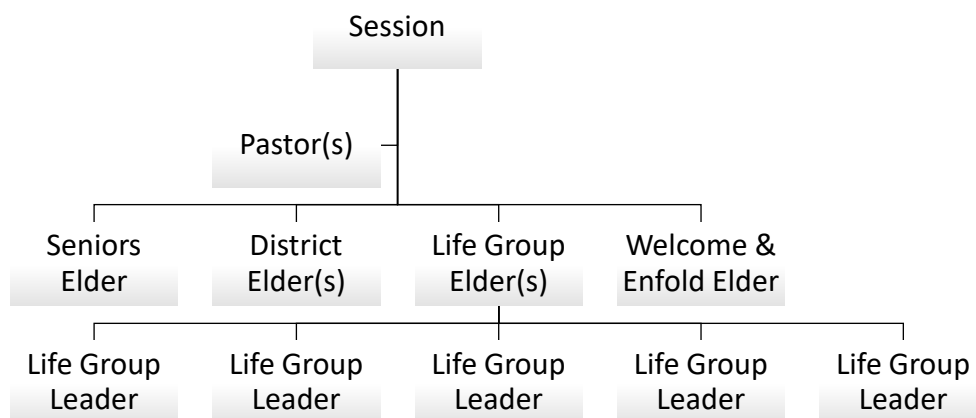
Pastoral Care Core Values

In our discussions about pastoral care at SGCRC we identified a number of core values that ought to guide the design and development of a pastoral care system at the church.

- The elders will provide oversight that effective pastor care is given to all members of SGCRC.
- The primary means to provide for pastoral care within SGCRC are through small groups. By small groups we are referring to healthy and effective gatherings of people for the purpose of fellowship, discipleship, serving, evangelism, and worship/prayer.
- The elders will ensure that proper small group training will be given in the five purposes mentioned above.
- All members not part of a small group will be encouraged to be part of one.
- Pastoral care will also be extended to those who have strayed away from the church.
- Pastoral care will also be extended to newcomers to the church so that they are welcomed and enfolded into the life and ministry of the church.
- Pastoral care will also be extended to church members not yet part of a small group by a designated elder.

Diagram of the Pastoral Care System

Below is a schematic diagram of the lines of accountability to ensure an effective and healthy pastoral system in the church:



The Pastoral Care System: An Explanation

The Role of Session

- Deals with overall strategic plan
 - Ministry effectiveness is based on movement toward increased church health in keeping with the mission and vision of SGCRC (i.e., the scorecard might be: Making and Growing Disciples)
- Deals with written Ministry Team reports
 - Session sets annual and long-term goals based on their core values, mission, and vision, and ministry opportunities.
 - The church is divided into a number of key ministry areas (perhaps based on the five purposes). Each of the ministry areas/teams sets annual ministry plans and goals in keeping with the goals of the session, which are approved by session
 - Goals include clear action steps and budgets
 - All Ministry Teams report to Session and are responsible to ensure that written reports are submitted.
 - Ministry Reports update session as to progress with ministry plans, and request assistance when needed
- Deals with reports from elders
 - District Elder(s) report on past month activity and request assistance when needed
 - All church members not involved in a Small Group (groups that do life together [hence: Life Groups], i.e., engage in regular worship/prayer, fellowship, Bible study, and service/outreach) are assigned to a district elder; the rest will receive primary pastoral care through their Life Group.
 - Reporting is on number of visits made
 - When there are ministry or membership issues that cannot be resolved by the elder, these are taken up by session to either be referred to one of the pastors or other professionals
 - Elders gauge the spiritual growth of their members based on people's engagement in making disciples and growing as a disciple themselves (i.e., the scorecard)
 - Welcome & Enfold Elder reports on past month activity and request assistance when needed
 - There should be a clear ministry role description focusing on following up with new people and ensuring people being welcomed and enfolded into the congregation
 - This elder should develop a team around him of church members who are engaged in hospitality, welcoming, and enfolding
 - The elder should run a new member's course in co-operation with the pastor(s)
 - Reporting is on number of contacts and/or visits made.
 - When there are ministry or membership issues that cannot be resolved by the elder, these are taken up by session to either be referred to one of the pastors or other professionals
 - Seniors Elder report on past month activity and request assistance when needed
 - There should be a clear ministry role description focusing on meeting the pastoral care needs of the elderly, especially the widows and widowers in the congregation

- This elder should develop a team around him of church members who are engaged in service, support, and care ministries.
- Reporting is on number of pastoral visits made.
- When there are ministry or membership issues that cannot be resolved by the elder, these are taken up by session to either be referred to one of the pastors, deacons, or other professionals.
- Life Group Elder report on past month activity and request assistance when needed
 - There should be a clear ministry role description focusing on making and growing disciples through Small Groups (groups that engage in regular worship/prayer, fellowship, Bible study, and service/outreach).
 - Only Life Groups that function in line with the five purposes are assigned under the care and oversight of a LG Elder.
 - Reporting is on number of meetings and/or visits made and overall health of the LGs under his care/oversight.
 - This elder should be in regular (suggest: monthly) one-to-one face-to-face/phone contact with each LG leader.
 - In addition, this elder should develop a team of Life Group leaders (no more than 5-7 LG leaders) and meet with them quarterly for support, encouragement, and/or training (use V.H.S. model of team building – cast Vision, Huddle for support, Skills training)
 - The elder should oversee the regular training in co-operation with the pastor(s) or others equipped to train Life Group Leaders.
 - When there are ministry or membership issues that cannot be resolved by the elder, these are taken up by session to either be referred to one of the pastors or other professionals.

Life Group Reporting

- Life Groups meet regularly for Worship/Prayer, Fellowship, Bible Study, and Service/Witness (five purposes).
- Life Group Leaders meet regularly by phone or in person (suggest: monthly) with LG Elder to report on past month activity and request assistance when needed.
 - Reporting is done on number and nature of LG activities.
 - LG Leaders gauge the spiritual growth of their members based on people's engagement in making disciples and growing as a disciple themselves (i.e., the scorecard)
 - The LG Leader is looking for movement spiritually (growing as a disciple) measured by a number of spiritual health indicators:
 - Commitment (attendance and engagement)
 - Spiritual Disciplines of Bible Study and Prayer
 - Character: Holiness and the Fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, etc.; Christ-likeness)
 - Making Disciples (Scattering Seed – Outreach Temperature)
 - The LG Leader is sensitive to other LG member needs, (i.e., illness, emotional, physical) and through the LG meets those needs.
 - When the LG Leader has concern about any LG member who is not developing spiritually, or there are other ministry or membership issues that cannot be resolved by the LG Leader, these are discussed with the elder for advice and/or for further pastoral care by the elder, pastor(s) or other professionals.