



Pastoral Care Policy

Agreed & Adopted: November 2025

Pastoral Care Lead:

DSL: Claire Walker

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1. Introduction

Birchington Baptist Church seeks to demonstrate the love and compassion of Christ by providing pastoral care to members and the wider community.

This policy sets out the principles, practices, and accountability structures for delivering safe, effective, and Christ-centred pastoral care.

Pastoral care is offered through prayer, prayer groups, personal conversations, phone calls, text messages, emails, social-media-messaging and visitation (in homes, hospitals, or other appropriate settings).

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:2)

2. Aims of Pastoral Care

- To provide encouragement, comfort, prayer, and practical support for those in need.
(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)
- To ensure pastoral care is offered in a safe, respectful, and accountable manner.
(1 Corinthians 14:40)
- To uphold safeguarding responsibilities for children, young people, and vulnerable adults.
(Matthew 18:5-6)
- To strengthen the life of the church by fostering a caring and supportive community.
(Acts 2:42-47)
- To recognise that pastoral care may intersect with trauma, mental health and healing needs, and to equip the church to respond sensitively and responsibly.

3. Principles of Pastoral Care

- Christ-centred: Rooted in prayer, Scripture, and the love of Christ. (Colossians 3:17)
- Confidential but Accountable: Information is treated with discretion, but safeguarding or serious concerns must be reported. (Proverbs 11:13)
- Respectful: Care is offered without judgment, respecting privacy, dignity and cultural differences. (Philippians 2:3-4)
- Safe: Care is provided in line with safeguarding procedures, ensuring no individual is placed at risk. (John 10:11, 14–15)
- Informed and competent: Recognising the difference between pastoral listening/support and professional counselling or therapy; knowing when to refer.
- Collaborative and resilient: In facing trauma or mental-health challenges, the church works as a team, refers appropriately, and supports one another.

4. Safeguarding

- All pastoral carers (paid or volunteer) must abide by the church's Safeguarding Policy.
- Children and vulnerable adults must never be visited or engaged with alone; a second adult should be present or contact should take place in an open/public space. (Mark 10:14)
- Any safeguarding concern must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Pastoral care is never to be used as a means of undue influence, control or manipulation. (1 Peter 5:2-3)
- Confidentiality has limits when safeguarding or serious harm is suspected: It may be necessary to break confidence in order to protect someone from serious harm.
- Ensure pastoral carers are offered training and that the church maintains oversight of vulnerable-adult and child-safeguarding procedures.

5. Methods of Communication

Pastoral care may be offered through various means, with the following guidance:

- Text & Email – use only church-approved accounts, be respectful, brief, and appropriate. (Colossians 4:6)
- Phone Calls – record and report calls with vulnerable people, seek parental knowledge when contacting minors. (Proverbs 15:23)
- Social Media – prefer group settings; maintain clear, respectful boundaries. (1 Thessalonians 5:22)

- Visitation – agree visits in advance, avoid lone visiting with vulnerable people, follow hospital rules. (Ecclesiastes 4:9–10, James 1:27)

Pastoral visitors should remain alert to trauma, grief, or mental-health distress and refer when needed.

6. Process of Administering Pastoral Care

1. Notification – Any pastoral need is to be reported to the Pastoral Lead. (Philippians 4:6)
2. Assessment & Delegation – The Pastoral Lead assesses and delegates the care. (Romans 12:4–5)
3. Delivery of Care – The designated carer provides the appropriate support. (Hebrews 10:24–25)
4. Record Keeping – A brief note of the pastoral care given is recorded securely. (1 Corinthians 4:2)
5. Follow-Up – Ongoing needs are reviewed by the Pastoral Lead and Deacons. (Acts 6:3–4)

6a. Trauma Awareness & Response

Pastoral carers should listen, offer stability, recognise signs of trauma, promote safety and refer where necessary.

When trauma is disclosed, volunteers must remain calm, avoid probing, and ensure referral to professional support or the Pastoral Lead for follow-up.

6b. Healing Ministry

Healing prayer and ministry aim for wholeness of body, mind and spirit. Prayer should be offered with consent and humility, without claims of outcome. Volunteers must not delay medical care or offer clinical advice.

6c. Mental Health Support

Volunteers are encouraged to undertake *mental-health awareness training*, recognise warning signs, and refer where appropriate.

Serious concerns (self-harm, suicidal thoughts) **must be referred immediately** to the Pastoral Lead and, if necessary, emergency services.

The church promotes a culture of *care rather than cure*.

7. Accountability

The Pastoral Lead oversees all pastoral care and reports monthly to the Deacons.

Volunteers are accountable to the Pastoral Lead and must follow safeguarding procedures. The church will provide supervision and debriefing for those regularly involved in pastoral care.

8. Confidentiality

Information is confidential unless there is risk of harm or safeguarding concern.
(Proverbs 11:13)

Volunteers must keep records secure and only share with consent or necessity.
(Matthew 7:12)

Records should be minimal, factual, and handled per our GDPR policy (1 Corinthians 14:40).

9. Pastoral Care Links and Contacts

The Pastoral Lead maintains a directory of trusted referral contacts including mental-health services, Christian counselling, trauma and bereavement support, hospital chaplaincies, and safeguarding hotlines.

This directory is reviewed annually to ensure accuracy.

10. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Deacons in consultation with the Pastoral Lead and Safeguarding Team.

“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be.” (1 Peter 5:2)

Pastoral Care Process Flowchart

Need → Notify Pastoral Lead → Delegate → Care → Report → Deacons