

Swallownest Baptist  Church

Pastoral Care Policy

Fully Revised & Adopted: September 2020

Introduction

New Testament believers were encouraged to share in each other's' burdens (Galatians 6:2), intercede for one another (Romans 8:26) and to demonstrate care in actions, not just words (1 John 3:18). At Swallownest Baptist Church (SBC) we need to adopt a 'whole church' approach to pastoral care.

One of the best ways to provide pastoral care is to encourage believers to join small groups within the church. At SBC initial pastoral support will be accessed through small groups. Where support is needed that is beyond the scope of the small group a referral can be made discreetly to one of the Elders or Pastoral team.

Drawing on all of our gifts, our aim is to enable and support each other in the challenges we face. At SBC we believe that all are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, in our relationships we respect one another.

Pastoral support will be offered within these contexts and guided by this policy. It is not intended to be an exhaustive document but to guide best practice.

Policy Statement:

Swallownest Baptist Church is committed in all areas of its work to providing a safe, welcoming environment, where all people are treated with dignity and respect. This document is relevant to all aspects of pastoral care at SBC.

- It is the responsibility of every adult to prevent the physical, sexual, emotional or spiritual abuse of, or the neglect of, any church attendee and to report any actual or suspected abuse that comes to light. Procedures set out in SBC's 'Protection of Adults at Risk Policy - Safe to Belong 2015' and 'Child Protection Procedures' must be followed.
- Each staff member or volunteer will be informed of and given access to copies of the current safeguarding policies and this Pastoral Care Policy and will be expected to observe them.
- SBC is committed to supporting, resourcing and training the Pastoral Care Team.
- The names of the Elders and Deacons will be clearly displayed within the church buildings along with out of hours contact numbers where appropriate.
- The Elders and Deacons will be responsible for the implementation of the 'Pastoral Care Policy' and will make themselves available to provide advice, guidance and support to members of the Pastoral Care Team.
- Everyone at SBC will have access to this Pastoral Care Policy on request.

The Leadership Team is committed to an annual review of this policy.

Care for One Another at SBC

Every Christian has a responsibility to care for others (John 13:34). That care often happens in natural and unplanned ways, although sometimes that is not possible or practical so additional support may be needed.

At SBC we recognise that life has both challenges and joys. We can journey together. As a church we want to foster a sense of belonging whether meeting all together or in small groups. Our care for one another includes praying, listening, encouraging, comforting, sharing and learning together.

Small Groups

As noted in the introduction one of the best ways to provide pastoral care is to encourage everyone to join small groups. At SBC these include: House Groups and other small groups (e.g. Ladies meeting, Mums and Tots, Men's breakfast).

Role of Small Groups

Pastoral support will be offered by every small group at SBC where friendships and care already exist. It is hoped that everyone in the group will be involved in this. Within each small group, one person will oversee pastoral care. They will ensure group members who have not attended recently are followed up and pastoral issues including those beyond the scope of the small group are communicated to one of Elders or Pastoral team.

Confidentiality Statement

Information of a personal nature that is shared within the context of pastoral care will be treated confidentially and with respect. If details are to be revealed the permission of the person sharing that information must be sought.

Where there is a serious risk of harm or where abuse is suspected, either to the person concerned or to others, then confidentiality will be waived in the interests of those at risk. In such cases confidentiality should not be promised.

Those providing pastoral care at SBC should not feel they do so alone. Concerns should be discussed with one of the Elders or the Pastoral team. This will normally be without divulging any personal information unless the person involved is informed, but occasionally this may be felt necessary. However, good practice is to tell the person why someone else is becoming involved.

Breach of Confidentiality

Whatever the information may be, a person's decision to share it may be at great cost to themselves or others and should not be treated lightly. It is a serious issue when confidentiality is broken. If this occurs, the Elders and Church Secretary should be discreetly informed and further action taken if necessary.

Disclosure requiring additional professional support

In some circumstances specialist and/or professional help is needed and referrals to get that extra help may be necessary. Relevant information for a referral should only be shared with the consent of the person requiring the additional support. It is expected that where further action is being considered one of the Elders will be involved.

Disclosure of abuse and further action

Where abuse or serious harm is suspected or disclosed:

- for adults refer to 'Safe to Belong 2015' and speak immediately to the Safeguarding team
- for children and young people refer to the 'Child Protection Procedures' and speak immediately to the Safeguarding team.

Issues of Mental Capacity and Consent in adults

Please refer to 'Safe to Belong' or speak with the safe guarding team

Children and young people

Parental consent should always be obtained before offering pastoral care to children and young people under the age of 18. Refer to the 'Child Protection Procedures' or speak with the safe guarding team.

Assumed consent

It can be assumed that someone agrees to pastoral care unless they state otherwise. If a person giving support is unable to continue or the person receiving support no longer wants it, that support will cease.

When invited, pastoral care can resume with either the original giver or someone else.

Safe Practice

Duty of Care

Duty of Care is 'a moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety or well-being of others' (Oxford Dictionary). This means that if someone causes loss or injury by failing to carry out his/her responsibilities in a careful way, they (and possibly Swallownest Baptist Church) could be held liable for negligence under civil law.

For work with Adults at Risk refer to 'Safe to Belong' and for work with Children and Young People the 'Child Protection Procedures'.

Prayer Ministry

Believers are encouraged to pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:18). Prayer support is fundamental to pastoral care and should always be offered but never imposed.

In addition to the rest of this policy the following should be observed:

- Prayer should show great sensitivity and respect.
- When we pray, we are asking God to be at work by His Holy Spirit.
- At times touch can communicate care more deeply than words. However, any physical contact e.g. holding a hand, should only be with the permission of the person being prayed for. Touch should not be inappropriate and/or intrusive.
- Be mindful of where you are praying and who might be listening.
- If praying with someone alone, do so in a place where you can be seen by others. Praying alone with someone of the opposite sex is discouraged.
- Prayer contact between an adult and a young person could easily be misunderstood. For best practice refer to the 'Child Protection Procedures'.

Lifts

Informal lifts arranged between friends at SBC are preferred. However, if lifts to church need to be formally arranged, this will be coordinated by the team. Provided the person is self-caring, a rota of volunteers from SBC could be set up. If the person requires assistance to safely get in and out of a car, an alternative will be sought (e.g. Taxi service). This will be paid for by the person requiring the additional help.

Anyone giving lifts on behalf of SBC should check with their insurer that they are covered for providing voluntary lifts.

Only members of the Pastoral Care Team with DBS checks should provide lifts, on behalf of SBC, to places where people receive health or social care.

Visiting friends at home

Home visits can happen both informally, amongst friends and small groups, and formally by the Pastoral Care Team.

For informal visits, in addition to the rest of this policy, keep the following advice in mind:

- Only visit people you are comfortable visiting. If in doubt, contact one of the Elders or Pastoral team so a formal visit can be made.
- Be aware of sexual attraction. Don't visit lone members of the opposite sex or someone who will make this difficult for you or them.
- Carry a mobile phone so that you can make a call quickly and easily if the situation requires it.
- Do not visit children or young people (Child Protection Procedures.)

Code of Conduct

Abuse of Trust

Abuse of Trust is when someone uses their position of authority or trust to the detriment of someone they are caring for. In addition, the one cared for may be reluctant to make a complaint or take action out of a sense of loyalty or fear.

It is important that all those working pastorally are aware of their boundaries and responsibilities.

For work with Adults at Risk refer to 'Safe to Belong' and for work with Children and Young People the 'Child Protection Procedures'.

For further information see, Caring for Young People and the Vulnerable? Guidance for Preventing Abuse of Trust (Home Office 2003).

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

People who support children on behalf of SBC will have a DBS check. When appropriate those supporting adults at risk will also have a check. Any existing or subsequent convictions of those workers offering support must be disclosed to the Leadership Team. Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar a person from all pastoral care work. It will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of the offences.

Boundaries to Practice

Those seeking and receiving pastoral care at SBC should know that

- Pastoral care is not counselling.
- Everyone should be aware of their limits and seek further help from one of the Elders if necessary.
- Nobody should handle personal finances for someone on SBC's behalf.
- An awareness of over-dependency in pastoral relationships is important. This dependency can apply both ways. In the event of dependence forming, a referral should be made to one of the Elders and support continue to be offered via the Pastoral Care Team.

Actions and Considerations

Equal Opportunities

SBC is committed to social justice and resolutely opposed to discrimination in society. We are committed to serving and respecting people on a fair and equitable basis. As an organisation using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to assess applicants' suitability for positions of trust, the church undertakes to comply fully with the DBS Code of Practice and to treat all applicants for positions fairly. It undertakes not to discriminate unfairly against any subject of disclosure on the basis of conviction or other information revealed.

Misconduct, mistreatment and abuse

Swallownest Baptist Church will not tolerate, or knowingly subject any person to any abusive or inappropriate behaviour. In cases of abuse or serious harm speak immediately to either the safe guarding team or Pastor/Team Leader.

The conduct of Swallownest Baptist Church members will be reviewed. Complaints will be taken seriously and reported to the Church Secretary. If necessary, other agencies (e.g. Police or Social Services) will be informed. If you have any concerns you can contact any of the Elders as above.

Incident and Accident Reporting

Significant incidents or injuries should be dealt with immediately, e.g. calling for an ambulance or the police, etc, and recorded as soon as possible on an Incident Report form and handed to the Church secretary.

Prayer chain

Function of the Prayer chain: The prayer chain is a group of intercessors who receive and share prayer requests, via text message, on behalf of those at SBC, their friends and families. This does not exclude requests from others. In all cases requests will only be passed on with the agreement of the person to be prayed for. The chain is operated on a strictly confidential basis with as little detail as necessary being given. The simpler the message the more accurately it is passed on. No further enquiries are made to remove any pressure or embarrassment of further discussion. However, feedback is welcomed where appropriate.

Persons invited to join the Prayer chain Team will have

- A desire to pray for God's people.
- Time available to receive and share messages and to pray for the needs.
- Read and agree to work within this part of the policy.
- A willingness to access support for themselves should they be troubled by praying for difficult issues.
- Ensure permission to share with the prayer chain.
- Pray for the needs that are shared.
- Ensure the request gets passed on to next person in the chain as soon as possible and if they're not available to call the next person in list to ensure the request is passed on.
- Consider praying together on the phone when passing on a request.
- Pass on requests by phone and only if this is not possible by text.
- Reply and confirm receipt if a request is received by text.
- Immediately delete any requests sent or received by text.
- Maintain confidentiality within prayer chain unless it puts others at risk.

Pastoral Care Team

'Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep' (Romans 12:15)

The Pastoral Care Team will:

- Offer confidential prayer and/or practical support to those in need.
- Attend bi-monthly or quarterly team meetings for support, encouragement and training.
- Follow this policy and the safeguarding policies and others as they become available (e.g. Data Protection).
- Seek pastoral advice when necessary.
- Commit to praying for those they're supporting, and for themselves as they deliver pastoral care.
- Not take on more than they can, recognising their limitations.
- Be accountable to one another.
- Communicate with the Pastoral Care Team just before visiting someone and afterwards to give a brief update.

Home Visits

In addition to the rest of this policy:

- Make it known that you are visiting on behalf of SBC and are accountable to the Elders and Deacons.
- Be clear that you are offering pastoral support, not professional help or counselling.
- If you are unsure about your safety or the safety of the person you are visiting, do not visit alone but choose an appropriate person to accompany you e.g. a Deacon and/or a different location where you can be seen by others e.g. a local café or park etc.
- For your safety home visits should be pre-arranged and if necessary communicated with the Pastoral Care team.
- Do not plan home visits late at night.
- If the person you are visiting is not at home, leave a visiting card to let them know that you called to see them.
- Be aware of sexual attraction. Don't visit alone members of the opposite sex or someone who will make this difficult for you or them.
- If you are visiting a child or young person refer to the 'Child Protection Procedures'. Ensure the parent/carer remains visible. This will prevent any misconstrued events.
- Carry a mobile phone so that you can make a call quickly and easily if the situation requires it.

Training and Support for those Providing Pastoral Care

Please refer to 'Safe to Belong', 'Child Protection Procedures' and the Data Protection and Privacy Policies once they become available.

Currently, to ensure that personal data is handled in compliance with Data Protection legislation the Pastoral Care Team should only use phones and computers to record information which should be suitably password protected.

The Elders will be responsible for providing pastoral-related training for the Pastoral Care Team and others on request.

If you are in any doubt then please ask.

Pastor/Team Leader

In addition to the role as described for the Pastoral Care Team, the Pastor/team leader will also:

- Be the link between the Pastoral Care Team and the Leadership Team.
- Ensure the Pastoral Care Policy is implemented and reviewed.
- Be clear about the roles, skills and availability of the Pastoral Care Team.
- Provide confidential supervision, advice and guidance to those providing pastoral care.
- Take on pastoral referrals that may be complex, sensitive or require planning.
- Contact specialist/professional agencies, make referrals and follow up as necessary.
- Pass on referrals to the Pastoral Care Team where appropriate and follow up.