

Pastoral Care

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Daniel the Stylite and Where You Stand as a Pastor



A Working Definition:

Similar to friendship and counseling but still unique, the ministry of pastoral care or spiritual care is any contact where lives can be touched by the Holy, where a concern can be met with care, and joys can break into singing. It is an expression of God's care for the healing and wholeness of the person, but the focus is in the spiritual. It is care of the soul.

The Primary Tasks Of Pastoral Care

1. Show Up – physically and spiritually
2. Pay Attention - listen, pray and reflect theologically
3. Bring what God has given you to offer: Faith, Hope and Love.

And Now For Something Completely Different

1. The Cape
2. The On-Demand Pastoral Machine (The imperative of pastoral availability is not the myth of "on-demand" comprehensive service, 24/7/365)
3. The Failure, the Monster, the Incompetent Pastor

So Who Should Receive Care?

The extent and nature of how one provides care depends on:

- The unique needs and issues of the person(s) receiving care.
(e.g. faith history, generational cohort, gender, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status, education)
- Amount of resources available:
 - Spiritual/Emotional Wellness of Care Providers
 - Time
 - Physical setting
 - Community Resources
- Level of pastoral training, skill, and supervision (don't go into waters you are not trained swim in **or** don't have the resources to take on effectively).



Guidelines for Counseling by Clergy of the Virginia Annual Conference

While it is to be expected that parishioners will come to their pastor seeking help and guidance with personal issues or concerns, we believe that our first responsibility to our parishioners as a clergy person or religious professional is in the realm of spiritual guidance and pastoral care. We recognize that the scope of knowledge, training, experience, and skills required in “pastoral counseling” is very different from that in pastoral “counseling” which is an extension of one’s broader pastoral care of a parishioner. Indeed, few clergy are trained and qualified to engage in “pastoral counseling” of a psychotherapeutic nature. Therefore, it is incumbent that each clergy person be mature and professional enough to know the limits of his/her professional knowledge, training, skill, and expertise. As such, clergy should make it a practice to provide a listening ministry of brief, supportive counseling and to use appropriate referrals when the problems or issues clearly go beyond the knowledge, training, experience or skills of the pastor.

Clergy should establish a personal policy which limits any counseling relationship to no more than three sessions of 60-90 minutes each per individual incident. Advise your congregation and church leadership of this policy and the rationale for it. Advise those who come to you for counseling of this policy at the outset. Be aware that exceeding appropriate limits in counseling increases the risks of the potential development of inappropriate relationships, boundary violations or misconduct between the pastor and the counselee, as well as the risk to parishioners of applying well intentioned, but misunderstood and inappropriate interventions or advice.

It is the clergyperson's responsibility to be aware of the various counseling and referral resources which are available in your community. In most communities, there will be a variety of certified or licensed mental health professionals and self-help groups to whom you can make referrals. Where this is not the case, you can make referrals to resource persons within a reasonable travel distance. Remember that persons in rural or more isolated communities already are accustomed to traveling to receive various kinds of professional care not readily available in their own community.

In consultation with the counselee and referral counselor, the clergyperson continues to provide appropriate needed pastoral care and support during the period of referral.

Clergypersons maintain confidentiality in all counseling relationships. What is shared by the parishioner in counseling with the pastor is considered privileged information and is not to be shared in any way outside the counseling relationship. However, we understand that we are legally mandated to report the suspicion of child abuse or neglect and such exception to confidentiality is provided for in the *2008 Book of Discipline*, ¶341.5.

Always use caution in the physical setting and observe appropriate boundaries of touching and other inappropriate physical contact or comments, especially when meeting with minors. Always be sure that other adults are nearby as protection for yourself, the counselee and the church. Help your church develop and implement a Child/Youth Protection Policy if one is not already in place. All clergypersons should complete the Board of Ordained Ministry training on "Boundaries in Pastoral Care and Counseling" being provided at the district level. This workshop provides a more comprehensive rationale and overview of the guidelines to be observed in counseling and how to make appropriate referrals to licensed or certified counselors and other mental health professionals.

Pastoral Self-Care is Critical for Pastoral Effectiveness and Quality Care

Break!

This is a great job.

Providing Care

1. The primary task of the pastor in counseling is ***Showing up, paying attention and responding with what God has given you.*** In counseling, *this will involve* active listening, reflecting theologically, and utilizing available community resources. Of all the possible things to offer in pastoral care, faith, hope, & love, lived out in relationship with God, are the essentials.
2. Pastoral Care is also vital to building relationships as a critical means for God to work in the lives of all involved. It builds trust and sense of understanding that will impact other issues in the parish.
3. Meet people where they are. Listen carefully to the person, God and yourself.
4. You do not have all the answers or the ability to fix much if at all.
5. Listen and ask questions. If you are making assumptions, ask if these are correct.
6. Choose wisely the timing of when to correct their theology or understanding. A crisis tends to be a really bad time to have a nuanced or rational theological discussion or proselytize. However, there are times that you may need to challenge distorted or limiting beliefs (e.g., 'God hates me because of _____ and would never forgive me.')
7. Be open to miracles, but do not give in to the temptation to make promises for God.
8. Be open to mystery, but do not give in to the temptation to make excuses for God.
9. Allow for people to be angry at God (remember the Psalms), and this may get transferred to you.
10. Be rooted in the promises of God's care and compassion found in scripture and experience.
11. Be prepared to help issues of anger, forgiveness, anxiety and stress, trauma, grief, depression, substance abuse, suicidal thinking and doubt, denial and spiritual crisis.
12. Always offer to pray with the person. Pray for healing and wholeness in the way that God desires
13. Limit advice to 2 or 3 items at the most.
14. Embrace the role of the Pastor and be careful with disciplinary crossover
15. Proactively initiate contacts
16. Keep a calendar of events and anniversary and check in
17. Check in on people who fade from attendance or participation
18. Use Prudent Caution
 - a. Under promise.
 - b. Avoid compromising situations and locations.
 - c. Remember you are in a position of power, vulnerability, and suspicion.

Organizing your ministry

1. Be Prepared to provide care
 - a. spiritually
 - b. theologically
 - c. emotionally
 - d. resources and logistics
 - e. ??
2. Develop a plan(s) for:
 - a. routine care (schedule a time and practice)
 - b. how you'll respond to a crisis (set up a plan, respond with compassion)
3. Develop good list(s) of people & issues
 - a. Check it regularly
 - b. Share some, keep others private.
 - c. Church's Prayer List is complicated, even tricky. And it is Not your pastoral care list.

4. Develop a Pastoral Care Kit
5. Develop a list of useful go-to books, articles, that you have read (e.g. Breaking and Mending for Divorce) that might be meaningful to offer or send to the person
6. Cultivate Networks for Care and Prayer. Care and faith formation is the job for all people in the congregation. Encourage and Equip Lay Care Givers (even if informally) and Lay Sacramental Ministry. Some good resources include:
 - a. The Caring Congregation by Karen Lampe (book and resource guide)
 - b. Stephens Ministry (stephenministries.org)

Best Practices for Care Visits

1. Do knock and announce yourself
2. Wear you Name Badge & bring needed items
3. Don't over or under stay.
4. Do offer to pray, and pray for
 - a. Situation
 - b. Healing and wholeness in God's will and way
 - c. Family and care providers
 - d. Other way the spirit moves
5. Offer communion as appropriate (Recommend use of individually packaged bread and juice packs in many health care settings).
6. Offer to excuse yourself when medical care or consultation is provided. Wait outside or keep a promise to return.
7. Clean Hands at entrance and exit.
8. If they are asleep, seriously consider waking. If unconscious, still speak to the patient and pray.
9. Use protective equipment (glove/mask/gown) if requested and model this for others.
10. Avoid going sick, but use gloves/mask/ gown if must.
11. Do not go if your presence would stress the person, but do provide for care in other ways.
12. Ask if including them on public prayer list ok and what to say. Help them if they don't want or need visitors at the moment.
13. Gifts are nice but circumstantial. Consider small crosses, prayer books, Bibles, etc.
14. Remember the promises of God, but don't make specific promises for God.
15. Under promise and over deliver in your care.
16. Be wise about the impulse to 'vigil' with family.
17. Understand your community practices with care, previous pastoral history, and your practical plan and priorities as a pastor. There may be tensions in these.
18. It is generally good to make a care contact with people undergoing a surgical procedure. Sometimes this can be done immediately before the procedure, but other circumstances may mean you need to do this by phone or in person the day before.
19. You can call the hospital to find out if a person is a patient and their room number. It is possible that you could talk to them by phone on most units, but many people now have their mobile phones with them.
20. If the person is in the emergency room or a restricted unit (e.g. ICU) present yourself to the front desk or nurses station, identify yourself as their pastor, and ask to see your parishioner. They are generally quite helpful unless something is going very wrong. Be patient.

Develop a Pastoral Care Kit:

1. Prepared Care Provider
2. Print Bible
3. Communion Kit with "Fellowship Cup", Pre-filled communion cups juice/wafers
4. Anointing Oil (you should be ready to explain it briefly and sincerely, and better yet, teach the use of this practice if not part of your community already.)

5. Prayer Book(s)
6. Professional Name Tag
7. Paper/pen, post cards, greeting cards.
8. Gifts, Bibles, Devotionals, Cards, Objects & Symbols
9. Informational and Referral Material
10. Church Brochures/Cards and business card
11. Hand Sanitizer

Dealing with Conflicts.

1. Love as a Pastor. Remember your job is to love and lead, not to be loved.
2. Work to not be “reactive” in your responses
3. Think deeply and pray. It is not always about the named conflict.
4. When there are lines drawn and sides to take, choose Jesus who loves all involved.
5. Stick with God, follow Jesus, and obey the Holy Spirit, and encourage others to do the same. Be responsible for your actions and feelings. If you are in the wrong, apologize.
6. Be Mindful of triangulation – arising from the study of dysfunctional family systems, this is a situation in which one individual will not communicate directly or fully with another, but will communicate with a third person. This takes the form of a triangle and is an attempt to manipulate circumstance, reduce anxiety or control conflict. A form of this, “splitting”, is when one person ‘plays’ one person against one that he or she is upset about.
7. Grow thick skin while maintaining a tender heart. Remember your sense of call.
8. Encourage honest communication and dealing with feelings as well as facts.
9. Work closest with the people in the parish who have proven to have your back.
10. Work with a mentor or colleague outside of your parish.
11. Learn from experiences and develop habits and survival skills for church conflict.
12. See expectations for Pastoral Leadership, pages 19-23 for a potentially helpful process.

Confidentiality

1. Confidentiality is a sacred trust and is the foundation of any pastoral relationship
2. Confidences must be inviolate (i.e. “free or safe from injury or violation”)
3. You should break confidence when there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect – Local or State Department of Social Services. (You Are A Mandated Reporter and have 24 hours from the time of your initial suspicion to report) See dss.virginia.gov for more information.
4. Ask what people want shared. Ask things like, “Can I add you to the prayer list?” or “Can I let someone know who can help?”
5. It is OK to say “I really can’t talk about that” to someone who asks invasive questions about someone else’s issues. When you do talk, ‘less is more.’
6. A Golden Rule: “When you, acting on behalf of the church, are contemplating the disclosure of health related information about someone else, first ask yourself what you would like done if you were in a similar position. Would you care whether you were first asked for your permission before disclosing the information? If you were incapacitated, would you prefer your family or friends to decide what should be disclosed and to whom? Would you possibly be embarrassed if this particular information was publicly disclosed? The answers to these questions will go a long way toward pointing us all in the right direction.” GCFA Memorandum on HIPPA Privacy Rule and Local Churches

Record Keeping

1. Capture Information about your pastoral care contacts only for the purpose of helping you provide care. This may be as simple as date of contact, names, general issues (enough to serve as memory prompt), items given or loaned, referrals, any follow-up plans.

2. Take reasonable and necessary steps to protect the confidentiality of the information. Password protect and encrypt electronic notes, keep paper notes in your possession or under lock and key. Develop a plan to purge old notes.
3. If electronic notes: consider using a service like Evernote.com, Airtable.com, theCareNotebook.com or DayOneApp.com which offers cloud based note taking that syncs across devices.
4. Do not share your notes with anyone except concurrently serving pastors. Keep and eventually destroy your notes when you move to the next parish. Leave only brief notes alerting issues for the Pastor who is following you.
5. When working with a care network in your church, only share essential information that would be publically known unless you have permission to share more. There still may be things you know pastorally that shouldn't be shared even with people in a caregiving circle.
6. Look back through it on occasion. You may want to count or even celebrate milestones (e.g. "I did 72 pastoral care contacts last quarter!")

HIPPA?

1. HIPAA is an acronym for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, a federal law passed in 1996. Privacy rules coming from this law are both complex and far-reaching.
2. Traditional pastoral counseling provided by churches at no charge to their parishioners does not make the church a covered health care provider subject to the privacy rule.
3. In general, HIPAA does not apply to churches' disclosure of health related information about its parishioners or other individuals in the context of publicizing prayer requests and prayer lists.
4. HIPAA does kick in:
 - a. If the church or the pastor also operate as Health Care Providers.
 - b. Concerning Church Employees: As a general rule, churches should be extremely cautious about disclosing health related information concerning their employees without their consent. This is true regardless of whether the employees are also parishioners.
5. Google "HIPAA Privacy Rule and Local Churches GCFA" for more information.

Communication Issues

1. Create a "Contact Me" practice and respond within boundaries. Work to correct assumptions that you know what is going on at all times with everyone.
2. You are "on call" for emergencies only. A pastor is NOT expected to be present for everyone when called upon, day or night, for any reason.
3. Clearly give advice to your parish about how to reach you, and try to stick with it.
4. Mobile phones are a great ministry tool, but in the wrong hands, your number can occasionally lead to frequent, intrusive calls. Give it out judiciously, and handwrite it on your business card, and encourage people to use your main number.
5. Consider setting up an internet based account to create a secondary number that will forward calls to any numbers you assign including your mobile phone. Google Voice is a free option for this, or you can use a fee-based service like Line2.com or others. It will also give you internet-based voicemail with transcription and text messaging. You can use this to set up primary business line or an urgent contact number.
6. Facebook and other social media can be a good place for care, but this is best done by private message. See the Conference Guidelines for the Responsible Use of Social Media for Virginia Conference Clergy and Religious Professionals and attend the Clergy Ethics II.
7. When providing care in writing, do it privately and be careful to not put something in writing that you would feel uncomfortable if someone, anyone else read. Inevitably, some things get forwarded accidentally or maliciously.

8. Consider adding this language to your email: "CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: This email message, including any attachments, is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential and privileged information, which is subject to Federal and/or State privacy regulations. Any unauthorized review, use, disclosure or distribution is prohibited. If you are not the intended recipient, please contact the sender by reply email or by phone, and destroy all copies of the original message. Thank you."

Referring To And Working With Allied Disciplines.

1. It is honorable and ethical to stay within your roll and limits.
2. Develop a good referral list and use it well.
3. Understand and remind yourself that you are not the only person who can help.
4. Find and develop relationships with care providers in the community. Encourage working with discharge planners when leaving hospital, rehab, etc.
5. Pastoral Counseling providers include: Virginia Institute for Pastoral Care (Richmond Area, Williamsburg, & Roanoke), Center for Pastoral Counseling of Virginia (several NOVA locations), Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center (Newport News), Tidewater Pastoral Counseling Services (Norfolk). Or search for counselor at aapc.org.
6. Spiritual Direction providers can be found through Hearts on Fire, the Fellowship of United Methodist Spiritual Directors and Retreat Leaders (fumsdrl.org) or Spiritual Directors International (sdiworld.org)
7. Call 2-1-1 or visit 211virginia.org for health or human service suggestions.
8. Free and reduced cost Mental Health Services are available through the local Community Service Boards (CSBs).

Recommended Books (available in print and eBook formats)

The Caring Congregation: How to Become One and Why it Matters by Karen Lampe (Abingdon Press, 2011)

The Caring Congregation: Training Manual and Resource Guide by Karen Lampe (Abingdon Press, 2014)

Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth, 3rd Edition, Clinebell & McKeever (Abingdon Press, 2011).

Pastoral Care In the Small Membership Church, James L. Killen (Abingdon Press, 2005).

The Gift of Presence: A Guide to Helping Those Who Suffer, Joe Pennel (Abingdon Press, 2009)

The Gift of Compassion: A Guide to Helping Those Who Grieve, Becca Stevens (Abingdon Press, 2012).

The Gift of Encouragement: Restoring Heart to Those Who Have Lost It, Marjorie Thompson (Abingdon Press, 2013).

Just in Time Series - Pastoral Prayers for the Hospital Visit, Sarah Webb Phillips (Abingdon, 2010).

Prayers for Life's Ordinary and Extraordinary Moments, Mary Lou Redding, Ed. (Upper Room Books, 2012).

Listening for the Soul: Pastoral Care and Spiritual Direction by Jean Stairs (Fortress Press, 2000).