

Pastoral Care

The dynamics of pastoral care in a growing church must change if it is to contain growth. A small church, say of up to 50 members, can be cared for sufficiently by one pastor, as he has more of a chaplaincy role. He can visit most of his members monthly and if the church has remained that size for many years, it is quite likely that the congregation will resist growth because they know most people. Also, many pastors find it hard to break free from unspoken expectations placed upon them by others, when it comes to visiting and counselling. People in the church reason that pastors are the ones trained and paid to do pastoral care not others. However, Ephesians 4: 11ff says:

'It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature...'

It is clear from these verses that it is not the function of the pastor to do all the work of the ministry, but to train believers to help do it. The problem however, is for the pastor to know how to mobilise the people to do pastoral care.

Several approaches have successfully involved congregations in effectively doing pastoral care. Research suggests that newcomers are more likely to remain in the fellowship if they form up to five friendships within their first six months. Pastoral care helps people become integrated into church life.

House Church. Over the years this method of care for people has proven to be very popular. The leader has close contact with the pastor and receives regular support and training to equip them for effective pastoral work. Often, they lead a group of people meeting weekly in a home, where they share in fellowship, worship and teaching. More serious cases of pastoral concern are often referred to the Pastor of the church for further attention.

Small Groups. These are particularly useful for discipleship training, fellowship or where there is a specific task for the group like missions or evangelism, which needs more time for planning and prayer. See the chapter on small groups. These groups are very popular.

Care Structure. Due to busy lifestyles (and possibly a lack of commitment) this concept is growing increasingly popular. Those given the responsibility should make regular contact and care for a selected group of people within the church.

Some pastors delegate to these leaders' pastoral authority, while other pastors see them simply as a means of determining where the needs are. In the former situation regular training is given, while in the latter, friendship and *communication* are what is important.

The following forms could help to keep a record of special needs which require further attention:

Pastoral Care Department

MONTHLY SUMMARY TO PASTOR

Leader _____ Month _____

[illegible]

Please return this form to the Pastor during the following week.

A typical job description for Pastoral Care Worker

1. Position Pastoral Care Person

2. Personal

2.1 Ultimately responsible to the Senior Pastor.

2.2 To be responsible for providing some pastoral care for those allocated to you.

3. Duties

3.1 To make at least one monthly contact, either by a phone call, home visit or a worthwhile talk after Sunday Church, with those under your care.

3.2 To be responsible for returning the monthly accountability form to the church office worker or Pastor.

4. Liaison

4.1 To liaise with the Pastor or Church Secretary on how you are getting on, particularly if extra help is needed.