

Pastoral Care at Nettleham Methodist Church Guidelines

INTRODUCTION.

This guideline has been put together for pastoral visitors at Nettleham Methodist church. The majority of it is based on the Lincolnshire Methodist District guideline for pastoral care. However, some additions have been made, particularly the section on confidentiality, the roles of the Pastoral Visitor, the first paragraph in the significance & importance of the work. The latter is based on a pastoral care document from Salisbury Methodist church which is freely available on the Methodist church of Great Britain website. The appendices were also added for further clarification.

The work of Pastoral Visitors (**PVs**) lies at the heart of the life and work of Nettleham Methodist Church by walking alongside those who need help to show care, compassion and love. It is clear that for many, pastoral support is invaluable and helps them to affirm that they are not alone and are valued.

The pastoral team has church wide responsibility. The first port of call, for those in cells, should ideally be the cell group facilitator. However, if there is a larger issue or one that the cell group facilitator or the group member(s) do not feel that they can manage the pastoral team should be contacted. People in cells can of course contact the pastoral team themselves if they would prefer for an issue to be dealt with away from the cell.

The pastoral team should perhaps be the point of contact for prayer requests being sent to the church. These can then be prayed over by the pastoral team and will also help if there are any pastoral issues that might require a visit to be offered. A dedicated pastoral care email account has been set up for this purpose. Permission will be asked from the person requesting the prayer if they wish the request to be disseminated to the wider church congregation via the notices.

THE SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE WORK.

Within the life of the Church the role of the Pastoral Visitor is one of the most significant. Its importance has several facets, because the visitor is part of the structure of the Church which enables members and adherents to sense that they belong to a Christian community. Part of the responsibility is to be a channel of communication, linking people together and keeping them in touch with what is happening in the life of the Church. The visitor is also significant in providing pastoral care to one or more individuals (their pastoral group), by demonstrating an interest in their lives and providing support and encouragement at particular times of need. As a member of a wider team, visitors can offer not just their own

time, skills and resources, but those of the Church as a body. The visitor also has a role to play in assisting others to grow in their faith and discipleship, through listening to their experience, discussing concerns and providing encouragement.

By definition, the suggestion is that pastoral visiting is about those who reach out, through visits to people's homes, wherever and whatever those may be. Much of it is in fact done within the person's home, hospitals or care home settings. However, there are some important considerations:

- **The term "visitor" should not always mean that we confine the role just to visiting.**

Such contact could be by way of an informal discussion at church, after church, through church activities etc. These are all opportunities to make important contact & identify how someone is at a particular time and what help, if any, they need at that time or in the future.

However, it is good practice not to confine all pastoral contact to the above settings as visiting the person at home or where they live helps to get to know much more about their situation, who is part of their life and the environment they live in.

- **There is an important difference between social visiting as a friend and pastoral visiting on behalf of the church.**

*Becoming a PV does not, of course, stop that person visiting someone too as a friend. However, visiting as a PV means that someone is being visited on **behalf of the church**, not just as a social friend. Supporting someone as a friend has clearly different expectations and experience shows that it will be harder as a friend to report concerns and break confidences.*

*Visiting on behalf of the church means that the visitor has been **"sent"**, is **accountable and does not work in isolation of a wider team**. It particularly reinforces that the PV has a **responsibility to report any concerns on behalf of, and to, the church as per the Responding Well (District Safeguarding) Flowchart procedure (Appendix 3)**. It means that the visitor is part of a team which should work to support each other and meet regularly to discuss common issues & people know where to go for help.*

KEY PRINCIPLES:

- **A Team Approach.**

It is important for PVs to see themselves as part of a team and **not working in isolation**. The team approach will need very careful co-ordination and the opportunity for meeting as a team to not only encourage the team approach but to ensure everyone is working together to understand their role will be encouraged and promoted. In particular, the team approach allows PVs to be mutually supported.

- **Acting on behalf of the church.**

Methodist CPD makes clear that:

“Pastoral Visitor” means a person appointed by the church council under its authority to exercise pastoral care over those committed to his or her charge...”

Acting on behalf of the church means that the PV is representing the church, is from the church and therefore is accountable to the church. For the PV, this will give a sense of security knowing that they are not operating in isolation of the church but with its support.

The critical implication of acting on behalf of the church is the need to be **accountable back to the church.**

- **PV meetings.**

The team will meet regularly. The meetings will serve many purposes and have a number of benefits:

- ***To bring together PVs to simply keep in touch with each other as a team and support each other;***
- ***To share common issues that are being faced, discuss together how to best resolve them and develop good practice;***
- ***To discuss any particular situations that have caused difficulty or confusion;***
- ***To identify training and development needs;***
- ***To, on occasions, bring someone in to speak on a particular topic, to further equip PVs in their knowledge and understanding.***

Regular support meetings are a good pattern if the spirit of team working is to be fostered and effective. Without regular meetings of this type, PVs may feel isolated, disconnected from each other and not up to date with relevant national, district or circuit developments that impact their role.

- **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is key in order to maintain trust between congregational members and the pastoral team. **The only caveat to this is if something is disclosed which needs to be passed on to others such as the minister or safeguarding.** In such instances the pastoral visitors should make the person(s) aware that this needs to be passed on and ideally gain the consent of the person(s). However, **safeguarding issues may need to be passed on without consent.**

Please also see the [Methodist Church Confidentiality Guidelines \(appendix 1\)](#).

The Role of Pastoral Visitors

1. To keep in contact with the members of their pastoral group through home visits, informal discussions and telephone conversations, ensuring that their personal details on the church's data base are kept up-to-date, and informing the Minister of any changes
2. To distribute Church Newsletters, Pastoral Letters (Harvest, Christmas and Easter), Christmas gifts and other information to those in their group unable to attend worship regularly.
3. To offer support and encouragement to the members and adherents in their pastoral group, particularly in times of special need.
4. To advise their Pastoral Group Leader, or Minister when additional support might be appropriately required either by the Minister or other professionals.
5. Pastoral visits should occur in pairs and both members should wear their lanyards for identification (see identification below). People may still visit individuals on their own but this would only be as friends. However, if any such visits identify a pastoral need, then a formal pastoral visit should be arranged with the pastoral team to visit as a pair.
6. There would be no set plan of how visits are conducted, rather the visitors would be led by the person(s) being visited. Thus, a visit may just be a chance to chat, prayers can and will be offered, however, if the person(s) wish then a bible reading can be read or perhaps a short bible study could be conducted or communion offered. The latter would need to be planned ahead as the sacraments will need preparing the Sunday before by the minister but these can be administered by the pastoral visitors, unless the person(s) would rather the minister visits to administer communion.

OTHER GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES.

IDENTIFICATION –Although the PV may be well known by those being visited, ID serves a number of purposes:

- ***It shows that PVs are there on behalf of the church;***
- ***Others who they might meet (family, staff in hospital or care homes) can see that the PV is acting in an official capacity;***
- ***It sets an example of good standards and practice;***

- ***It shows other organisations that we take the role seriously.***
- **PV's need to protect themselves by being accountable and visiting in pairs**

Recording visits – It is good practice to make a simple note when a PV has had contact, especially by way of a visit but **not** a detailed record of what occurred in that visit. This is important for several reasons:

- ***To help to record who has been seen, including dates and times;***
- ***To avoid disputes if someone feels they have been unsupported;***
- ***In the rare case of a complaint being made, there is a record of what support has been offered and/or if someone has been in someone's home at a particular time/date;***
- ***To support accountability.***

There are a few ways this can work:

- The PV themselves could make a note in a diary or similar just to show when they visited or had contact. Nothing more than that will be required;
- The Co-ordinator could hold a central record of when visits are made as informed by the PVs.

If a note is taken or central record kept of visits, it will be important to keep that record or the means of the record for the foreseeable future and until archiving policies are clearer.

[Please also see the guidance on recording pastoral of pastoral work \(Appendix 2\)](#)

PROVIDING TRANSPORT IN THE ROLE OF A PASTORAL VISITOR.

The District Safeguarding Policy now states that all those offering transport and lifts as part of any role must have the correct car insurance in place, **that is cover for a volunteer providing transport.**

In addition, duty of care must be exercised to ensure drivers are fit to drive and will not put anyone, including the general public, at risk.

APPENDIX 1

12. Guidelines for Good Practice in Confidentiality and Pastoral Care

Within these Guidelines the expression 'Pastoral Worker' refers to lay, ordained, paid and voluntary persons who exercise a pastoral role within or on behalf of the Methodist Church.

12.1. In order to establish a relationship of trust within a pastoral relationship and within the wider church community, it is important that the things people share are treated in confidence. There are three exceptions to this.

- x If someone specifically gives the pastoral worker permission to pass on something they have said (eg, they give permission for a situation they are facing to be mentioned in the intercessions at church).
- x If a person discloses information that leads a pastoral worker to think that that person or another person is at risk.
- x If a person indicates that he has been involved in or is likely to become involved in the commission of a serious criminal offence.

12.2. In the second and third cases information should be passed on to the appropriate person or agency. Wherever possible the person disclosing information should be supported in sharing that information himself or herself. If that is not possible they should be encouraged to give permission for the information to be passed on.¹ Only if this is not possible should the pastoral worker disclose the information to the appropriate third party without permission. A child would not necessarily be expected to disclose information themselves, but they should be carefully consulted.

Guidance on the safeguarding of Children, Young People and vulnerable adults can be found on the Methodist Church website.²

12.3. When a person indicates that what he or she is saying is to be kept confidential, it should be understood that it will remain so, subject to the circumstances outlined above. There is a further responsibility on behalf of the person offering care in the pastoral context to assume confidentiality even without this being explicitly raised. Seeking the permission of the person disclosing information as to whom it might be shared with and in what circumstances is an important part of building up trust and demonstrating that they and their story are valued. A trust that is born of a community in which confidentiality is normally maintained will lead to confidence that those who offer care are able to exercise proper judgement on those rare occasions when confidentiality needs to be broken.

12.4. Supervision

All those in a recognised pastoral relationship should be supported through a structure of formal reflective practice (called 'supervision'). Each church or Circuit should have a supervision system in place for their pastoral workers, providing someone they can talk to, seek advice from and share with, in confidence, issues and concerns about a visit or a series of visits. This may be an experienced pastoral visitor, pastoral secretary, a lay pastoral worker, a presbyter, deacon or a professional

supervisor. Details about possible models of supervision can be found on the Methodist Church website.³

¹ . Care must be exercised to not prejudice or risk prejudicing any possible police investigation. See, for example, SO 022A(7B) for guidance.

² . www.methodist.org.uk

³ . Ibid.

12.5. Self-Awareness

If the pastoral worker has an urge to pass on information, what is their motivation? Has the information shocked, alarmed or offended them? Has the information caused painful memories to surface from their own history? Is there a sense of power connected to knowing this information when others do not? On the other hand, would it help the person or people in the midst of a pastoral situation to pass the information on? If so, the person disclosing should be encouraged to share their own story, or give permission for it to be told. Three simple headings can help those in a pastoral relationship to develop their self-awareness in regard to confidentiality.

12.6. When to tell

When permission has been given by the 'owner of the story'.

When an individual/individuals will be at risk of harm if the information is not passed on.

When information has been disclosed about a serious criminal offence that has taken place or is planned.

In the context of supervision, with the prior knowledge of the individual that this may take place.

12.7. What to tell

What are the facts of the story? These need to be told without gloss or 'spin'. Only sufficient information should be passed on to enable the giving of support, practical help or informed prayer. Avoid sharing more than is needed.

In a supervision context it would be usual practice not to give details of names, but an outline of the situation and the pastoral worker's response.

12.8. Who to tell

Identify the most appropriate person (if any) to pass the information on to. Who can help or has the resources or access to support for the person concerned? Who will most appropriately support the pastoral worker in reflecting on what they have heard?

Identify any persons or groups who should not be told. It should not be assumed that the person concerned has told their family or friends.

It is not good practice for pastoral workers to share pastoral information about third parties with members of their family. People would not expect a GP to pass on to her spouse confidential medical information, yet often assumptions are made that to tell a pastoral worker information will lead automatically to their partner knowing. Boundaries of confidentiality need to be made clear to all concerned, and the family members of the person offering care should not be expected to carry the responsibility of holding such information.

12.9. Prayer Support

People's names and situations should only be mentioned in public worship and contexts of open prayer if they have given express permission. This applies to prayers written in books, hung on prayer trees and passed on to prayer chains and networks.

Care should be taken when a worship leader or preacher invites topics for intercessory prayer that people understand that they should only share information about people that is given with their permission.

12.10. Church Meetings

The limits of confidentiality within any church meeting need to be identified and kept to – not by implicit assumption but by explicit and agreed policy. Applying the general principles that information is only passed on when permission is given

and that the person involved knows the context in which it will be shared will enable meetings to remain in good order.

Groups discussing the status of an individual need to be reminded of the confidential nature of their business.

Disciplinary proceedings of the Church operate under strict rules of confidentiality, which are fully explained in 'Complaints and Discipline in the Methodist Church: A Step by Step Guide to the Standing orders on Complaints and Discipline'.⁴

12.11. Dual Roles

The boundaries of a pastoral relationship can be blurred. A pastoral visitor may also be a former nurse and a volunteer visitor at the local hospital. This may give her access to church members as patients, in which case it is important that she and the church member are both clear about which 'hat' she is wearing. It may be that pastoral support would need to be offered by a different member of the church or Circuit.

Sometimes the person offering care has dual responsibilities on behalf of the Church (eg, a Chair of District who is responsible for pastoral care of ministers as well as their discipline and their stationing). In such situations the status of the conversation should be made as clear as possible from the outset. The speaker should be asked to state what his or her expectations are. The listener should make it clear whether he or she is willing to be bound to complete confidentiality in advance and explain in what circumstance they would feel an obligation to share or use the information given.

If during the course of a pastoral conversation a listener realises that there is material that might need to be used in a context beyond pastoral support, the speaker should be told.

12.12. Multiple Contexts

A pastoral worker may have privileged knowledge of an individual from another context (eg, barrister, GP, counsellor). Best practice is that information disclosed by an individual remains within the geographical or professional context in which it was disclosed.

If a person has given permission for their situation to be prayed about by a prayer group and a member of that group has contact with them in another pastoral setting, it is not appropriate for that information to be shared in that other setting without permission being sought.

12.13. Multiple Needs

Where there are multiple parties within the church or within a family with a range of needs, different sources of pastoral support for those parties will need to be offered. This is particularly the case in a situation of abuse, where victim and perpetrator should not have the same pastoral supporter. It may also be that a church's pastoral system has visitors that care for particular groups within the life of the church, such as young people.

Confidentiality and Technology

12.14. Data storage

When a computer is passed on, sensitive and confidential data from the hard drive should be permanently deleted. Security software can be purchased to do this. Alternatively hard drives should be removed from equipment being disposed of.

⁴ . Clifford Bellamy, *Complaints and Discipline in the Methodist Church: A Step by Step Guide to the Standing Orders on Complaints and Discipline*, Third Edition, MPH, to be published September 2008.

Where data is stored in such a way that there is shared access, proper use of passwords should be made to limit access to appropriate persons. This is true of those whose computers are based at home and used by family members, as well as those who work in an office.

When data is stored on portable media, including: CD and DVD ROMs, floppy discs, USB drives, mobile phones and laptops, care needs to be taken to password protect files and machines.

If using a Wireless Local Area Network (WLAN) to store, send or receive confidential information, it is important to ensure that a high level of security encryption is enabled.

12.15. Social Networks and Websites

Sites such as Facebook and MySpace are increasingly popular and are used by many people as a source of support and friendship. People are often quite relaxed about the amount of information they disclose about themselves and possibly about others. It is important to apply the principle about 'who owns the story' in what is shared about others online.

12.16. Remote printing and faxing

If using fax machines or printers that are networked from a computer into another room, in a busy office for instance, it should be ensured that sensitive information is not left unattended.

12.17. Photocopiers

Originals of sensitive material should not be accidentally left on the photocopier; the next person to use the machine may not understand the confidential nature of what has been left for all to see. Some copiers retain a scan of a document until the next document has been copied. If a print run is interrupted (due to lack of ink or paper) it may be that the next person to use the machine finds that the outstanding copies print out when they have stocked up the paper or ink.

12.18. Email

In families and in offices it is not unusual for people to have shared mailboxes allowing general access. Where possible, in-boxes should be password protected.

Any email that contains personal data about a third party should only be sent with their permission and should be treated with the same care and attention as any other written information being passed on. It is important to take care not accidentally to 'reply to all' if the contents of your reply to an email should not appropriately be seen by the wider group. When emailing a group, if the members have not given permission for their details to be circulated within the group they should be mailed using the 'blind carbon copy' (ie bcc) facility.

12.19. Protecting contents

When sending documents, secure the contents against accidental or deliberate alteration by converting documents into a secure format such as PDF.

12.20. Mobile Technology

The same care should be taken in passing on texts as when using any other method of passing on information. It is important not to discuss personal details of individuals whilst using a mobile phone in a public place.

Documents, images, sound recordings and videos can easily be made and passed on using various kinds of mobile technology. If sending data by Bluetooth it is important to remember that unintended people may have their Bluetooth connectivity set to 'on' and be able to receive information. When sending

confidential or potentially sensitive data it is important to target a particular device (phone or laptop), rather than use a general broadcast, which may be picked up by other devices within range.

12.21. Shredding

The increase in cases of identity theft has brought to light the need for careful disposal of sensitive or personal information. Documents containing personal details or confidential information should be shredded before binning or recycling.

This Appendix Was Taken from The Methodist Church of Great Britain Website.

Appendix 2

Guidance on Recording of Pastoral Work

The importance of following the Data Protection Act (DPA) is relevant to all sections of the guidance below. The Act does not necessarily prohibit the collection or disclosure of data. There is an explanation of the relevant sections of the DPA in the report *With Integrity and Skill* section 10.

(http://www.methodist.org.uk/downloads/Conf08_18_With_Integrity_and_Skill.pdf)

a) Who does the guidance apply to

In line with the Conference report *With Integrity and Skill*, this guidance is for all pastoral workers - a term used to refer to lay, ordained, paid and voluntary people with a recognised role of care in the Church. It should be followed alongside the guidance on confidentiality.

b) Why record pastoral visits

- i) Many pastoral visits are to those who are vulnerable, whether because of ill-health, bereavement, or other stresses in their lives. These conditions can affect whether a person becomes a risk either to themselves or to others. Accurately recording observed behaviour and statements that have relevance to assessing risk over time is an important part of being able to ensure the right level of protection and/or help is secured for the person concerned or others.
- ii) Maintaining appropriate boundaries in pastoral work is extremely important. Recording the information outlined below is part of a framework to protect both the person being visited and the pastoral worker. It helps inform the discussions that would need to take place in supervision or in another setting if this area raises any concerns for either party.
- iii) The person being visited may disclose information that is relevant to a safeguarding situation or the commission of a criminal act. Timely and accurate recording of what has been said is of the utmost importance. Recording procedures under the Safeguarding Policy will apply in the first case.
- iv) The person being visited may share information about their family or circumstances that it is important to remember in light of an ongoing pastoral relationship.

c) What information should be recorded

- i) With all pastoral visits the following basic information should be recorded by all pastoral workers:
- name of person visited
 - date of visit
 - venue
 - reason for the visit
 - necessary action, if any, who it involves
 - date of next visit.

Bearing in mind the points above on why record, an additional section of the record could include observations on behaviour, statements made or information shared.

d) Where to record

- i) Information can be recorded either electronically or as a paper record. If it is recorded on a manual system it should not be in a notebook as it will be difficult to separate recording about a particular individual from other recording. An index card or similar would be suitable. Such records should be kept in a locked container.
- ii) records kept electronically should be filed with appropriate password and security access. The section of the guidance on confidentiality headed "Confidentiality and Technology" should be followed.

This Appendix was taken from The Methodist Church of Great Britain Website

Appendix 3

Safeguarding in Lincolnshire

Responding Well – District Safeguarding Flowchart

- This procedure is for all churches in the Lincolnshire Methodist District from **September 1st 2021**;
- This procedure relates to concerns about children and adults, their families and/or church officers and Ministers;
- It also should be used by Pastoral Visitors, Local preachers, Local Church Pastors and all paid lay roles.

Concern (even if a just niggles) about...

