

Pastoral Care Policy

At St Martin's we want to uphold gospel principles and operate a model of grace by caring well for those in our church family. This means extending particular care to those who are vulnerable or in need. People may be vulnerable in the short term because of particular circumstances (eg, ill-health, in a particular relationship) or longer term (eg, children, those with learning difficulties). Caring for these groups often means there is a safeguarding element to our care of them. The best safeguarding is proactive and overlaps with care, rather than only being responsive when a crisis occurs. As we grow numerically it becomes harder for this to happen organically.

To tackle these issues a small group (the 'Pastoral Team') has been meeting regularly to consider our care of groups and individuals. This group is currently made up of Will Rubie (minister), Lucy Davidson (safeguarding officer), Richard Criddle (minister) and Rachael Rubie (due to the pastoral care she offers to many). This group is deliberately small, although we are considering asking one other member to join to increase representation of an older age demographic and who is linked to Community Hub, as a key outreach ministry. This group operates with the strictest of confidentiality.

The purpose of this group is to discuss individuals or groups where there is a perceived pastoral need which requires care and support, over and above what is normally offered to all church family, and to consider how best to support them. The group would consider practical, health (both physical & mental) & emotional needs. (Although we recognise there will always be overlap we would not consider primarily spiritual issues.)

The discussion will consider how to understand the difficulties experienced; how to support the individual; who could be involved in that support; & whether there are any safeguarding implications. The role of the Pastoral Team will not be primarily to provide support to individuals but to mobilise support. Support would come from the church family; in the first instance using existing structures like hub groups as the vehicles, it may also come through connecting individuals who may not already be connected (such as a new parent with an experienced grandparent). Occasionally it might be necessary to have a clear written plan with expectations of each party but in most circumstances this will be negotiated through relationship. Some needs will be too great or specialist for us to meet within the church family and the Pastoral Team will also actively consider

what external support services could be utilised, this may include: food bank, money management courses, GP support, counselling. Where there is a cost to these services, consideration may be given to utilising the Hardship Fund (see policy) if appropriate.

In almost all circumstances, individuals will be discussed with their consent and they should be involved in and aware of any support plans. On occasions it may be necessary for a group member to discuss with the group whether there is a need for support to be offered and to seek the guidance of the Pastoral Team before discussing this with the individual. These meetings will be treated with absolute confidentiality and only very brief notes are kept & securely stored by the Safeguarding Officer. Any member of the church family (but particularly ministry leaders) can approach a Pastoral Team member (or email pastoralcare@stms.org.uk) and request for an individual to be discussed by the group. Any particular worries or tensions should be made clear. In addition to ensuring those with pastoral needs are being cared for, part of the function of the team is to ensure that church family members are not inappropriately burdened by caring responsibilities and that these can be shared between us where possible.

It is very important to note that this group is **not** to be used to discuss allegations or disclosures of a safeguarding nature. The usual process should be followed in these instances. It is possible that some discussions by the Pastoral Team may lead to seeking advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor: for example, if over time it became clear there was someone attending St Martin's who was highly vulnerable and needed to be protected from harm, or if someone was presenting a risk to others.