

## **Setting up a Pastoral Care team- working through the nuts and bolts!**

Pastoral Care is the responsibility and calling of all Christians. It is a natural and organic part of discipleship that comes as part of the baptismal calling to service in God's world. No formal structure or authorisation is needed for Christians to care for one another or to offer good neighbourliness.

Yet, for good reasons, parishes have sought to develop teams of people to share in particular aspects of the responsibility of care. This set of headings is offered to assist clergy and their PCCs in establishing and training a pastoral care team in the parish.

A team or group will be focussed in different ways according to the giftings of the members and the identified missional goals of the church/es. Such a team can keep before a church community the importance of everyone's role in caring for one another and ensure that the existence of such a team doesn't encourage others to abdicate responsibility for their own calling to service as Christian disciples. The team has the opportunity to model and encourage Christian care as an essential aspect of discipleship.

### **Establishing a pastoral care team**

The decision to set up a pastoral care team needs to be prepared for by thorough consultation within the parish. This should include discussion with other ministers, PCCs and other interested parties. Preaching and learning opportunities might be used to share the idea more fully before it is implemented; utilising some of the preliminary questions addressed here.

### **Preliminary Considerations**

Before setting up a pastoral care team these preliminary questions need to be addressed:

#### *What is a pastoral care group for?*

It is important that you list the specific areas of your parish ministry that you could see members of a pastoral care team assisting with. What are the tasks

Areas to consider might include:

- Parish visiting of the sick, elderly, lonely or those in any kind of need in their homes or hospitals or care homes
- Taking Holy Communion to the sick
- A ministry of welcome: responding to those who are new to the area
- Care for a particular group within the Church – e.g., young mums, or men
- Keeping contact with those who are on the fringes of the Church
- Assisting with care for families of those who are recently baptised
- Being the first point of contact for those seeking marriage
- Praying with and for those who are sick.

#### *The Incumbent's/pastoral care group convenor's responsibilities for oversight of a pastoral care team*

In agreeing to set up a pastoral care team, the Incumbent/Convenor undertakes to provide oversight, supervision and co-ordination. The team is accountable to the incumbent and the incumbent is accountable for what members of the team do.

#### *Guidelines for building a team and choosing potential members*

There are various ways to do this, but the following principles are useful:

- *Balance and breadth*- In considering who might be a member of such a team, try to seek a balance that represents the congregation appropriately. Consider male / female balance, age balance, and breadth of experience. Think across the breadth of the congregation to help guard against simply thinking of those who currently do a lot in church.
- *A Collaborative approach*- Involve members of the leadership team in discerning who it might be appropriate to invite. This should be a collaborative and consultative exercise. A trusted group of 2/3 people, for example, who have good judgement, could help the team be formed

and make decisions about what training and authorisation are needed before and after formation.

- It is probably best not to encourage open access or self-nomination to be a member of the team. A church needs confidence that this is a process of discernment based on the gifts and skills needed in the team of that particular church and community. Anyone wanting to be a part of the team who is not felt to be suitable needs to be responded to pastorally.
- Team membership should be for a fixed term – e.g., 3 years, though renewable
- Guidelines for discerning gifts and skills needed in potential team members.  
Consider people who:
  - are respected in the Church and community – their ministry would be welcomed
  - have the ability to listen in a non-judgemental way
  - have a degree of common sense and wisdom that comes from life experience
  - are compassionate and generous in the way they deal with other
  - are involved in the life of the worshipping community and have a depth of spirituality that sustains them
  - are self-aware and recognise their need to grow
  - are capable of relating to a wide range of people
  - are people of sensitivity who can be trusted
  - are capable of working collaboratively within a team
  - respect authority and boundaries
  - have the capacity to respond to a sense of being called to this ministry
- You may have reservations about people who:
  - Have a reputation for gossiping
  - Seem 'brittle', insecure or unwilling to accept change
  - Unconscious of their expressions of anger or resentment
  - Often misjudge pastoral situations
  - those who struggle with working collaboratively
- It is probably best not to include people in the year or so after a major bereavement.
- It is a diocesan requirement that all members of such a team should have an enhanced DBS