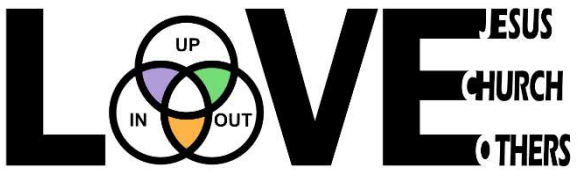
Pastoral Care Network

LOCKINGCASTLECHURCH

Locking Castle Church Pastoral Care Policy
"Caring for One Another in the Way of Jesus"



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1. Vision and Values

At Locking Castle Church, we believe pastoral care is the responsibility and privilege of the whole church community. While some are gifted in particular ways, every believer is called to love, support, and build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11).

Our aim is not to create a small group of people who "do" pastoral care, but to foster a culture of compassion, courage, and Christlikeness, where care is offered naturally in relationships and within community life.

Pastoral care is:

- Rooted in our relationship with Jesus
- Expressed through compassionate action
- Shaped by Scripture and prayer
- Directed toward wholeness, maturity, and hope

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2. Principles of Pastoral Care

All those offering care, formally or informally, agree to the following shared principles:

Compassion

Care should be motivated by love, humility, and grace — seeking to understand, support, and walk with others in their journey.

Confidentiality

We commit to treating sensitive information with care and discretion.
Confidentiality is held within appropriate boundaries — information shared may be passed to safeguarding leads, ministers, or other key leaders if it concerns safety, abuse, or significant risk.

Transparency

Pastoral care should not take place in secrecy or isolation. We encourage accountability, letting another trusted person (e.g. a team leader or minister) know about ongoing situations. This protects both the person being supported and the one offering care.

3. Boundaries and Limitations

While pastoral care is essential, it is not professional counselling or therapy. Those involved in offering pastoral support should:

- Recognise their limits and refer to professionals (e.g. GP, counsellor, mental health services) where appropriate.
- Avoid creating dependency, instead seek to empower people toward health, healing, and wise decision-making.
- Offer a listening ear, prayer, scriptural encouragement, and practical support within healthy boundaries.
- Meet in safe, appropriate settings, ideally in public or semi-public spaces, such as cafés, church premises, or open rooms.

Home Visits

When visiting someone in their home:

- Go in pairs wherever possible, especially if the individual is vulnerable or if you are unsure of the situation.
- Note: A pair should not be a married couple, as this does not offer sufficient safeguarding accountability when visiting potentially vulnerable individuals.
- If a solo visit is necessary, let a trusted person know in advance, including the name of the person being visited, the time of arrival, and the expected end time.
- Follow up by confirming when the visit is over. This simple step promotes safety and transparency for everyone involved.

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4. Transparency and Accountability

Pastoral care should never happen in isolation. To ensure the safety, integrity, and wellbeing of everyone involved, we encourage a culture of open accountability:

- Share significant ongoing pastoral situations with a team leader, minister, or designated contact, not for gossip, but for wise support and shared insight.
- When offering care across lines of vulnerability (e.g. male-to-female, adult-to-youth, or with those at risk), be especially mindful to communicate, document, and involve others where appropriate.
- If unsure, ask: *"Would I be happy for this to be known by my church leadership?"*
- Keep brief, factual notes (where appropriate) and pass concerns or safeguarding issues immediately to the Safeguarding Coordinator.

During the minister's Sabbath (Fridays), annual leave, or periods of unavailability, pastoral concerns should be directed to the designated pastoral point of contact (to be shared with the church in advance).

Transparency protects both the one being cared for and the person offering care. It builds trust, prevents misunderstandings, and reinforces that we operate in the light (1 John 1:7).

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5. The Goal of Pastoral Care

Our goal is not just to help people feel better but to lead them toward wholeness and maturity in Christ (Ephesians 4:13). This means walking with people as they:

- Grow in faith, identity, and purpose
- Overcome struggles through godly wisdom, prayer, and support
- Experience healing in mind, body, and spirit
- Become equipped to offer care to others

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6. Who Can Offer Pastoral Care?

At Locking Castle Church, pastoral care is not limited to a formal team. We recognise and celebrate those who:

- Listen and pray for others
- Support friends through illness or loss
- Offer hospitality or practical help
- Gently disciple others through word and example

Everyone in the church is encouraged to show pastoral care in everyday ways — through relationships, conversations, acts of kindness, and prayer.

However, those who serve in a more intentional or recognised capacity on behalf of the church (e.g. bereavement support, regular home visits, or responding to complex needs) may be referred to as Pastoral Champions. These individuals may be invited to receive additional training and support, especially around safeguarding and best practice. This is not to create exclusivity but to ensure that those offering regular or more formalised care are well equipped.

All Pastoral Champions are expected to:

- Be known and accountable to church leadership
- Follow this policy and safeguarding best practice
- Attend occasional training or reflection events as appropriate

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7. The Role of Life Groups in Pastoral Care

Life Groups are the primary context for ongoing relational pastoral care within the church. They provide the structure through which individuals are known, supported, and encouraged in their faith and daily lives.

Life Group Leaders play a key role in facilitating care within the group and signposting needs that require further support. While they are not expected to meet all pastoral needs, they will be:

- Given training in basic pastoral awareness and safeguarding
- Supported by church leadership
- Encouraged to delegate or refer when needs exceed their capacity

This approach helps ensure that pastoral energy is spread across the community rather than concentrated on a few individuals, and that people who are less vocal are still noticed and cared for.

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8. **The Role of the Prayer Ministry Team**

The Prayer Ministry Team (PTM) offers immediate prayer support during ministry times but does not provide follow-up pastoral care.

If PTM members sense that further support is needed (and it is not a safeguarding issue), they are encouraged to:

- Refer the individual to their Life Group Leader if they are in one, or Lead Pastor
- Pass the concern on to a Pastoral Champion or designated pastoral contact point or? minister ### check on the wording of this ### will we know who the champions are

This ensures clarity around roles and a seamless handover of care when needed.

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9. **Safeguarding**

Pastoral care and safeguarding are closely connected, and all pastoral carers must maintain open communication with the Safeguarding Team.

It is not uncommon for a situation to appear pastoral when it is actually a safeguarding concern. All concerns or uncertainties should first be run past the Safeguarding Team, who can help determine whether a situation requires a safeguarding response or falls under pastoral support.

Any pastoral care involving children, young people, or vulnerable adults must be conducted within the guidelines of our Safeguarding Policy. Concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Beth Dinsmore, mobile number 07554 770831.

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10. **Final Note: A Church That Cares**

This policy is not just a document — it's a declaration of who we are becoming.
We long to be a church where no one is overlooked, where care flows freely, and where every member plays their part in the body of Christ.

As Paul writes:

"From him the whole body… grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:16)