

SHEPHERDING GOD'S FLOCK

A Manual For Church Leaders

“Be shepherds of the church of God which he has bought with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

“To the elders among you, I appeal... Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers.” (1 Peter 5:1,2)

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PART ONE: PRINCIPLES FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

I. UNDERSTANDING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

A. Defining Pastoral Leadership

Pastoral leadership is a servant ministry within the body of Christ in which called and gifted men work together to oversee and shepherd God's flock, bringing each member to wholeness and maturity in Christ, enabling the church as a whole to build itself up and fulfill its functions in the world.

1. It is a *servant ministry* within the church
 - pastoral leadership is a ministry or service within the church
 - it is fulfilled in a servant spirit. Pastoral leaders are servants of Christ and of their fellow church members.
2. It involves *called and gifted men*
 - pastoral leaders are not self-appointed but divinely-called
 - they are men appropriately gifted for their ministry
3. It entails *overseeing and shepherding* the flock of God
 - pastoral leaders are overseers of the flock, watching over its members and administering its affairs
 - they are shepherds of the flock, nurturing, leading, healing, correcting and protecting its members
4. It aims to bring *each member to wholeness and maturity* in Christ
 - pastoral leaders are to exercise individual care as well as corporate concern
 - they are to bring every member to maturity in Christ
5. It enables the church to *build itself up and fulfill its mission* in the world
 - pastoral leaders are to equip others in the body for their ministries so the whole body can grow as each member serves in love
 - in this way, the church will be able to fulfill its ministry of witness to the world through its life, love and testimony.

B. Describing Pastoral Leadership

1. Pastoral leadership is *administrative*
 - leaders don't make the rules – God does
 - they administer them – see that they are applied in the life of the church
2. Pastoral leadership is *participatory*
 - leaders are not remote theorists over the flock
 - they are servant members fulfilling a distinct role within the flock
3. Pastoral leadership is *exemplary*
 - leaders don't simply tell people what to do
 - they show by their example what to do. Leadership is “*Come, follow me,*” not “*Do as I say.*”
4. Pastoral leadership is *purposeful*
 - leaders are not *ad hoc* reactors without clear direction or purpose
 - they know the mind of God and lead people toward definite goals
5. Pastoral leadership is *gospel-focused*
 - it is anchored in the gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ
 - it is accomplished by the explanation and application of the gospel of Christ
6. Pastoral leadership is *comprehensive*
 - it is concerned with every member of the body
 - it is concerned with every area of life
7. Pastoral ministry is *corporate*
 - leaders do not act independently and individualistically
 - they act together, yet with reference to their individual gifts and contributions

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

A. What pastoral leaders need to be

1. *Mature* Christian men
 - they are not to be novices, but men of experience
 - they are to be men of developed and consistent Christian character
2. *Proven* household leaders
 - they must have blameless marital and family relationships
 - they must be effective household managers
3. *Faithful* adherents to the Bible
 - they must know and hold firmly to the truth of the gospel
 - they must be able to teach and defend that truth

B. What pastoral leaders need to know

1. About the *nature* of God's flock
 - it is God's own household and family
 - it is the body of Christ
 - it is the habitation of the Spirit
2. About the *life* of God's flock
 - its life is rooted in Christ and derived from Christ
 - that life grows and flourishes as the different members exercise their gifts
3. About the *resources* of God's flock
 - the Word of God
 - the Spirit of God
 - prayer and ministry of the Word
 - spiritual gifts
4. About the *functions* of God's flock
 - to glorify and worship God
 - to grow to maturity in Christ
 - to proclaim the gospel in the world
5. About the *tasks* of God's flock
 - worship
 - nurture
 - evangelism
 - diaconal care
 - government

C. What pastoral leaders need to do

1. Take *heed to themselves*
 - their *manner of life*
 - their *doctrine*
2. Take *care of the flock*
 - they need to *know* the flock
 - they need to *feed* the flock
 - they need to *guide* the flock
 - they need to *equip* the flock
 - they need to *correct* the flock
 - they need to *protect* the flock

III. DYNAMICS OF PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

A. Two approaches to pastoral leadership

1. *Maintenance-orientated* leadership
 - is concerned primarily with keeping structures, institutions, ministries etc. functioning – “*If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.*”
 - little place for strategies and planning
 - resources are devoted to maintaining the status quo within the church rather than ministries and mission outside it.
 - effectiveness is measured in terms of budget, attendance, programmes etc.
2. *Mission-orientated* leadership
 - is concerned with achieving definite purposes – “*Achieving what we are here for.*”
 - definite strategies are developed to achieve purposes; planning is essential
 - resources are organized and devoted to achieving purposes; forms follow functions
 - effectiveness is measured in terms of accomplishments, not buildings, committees etc.

<i>Maintenance-orientated leadership</i>	<i>Mission-orientated leadership</i>
1. Focuses on structures, committees, forms, activities, traditions etc.	1. Focuses on mission or purpose
2. Concerned with efficiency, order, correctness	2. Concerned with effectiveness
3. Conservative and protective - reluctant to change	3. Innovative, creative - ready to change
4. Thinks there is one right way of doing things (synonymous with orthodoxy)	4. Recognizes there are many right ways of doing things
5. Methods inflexible; outcomes flexible	5. Outcomes inflexible; methods flexible
6. Function follows forms	6. Form follows function
7. No room for failure	7. Allows freedom to fail

B. The basic leadership task

1. What it *is not*
 - exercising arbitrary power
 - attending in board meetings
 - leaders doing everything
2. What it *is*
 - serving fellow-members of the flock as overseers and spiritual shepherds
 - bringing others to maturity in Christ, protecting them from harm and danger
 - equipping and mobilizing others for ministry and witness

C. The basic leadership process

1. Clarifying *goals*
 - leaders must identify biblical objectives and purposes
 - they must help establish clear direction and goals
2. Devising *strategies and plans*
 - they must be able to see how goals and objectives can be achieved
 - they must be able to develop workable plans
3. Mobilizing *people*
 - through communication. Effective communication needs to be verbal, adequate, clear, loving and truthful.
 - through delegation. Delegation involves recognizing gifted people, enlisting their commitment, and entrusting them with specific tasks and ministries.
 - through training. People must know what to do, know how to do it, and have all the resources they need to be able to do it.
4. Supervising *progress*
 - ensuring things get done. It is never enough for people to know what to do and to say they will do it. Leaders must see that it is done.

- solving problems that arise. Leaders must help cope with the unexpected, and with the difficulties and tensions that arise in the course of doing what needs to be done.
 - encouraging those who get down-hearted. Personal failure, tense relationships, hostility and danger can dampen enthusiasm and arrest activity. Leaders need to counter these by being encouragers.
 - correcting those at fault. Genuine mistakes and sinful disobedience must be corrected before they cause damage.
 - protecting against opposition and error. Satan will do his best to destroy and confuse through error and opposition.
5. Celebrating *achievements*
- acknowledging achievement. People need to be acknowledged for their contributions.
 - praising God for achievement. God needs to be acknowledged as the source of all true spiritual accomplishment and thanked and praised accordingly.

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PART TWO: PLANNING FOR PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

The process of planning generally follows a definite sequence. After *defining* the particular activity or ministry to be planned, it begins with *a statement of philosophy* – a summary of the biblical principles that give direction and boundaries to specific actions. It then clarifies and identifies *the main components* involved in a ministry or activity – the particular activities, roles, functions etc., - again, basing these as much as is possible upon biblical principles. Finally, it develops *definite plans and strategies* that will enable the ministry of activity to be achieved.

The ideas below are suggestions to help in this process. Each group of leaders will want to develop their ministries in unique ways and will need to work through the planning process in its entirety for themselves. But it is often helpful to have ideas to stimulate and give direction in that process. It is with that in mind that the following outlines have been provided. Specific examples are provided among the Appendices.

I. PLANNING FOR WORSHIP

A. A Philosophy of Worship

1. The *whole of the Christian life* is to be an act of worship to the Triune God
 - the highest end of man is to love the Lord God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength
 - as royal priests, we are to present all that we are, have and do as a living sacrifice to God, in this way offering spiritual sacrifices to him through Christ
 - in everything, we are to live to the glory of God
2. Christians individually, in their families, and as a congregation are to *engage in specific acts of worship*
 - God calls every Christian into a life of fellowship with himself and his Son through the Spirit
 - he desires that we should let his word dwell in us richly, pray without ceasing, and give thanks always
 - this finds expression in private, family and corporate worship in such activities as prayer, Scripture reading, preaching, singing and celebrating special ordinances
3. God can only be worshipped acceptably in *Spirit and in truth*
 - acceptable worship is not only sincere worship, but Spirit-empowered worship
 - God is only worshipped acceptably when he is worshipped according to his revealed truth, especially as that truth has been made known in Christ.

B. Components of Corporate Worship

1. Corporate worship is *a living encounter* with the Triune God
 - it involves the act of approaching God
 - it involves the act of communing with God
 - it involves the act of listening to God
 - it involves the act of consecrating ourselves to God
2. Corporate worship involves *distinct activities and responses*
 - it involves reading and preaching the Word
 - it involves adoring, confessing, thanking, requesting and interceding in prayer
 - it involves the public confession of our faith and testimony
 - it involves the presentation of our tithes and offerings
 - it involves the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs
 - it involves the celebrating of special ordinances – the Lord's Supper and Baptism

C. Planning for Worship

1. Planning and leading *the worship service*
 - focus the precise nature and purpose of the worship service
 - develop a definite strategy to achieve this purpose
 - identify the people and resources needed to accomplish this purpose
 - determine the communication, equipping, supervision, evaluation steps needed
2. Planning *a preaching programme*
 - clarify where preaching fits into the life of the church
 - identify the principles and values that need to govern preaching in the church
 - determine the length and purpose of a specific preaching series
 - outline the text, theme and purpose of the individual messages for the series
(See Appendix III for a sample preaching programme)

B. PLANNING FOR NURTURE

A. A Philosophy of Nurture

1. The Christian life is one of *constant growth toward maturity in Jesus Christ*
 - it entails growth in the knowledge of Christ
 - it involves transformation into the likeness of Christ
 - it results in consecration to the service of Christ
2. That growth takes place *through different means*
 - it takes place through worship
 - it takes place through instruction
 - it takes place through correction and discipline
 - it takes place through fellowship
 - it takes place through suffering
 - it takes place through witness
 - it takes place through service
3. It also takes place *in different contexts*
 - it takes place in our private devotions
 - it takes place in our families
 - it takes place in the church community
 - it takes place in the world

(To be completed)

B. Components of Nurture

C. Planning for Nurture

C. PLANNING FOR MISSION

A. A Philosophy of Mission

B. Components of Mission

C. Planning for Mission

D. PLANNING FOR PRACTICAL CARE

A. A Philosophy of Practical Care

B. Components of Practical Care

C. Planning for Practical Care

E. PLANNING FOR ADMINISTRATION

A. A Philosophy of Administration

B. Components of Administration

C. Planning for Administration

PART THREE: APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PASTORAL VISITING

I. THE NATURE OF PASTORAL VISITING

A. Defining Pastoral Visiting

Pastoral visiting is shepherdly interaction between elders and church members with a view to promoting spiritual growth and ministry

1. It is *shepherdly* interaction. Pastoral visiting is not simply informal social visiting, but visiting that serves an oversight and shepherding function. In that sense it is official rather than personal or casual.
2. It is interaction between *elders and church members*. Pastoral visiting is part of the ministry of elders in the congregation. Elders visit members of the congregation as those entrusted with responsibility for the flock. They do so as fellow-members of the flock, yet also as those “set over the flock” (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).
3. It is interaction that aims at *promoting spiritual growth and ministry*. Pastoral visitation is purposeful. Behind it is the conviction that elders have to watch over those under their care, that they have to seek their growth in Christ, and that they have to equip them for their works of ministry (Heb. 13:17; Col. 1:28; Eph. 4:12,13).

B. Distinguishing Pastoral Visiting

1. Pastoral visitation differs from *polite social calling*. In some traditions, a visit from the pastor is a polite social event. It gets little beyond superficialities and formalities. Biblical pastoral visitation goes beyond these to core spiritual issues.
2. Pastoral visitation differs from *casual social interaction*. Elders may certainly visit church members for purely social purposes – though they do not lay aside their role as elders when they do so. But these social visits are not the same as intentional pastoral visits.
3. Pastoral visitation differs from *focused spiritual counselling*. Spiritual counselling is an intensive form of pastoral care. It concentrates on bringing the gospel to bear on specific problems. Pastoral visiting is of a more general nature, and is often the forerunner to counselling.

II. THE BENEFITS OF PASTORAL VISITING

1. Pastoral visitation *builds personal relationships*. It encourages confidence and respect and builds affection between elders and church members.
2. Pastoral visitation *deepens pastoral acquaintance*. It helps elders appreciate the circumstances and struggles of people, and gives them a better understanding of the spiritual needs of the flock.
3. Pastoral visitation *allows individual application*. It provides opportunity for teaching correction, reproof and training in righteousness in particular cases.
4. Pastoral visitation *uncovers masked problems*. It provides occasion to unearth personal sins and weakness on the one hand, and complaints and criticisms on the other.
5. Pastoral visitation *promotes spiritual unity*. It provides opportunity for correcting error, restoring wrongdoers and fostering harmony and love.

III. THE GOALS OF PASTORAL VISITING

A. General Goals

1. Pastoral visiting aims at *promoting the spiritual growth of church members*
2. Pastoral visiting aims at *promoting the spiritual ministries of church members*

B. Specific Goals

1. *Deepening personal relationships.* Relationships are important within the church, especially between pastors, elders and members. Pastoral visits should aim to deepen trust, openness and affection.
2. *Discovering needs and problems.* Pastoral visits are occasions to detect and begin to address both practical and spiritual needs and problems. Behaviour problems, ungodly reactions and specific complaints call for corrective healing – perhaps even in focused counselling sessions.
3. *Encouraging spiritual growth.* Elders should always be trying to encourage members to grow in their love, obedience and service to God. They should help people deepen their worship of the Lord, clothe themselves in the character of the Lord, and give themselves in ministry for the Lord (Deut. 10:12,13; Matt. 22:37-39; Rom. 6:13; 12:1).
4. *Facilitating service and ministry.* Pastoral visits give opportunity to help people discover the opportunities God has given them to minister and serve others – both within the church and outside it. Elders can help people appreciate their gifts and assist them to develop and use them (Eph. 4:12; Rom. 12:3ff; 1 Pet. 4:10).

IV. THE PRACTICE OF PASTORAL VISITING

A. Planning Pastoral Visits

1. *Developing a schedule* for pastoral visits
 - schedules help overcome obstacles to visitation. Making plans to visit definite people at definite times for definite purposes overcomes fear and motivation barriers.
 - schedules are a way of ensuring fairness. They enable the pastoral team to plan the pastoral task equitably. Partiality and imbalance undermine pastoral effectiveness.
2. *Making arrangements* for pastoral visits
 - notifying people of visits. Making definite times and dates, and confirming these close to the time of visit, are necessary to prepare people for visits.
 - mentioning specific purposes. Wherever possible, people should be told beforehand the nature and purpose of the visit. This lessens the tension and suspicion that can develop with uncertainty.
3. *Preparing oneself* for a pastoral visit
 - revising notes from previous visits. This prevents needless repetition and alerts to necessary follow-up.
 - prayer for yourself, those you are visiting, and for the conduct of the meeting. Only the Spirit of God can enable effective pastoral visits.

B. Guiding Pastoral Visits

1. *Establishing contact* in a pastoral visits
 - try to establish warm, personal relationships at the outset. Take a genuine interest in those being visited – their home, their family, their work etc. Find out where they are and meet them there.
 - try to create a relaxed, caring atmosphere as a prelude to honest, hearty conversation about spiritual realities.
2. *Spontaneity and structure* in pastoral visits
 - be prepared to let deeper conversations develop naturally. It is always best to start where you find people and guide them from there to where you need to get. Occasionally it may be necessary to address an issue head-on at the outset.
 - be clear what you need to achieve, and if necessary share this at the outset.
 - be open to conversations developing in unexpected ways. Be sensitive to the Spirit at work in the meeting and be ready to abandon your agenda for His.
3. *Learning and teaching* in pastoral visits
 - be ready to listen and learn before attempting to speak. Shallow, ill-informed, premature comment does more harm than good.
 - be more ready to teach than pass judgments or give instructions (2 Tim. 2:24,25; 4:2). Lasting change comes about through conviction rather than coercion.

4. *Control and freedom* in pastoral visits
 - aspects of the visit need to be controlled. The language and spirit of the discussion, and the general agenda and direction of the visit need to be controlled. So too does the pastoral/authority relationship where threatened.
 - at the same time, there needs to be freedom. Those being visited need the freedom to raise issues and concerns and to contribute to the discussion.
5. *Concluding pastoral visits*
 - conclude visits clearly. Don't let them linger on or keep people in suspense or uncertainty. Crystallize decisions, conclusions and follow-up. Be sure people know you have come to the end of your visit.
 - conclude visits appropriately. Read a short, relevant passage of the Bible, make a few comments pertinent to the discussion, and close in prayer.
 - conclude visits constructively. Leave people encouraged and challenged. If practical responses are needed, be sure these are understood and expectations clearly defined. Do your best to resolve any tensions that have arisen and ensure that sins and offenses that have arisen in the meeting have been confessed and forgiven.

C. Manner in Pastoral Visits

1. *Warmth and affection*
 - pastoral visiting should avoid becoming detached and professional. Elders visit as shepherds caring for the sheep entrusted to their oversight.
 - their manner will necessarily be warm and affectionate, without being sentimental, over-familiar, or patronizing.
2. *Love and gentleness*
 - pastoral visiting should be motivated by love – a sincere concern for the well-being of those being visited. When driven by lesser motives it risks becoming formal, manipulative or egocentric.
 - consequently, it will be characterized by gentleness (2 Tim. 2:24). While some situations will demand strong, firm dealings, the spirit of Christ-like ministry is that of meekness and gentleness (Matt. 12:18-20; 2 Cor. 10:1). It is persuasive rather than coercive, servant-like rather than domineering.
3. *Discretion and self-control*
 - elders must act with discretion and courtesy when they visit.
 - they need to exercise self-control in their conversation and in their eating habits etc.
4. *Firmness and flexibility*
 - pastoral visiting should be purposeful yet relaxed. Over-intensity and a rigid determination to keep to a predetermined agenda are generally stifling to pastoral intimacy, and tend to obscure real needs and cries for help. There does need to be clarity and direction about a visit – vagueness and timidity are unhelpful. But at the same time, there also needs to be flexibility.
 - flexibility is essential if we are to meet the real needs of individual people. Pastoral visiting cannot be stereotyped. Different people have different needs, and respond in different ways. A deep concern to know and help them, and a readiness to follow where the Holy Spirit leads in pastoral discussions, are essential if visiting is to be effective. Having clear goals for a visit, yet being open to God's leading at the same time, is the key to being both purposeful and flexible.

V. THE PITFALLS OF PASTORAL VISITING

A. In the Conduct of Pastoral Visits

1. *Irregularity*
 - regularity is essential for consistent pastoral care and oversight. Prolonged neglect erodes confidence.
 - this is heightened where inequalities exist. Favoritism and partiality dampen affection and destroy confidence.

2. *Domination rather than edification*

- pastoral visiting can be so purpose-driven that it fails to hear people and recognize their needs. It can become more manipulative than ministerial.
- when this happens, people feel abused and are hardened rather than helped. Every effort must be made to strengthen faith, love and obedience by ministering the word to needy hearts in the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. *Inadequate control*

- pastoral visiting fails when it drifts aimlessly or is side-tracked by those being visited. Essential and often difficult issues will rarely be faced openly if this happens.
- lack of control can also show itself in runaway conversations, especially when these become heated and accusatory. Sinful tendencies always need restraint.

4. *Attempting too much*

- pastoral visits often fail to be useful because too much is attempted in a single visit. In some cases this arises when too many issues are raised. In others, it occurs when matters are being dealt with too deeply.
- it is better to concentrate on one or two things – or on gaining a general awareness of problems and issues – and then to reschedule another time(s) for dealing with particular issues in greater depth.

5. *Personal rather than biblical authority*

- personal experience or opinion should never be the basis of authority in pastoral visiting. Sharing personal experience has a valuable place in visiting – especially as a means of empathizing with and encouraging those we visit. However, it should never be projected as the standard or basis of authority.
- ministry of the word must always be the central aim of pastoral visiting. Ultimately we want to bring the promises and expectations of the gospel to bear on the lives of those we visit.

6. *Unwarranted meddling*

- pastoral care is comprehensive, but at the same time does have its limits. Biblical shepherds are to bring God's flock to maturity, not reduce it to servility (Ezek. 34:2-6). They err when they seek to impose personal preferences, dictate specific responses to general principles, or when they intrude into personal and family spheres of decision-making. They must be keenly sensitive to legitimate areas of personal freedom.
- the primary function of pastors and elders is to teach and help people apply the biblical principles that relate to the total range of their personal responsibilities (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Beyond this, they are in danger of meddling.

7. *Overstaying*

- overstaying occurs when pastoral visitors stay longer than is necessary or helpful. Lack of self-discipline, clear purpose, and poor planning often lie behind this fault.
- it is especially damaging where it reflects insensitivity to the personal or family circumstances of those being visited. Pressures and demands associated with illness, work commitments, children's needs, emotional instability etc. often call for a visit to be shortened or terminated. Insensitivity to these factors, and resultant overstaying, can undo the positive achievements of an otherwise helpful visit.

B. In the Manner of Pastoral Visits

1. *Over-familiarity*

- pastoral visitors can be over-familiar both in what they say and in the way they say it. While pastoral affection and intimacy are always proper, over-friendliness, inappropriate physical contact and excessive transparency are to be avoided. They undermine credibility, threaten privacy and integrity, and weaken authority.
- special care needs to be taken when visiting women. As a rule it is best never to visit a woman – either young or old – alone. The dangers of temptation, wrong impressions and false accusations make it necessary to be especially guarded in this matter.

2. *Unguarded speaking*

- pastoral visiting calls for great care and self-control in what we say. It is easy to say too much, to say things in the wrong way, or to say things without listening or thinking.
- retaliation and anger are responses to be especially guarded against. Church members frequently express unfounded, hurtful and very personal criticisms. Sinful retaliation is a very real danger.

3. *Gossip*

- conversation about other people commonly arises in pastoral visits. It can be a means of building warmth and unity within a church family. But it can also be highly destructive if not well managed.
- conversations degenerate into gossip when others are talked about in unnecessary or unhelpful ways. The exposure of confidences, the spreading of criticisms and rumors, and the unnecessary disclosure of faults and failings are all forms of spreading - as one writer has put it - spiritual typhoid within the church body. Pastoral leaders must guard themselves against gossiping as they visit from home to home. They must also be ready to suppress and correct it in others.

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APPENDIX 2: HOSPITAL VISITING

Hospital Visitation

Notes from "The Effective Pastor", Robert Anderson, pp. 134-140

I. HOSPITALIZATIONS

A. Hospitalisation is a depersonalising experience

Once he has checked into a hospital, a person is stripped of his clothes, his dignity, and his individuality. He becomes a pawn of those who are treating him, but he has no assurance that they will even explain to him what is being done to a body that, until then, he had considered his own property. Clad in a nondescript hospital gown that provides extensive ventilation in the rear, he is put into an oddly-constructed bed that is so high off the floor that he must use a footstool or a course in gymnastics to get in or out of it. His room is located on a noisy passageway through which people come and go all day and all night. On the rare occasion when he is able to sleep, someone invariably barges into his room, turns on the light, takes his temperature-which has not altered a degree since he entered the hospital-and gives him a pill so that he may sleep better.

B. It is also a disturbing experience

He is deprived of everything personal and comfortable, is given an arm bracelet that identifies him by number, and is put through nearly every conceivable test science can devise so that the hospital may justify the purchase of the tons of equipment for which it has spent so many of his hard-earned dollars. He is disgruntled, discouraged, lonely, and more than a little scared. During such a time, a pastoral visit is of exceptional value to him.

II. LEARNING OF HOSPITALIZATIONS

A. Through prayer chains

Many churches have what is called a prayer chain. That is a calling tree designed to inform the entire congregation by telephone of specific urgent needs and to encourage people to pray for those needs. If the pastor makes sure that either he or his spouse is included in the prayer chain, he will usually be informed when a member of the congregation is hospitalized.

B. Through other channels

The pastor should also establish other channels designed to inform him of hospitalizations, realizing that many members of the congregation who would not trouble him by phoning such news, strangely enough will expect him to know automatically about all hospitalizations. They will expect a visit from him soon after their entry.

- Members should be urged to call the pastor when they receive news of hospitalizations.
- The church secretary should establish effective channels of communication so that he or she can keep the pastor informed.
- The leadership of the church, likewise, should be trained to keep the pastor up-to-date.

III. VISITING THE HOSPITAL ROOM

A. Prior arrangements

When receiving news of a hospitalization, the pastor or church secretary should call the hospital to determine if the patient is indeed registered there, to find out the severity of the ailment, and to get an idea of the length of time the patient is expected to stay. Many people can no longer afford the luxury of long hospitalization. They are admitted briefly for surgical procedure and are dismissed that same day.

B. Visits after admission

If the patient has been admitted that very day and it is anticipated that he or she will stay awhile, it is a good idea for the pastor to plan an evening visit. By then, most medical procedures should be finished and the visit may occur in a fairly uninterrupted fashion. Unless the patient has undergone extensive

surgery this is a good time for a prolonged visit. Cheerful conversation, the reading of the Scriptures, and a prayer will bring reassurance to the Christian. If the patient has misgivings and questions and there are not too many other people present, often he will use the opportunity to seek answers from the pastor. This is not a time for pat solutions but for sensitivity, calmness, and reassurance.

C. Visitation protocol

1. *Approaching the patient's room*

An excellent rule of thumb for the pastor to follow is this:

- If the door is closed or the curtain pulled around the patient's bed, always respect his privacy.
- Inquire of a nearby nurse, who, in turn, will check to see if the patient may have visitors. Such a procedure will save the patient and pastor embarrassment, and it has legal ramifications. In certain localities, I am told, if someone invades a patient's privacy, he may be sued.

2. *Conduct within the room*

- When he visits a patient, it is advisable for the pastor not to sit on the patient's bed. Sitting on the bed may cause the patient discomfort, and it is always improper etiquette. Some pastors I know, and even some hospital chaplains, do that on a regular basis and get away with it. I have always considered it rude and insensitive, except in those rare cases where the patient himself has invited the pastor to do so.
- The pastor should remember that the hospital room is the patient's present home. Certainly the rent is high enough! Therefore, the pastor should conduct himself as the patient's guest, being careful to be gracious and thoughtful. He should be cheerful but not boisterous. Laughter may prove painful to a person who has undergone surgery and loud talk may disturb him and the other patients. The pastor should stand or sit where the patient does not have to strain to see him. That may require helping the patient adjust his bed, if he so desires.
- The pastor should be encouraged to touch the patient, especially when he prays with him. Touch in itself can have a healing effect. Sometimes patients feel that hospitalization has singled them out as someone who is diseased and therefore unacceptable. The touch of another person reassures them that they are not outcasts. When touching a woman, the pastor always should be especially discreet. Holding her hand when praying with her is appropriate.
- If it is evident that the patient is tiring or if a significant number of other guests arrive, it is wise for the pastor to excuse himself and leave. Before doing so, he may want to invite the other guests to join him in prayer for the patient. Flowers from the church are a tangible way of telling the patient that his brothers and sisters in Christ care for him. It is wise for the pastor to make sure that those responsible see that each member who is hospitalized receives that gesture of concern.

IV. VISITING DIFFERENT KINDS OF PATIENTS

A. Visiting the Surgical Patient

1. *Pre-surgery visitation*

When the patient is scheduled for surgery it is wise for the pastor, an elder, or a deacon to visit with him immediately before the surgery and pray with him, even though the surgery may be scheduled for early in the morning. A short time of prayer, a Scripture verse, and a word of reassurance may calm many who face surgery with dread.

2. *Surgery and relatives*

If close relatives of the patient intend to wait at the hospital during surgery some representative of the church may want to wait out the ordeal with them until the surgery is over and the patient out of danger.

3. *Post-surgery visitation*

- unless the immediate prognosis of the patient is extremely guarded, it is not advisable for the pastor to visit the patient until he has been brought back to his own room. At that time, a short, quiet visit with a brief prayer is in order. If the patient is asleep, he should not be awakened. The pastor may want to jot a short note on his business card and leave it for the patient when he awakens.
- the pastor should plan to visit the patient at least once more after the surgery coordinating his efforts with other members of the church so that the patient is visited every day.
- if there is an extensive period of convalescence at home, the pastor should plan to visit there as well.

B. Dealing With The Comatose Patient

If the patient is comatose and it appears that he is both unsaved and near death, it is important for the pastor to talk to him as if he is able to hear and understand everything that is said. In many cases, when such patients have returned to consciousness, they could tell people everything that was said to them while they were comatose. Because there is so much at stake here, the pastor should always present the plan of salvation as simply and effectively as he can and allow the patient to make a decision—one that only the patient and God will know about.

C. Dealing With The Terminally Ill Patient

1. *Acquainting people* with their condition

- I believe firmly that a person has the right to know if he is dying so that he may engage in whatever spiritual preparation he feels is necessary. But physicians often try to withhold that information from the patient in an attempt to keep him calm and prolong his life as long as possible. At such a time, the pastor may be able to discern the patient's overall needs better than the physician and, as a result, may be bound morally to disobey the physician's orders.
- There is no suggestion here that the pastor blurt out the fact of the patient's impending death. What is meant is that if the patient asks about his condition, the pastor should tell him the truth. If the patient does not bring up the matter, I believe that the pastor has the obligation to approach him. He can ask the patient, "Joe, are you aware that you are very seriously ill, and there's always a chance that you may not make it?" Then the pastor can talk with the patient about the spiritual preparations a person should make before he enters the presence of God.

2. *Attitudes* toward death

- We who are Christians know that prolonging life on this earth under any condition, or at all cost, is not a suitable Christian goal. The state of a person's heart before God is a much more important consideration than trying to keep him alive for a few more hours in a disintegrating body.

D. Visitation Connected With Childbirth

1. The *tensions of childbirth*

- Childbirth, usually a time of great joy and celebration, may be a time of great trauma. Nervous prospective fathers as well as mothers-to-be may find comfort in a pastoral visit, especially if complications are suspected.
- During a time of potential danger, it is good for some mature saint, if not the pastor himself, to stay close by the couple in case emotional support is needed.

2. *Traumas connected with childbirth*

- If a child is stillborn or born with a severe handicap, the couple will need pastoral support as soon as possible. The pastor may not be able to do much more than cry with the couple, pray with them, and give them some assurance from Scripture. At such a time, what he says is not as important as the fact that he is there.

- The pastor should be careful in what he says, however. He should always avoid being judgmental, no matter how much bitterness may pour from the parents. Also, he should avoid mouthing pious platitudes or saying that he understands their sorrow, if he has never gone through such an experience himself. Above all, he should refrain from assuring them that there is plenty of time for them to have other children. All their present hopes, plans, and dreams are bound up in the child they lost.

3. *Post-birth visits*

- When the delivery is routine and successful, the pastor may wish to visit the new mother and baby in the hospital at least once. The visit should be short and scheduled carefully. It should not occur during the hours the mothers are nursing their new babies.
- If the pastor does not feel well, he should not visit the maternity ward until he recuperates fully.

V. EVANGELISM AND HOSPITAL VISITS

1. *Gospel opportunities* and hospital visits

- People often are more receptive to the things of the Lord during hospital stays, though that does not give the pastor carte blanche to use pressure or scare tactics to evangelize them. The conversation between patient and pastor may turn to spiritual matters merely because the pastor is there and the patient is thinking through the really crucial issues in his life.
- When a conversation moves in this manner and a pastor is not sure of a person's spiritual condition, it is always proper for the pastor to inquire whether or not the patient has experienced salvation. If the person is unsaved, it is important for the pastor to ask him if he would like to be saved. If the answer is negative, the pastor should drop the subject. If the answer is affirmative, the pastor may have the glorious privilege of leading the patient to the Lord.

VI. VISITATION AND HOSPITAL STAFF

A. Dealing As A Professional With Hospital Staff

The pastor who wishes to be effective in hospital visitation always establishes friendly relations with hospital personnel, including physicians. However, the pastor should not allow himself to be intimidated by such people. He should remember that he is every bit as well prepared in his profession as they are in theirs and that he is almost always able to minister much more holistically to the patient than the physician, who frequently is concerned only with treating a person's body. I am not suggesting that the pastor give medical advice or interfere with medical treatment. I am insisting that the pastor has valuable input into a patient's life that many physicians do not even know about. There are times, therefore, when pastor and physician will conflict. One of those, as noted above, may be during the final illness of a terminally ill patient.

B. Dealing With Insensitive And Neglectful Hospital Staff

1. *Neglect and incompetence* does exist

- In my experience as a hospital chaplain, I became aware of incidents when hospital personnel were unnecessarily crude, rough, unsympathetic, and even negligent toward a patient. I have found physicians and nurses, for instance, who treated mature patients as if they were mentally retarded, refusing to explain to them what and why they were undergoing a specific procedure. Additionally, I have seen nurses who treated the patient and his family members as something subhuman and refused or neglected to respond to a patient's needs when the patient drew those needs to the nurse's attention.
- Such behaviour is rare, but it should not be permitted to reoccur.

2. *Appropriate responses*

- Poor examples of the medical profession should be reported to the proper authorities. Probably the first person to whom the report should go is the hospital chaplain, if there is one. The next person is the hospital administrator and then the board. If none of those persons takes satisfactory action, the local or regional hospital board or commission should be informed.
- Before taking such steps, however, it is advisable for the pastor or church representative to stay at the hospital long enough to observe personally at least one example of unsatisfactory conduct. If the pastor cannot document the conduct himself, he should pursue proper remedial efforts with the corroboration of family members who are willing to testify to the abusive behaviour they have witnessed. It is necessary to obtain documentation and corroboration of such accusations. The word of the patient alone is not necessarily good enough, for sometimes actions that the patient perceives as being harmful are actually medical procedures necessary for his welfare.

C. Cooperating With The Hospital

By and large, the pastor's department in a hospital should be one of support, encouragement, and cooperation with medical personnel. Before he enters intensive care units, for instance, he should always inquire at the nursing station concerning the condition of the patient. At that time, he should ask permission to see the patient and should find out if there are any limitations regarding the length of his stay or any conditions governing his visit. Likewise, when he visits people in isolation units, he should follow hospital policy, including washing his hands, wearing a gown and mask, and respecting any other procedures specified by the nurses.

VII. HELPING THE FAMILY

When members or friends of the church are hospitalized, an efficient deacons' organization will spring into action, visiting the home and determining whether or not the needs of the family are being met. Needs may include the preparation of meals, the cleaning of the house, the paying of bills, babysitting, and transporting family members to and from the hospital. Where the illness is serious, out-of town relatives may decide to encourage the family by a personal visit. The relatives may need transportation to and from the airport or bus station.

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APPENDIX 3: PLANNING A PREACHING MINISTRY

PLANNING A CHURCH PREACHING MINISTRY

A SAMPLE

Based on the Plan of Westminster Presbyterian Church Indooroopilly, Queensland (WPCI)

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I. OBJECTIVE / MISSION STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH

"WPCI exists to glorify God in its worship, life, service, evangelism and government. Its specific purpose is to bring men and women to maturity in Christ, and to equip them to serve him in the church and in the world. It aims to have people KNOW God, GROW in grace and godliness, SERVE others as they have opportunity, and MULTIPLE by making disciples."

II. DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHURCH

WPCI is a church that is distinctively Reformed and Presbyterian in its commitment and which aims to have its members active, involved and mission conscious. It comprises of people of a range of Christian maturity levels - from new Christians to mature, widely experienced saints. It contains people from different denominational backgrounds and different age groups. Its most distinctive feature is the proportionately large body of university students within its ranks. This group within the congregation offers its most distinctive outreach opportunity. It also gives a distinct "seasonal" and temporary character to the congregation and its life.

III. GOVERNING PRINCIPLES REGARDING THE PREACHING MINISTRY

The regular Sunday pulpit ministry at WPCI is shaped by the following biblical and general principles:

1. A commitment to accurate exposition of the Scriptures
2. A commitment to direct and challenging application of biblical truth
3. A commitment to congregationally-sensitive, relevant ministry of the Word
4. A commitment to balance in the different types of messages - doctrinal, ethical, evangelistic, practical
5. A commitment to variety in the form of biblical messages- consecutive expository, 'textual' expository, topical etc
6. A commitment to earnest, plain ministry of the Word
7. A commitment to comprehensiveness in the preaching ministry - in terms of the range of subjects covered, the different parts of the Bible expounded etc,

A BASIC STRATEGY FOR THE PREACHING MINISTRY

1. In view of the importance of the student body in the congregation, and the fluctuating attendance at different times of the year, it is best to divide the preaching year *into four three month terms*, each term coinciding with some pulse in congregational life, and each with its distinctive aims
2. *The four terms and their distinctive features* are as follows:
 - I. *March-May* : students return; a time of fresh contacts; an important time to reach out and consolidate
 - II. *June-August* : settled congregation; premium time for catching
 - III. *September-November*: fatigue zone; student exams; time for something inspiring, fresh, creative or very practical
 - IV. *November-February*: evacuation time! Students leave; holiday disruptions and seasonal pressures and opportunities. A good time for short series, occasional messages etc.

3. *Preaching emphases* in the four terms might be as follows:

Term I - evangelistic sermons; the nature, function and mission of the church in the world; characteristics of church life

Term II - doctrinal sermons; expositions of Pauline epistles, sermon on the mount, Ten Commandments etc; introduction of great themes such as covenant etc

Term III - topical series on issues facing Christians; exposition of little known or appreciated OT books; series on miracles, parables, Bible characters etc; series on practical subjects

Term IV - series from the gospels, life of Christ etc; series from the Psalms; occasional sermons for Christmas/New Year etc; devotional sermons

SPECIFIC FIVE -YEAR GOALS FOR THE PREACHING MINISTRY

1. Cover the first 8 chapters of Paul's letter to the Romans
2. Present a comprehensive coverage of essential elements of the nature, function and mission of the church in the world
3. Cover areas of Christian attitude to work, the world, and pressing social issues
4. Expound biblical ideas on practical godliness, Christian living in the home, and relationships within the church
5. Preach ten distinctively evangelistic sermons each year
6. Expound and introduce three minor prophets, and the books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon to the congregation
7. Preach through the Sermon on the Mount
8. Emphasise the relevance of the Old Testament by series on the Pentateuch and Psalms
9. Preach through the main events in the life of Christ
10. Preach a short series on the Second Coming of Christ

A FIVE -YEAR PLAN FOR THE PREACHING MINISTRY

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4
YEAR 1	1 Thess	Rom 1-3	Jonah	Life of Christ (1)
YEAR 2	Ephesians	Hebrews	Home life	Sayings of Jesus
YEAR 3	Discipleship	Rom 4-5	Ecclesiastes	Psalms
YEAR 4	1 Peter	Deuteronomy	2nd Coming	Bible Characters
YEAR 5	The gospel/ contemp. issues	Rom 6-8	Daniel	Life of Christ (2)

A SAMPLE SERIES PLAN

(See over page)

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APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE FORMS AND PLANNING SHEETS

LEADERSHIP PLANNING SHEET

Basic Church Function _____ Specific Ministry/Activity _____

Leader Responsible _____ Date _____

I. DEFINING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. Basic Objectives (What are we doing this for? What outcomes do we want achieved?)

1. What is the basic ministry or activity in view?
2. Where does it fit into the life of the church?
3. How is it meant to contribute to the life of the church?

B. Definite Goals

1. What definite outcomes do we want to see achieved?
2. How will we know they have been achieved?
3. When do we want to see them achieved by?

II. DEVELOPING STRATEGIES AND PLANS

A. Developing basic strategies

1. What outcomes do we want to achieve?
2. What means are available to achieve them?
3. What sequence of steps or processes will best enable us to achieve them?

B. Developing detailed plans (for each step in the strategy)

1. What actions are needed to accomplish this step?
2. How are they going to be achieved?
3. Who is going to do them?
4. When will they need to be done by?

IV. DETAILING RESOURCES

A. What human resources are needed?

1. What sorts of people (in terms of gifts etc.) do we need?
2. How many such people do we need?
3. What specific activities/tasks are they responsible for?
4. What training or information do they need to be able to do this?
5. When and how is this going to be provided?

B. What ministry or other material resources are needed?

1. What buildings/vehicles/equipment resources are required?
2. What ministry materials are required?

C. What financial resources are needed?

1. Who (or what particular activity) is going to need money
2. How much is going to be needed?
3. When is it going to be needed by?

V. DESIGNING SUPERVISION

1. Who is going to supervise this activity?
2. How are they going to supervise it?
3. Who will they be accountable to?

VI. DETERMINING EVALUATION

1. When is it going to be evaluated?
2. How is it going to be evaluated?
3. Who is going to evaluate it?
4. What will happen when it is achieved?