

PASTORAL CARE



**“Carry one another’s burdens, and you will fulfil
the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)**

Pastoral care @ ACC

In this brochure, we want to give an outline for, and describe how, pastoral care at ACC takes place. First and foremost we see pastoral care to be *everyone's responsibility*, not just for the pastor, for church leaders, or for official members of a team. As such, caring for one another involves each of us as members of the church taking the initiative when we are aware of someone struggling or in need, praying with someone after a service or whenever we meet them, offering hospitality or a lift to church, providing a meal or giving financially to support the church Community Fund etc.

In the New Testament, one of the pictures of the Church is that of the "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). ALL of us are responsible for one another within this body.

What do we understand by pastoral care?

When we speak of "pastoral care", what precisely do we mean? We believe the text from Galatians 6:2 summarises our understanding. For us, pastoral care, is simply one person coming alongside another person in order to listen, support, encourage and help that person with any burden they may be carrying or simply just to be a friend. As we do this we are fulfilling and living out "the law of Christ" - to love one another.

In practice, however, we view pastoral care operating at three levels: (1) Coming alongside someone as a friend in their journey, to listen, support and pray for them. (2) Visiting someone who may be sick, housebound, lonely or struggling - this could involve offering practical care, prayer and even sharing communion with that person in their home. (3) Offering some degree of pastoral counselling, either on a one-off or regular basis. Clearly, we would want to ensure the person offering this was qualified and gifted or had adequate training to do this.

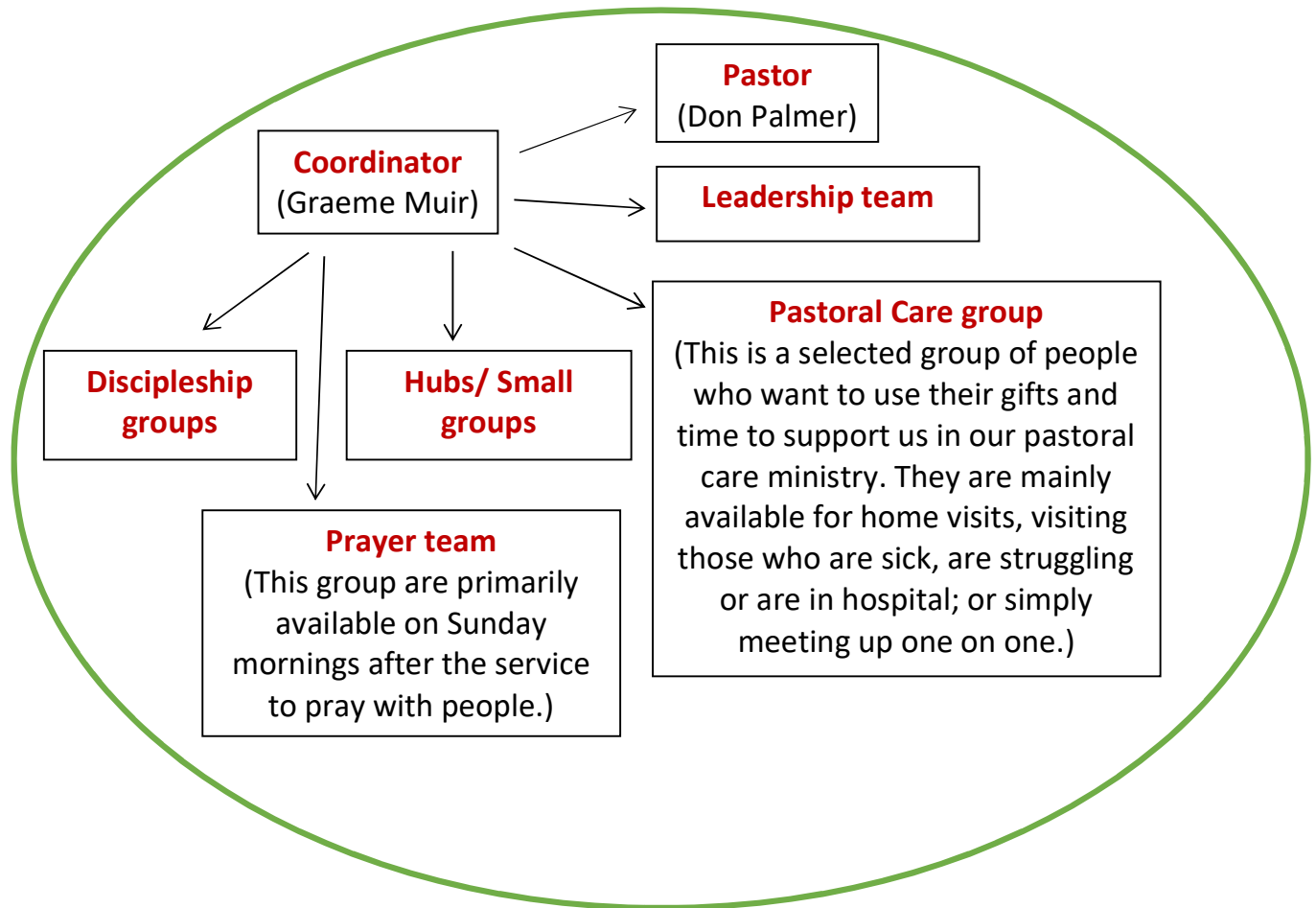
We believe it is very important, and would encourage everyone at ACC to be part of either one of our hubs or a discipleship group. No matter what structure any church has for its pastoral care, it is impossible to always be aware of the needs of every person attending or associated with that church. Committing to meeting on a regular basis with others in a smaller group is vital and one of the keys in a church to building relationships and friendships and finding practical or prayer support in times of need.

So how does someone receive pastoral care?

We believe this happens most naturally as people commit to attending church on a regular basis, getting involved in a small group and establishing good relationships with others. However we do recognise that sometimes that doesn't happen easily and we want to ensure that no one feels isolated, unsupported or becomes "invisible" to us. Therefore we also seek to offer some level of care through the following channels:

1. Our **Leadership team** monitor, each month, those who are attending the church, pray for the congregation members and aim to offer a home visit or to meet up personally with newcomers within three months of them attending the church. They also are available to visit with anyone who wishes to become a member of the church.
2. Involvement in one of our **Hubs** or our **Discipleship groups**. We are committed and available to help anyone get involved in one of these groups at anytime. If necessary, we are always willing to consider starting up new groups. These groups meet at various times and frequencies throughout the year.
3. We do have a wider **Pastoral Care group** within the church who can either be available for pastoral visits, upon request, or will initiate this themselves on occasion.
4. Our **Pastor** is available for pastoral visits or counselling upon request or by arrangement. But please be aware that pastoral care and visits will also take place by other church members on behalf of the Pastor and Leadership team. For those who have joined ACC from other churches or traditions where the Pastor/ Minister is the primary caregiver or systematically makes pastoral visits, that is not our current practice.
5. If anyone has questions, would like a pastoral visit or requires any form of pastoral care, they should contact **Graeme Muir**, who is the designated person on our Leadership team to oversee the various aspects of care that we seek to provide.

Here is a diagram of how we see the outworking of pastoral care:



Directing people to find support elsewhere.

We are also very aware of our limitations in this whole area, and want to recognise the existence of other qualified people and excellent organisations which exist to help people at various levels of their experience. Therefore, sometimes supporting someone is best served by directing them to an individual or organisation which is better equipped to help them, whether that relates to issues such as addictions, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, depression or other mental health struggles, seeking asylum, marriage and family matters or experiencing spiritual deliverance and finding freedom in Christ.



ACC Pastoral Care Flow Chart

