

Basic Guide for Home Group Pastoral Care Liaisons: The ABC's of Pastoral Care

No two pastoral care responses are ever the same. But here are a few general guidelines we try to follow. We call them "The ABC's of Pastoral Care."

A is for ASK

This is the most important step. Before we do anything, we need to **ask** the Person in Need what they want/need. Sometimes, with all good intentions, we act too quickly and respond to needs the person has not expressed or may not have.

When you first learn that someone in your Home Group may have a pastoral care need, contact your "Shepherd" from the Pastoral Care team. Then you and the Shepherd can discuss the situation, including possible options for what the HG might offer. (Loop in the HG Leaders at some point too.) Then you – or the Shepherd or one of the HG Leaders, depending on what is most comfortable for the Person in Need – make contact and **ask** if that person would like assistance.

You can suggest: putting them on the prayer list, having HG members send messages of support, delivering meals, visiting, pet sitting, driving to appointments, etc.

NB: If nothing is needed, that's fine. Asking itself is pastoral care. And the person knows you are the person to contact if needs do arise.

B is for BOUNDARIES

Confidentiality is a **boundary** that a Person in Need often sets. The Person in Need may not want their situation widely broadcast. Maybe they're fine with the Home Group praying for them, but not the entire congregation. Or maybe they only want the clergy to know about their need. Ask about what other boundaries they may have.

We in Pastoral Care can also set **boundaries**. For dinner deliveries, for example, we generally offer 3 meals per week for 2-3 weeks. This is not a "rule," but delivering daily dinners for ten weeks is too much to ask. We also are not social workers, lawyers, or doctors, so there are vocational limits to what laypersons can do. Check with the Pastoral Care team to find out about other Grace ministries, such as support groups, and local organizations like Helpline House, Fishline, and Island Volunteer Caregivers.

C is for COORDINATE A PLAN and CHECK IN

Once you have asked the Person in Need what they want, and have determined **boundaries** for each party, then you can **coordinate a plan**. Your plan may involve your Home Group members, friends of the Person in Need, Grace groups with whom the Person in Need feels comfortable (e.g., Music Circle, Wednesday Bible Study, Prayer Shawl Knitters). Or your plan may be to send an email to your Home Group requesting prayers, meals, etc. After your plan is in place, occasionally **check in** with the Person in Need to see if the plan is still working or if it needs to be changed.

Pastoral Care Leadership Team, 2/2022