

Queanbeyan Uniting Church

Pastoral Care Policy

MISSION STATEMENT

The **QUC Pastoral Care Task Group** will help our Church be a congregation that expresses the reality of the reign of God by being a community of compassion and care.

People are inspired by different things in the life of the church: preaching, music, prayers, atmosphere, etc. Research by Christian organizations, ranging from the Billy Graham organization through to the more recent Australian National Church Life Surveys, indicate that first time attenders will become established members if their first experience of a particular church is **welcoming, invitational and caring**.

That same research shows that people tend to stay in churches where they find **ongoing relationships** that both nurture them and welcome their gifted participation and leadership.

The example and teaching of Jesus

Jesus came proclaiming that the kingdom of God (reign of God) was near/at hand/close. He then set about showing what that meant as he encountered people along the way and taught his disciples his understanding of what it means for God to be near.

When he washed the feet of his disciples (John 13) Jesus gave us the example of how his followers were to be – servants of each other.

Jesus' words identifying compassion towards the least of his community (Matthew 25:31-46) as being the sign of a true follower are a strident command to take seriously our care for others, particularly the ones least able to care for themselves.

Images that inform our understanding of the pastoral role of the church include:

The Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13:13); and

The branches on the vine (John 15).

Both these are images of a community of people who are intimately linked with love, respect and compassion;

Instruction to the early churches also makes it clear that the community of Christ is called to be an expression of the compassion of God –

Romans 12 and James 1:27 – true worship is compassion (a reflection of
Isaiah 58:6-7 and Micah 6:8);

Galatians 6:2 – carry one another's burdens;

Hebrews 13:1-3 – keep on loving one another;

Passages such as these portray the community of Christ's followers as:

- a) A safe community in which individuals are cared for without being patronised or abused;
- b) A welcoming, accepting community in which distinctions of class, rank or wealth are rejected and replaced with oneness, mutual service and Spirit;
- c) A compassionate community in which all people experience generous love and warm acceptance;
- d) An encouraging community in which individuals can discover and express their God-given talents, gifts and abilities as part of the community's ministry and mission.

Being a Caring Congregation

Recent research by the Pastoral Care task Group indicates that there are a variety of expectations concerning pastoral care amongst the membership of our congregation:

- a) Only a relatively small number of members express a desire for a person to be allocated to them as their carer;
- b) A significant number of people feel well cared for through their natural relationships with other members whom they regard as friends or through small groups and networks to which they belong;
- c) There are some members who have a particular “vulnerability”, eg aged and single or chronic illness, resident in nursing home, etc, who would value a formal carer;
- d) Most members expect that during times of crisis or distress the church will offer pastoral support through the minister and members.

This information gives rise to the following principles:

- a) **Pastoral Care is the responsibility of the whole church.** Effective and healthy relationships are built when the whole congregation is intentionally living out of the compassion and grace that God has shown us through Christ. While the paid staff have formal roles in pastoral care the primary calling to care is a calling to the whole congregation which responds by offering care “member to member” and to the wider community.
- b) **To be a member of the congregation involves accepting the responsibilities and privileges of participating in the life of the church.** This includes both receiving care and offering care when it is needed.
- c) **Some members are gifted carers** and may take on a special role in the life of the congregation in this area of ministry. These members will be invited to take on specific care (see below – Types of Care) of members who may be deemed vulnerable due to isolation, health, etc.

From this we see that there are, broadly speaking, four types of care:

TYPE 1

Informal pastoral care between members based on personal friendships, networks and interests.

TYPE 2

This is intentional/regular pastoral care among members by a designated carer. Carers are chosen on the basis of discerned giftedness. Each carer has a specific group of members for which they ‘care’. The people they offer care to will be those who are in some way vulnerable due to age, isolation, health, etc.

Type 2 Care tasks:

Ongoing contact—visits, phone calls, letters, cards.

Reporting (with permission of person involved) of significant issues or specific needs to appropriate ministry staff

TYPE 3

Specific situations requiring the professional skills of our ministry staff.

TYPE 4

Professional psychological referral.

Helping the Church be a Caring Congregation

The Pastoral Care Task Group will develop a number of strategies to help our Congregation grow in its ministry of care:

- a) Recruit formal Pastoral Carers and discern members needing ongoing care.
- b) Sponsor community events to foster “members meeting members”.
- c) Promote care as a characteristic of a healthy church.
- d) Educate members in aspects of caring.
- e) Attend to New Members welcome and assimilation.

Details of strategies.

a) Formal Pastoral Carers.

Recruit and allocate a small number of people with the gift of compassion and care to build ongoing relationships with members who may be considered vulnerable.

Individual members will be allocated to each carer on the basis of personal compatibility and availability.

These people will be supported by the Minister who will, from time to time, offer opportunities to explore aspects of Pastoral Care using resources such as Pastoral Partners.

b) Community Events to foster “members meeting members”.

Provide a range of opportunities for members to meet and engage with people they may not normally spend time with.

Such events will include:

“Guess whose coming to dinner/lunch”,
community lunch following morning worship.

c) Promote care as a characteristic of a healthy church.

Throughout the year take opportunities to remind the congregation of the importance of caring for each other:

- (i) letter 2x per year from Pastoral Care Task Group encouraging members to be alert to the needs of other members and take opportunities to express the compassion of Christ;
- (ii) 4x per year take two minutes in Pastoral Segment (announcements) during worship to encourage care, eg “have you met anyone new lately? Why not risk it after worship?”
- (iii) 4x per year guide the after-worship morning tea conversations with directions to speak with people you normally don’t speak with – with specific questions to ask.

d) Educate members in aspects of caring.

4x per year distribute one page from the Pastoral Care Program to all members via a quarterly QUC publication.

e) New Members welcome and assimilation.

At least two “welcome to new members” events per year, timing to take account of young families (perhaps Sunday lunch) as well as childless couples and individuals.

Target established members who can also attend with the understanding they will invite New Members to some event, eg meal, in their home at which other established members will be present.

(Include here a sample format for the event including details of catering etc.)