

PASTORAL CARE ROLE

In every assembly the overall responsibility for the spiritual health of the people rests with the pastor and elders.

Refer: **Hebrews 13:17 & 1 Peter 5:1-3**

However this responsibility can only be fulfilled in conjunction with other members of the body of Christ – male and female.

It is wrong to assume that the pastor alone has the time and experience to be able to do this alone.

We need a team of people in each fellowship who are able to look out for their brothers and sisters, identify needs/possible mental health concerns, and draw alongside to love, guide support and encourage.

This is particularly important in the early teens to 30s age group.

This must be done with the knowledge and support of the oversight in the assembly.

We do have experienced and wise caring brothers and sisters in different age groups who with some training / guidance could recognise, and then initially assist those with needs.

We do need at least one person, and preferably one male and one female in every assembly who has sufficient understanding to recognise the symptoms of depression / anxiety / fear and with the oversight begin the process of ministry / healing and possible referral.

- In a large assembly the pastoral care team may be the house leaders and their wives – **but not necessarily.**
- In a small assembly, there needs to be one male and one female member who will take the responsibility before the Lord and work together with the pastor.

If there are fellowship members – male or female - who have professional training and expertise in counselling / psychology then they should be involved, but they must understand and agree that this knowledge and experience is to be used as a basis for understanding problems / needs as a guide to how the Spirit and the scripture will work together to bring healing.

The responsibilities/requirements of this role include:

- Genuine interest in the wellbeing of others
- Openness to continue developing excellent listening skills
- Able to offer wise counsel based in scripture

- Awareness of common mental health problems and some training in mental health. There are a variety of short courses in *mental health first aid* that are a good starting point, if people do not already have training in this area. (e.g. <https://mhfa.com.au/>)
- Ensure that there is excellent liaison between the pastoral care team and the pastor/houseleaders so that they are also informed about the wellbeing and needs of the people in their care
- Be clear about the difference between pastoral care and clinical or therapeutic interventions and only operate within your level of training and expertise. Refer to health professionals for clinical intervention if the problems are severe, ongoing and not improving.
- Be informed about local referral options for clinical or therapeutic intervention, including crisis assessment services. CATT : The Crisis Assessment & Treatment Plan.

Who Cares for the Carer?

- The person who is the wife or husband or mother / father or brother / sister of the person struggling with mental illness needs a shepherd / brother / sister that they can talk to as well