

## **Covenant Presbyterian Church Pastoral Care Plan**

### **Vision of Caring at Covenant Presbyterian Church**

*As members of organized and informal communities of care including pastors, parish visitors, deacons, and others at Covenant Presbyterian Church and guided by our faith and belief in God we will:*

*Grow personally in our faith admitting our imperfections and need for grace;*

*Build an accepting, caring and transforming community of Covenant kin where members are alert to the needs of others and;*

*Work together with respect, dignity, honor and compassion to offer and assist those church members and neighbors that need care.*

The earliest depictions of the deacon and caring ministry of the church in scripture speak of the deacon as someone who is responsible for making sure that everyone in the earliest Christian communities were fed (Acts 6). In the book of John, Christ asks Peter, "Do you Love me?" to which Peter responds, "Of course." To which Christ says, "Feed my Sheep." That is our calling as a people of faith and so we respond by looking to spiritual hungers within our congregation and beyond. We understand that feeding people is continually a part of the ministry of pastoral care, and this is how we model our ministry as the pastoral care system of Covenant Presbyterian Church. We seek to make sure that all within the community of faith are spiritually fed and cared for by the body of Christ.

## **Roles of Pastors in Pastoral Care at Covenant Presbyterian Church**

Just as scripture speaks of the caring ministry of the church as a ministry to feed others, so too is the role of the pastor as outlined by the *Book of Order*.

The person who fulfills this responsibility has, in Scripture, obtained different names expressive of his or her various duties. As he or she has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he or she is termed bishop. As he or she feeds them with spiritual food, he or she is termed pastor. As a servant of Christ in the Church, the term minister is given. As it is his or her duty to be grave and prudent, and an example to the flock, and to govern well in the house and Kingdom of Christ, he or she is termed presbyter or elder. As he or she is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God, through Christ, he or she is termed ambassador. And as he or she dispenses the manifold grace of God and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he or she is termed steward of the mysteries of God. Both men and women may be called to this office. (G-6.0202a)

### **Responsibilities May include:**

1. Responding to people in crisis situations, grief, and life threatening situations.
2. Maintaining regular contact with church members receiving hospice care (and their families).
3. Visiting members of friends of the church in homes, hospitals, assisted living facilities, and rehabilitation centers.
4. Providing counseling.
5. Praying for those in need.
6. Referring members and church friends to special resources and people.
7. Participating and in taking communion to people unable to attend worship.
8. Maintaining confidentiality.
9. Meeting monthly with representatives of the Parish Visitors to coordinate, evaluate, and assess the care needs of members and friends of the church.
10. Meeting monthly with the Board of Deacons (associate pastor).
11. Communicating care needs to Parish Visitors and Deacons.
12. Communicating with family members of church members to explain the limits of what the church is able to do.
13. Offering special support for church members who provide pastoral care within the congregation.

### **As part of a broader system of care as church and world, a Pastor is not:**

1. An independent agent : The pastors work in conjunction with the whole pastoral care system at Covenant.

2. Professional Therapists: Though pastors are trained to address certain needs on a limited basis, they are trained to be spiritual care givers, not mental health professionals.
3. The only pastoral care givers within the church: Pastoral care refers to the caring ministry of the whole church, not of the pastors. In fact, sometimes a member can offer far better pastoral care than one of the pastors.
4. Able to be in all places at all times, and often will depend upon others to assure that the children of God are fed.

## **Roles of Deacons in Pastoral Care at Covenant Presbyterian Church**

As the first deacons were called to feed others, so too, are the deacons of Covenant Presbyterian church called to bring Spiritual food to the people of God. The *Book of Order* describes the role of deacon in the following way:

The office of deacon as set forth in Scripture is one of sympathy, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ. Persons of spiritual character, honest repute, of exemplary lives, brotherly and sisterly love, warm sympathies, and sound judgment should be chosen for this office. It is the duty of deacons, first of all, to minister to those who are in need, to the sick, to the friendless, and to any who may be in distress both within and beyond the community of faith. They shall assume such other duties as may be delegated to them from time to time by the session, such as leading the people in worship through prayers of intercession, reading the Scriptures, presenting the gifts of the people, and assisting with the Lord's Supper. (G-6.0401-.0402)

In response to the wisdom of this tradition of the church the Board of Deacons responds in faith by going forth in obedience to God's call to feed the children of God.

### **Responsibilities may include:**

1. Providing individual attention to families from the body of the church.
2. When possible, acting as a first line of connection and support.
3. Triaging situations to determine what other parts of the pastoral care system should be called upon.
4. Identifying joys and concerns to be brought to the attention of the rest of the pastoral care system, within the bounds of confidentiality.
5. Responding to deaths within the congregation by helping with memorial receptions and care of the family.
6. Communicating regularly with families of the church
  - a. Attempted contact at least once a month
  - b. remembering important days and occasions
7. Joining the pastor in participating in home communion with those not able to be at Sunday worship
8. Maintaining confidentiality
9. Praying for those in need
10. Coordinating and sharing needs of families with the pastoral care team
11. Communication with Session, pastors, parish visitors, the office manager and the rest of the pastoral care team.
12. Helping to point people in directions where they might receive proper support

**As part of a broader system of care as church and world, a Deacon is not:**

1. An independent agent: The deacon works in conjunction with the whole pastoral care system at Covenant.
2. Second String: Deacons are not pastoral caregivers for when the pastor cannot show up, but are called by God to their own ministries of care.
3. An elder in training: The deacon ministry of the church is very much a specific calling to which there are particular spiritual gifts.

## **Roles of Parish Visitors in Pastoral Care at Covenant Presbyterian Church**

The role of parish visitor is unique to Covenant Presbyterian Church, and is not addressed by the *Book of Order*. Parish visitors help to care for others as Covenant kin using their God given talents and skills, guided by their faith and belief in a loving God. Parish visitors may minister to the bodies, minds and spirits of those whom they contact by encouraging long term healing or support for those who are terminally ill or have long-term chronic health issues. There are no professional skills required to be parish visitor and those with interest, a caring attitude, and training from the church may be a parish visitor.

Parish visitors listen, support, encourage, befriend, facilitate, and advocate for Covenant members/friends individual with specific needs as identified by deacons, ministers, friends or family. They are there for those who are confined to homes, hospitals, in assisted living or rehabilitation centers or have special needs. Parish visitors can be an aide to the individual's and family's community support system.

Just as pastors and deacons are called to ministries to spiritually feed those in need, so too are the parish visitors. Parish visitors offer nourishment for those whose needs are deep and ongoing.

Close communication between ministers, office manager, deacons and parish visitors is essential to meet individual members' needs, maintain privacy, honor beliefs and support one another in this important role.

### **Responsibilities may include:**

1. Identifying members and friends of the congregation with needs and offering assistance as indicated.
2. Praying for those in need.
3. Respecting privacy and maintaining confidentiality.
4. Visiting and communicating regularly with assigned church members and church friends.
5. Working closely with those in the family, friends and the full circle of support to organize on-going care needs which may include:
  - a. Occasionally providing transportation to medical/dental appointments.
  - b. Assisting, along with the deacons and others in the congregation, in delivering meals or other continuing care needs.
  - c. Acting as an advocate when help is needed.

- d. Participating, with deacons and pastors, in communion with members in their home or health care facility
6. Maintaining regular contact with individuals on hospice.
7. Assisting in identifying and accessing services/resources as needed by the individual, and if possible, making connections with individuals within the congregation who have special skills that might become resource people/support in certain situations (mental illness, alcoholism/substance abuse, teens at risk, etc.)
8. Participating in monthly meetings with pastors and other parish visitors to evaluate, coordinate and assess the changing care needs of members and church friends.
9. Keeping the pastors, the session, the deacons and the congregation informed of the activities of the parish visitors and their role.

**As part of a broader system of care as church and world, a Parish Visitor is not:**

1. A free home care provider (fix meals, do household chores, etc.)
2. A provider of hands on care (give shots, do dressing changes, administer medications, etc.)
3. To be considered as an expert: When advice is solicited from them, it is on the level of a friend or family member—*not as a physician or a legal expert.*
4. A cost effective 911 intermediary.
5. An independent agent: The parish visitor works in conjunction with the whole pastoral care system at Covenant.

# Pastoral Care Network Lines of Communication

