

La Côte Anglican Church

Pastoral Care: Policy, strategy and procedures 2026

Executive summary

At La Côte Anglican Church, pastoral care is how we support one another in times of difficulty — emotionally, spiritually, or practically. Inspired by Christ's compassion and the care shown in the early Church, we aim to ensure everyone in our community receives the care they need.

Our pastoral care framework begins with the clergy — presently the full-time Chaplain, Reverend Canon Carolyn Cooke and the part-time Assistant Curate, Reverend Betty Talbot — who identify or receive referrals about people in need. A clear *decision tree* guides each case:

- **Spiritual or theological concerns** (e.g., doubts, search for meaning, prayer struggles) are supported by clergy, and may be referred to *Lay Ministers, Spiritual Directors, or Stephen Ministers*.
- **Emotional needs** (e.g., bereavement, life transitions, loneliness, stress) are referred to *Stephen Ministers* — trained lay volunteers offering confidential one-to-one support through listening and prayer.
- **Practical short-term needs** (e.g., meals, visits, transport) are coordinated by informal networks of friends, with clergy input.
- **Serious emotional or mental health issues** (e.g., abuse, addiction, severe depression, suicidal thoughts) are referred to medical professionals or the police, following safeguarding policy.

All these needs are in a sense spiritual; the separation into categories reflects choices about how best to respond to needs.

Importantly, *chronic or long-term practical care* — such as ongoing support for ageing, long illness, or disability — is beyond the church's scope. These are the responsibility of individuals and families, though the church may help connect people to appropriate services.

Pastoral care also happens through networks — small groups, prayer teams, post-service fellowship — and special services like All Souls and Blue Christmas. It is offered freely, respectfully, and confidentially, never “done to” people.

Pastoral care at La Côte is a shared ministry — rooted in love, guided by wisdom, and open to all. Everyone is encouraged to give and receive care as needed. Those wishing to offer themselves as carers are invited to speak with the clergy.

1. Definitions: What is pastoral care?

Everyone experiences a trying situation or a difficult journey at some point in life. Whether it be grief, depression, loss, trauma, sickness, loneliness, or a major life transition, everyone knows a season of challenge. People sometimes travel this path alone, without anyone by their side.

Pastoral care refers to one-off or acute support in a crisis, as well as ongoing care, which is offered by lay and ordained members of religious communities. Pastoral care is the church's response to the challenges and suffering that people experience. It includes the regular caregiving church members provide for one another –spiritual, emotional and practical.

Pastoral care can take many forms in different contexts, but it always seeks to meet people at their lowest points and draw them to the mercy and loving care of God. Pastoral care can be offered to anyone. It is not 'done to' someone, but a genuine expression of the love of Christ. Both members of the church and those outside the congregation are welcome to receive pastoral care.

2. Foundations: What is the scriptural and theological basis for pastoral care?

There are several foundational scriptural and theological ideas undergirding pastoral care.

First, Jesus taught that the second greatest commandment is to **love our neighbour** as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). We learn how wide is the definition of 'neighbour' from the parable of the Good Samaritan. Pastoral care is love for others in action. But while Jesus presented a wide scope of application he also saw a special need for caring for fellow-believers (Matthew 10:42).

Second, Jesus is described as having '**compassion**' on the crowds or individuals (Matthew 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34). This was partly his response to the lack of sound teaching they had, but it especially applied to his healing ministry.

Compassion is an emotional response to need; the root of the word means to 'suffer with' others.

A third theme is the **care for the poor** by the early Church. We see this in the choosing of the seven, recorded in Acts 6, to ensure that the widows of the Hellenistic Jews were not short-changed, and in the collection for the Jerusalem Church, described in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9.

The fourth, and probably the most widely understood idea, is that of **shepherds' care for their sheep**. Matthew 9:36 and Mark 6:34 refer to sheep without a shepherd. Ezekiel chapter 34 rebukes the political leaders of ancient Israel for misleading and exploiting the sheep. John chapter 10 has the great illustration of the Good Shepherd and Jesus is seen as the Shepherd in Matthew 2:6, Hebrews 13:20, 1 Peter 2:25 and 5:4. Shepherds seek the lost sheep and care for the flock. The adjective 'pastoral' refers to the image of the shepherd found in biblical texts and Christian traditions. The shepherd's care of the flock depicts how Christian leaders care spiritually for members of their churches by embodying the love of God.

The Bible overflows with accounts of pastoral care given, received and encouraged. Jesus listened compassionately to the woman at the well (John 4). At various times, Jesus himself needed and received care, such as the anointing in the home of Mary and Martha at Bethany (John 12), and in the home of Simon the leper (Matthew 26), and the women standing by him at the cross (Luke 23). In Galatians 6:2, Paul encourages his readers to bear one others' burdens, a call for mutual care.

Embodying the message of Psalm 23, pastoral care seeks wellbeing, restoration, guidance, accompaniment and comfort for God's people, for his name's sake.

Pastoral care today follows in the footsteps of Jesus and the early church by going to people wherever they need spiritual healing and recognizing that those in need of physical care are also in need of spiritual care. For these reasons, pastoral care extends well beyond the walls of the church. Pastors and caregivers meet people where they are, providing care to people in hospitals, nursing homes, personal residences, and wherever people express needs for spiritual guidance, prayer, or care.

3. What we do now in providing pastoral care

We live in a community of people who have left their established networks and have had to start again. With this comes a risk of isolation. As a church, one of the gifts we have to offer is **community**, a sense of belonging. As the body of Christ we can welcome people into our family, a home away from home.

A lot of caring takes place in the La Côte community. The church also reaches out into the wider community through our extended networks, such as Blokes' Dinners, quiz nights, jazz evenings, and participation in local groups and community service organizations, such as the Association Coup de Main and the Nyon Food Bank.

La Côte Church offers pastoral care to adults; children are the responsibility of their parents or guardians. Nevertheless, those working with children, including clergy and Sunday Club volunteers, are trained in safeguarding and alert to children's needs. Confidential conversations may take place with parents and guardians of children, but formal pastoral care does not.

Whilst La Côte Church will always endeavour to provide what support it can, chronic practical care (e.g., practical care support for the rest of life, particularly with ageing or after a major illness) is not within the scope of La Côte pastoral care. Such chronic needs are the responsibility of individuals (to plan how they will manage ahead of such anticipated and unanticipated events) and family (to organise, provide care and even to take legal responsibility, such as power of attorney, when circumstances dictate).

4. Vision: What is La Côte Church's vision for pastoral care?

That everyone who is part of the La Côte Church community receives the care they need, whether provided by family members, friends, external agencies or the church.

5. Mission: Objectives of La Côte Church's pastoral care work

The mission of La Côte church is to achieve the vision articulated in section 4, above by ...

1. Providing care and support for hurting people
2. Building up the congregation as a resilient, caring community
3. Equipping people to use their gifts in caregiving ministry

We have an opportunity to strengthen the links between people and to build resilience so that people have the resources they need when difficulties come. We can be salt and light, helping people to find hope in their struggles.

6. Types of need

The needs listed below are examples only, not exhaustive. In each case, pastoral care may be required to respond to **acute needs** – the onset of a crisis in people's lives, and to **ongoing needs** – the longer-term support of people. And a caregiver today could be a care-receiver tomorrow.

a. Emotional and psychological needs

- Loneliness
- Isolation: The housebound
- Anxieties and losses related to ageing
- Poor health and sickness
- Hospitalization and post-hospital recovery
- Long-term nursing home needs
- Dying – the individual or their loved ones
- Bereavement (including funeral and follow-up visits)
- Stress
- Mild depression and other mild mental health needs
- Marriage / relationship support (including in the run-up to marriage, response to marital tensions)
- Marriage / relationship breakdown (including coercive control, betrayal, separation, divorce, moving on)
- Uncertainties about sexuality
- Parenting issues (including pregnancy, childbirth, baptisms, challenges of child-raising, teenage years)
- Work-related needs (including tensions at work, dissatisfaction, job search, job loss, longer-term unemployment)
- Stress related to moving house
- Worries about money
- Needs of newcomers
- Needs of asylum seekers and refugees

- Grief about any of the above issues

The church refers people with such emotional and psychological needs to trained experienced **Stephen Ministers** (see section 8, Stephen Ministry, below) for one-to-one support, subject to the availability of Stephen Ministers.

Certain acute and severe needs may be referred immediately to medical or psychiatric services in the community, or to the police. These include:

- Addiction to alcohol, drugs, sex and other types
- Abuse, violence and subsequent trauma
- Severe mental health issues
- Suicidal ideation

Suspected violent criminal activity, involving abuse, risk of homicide or serious self-harm, is always referred to the police.

b. Spiritual needs

- Search for meaning and purpose in life
- Sense of distance, separation from God
- Anger or disappointment with God
- Fears or uncertainties about salvation or ultimate spiritual destination (for oneself and for loved ones)
- Spiritual guilt
- Fear of judgement
- Perception of a lack of forgiveness, given or received
- Difficulties with prayer
- Difficulties with understanding the Bible
- Worries about certain doctrines or practices
- Questions about sacraments, e.g., baptism, confirmation, Holy Communion
- Questions about theodicy – how an all-knowing, all-powerful and all-loving God can ‘allow’ so much evil and suffering in the world
- Spiritual abuse
- Disillusionment with the Church as an institution

People with spiritual needs such as these are supported, in the first instance, by the clergy, who may refer them to other trained and experienced congregation members, such as lay readers (licensed lay ministers), congregational worship leaders, to Stephen Ministry or to trained, experienced Spiritual Directors.

c. Practical needs

- Occasional accompaniment, such as a walk, a change of scene, an outing for coffee
- Home visits
- Hospital and nursing home visits
- Provision of meals
- Shopping
- Lifts
- Accompaniment to appointments

People with temporary practical needs such as these are referred to informal practical care networks (see section 9, below). Those with chronic practical needs will be encouraged and supported, where possible, to find their own sustainable solutions, involving family members if possible.

d. Administration of home Holy Communion

A small number of church members are trained and authorised to administer Holy Communion by extension to people who are housebound.

7. Central role of clergy, with delegation to trained and experienced caregivers

La Côte Anglican Church has two clergypersons: the full-time Chaplain, Reverend Canon Carolyn Cooke and the part-time Assistant Curate, Reverend Betty Talbot. In practice, the clergy identify most pastoral care needs, or congregation members refer people to them. Their role and responsibility are central to the church's provision of pastoral care.

The clergy work closely with church members, who are well-connected within the community and can mobilize others to refer people with practical needs to the most appropriate caregiver(s), including through Stephen Ministry. For details, see sections 8, 9, and 11, below.

8. Stephen Ministry

La Côte Anglican Church became a Stephen Ministry congregation in March 2025.

Stephen Ministry is a confidential, lay-led Christian care ministry that provides support through listening, prayer, and grace-based acceptance. Inspired by Acts chapter 6, where Stephen and others were appointed to care for those in need, this ministry allows trained laypeople to walk alongside others in times of difficulty.

Stephen Ministers provide ***emotional and spiritual support***, but do not provide practical care. Within La Côte church, practical care is provided by informal networks of church members (see section 9, below).

Stephen Ministers are not professional counsellors, but are lay people who have had 50 hours of training. They meet with their care receivers for about an hour a week and continue for as long as necessary, for weeks, months, or potentially even years. Stephen Ministers gather once a fortnight for supervision and support.

Stephen Ministers provide care in four types of situation:

1. Crisis care (e.g., divorce, bereavement, sudden unemployment etc.)
2. Follow-up care (e.g., sometime after a trauma-inducing event when others have started to forget)
3. Preventative care (e.g., when a life changing event can be anticipated such as retirement, children leaving home)
4. Care to caregivers (e.g., caring for those who are the primary carers for others)

This is a great opportunity to care for those within our community and also to reach beyond our church walls, as Stephen Ministers are available to provide grace-based, non-judgemental, faithful Christian love and care to whomever needs it.

There are already several Stephen Ministers in our congregation, and there are many others available through the broader regional church network. Stephen Leaders are the principal focal point for referral of a person to Stephen Ministry and are involved in training and supporting Stephen Ministers, as well as the leadership of the regional network in Suisse Romande, which includes Saint John XXIII, Westlake and Crossroads churches.

Congregation members' prayers, support, and engagement are vital in three areas:

1. Congregation members who are interested in being trained as a Stephen Minister may contact a Stephen Leader, currently Louise or Jeremy Burrows.
2. Congregation members who become aware of someone they know could benefit from Stephen Ministry may reach out to a member of the clergy or a Stephen Leader confidentially.
3. Congregation members can help spread the word about Stephen Ministry so that we can reach the people who need this support.

9. Practical care

The body of Christ has many members; we all have a part to play. Helping provide practical care can empower members of the congregation with gifts for pastoral care, so that we can minister to each other without all depending on a few people.

Much practical care in La Côte church takes place spontaneously, without need for formal organisation. Self-organising networks emerge to coordinate how best to meet new needs. In practice, these networks have informal leaders, who communicate and coordinate among members.

Delegation and empowerment require good management. The clergy need to have confidential oversight to ensure that people are not slipping through the net and that caregivers are also cared for appropriately.

a. Functions

The principal functions of the informal practical care networks are to:

- Meet the practical needs listed in section 6 c, above.
- Support the clergy by providing confidential updates on the wellbeing of people whom they are assisting practically.

b. Qualifications

Qualities required of the practical care network members:

- Discreet; able to respect and maintain confidentiality
- Approachable
- Compassionate
- Good listeners
- Respect clear boundaries
- Reliable
- Willing to be trained
- Have successfully completed Church of England Basic and Foundations Safeguarding courses

In addition, the church members authorised to administer home Holy Communion must have completed specific training on administration of home Holy Communion.

c. Training

Practical care network members are encouraged to undertake training provided by external agencies, such as the Acorn Listening course, and certain Stephen Ministry training modules, such as those on Boundaries and Referral. Short training videos are available on these and other relevant topics from Louise.

d. Regular supervision

From time to time, the clergy meet with caregivers to review their practice, respond to questions and difficulties, and to check in on their wellbeing. All Stephen Ministers take part in fortnightly clinical supervision and support sessions.

10. Expectations and responsibilities

A basic understanding in pastoral care is that individuals are responsible for their own well-being. The church and its partners in pastoral care can certainly help and support people with compassionate care to maximise their well-being. But the church and its partners cannot be held responsible for the consequences of people's poor or unrealistic life choices.

11. Prevention

From time to time, the church offers advice and support to help people to prepare for future challenges, such as retirement or the difficult end-of-life period, while they are still in good health and able to make sensible decisions. Examples include a series of Lenten Seminars on death and dying, a 'death café' event, and several Blokes' Dinners devoted to understanding subjects such as depression, transition to retirement and sexism. The church also regularly publicises courses and events offered by nearby agencies or online.

12. Pastoral care in and through small groups and other informal mechanisms

Pastoral care is not the sole responsibility of the Clergy, Stephen Ministers and the practical care networks. The wider church community plays a vital part. The church's pastoral care strategy envisages the encouragement of pastoral care and support through existing small groups, which meet regularly, spontaneously offer prayer, pastoral care and support to their members. These groups include:

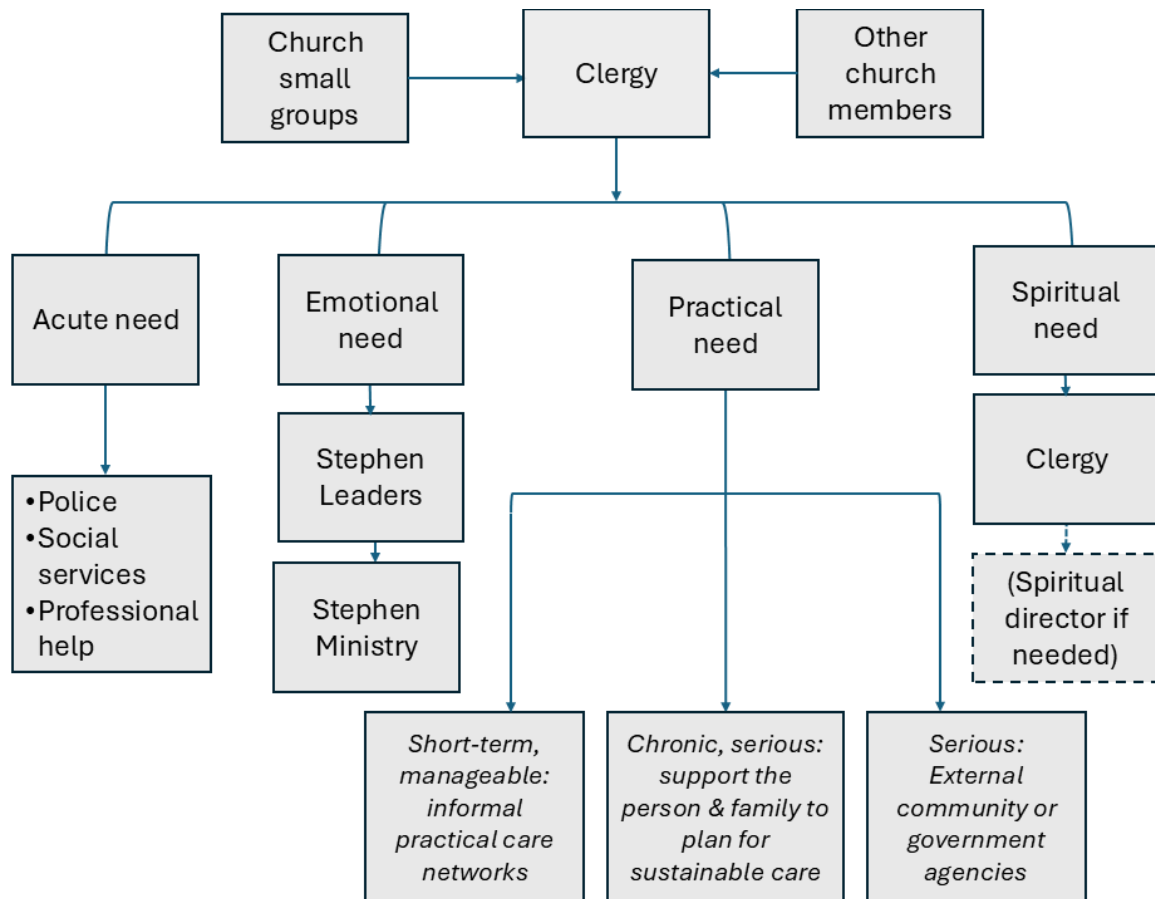
- Morning Prayer group (online)
- Tuesday prayer group
- Tuesday Bible study group
- Window on Wednesday
- Blokes' dinners
- Girls' gatherings
- La Côte Play group

Other less formal opportunities for pastoral care include:

- One-on-one prayer ministry offered after services
- Coffee and tea after services
- Individuals looking out for friends and neighbours
- Networks coalescing around certain people
- The Chaplain's weekly list of people to touch base with

13. Pathways and a decision tree

Below is a diagram setting out pathways to pastoral care within La Côte Church.



14. Referrals

The decision tree in section 13, above, sets out pathways for referral by the clergy and their delegates:

- to the police for serious situations, potentially involving suicide, homicide or abuse;
- to external community agencies and government services (for more serious emotional and psychological needs, and for some practical support needs);
- to Stephen Ministry (for less serious emotional and spiritual needs);
- to the practical care networks for practical needs; and
- to spiritual directors if needed

The external community agencies include:

Switzerland

- Local medical practitioners and psychiatrists
- EVAM assistants sociaux
- La Main tendue
- Pro senectute
- GRAAP
- Unisanté
- Fondation vaudoise contre l'alcoolisme
- SOS jeux
- L'Office AI Vaud
- Centre de Consultation les Boréales - CHUV

France

- Local medical practitioners and psychiatrists
- Premier secours en santé mentale France
- Service Coordination Santé Mentale de l'Ain
- Centre Communal d'Action Social de Divonne-les-Bains

In addition to these four, the Chaplain has a substantial and regularly updated list of helpful emergency health, mental health and social service agencies based in France (Pays de Gex and more broadly Département de l'Ain):

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1tyBqozSAGXZCsulvKjmbhOp8oJsm9cnj>.

The clergy maintain very brief, confidential records of those referrals (see section 16, Record keeping, below).

15. Conveying pastoral care through services and liturgy

Each year, La Côte Anglican Church offers services that address the reality that some of our congregation members suffer long-term grief and loss, living with emotional wounds that are sometimes very hard to bear, and in some cases with trauma. Services such as those for All Souls Day, Remembrance Sunday, Safeguarding Sunday, Blue Christmas, Holy Saturday and Refugee Sunday provide opportunities to acknowledge the pain of those situations yet affirming that this pain is not the last word and that Jesus is present with us in them.

This is a thread, a recurring theme, running through the services and connecting them. We may also speak of a long, horizontal root of sensitivity to grief, loss and trauma that underlies our whole church life, including worship and pastoral care. That root is deeply biblical, running from Old Testament injunctions to compassion for widows, orphans and resident aliens (e.g., Deuteronomy 27:19) to Jesus' call to love God and express that in love for our neighbour (Matthew 22: 37-40). Every La Côte service manifests some element of pastoral sensitivity to grief, loss and trauma, especially in the prayers of intercession and in notices. The special services mentioned above are more obvious shoots springing out of the root, strongly reinforcing our church's commitment to pastoral care.

These services are not only intended to support and comfort those who live with the effects of grave illness or death of loved ones, damaged or broken relationships, deep loss, or trauma. They also allow other congregation members to share bonds of mutual understanding, solidarity and compassion with those, not named publicly, who are suffering. The liturgy shared in such services can be powerful and transformative. And the services can strengthen the depth and quality of pastoral care, demonstrating to the congregation and to newcomers the importance our church community places on the spiritual, emotional and psychological wellbeing of all.

One Sunday each year is designated Pastoral Care Sunday. At services on that day the ministry of pastoral care is presented to the congregation, through a sermon based on a passage such as those referred to in section 2, above, and an extended announcement or presentation during the notices. This is not a fixed date in the calendar but can be associated with key transitions in the year, such as Rentrée or New Year.

16. Record keeping

Records of pastoral care encounters are kept according to the following principles and protocols:

- Record keeping for pastoral care respects confidentiality but is not anonymous.
- Record keeping for pastoral care follows the church's data privacy policy (see <https://www.lacotechurch.ch/data-privacy-notice/>).
- Only in cases of serious emotional or spiritual need is a basic note taken – date, name of caregiver, name of care receiver, purpose of meeting, outcome.
- Caregivers pass those notes to the clergy by email.

- No record is needed for practical care visits.

Stephen Ministry keeps separate records of meetings between caregivers and care-receivers, which are confidential and anonymous. Stephen Ministers also participate in group supervision, during which details identifying the care receiver are not revealed.

17. Risks, threats and their mitigation

The La Côte Pastoral Care programme faces several risks and threats. Possible mitigations are listed after each risk / threat.

- Unrealistic expectations of what we can do for people
 - Clear and repeated communication with the church community and each care receiver about what care can and cannot be provided.
 - Clergy, Stephen Ministry leaders or informal practical care network leaders may speak with any complainant to listen and explain.
- Unmet areas of need
 - Our capacity is limited and we cannot provide for all the needs. We need to encourage each member to participate in providing care as they are able and not to expect the church to cover everything.
 - We have to accept that, in our imperfection, we will just not be able to provide care in some cases.
- People 'falling through the cracks', suffering without anyone being aware
 - Individuals have a responsibility to make it known that they need care. We cannot be expected to read minds.
 - Communicate that we are a safe place to ask for help and the points of contact for support.
- People unwilling to receive care as they don't want to be 'done to'
 - Communicate that care is offered freely, in love, and in response to an expressed need.
 - Communicate that we are all broken and in need, and that we can all serve and be served by one another at different points in our lives.
- People uncomfortable with any sense of oversight of their relationships

- Frame this in terms of supporting carers and ensuring the best care is given to the person in need.
- Implement this with a 'light touch'.
- We do not need to manage every activity, e.g., acts of care between friends may be offered and provided outside the strategy – this policy covers acts of care done on behalf of the church.
- Fears around confidentiality
 - Reinforce the fact that confidentiality is a core principle. Stephen Ministers also take an oath of confidentiality when they are commissioned.
 - A minimum level of temporary confidential record keeping is kept, according to La Côte's policies, to ensure proper care is provided and accountability to the clergy.
 - Ensure clear communication with the person in need as to whether they want this information to be kept confidential, or whether they would like people to know and, for example, be prayed for in services and the prayer group.
- That too few people volunteer to be part of the informal practical care networks, leaving too great a burden on too few
 - The numbers involved and able to offer practical care will be a part of the communications for managing expectations (see above)
 - Communication of the need for new practical caregivers and inviting new involvement is a priority.
 - Communication of Stephen Ministry training courses to replenish the pool of Stephen Ministers and, subsequently, Stephen Leaders
- That the Pastoral Care system becomes organizationally heavy
 - The system outlined in this document is deliberately 'light-touch', yet needs to be trialled, reviewed after a time, and adapted as needed.
- That any leaders or individuals within the wider care team bypass these arrangements and just meet needs directly; or that they delegate improperly, interfering or retracting responsibility and authority after delegating
 - Feedback needs to be immediately given in the event of any system bypass that either causes confusion, hurt, inadequate care or increased burden on any carer. We need to foster a culture of loving feedback.

18. Links to safeguarding policy and procedures

La Côte Church has a strong safeguarding policy and clear procedures in place to prevent and respond to any safeguarding concerns (see <https://www.lacotechurch.ch/safeguarding/>). The Church has three Safeguarding Officers, Cate Bichara, Liz Martinez and Heidi Hawkings, who coordinate safeguarding training and response.

All pastoral care is offered within the context of safeguarding and people active in caregiving will all be trained in the Church of England's Basic and Foundations safeguarding courses, which cover situations involving vulnerable individuals and families. All pastoral care providers must provide proof of a police check (called an *extrait de casier judiciaire* in Switzerland and France). The clergy and the Stephen Ministry leaders are also trained in Safeguarding Leadership and Awareness of Domestic Abuse.

In the course of pastoral care activities, team members may learn of safeguarding concerns, which they should refer immediately to the Safeguarding Officers.

Although children do not receive pastoral care through the Church, safeguarding concerns about children may emerge through pastoral care processes. Such concerns must also be referred to the Safeguarding Officers.

19. Visibility: Communication of the policy, strategy, procedures and team members to the congregation, initially and with regular reinforcement

a. Website

The website page on Pastoral Care has recently been rewritten to reflect this policy, strategy and procedures statement. The La Côte Church Administrative Assistant will update the web page from time to time.

b. A leaflet

A brief leaflet, *Pastoral Care in La Côte Anglican Church*, is available for distribution after every service, and is highlighted at special services (see section 19 d, below).

c. In regular services

Especially through generic prayers of intercession and notices, the importance and availability of pastoral care can be reinforced regularly.

d. In special services, the liturgy of which focusses on grief, loss and trauma

These services, such as All Souls Day, Remembrance Sunday, Safeguarding Sunday, Blue Christmas, Holy Saturday, Refugee Sunday and Pastoral Care Sunday, were highlighted in section 15, above, 'Conveying pastoral care through services and liturgy'. They provide opportunities to identify, draw attention to and reinforce pastoral care, something that lies just beneath the surface of who we are and what we do, allowing that commitment to seep into our church family's collective consciousness.

20. Resources

Church of England. 2021. *Held Together in the Love of Christ: Pastoral Principles for Living and Learning Well Together*. London: Church House publishing.
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