

First Christian Church of Burbank
Pastoral and Spiritual Care

There are times in life when we need to talk to someone. Someone who will listen to us, without judgement and help us work through life's difficulties and decisions. As a pastor, part of my role is to be available to offer care to those who are in such a place. I often hear people say, "I was going to call you," or "I know you are really busy." These are phrases that show me that people were seeking pastoral care but didn't know how to arrange for it, what to expect, or what was offered. Since I feel pastoral care is a vital aspect to a healthy church and can enrich our lives, I want to share my perspective on the ways I approach pastoral care.

First, I need to hear directly from congregants that they desire a pastoral call or a time for pastoral care. While in past generations pastors felt comfortable dropping in on congregants at their homes unannounced or relied on the 'grapevine' to hear that someone had a problem or a medical condition, in our modern society, most people are much more private with their 'space.' Visiting a church or even joining a church doesn't necessarily mean that the person wants the pastor to make a home visit. Some people are also very private about their medical conditions, relational struggles, addictions, vocational decisions, etc... and may prefer to be left alone during these times. As a pastor it is difficult for me to know who expects a call or a visit, and who prefers their space and privacy. So, in order to maintain proper boundaries, one of the best ways I can serve is to have you contact me or the church office directly. Once offered your invitation, I'm more than happy to visit with you, pray, listen and provide the best pastoral care I can. This invitational approach helps to maintain boundaries and confidentiality. I will never share your information or situation with another, nor will I approach you about it in another setting. In other words, I won't come up and ask you a question in front of other congregants or share a prayer request from the pulpit (not unless explicit permission is given).

I am never too busy to meet with you. Scheduling time with me is quite easy and I look forward to being of service; it's why I went into the ministry. You may call the church office or my cell phone directly. If you prefer to write out what is on your heart, you may also contact me by e-mail. It is best to contact me ahead of time so we can set up an appointment. This gives us both a chance to prepare for the meeting and to set up an environment that provides a 'safe' space in which to share. Of course if it is emergency, I will do my best to meet with you immediately. Sometimes, your own schedule may make it difficult to carve out space to meet with me. There are ways that I can provide pastoral care over the phone. Again, it is best to set up an arranged time, so you can put yourself in a space where you feel comfortable talking. Perhaps, even sitting in your car during a lunch break, will provide a place of sanctuary to share your heart.

So, what is pastoral care? Well, for me it begins with deep listening, to hear: what is tugging at your heart, what is bringing you joy, what is causing confusion or a dilemma. Second, I don't try to offer you solutions, solve your problems or 'fix' you or the situation in any way. My goal is to listen deep enough in order to ask you open and honest (and sometimes challenging) questions that help you explore the situation and listen to the voice of your own soul. I also, try to bring a remembrance and awareness

of God's compassion. I myself have been blessed to have nonjudgmental and compassionate people listen to my story and while speaking, I hear my own situation in a new way. The person's presence was what was most important. Pastoral care is really helping people hear and see the work of God in their own lives and helping them be attentive to their own soul. Pastoral care is not 'professional therapy.' Often times I will refer people to professional counselors and therapist. If needed, I will help support you in the journey of finding a licensed therapist who meets your needs.

Lastly, spiritual care doesn't have to be offered by me alone. There may be another person in the congregation (an Elder, someone who has been through a similar situation) whose presence would be beneficial. Bringing in another person or a couple of other people, may deepen the experience of care and compassion. Perhaps, you may be more comfortable talking to others and not have me present. I would be happy to help arrange such meetings and provide any necessary guidance. Someone else's life experience, gender, perspective, etc...may make you feel more comfortable in sharing.

Pastoral and spiritual care has been very helpful in my own life, and I pray that we as a church can find ways to care for each other's souls.

Sincerely,
Steve Borgard