

These studies empathise with the story above. In the Christian life, intellectual knowledge of God's love from the Scriptures is vital, but genuine and practical care and compassion from one Christian to another is immeasurably comforting and assuring. Words about God's love are needed, but the experience of comfort from a brother or sister makes the world of difference. (A pastor of a large church in the U.S.A. in the 1990's called Melvin Steinbron, of Minnesota, wanted his church to become a more caring community. He was perplexed and concerned as he looked around at the pastoral care offered in many churches. Time and time again he found that the care for the people centred on and depended largely on the paid pastor. He observed that most churches with more than 75 members usually struggle to do well at caring for those people when relying on a clergy-centred model of pastoral care. The spiritual, emotional, and relational needs of many 4 members was often grossly inadequate. In an attempt to develop a shared model of pastoral care so that no-one unnecessarily missed out, Steinbron developed training courses to teach all members of his church four fundamental features of effective pastoral care, one-to-another that a Christian community can exercise.

P.E.A.C.E. ACROSTIC

We have added one more letter to the acrostic designed by Steinbron to make the word "PEACE", which we believe is the goal of good pastoral care.

P... E... A... C... E... stands for the following elements of Christian pastoral care:

- P Prayer
- E Encouragement
- A Availability
- C Contact
- E Example

In later studies we will unpack each one for our church's life together.



A guide for pastoral care - one to another *Study #1 — Why Care?* *St Michael's Anglican Church, North Carlton*

INTRODUCING THESE STUDIES

This series of studies aims to assist members of Christian small groups to consider the importance and advantages of pastoral care which is shared across the membership of the church and not heavily dependent on clergy or other professionals. The study guides will be published under the following titles: #1 - Why Care? #2 - Qualities of a good carer? #3 - Spiritual gifts & Spiritual maturity #4 - The PEACE model of parish care #5 - Skills for caring #6

These study guides have a mix of text to read aloud, questions to put to the group and bible references that participants can look up during and outside of the study time. It is not necessary to follow the studies strictly, nor to adhere to the recommended number of studies or configurations. There are some background texts that can be studied if needed, including: Can the Pastor do it alone? by Melvin Steinbron, Christian Caregiving by Kenneth Haugk and God's love in action by Jill McGilvray.

To get the most out of this study:

- READ the text for the day
- MAKE time for silence and reflection before considering the questions
- ASK yourself how this passage might be “speaking” to you today
- PRAY for the help of the Holy Spirit
- DISCUSS your thoughts with others

SHEPHERDS AND US

READ John 10:1-18

The Bible gives us (at least) two helpful modes of pastoral care that God intends for Christian communities:

1. ‘Shepherds’ of God’s ‘flock’
2. ‘One-another’ ministries

In many places the Bible speaks of God as shepherd, and his people as ‘sheep’. An ancient middle-eastern shepherd knew and cared for his flock, providing safety, good pasture, nurture and direction. In the Old Testament God appoints shepherds or pastors of his people. Bad shepherds are denounced by the Prophets and good shepherds are encouraged. Jesus identifies himself as the Good Shepherd in John’s Gospel (chapter 10). And the New Testament shows how the church in many places appointed people to be pastors and under-shepherds of Christ to guide and care for God’s people (e.g. Acts 20:28).

Let’s first consider how appointed shepherds help our Christian communities to be caring communities and then look at responsibilities one-to-another.

DISCUSS

God as Shepherd - Ps. 23; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 31:10

Jesus - John 10:1-21; 1 Peter 2:25; Hebrews 13:20

Appointed shepherds - Ezekiel 34:1-24; 1 Peter 5:1-4, 10

Consider the following passages from the Bible and note pastoral implications:

1 Tim. 2:4; John 3:16,17

1 John 4:7, 9, 11

John 13:34,35

2 Corinthians 1:3,4

Matthew 25:35-36, 40

Galatians 6:1-2, 9-10

What implications do these passages have for Christians?

What connections can you see between the passages?

INTRODUCING the PEACE MODEL OF CARE

One cold night when the winds were howling and lightning was illuminating the cloudy skies, a young boy continued appearing at his parents' bedside. Each time he expressed his fears, mum and dad reminded him that God loved him, and sent him back to bed. Within minutes of another crack of lightning and peal of thunder the child would find his way back to their bedside. Again his parents offered words of comfort. "We know that the storm is scary, but remember that God loves you, go back to bed." Once more the boy made a hopeful trip to his weary parents' side. Once again they affirmed God’s care and love to calm the boy’s fears. This time, however, the boy plucked up the courage and said in response, "I know God loves me, but I want love with skin on!"