

PASTORAL CARE PLAN

First Unitarian Church of Pittsburgh
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Summary

Pastoral care at First Unitarian Church is coordinated and provided by Pastoral Associates, Pastoral Contacts, and members of the church staff. Church members and friends are encouraged to provide both pastoral care and pastoral assistance.

Pastoral Associates attend to the pastoral situations of all members and friends of the church. **Pastoral Contacts** are members of small groups (including covenant groups, music performance groups, and affinity groups) and attend to the pastoral situations of people who are part their small group. Each small group will be encouraged to have its own designated Pastoral Contact. **Members of the church staff** provide overall coordination and also attend to pastoral situations.

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Part I. The Basic Pastoral Care Program

A. Roles and Responsibilities

Pastoral Associates

Pastoral Associates include eight to twelve individuals recruited by the minister. Two-year terms, renewable once, begin on May 1.

Pastoral Associates are responsible for attending to the pastoral situations of all church members and friends. When any Pastoral Associate becomes aware of a pastoral situation, that Pastoral Associate should (1) provide emotional and spiritual support for the person or family experiencing a pastoral situation, as appropriate; and (2) inform the appropriate church staff members and the other Pastoral Associates via email or telephone or personal conversation.

Pastoral Associates are responsible for coordinating the sharing of Joys and Sorrows at our worship services on Sunday mornings.

Pastoral Contacts

Pastoral Contacts are members of the following small groups:

All Covenant Groups

Music Performance Groups

- Family Choir
- Sanctuary Choir
- Folk Orchestra
- Allegheny Passage
- Recorder Ensemble
- Dance Choir

Affinity Groups

- Humanist Group
- Men's Gathering
- UU Community on Campus
- Womanspirit
- Women's Alliance

Pastoral Contacts are responsible only for attending to the pastoral situations of members of their small group. When any Pastoral Contact becomes aware of a pastoral situation in his or her small group, that Pastoral Contact should (1) provide emotional and spiritual support for the person or family experiencing a pastoral situation; (2) encourage other members of that small group (as appropriate) to provide emotional and spiritual support

for the person or family experiencing a pastoral situation; and (3) inform appropriate church staff members and the Pastoral Associates via email or telephone or personal conversation.

Training for Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts

Pastoral Associates are required to attend an initial training session and are expected to attend ongoing training sessions which will take place three or four times each year.

Pastoral Contacts are strongly encouraged to attend an initial training session and are welcome to attend the ongoing training sessions which the Pastoral Associates are expected to attend.

Training will be provided by the minister or by other church staff or by appropriate individuals from outside the congregation (e.g., Unitarian Universalist ministers with special training in pastoral care, individuals who serve as chaplains at local hospitals, individuals who provide pastoral care at local hospices, or psychologists or social workers trained in counseling or psychotherapy).

Program Staff and Office Staff

Program staff members and office staff members are responsible for monitoring the entire congregation for pastoral situations. When any program staff member or office staff member becomes aware of a pastoral situation, that staff member should (1) provide emotional and spiritual support for the person or family experiencing a pastoral situation, as appropriate; (2) inform other appropriate church staff members and the Pastoral Associates via email or telephone or personal conversation; and (3) if the person or family experiencing a pastoral situation is part of a small group, inform the appropriate Pastoral Contact.

The Minister

The minister has general responsibility for pastoral care for members and friends of the church, but the minister must rely on many others for assistance in responding to pastoral situations. The minister may choose to provide pastoral care directly in any pastoral situation. In addition, the minister has the following responsibilities: (1) recruit Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts; (2) share pastoral information with other church staff members at staff meetings and in other ways, as appropriate; (3) share pastoral information with Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts, as outlined below; (4) provide a list of known pastoral situations for church staff, Pastoral Associates, and Pastoral Contacts each week, as outlined below; (5) arrange for periodic pastoral care training opportunities; (6) make requests for assistance to church staff, Pastoral Associates, and Pastoral Contacts; (7) maintain and distribute a list of appropriate referrals; (8) maintain emergency contact information for members and friends of the church.

B. Operation of the Basic Pastoral Care Program

Assignments

The minister may ask Pastoral Associates, Pastoral Contacts, program staff members, and office staff members for assistance with any pastoral situation. In general, responses to such requests should be as follows

- A Pastoral Associate may respond to a request for assistance by (1) agreeing to make contact within twenty-four hours with the individual or family experiencing a pastoral situation, or (2) indicating within twenty-four hours after the request has been made that he or she is unable to accept this request at the present time.
- A Pastoral Contact may respond to a request for assistance by (1) agreeing to make contact within twenty-four hours with the individual or family experiencing a pastoral situation, or (2) spreading the word among some or all of the other members of the small group, as appropriate, inviting them to make contact with the individual or family experiencing a pastoral situation, or (3) indicating within twenty-four hours after the request has been made that he or she is unable to accept this request at the present time.
- A church staff member may respond to a request for assistance by (1) agreeing to make contact within twenty-four hours with the individual or family experiencing a pastoral situation, or (2) indicating within twenty-four hours after the request has been made that he or she is unable to accept this request at the present time.

If no response is forthcoming within twenty-four hours after a request for pastoral assistance has been made, then the minister will assume that the Pastoral Associate, Pastoral Contact, or church staff member is unable to accept this request at the present time. The minister may then request assistance from another Pastoral Associate, Pastoral Contact, or church staff member.

List of Pastoral Situations

The minister will maintain a list of individuals or families who are currently experiencing pastoral situations. The minister will gather pastoral information from Pastoral Associates, Pastoral Contacts, program staff members, office staff members, and other sources (accordingly, a few minutes of each weekly staff meeting will be devoted to sharing pastoral information). The minister will make this list available each week to program staff, office staff, the Pastoral Associates, and the Pastoral Contacts. To maintain some measure of privacy or confidentiality, this list will include few or no details of the pastoral situation each individual or family is experiencing. This list will be sent out each week via email or printed copies.

How This Process Works from the Perspective of Church Members and Friends

Church members and friends who **are** part of a small group should expect to receive pastoral care and pastoral assistance primarily from (1) other members of that small group (including the Pastoral Contact for that group), (2), a Pastoral Associate, or (3) a church staff member.

Church members and friends who **are not** part of a small group should expect to receive pastoral care and pastoral assistance primarily from (1) a Pastoral Associate or (2) a church staff member.

C. Definitions and Expectations

Pastoral Situations

Pastoral situations include the following: (1) personal illness, surgery, or injury requiring hospitalization; (2) illness, surgery, or injury requiring hospitalization of an immediate family member; (3) death of an immediate family member; (4) a persistent, problematic medical condition involving illness, surgery, or injury; (5) birth or adoption of a child; (6) loss of a job, a major personal loss, or a major financial setback; (7) emotional stress after a medical test has been conducted but before the results are known; (8) emotional stress after a medical test has been conducted and the results indicate continuing medical challenges; (8) family problems resulting from (a) marital stress, separation, or divorce; (b) children who are experiencing emotional difficulties; (c) mental illness; (d) addiction; or (e) legal trouble; (9) emotional challenges associated with retirement.

Pastoral situations may occur suddenly or gradually. Pastoral situations may be resolved within a day or two, or they may be resolved within a week or two, or they may be resolved within a few months, or they may continue indefinitely.

Forms of Pastoral Care and Pastoral Assistance

Pastoral care may be any of the following, as appropriate: (1) a personal conversation over the telephone; (2) a personal conversation at church or in some other location; (3) a personal visit to a home, hospital, hospice, or funeral home; or (4) a written message such as a card or brief letter.

Pastoral assistance may be any of the following, as appropriate: (1) providing a meal; (2) providing a ride; (3) providing child care (to be done only in situations where a trusting personal relationship already exists); (4) helping with household tasks.

Expectations of Church Members and Friends

Providing pastoral care is a responsibility shared by Pastoral Associates, Pastoral Contacts, and members of the church staff, as well as by members and friends of the

congregation. Providing pastoral assistance is a responsibility shared primarily by members and friends of the congregation.

At a minimum, church members and friends may expect the following when they are involved in a pastoral situation:

- If an individual or family belongs to a small group, that individual or family can expect that other members of their small group (including the Pastoral Contact for that group) will offer pastoral care or pastoral assistance, as appropriate and as possible.
- All individuals and families can expect that a Pastoral Associate will offer pastoral care or pastoral assistance, as appropriate and as possible.
- All individuals and families can expect that whenever possible, the minister and other church staff will offer pastoral care (but not necessarily pastoral assistance), depending on (1) the seriousness of the pastoral situation and (2) the other duties and responsibilities that the minister and other church staff have at any give time.

Job Description for Pastoral Associates

Pastoral Associates are invited to serve by the minister. The two-year term begins on May 1 and is renewable once. Duties of Pastoral Associates are as follows:

- Attend the training session for new Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts.
- Attend additional training sessions for Pastoral Associates, Pastoral Contacts, and church staff which will be held three or four times each year.
- If you become aware of a pastoral situation, you should (1) provide emotional and spiritual support for the family or person experiencing a pastoral situation, as appropriate; and (2) inform the appropriate church staff members and the other Pastoral Associates via email or telephone or personal conversation. If the family or person experiencing a pastoral situation is part of a small group, you should inform the Pastoral Contact for that small group about the pastoral situation via email or telephone or personal conversation.
- Respond promptly (that is, within twenty-four hours) to requests made by the minister to provide pastoral care or pastoral assistance to members and friends of your small group. Your response should indicate either that you are willing and able to comply with the request by making contact within twenty-four hours, or that you are unable to comply with the request at the present time.
- Assist with the coordination of the Joys and Sorrows portion of Sunday morning worship services.

- Adhere to the Code of Ethics for Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts.

Job Description for Pastoral Contacts

Pastoral Contacts are invited to serve by the minister. Duties of Pastoral Contacts are as follows:

- Attend the training session for new Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts.
- Attend additional training sessions for Pastoral Associates, Pastoral Contacts, and church staff which will be held three or four times each year.
- If you become aware of a pastoral situation involving a family or person in your small group, you should (1) provide emotional and spiritual support for that person or family; (2) encourage other members of that small group (as appropriate) to provide emotional and spiritual support for that person or family; and (3) inform appropriate church staff members and the Pastoral Associates via email or telephone or personal conversation.
- If you become aware of a pastoral situation outside your small group, you should inform the appropriate church staff members and the Pastoral Associates via email or telephone or personal conversation.
- Respond promptly (that is, within twenty-four hours) to requests made by the minister to provide pastoral care or pastoral assistance to members and friends of First Unitarian Church. Your response should indicate either that you are willing and able to comply with the request by making contact within twenty-four hours, or that you are unable to comply with the request at the present time.
- Adhere to the Code of Ethics for Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts.

Job Description for Church Staff

The minister has principal responsibility for pastoral care for members and friends of First Unitarian Church. However, other members of the church staff are encouraged to assist with pastoral care, as appropriate and possible.

- Church staff members are encouraged to attend training sessions for Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts.
- If you become aware of a pastoral situation within the congregation, you may provide emotional and spiritual support for the family or person experiencing a pastoral situation, as appropriate; and you should inform the appropriate church staff members and the Pastoral Associates via email or telephone or personal conversation. If the family or person experiencing a pastoral situation is part of a

small group, you should inform the Pastoral Contact for that small group about the pastoral situation via email or telephone or personal conversation.

- Respond promptly (that is, within twenty-four hours) to requests made by the minister to provide pastoral care or pastoral assistance to members and friends of First Unitarian Church. Your response should indicate either that you are willing and able to comply with the request by making contact within twenty-four hours, or that you are unable to comply with the request at the present time.
- Adhere to your Code of Professional Ethics or to the Code of Ethics for Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts.

Code of Ethics for Pastoral Associates and Pastoral Contacts

- I will keep in mind that I am a visible representative of First Unitarian Church and I will ensure that my pastoral contacts with members and friends of the church will exemplify the religious and ethical principles of Unitarian Universalism.
- I will keep in mind that serving as a Pastoral Associate or Pastoral Contact is a privilege, not an entitlement.
- I will learn from members and friends of the church to whom I offer pastoral care what is to be kept confidential and what may be shared with others.
- I will not exploit my pastoral contacts with members and friends of the church for personal advantage or sexual gratification.
- I will be constantly aware of my own emotional, spiritual, and informational limits, and I will be willing to refer members and friends of First Unitarian Church to a church staff member or to an outside professional when I sense that I am approaching my limits.
- I will work as a cooperative, supportive, collaborative, and trusting member of a pastoral care team which includes Pastoral Associates, Pastoral Contacts, and church staff members.

Part II. Extensions of the Basic Pastoral Care Program

Referrals

Pastoral Associates, Pastoral Contacts, and church staff members are encouraged to make appropriate referrals using a list of referrals provided by the minister.

Emergency Contact Information

The Pastoral Associates and members of the church staff will seek to collect emergency contact information for all member and friends of the church (e.g., names, addresses, telephone numbers, and email addresses of next-of-kin such as children, parents, or other close relatives). Church staff, Pastoral Associates, and Pastoral Contacts will have access to this information, as appropriate.

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