

Overview of the Pastoral Visitor Program (PVP)

(Part of Adelphicare.org)

(Modified 14 February, 2025)

Background

Pastoral or Spiritual care?

A question often arises about whether it is more appropriate to use the term pastoral or spiritual in relation to care. A rough distinction is that spiritual carers focus more on spiritual development of the people in their care - those issues relating to the person's inner being, or what is most central to their life. For Christadelphians, this of course means that God and His Son are central to our life. Pastoral has a broader understanding. One definition refers to emotional, social and spiritual support. In this Program we use the term Pastoral because the work we are doing is to help many people, not only Christadelphians, who have a broad life-context. At the same time, there will be focus on spiritual aspects of inner life - a Christ-centred inner life.

A pastoral carer or a pastoral visitor? What is the difference?

In a formal sense, a pastoral carer has more comprehensive training than a pastoral visitor. If you were thinking of a continuum, it might consist of, at one end, a pastoral counsellor - someone who is trained in psychology and active counselling and listening. In the middle - a pastoral carer who is trained and experienced in the theory and practice of pastoral care, and at the other end, a pastoral visitor - someone who simply wants to be an effective friend and visitor who has basic training in aspects of listening and responding in pastoral/spiritual situations. It is this latter category that is central to this program.

Aim of this Program

- To assist participants in developing a greater awareness of spirituality in their personal life.
- To provide basic training in pastoral/spiritual work suitable for people who wish to simply become more effective carers when they visit people.
- To assist people care in a variety of situations but focussing initially on older people.
- This content is predicated on the principle that there is a minimum of fundamental aspects of pastoral care that should be developed by all pastoral visitors.

Scope

- Carers anywhere will be welcome.
- Eventually, there may be Cohorts in ecclesias or Cohorts in other entities such as Women at the Well.
- All Christian participants will always be very welcome.
- To ensure as much flexibility as possible, there is no timeline for development and offering of the Program although it is expected that participants will try to complete it within a reasonable timeframe.

Mode of delivery. Flexibility

Model A

- Video sessions (Zoom app) or face-to-face where practicable.

- **In this model**, there will be one, one hour introductory, explanatory session followed by six, 1.5 hour workshop sessions arranged with participants at suitable times.

Model B

- This involves the Program being offered almost entirely **online**. This will involve participants preparing answers to questions based on the Handbook notes and submitting them online.
- **However**, the editorial team is adamant that there will be at least two occasions where participants in this Model will have personal interaction with a tutor on a one-to-one basis or in small groups as suitably arranged.

Model C

- In this Model, participants may mix Models A and B as necessary. For example, due to personal circumstances a participant may not be able to attend a Workshop session. In this case, he or she may complete the online element of the Session.

Our request

The Editorial Team firmly believes that participant interaction is vital in developing expertise in pastoral/spiritual understandings and abilities so we would encourage all participants to engage in Workshop sessions as much as is possible. For this reason, we have stipulated that in order to complete the Program, each participant will have had at least two interactions with tutors or workshop involvement.

- In Model A, sessions will usually include no more than 10 minutes of leader presentation. The remainder of the time will emphasise discussion by participants based on guided reading and prepared questions.
- A Pastoral Visitor Program Handbook is available electronically for participants. It can be downloaded from the following URL:
<https://www.adelphicare.org/visitor/resources/Pastoral-Visitor-Program-Handbook.pdf>
- A key element of delivery is **flexibility**. The structure is six modules. These have been developed so that they might be delivered in a variety of ways as long as the content is covered.
- For participants in the online mode of delivery (Model B) there will be questions online based on the Module notes provided in the Handbook.
- However, participants involved on the online mode will still be required to have personal contact with a tutor for approximately two single hours at a mutually convenient time(s). This contact will normally occur at the beginning and towards the end of the course. The mode of contact will be through the Zoom app – audio, or video and audio.
- For others, as there are no written assignments (apart from the Conversation Project – Module 6) considerable emphasis is based on interaction between participants within workshops.
- The Program has been developed to enable maximum flexibility of delivery - guided reading, discussion. The notional 1.5 hour workshop is the basis.
- There can be flexible hours of delivery according to a local Cohort's preference and availability. E.g. daytime (for retirees) after work for younger – working people, 3 weekends of 4 hours, evenings for working people.
- A major aspect of this Program is that it is assumed that people interested already have visiting abilities and that they are participating because they wish to hone them a bit more. **For this reason, preparation prior to each Workshop through reading and thinking is a vital element of a person's involvement.**
- The Zoom video app will be used because it has no costs attached to it and it is relatively simple to use. There will not be screening of videos during a workshop and other aids, viz. e-slides, will be kept to a minimum.

Content

- Introductory session - Outlining the program and participation requirements.

- Module 1 – What is pastoral care and pastoral visiting?
- Module 2 – Basic caring: communication.
- Module 3 – Loss and grief: suffering and death.
- Module 4 – Ageing and aged care.
- Module 5 – Health issues in aged care.
- Module 6 – Project: Conversation with an older person.

Assessment

Completion

- At the successful completion of the whole program, a participant will be awarded a Certificate of Completion.
- Assessment will involve successful participation in each of the six workshop sessions, or completion of the six Modules online, or tutorials, or a mixture.
- Preferably, the six sessions would be part of the same group but if a participant misses one or more sessions in a particular group, he or she may participate in a similar session in a later group or complete the Module online.
- Practical experience by participants is vital (Module 6).
- One way of doing this might be for a participant to work with a spiritual care coordinator in an aged care home to link with an older person, have one visit (15 minutes), explore the person's spirituality and then complete a verbatim account of the visit. This could then be the subject of discussion between a participant and team leader and group in the final session.
- Another possibility is for the participant to record verbatim a visit with any of their older friends and discuss this as above.
- In either case, the participant will need to seek permission from the older person for the visit.
- Please note that the conversation is not to be audio or video recorded.

Requirements of participants

- A commitment to spiritual care.
- A commitment to attending and participating in workshops or completing the Program online.
- Preparing for each workshop by reading the recommended articles and giving thought to the questions provided. These will be discussed in workshops or with tutors.
- Workshop leaders will invite participants to answer the questions on a rotational basis during the workshop.
- Each Cohort for Model A of the program will consist of a maximum of six participants.
- At the successful completion of the Program, if the Cohort has been arranged by a spiritual care coordinator, each participant would be required to volunteer to be a Pastoral Visitor at the aged care home where their training was arranged for a period of six months.
- Participants would be required to register as volunteers with the aged care home with which they are associated. (This is a local requirement.)

Personnel

Leaders. These will be qualified and experienced carers. On occasions, the discourse may be provided by suitable people with outstanding qualifications or expertise in a special field.

Costs. There will be no cost associated with the Program.

General

- Participants might come from any location even from within one group. (Video delivery.)

- It is envisaged that initially, participants will largely come from recommendations made by spiritual care coordinators in various Christadelphian Homes. One of the principles of this program is that we are trying to increase the number of volunteer pastoral visitors in each home.

Administration of the Program

- The Association of Australian Christadelphian Ecclesias (AACE) hosts the Program. One of the objectives of the Association is
To foster a support network to assist within a Scriptural framework, brothers and sisters and associated young people who may be experiencing difficult personal situations, supplementary to the caring services provided by ecclesias and other Christadelphian organisations.
- It is within this broad umbrella that the Pastoral Visitor Program is conducted and in association with Adelphicare.org, also an entity of the AACE. Participants would be awarded a Certificate of Completion at the successful completion of the Program.
- As much Australia-wide involvement as possible is sought in contributing as leaders and participants in the Program.

Variations

- The premise for the above development is that interested and motivated people can gain a basic understanding of pastoral visiting and care.
- There may be some people who prefer to complete just one or two workshops of particular interest to them.
- The offering of a special interest session can be made from time to time as either a video meeting (Webinar) or face-to-face.
- The special offering would have the title associated with the session, e.g. Coping with Cancer.
- The principles of offering would be the same – presentation and interaction.
- Those attending will be offered a Statement of Attendance when the session has finished. There would be no assessment as required in the full PVP because it may not be possible for all participants to participate in discussion.
- Sessions will be advertised through the Adelphicare Newsletter.

