

St. Anne's Church

Guidelines for Pastoral Visitors & those undertaking Holy Communions **(or Code of Conduct for visiting vulnerable adults (Lay Visitors & Ministers of Communion)**

Guidance for those undertaking pastoral ministry or those taking Home Communion to vulnerable adults. Such activities should be undertaken within these set of guidelines. Following these guidelines should not only protect vulnerable people but also ensure that workers are not wrongly accused of abuse or misconduct.

Your relationships

Exercising any kind of ministry involves developing an understanding of yourself and how you relate to others, how you increase the well-being of others and how you ensure your own well being and safety. In a position of trust you are expected to respect professional boundaries. Many pastoral relationships can become intertwined with friendships and social contacts, making this guidance even more necessary.

- Exercise particular care when ministering to persons with whom you have a close personal friendship or family relationship.
- Be aware of the dangers of dependency in pastoral and professional relationships and seek advice or supervision when these concerns arise.
- Recognize your limits and do not undertake any ministry that is beyond your competence or role (e.g. counselling). In such instances the person should be referred to a person or agency with appropriate expertise.
- Avoid behaviour that could give the impression of inappropriate favouritism or the encouragement of inappropriate special relationships.
- Pastoral relationships may develop into romantic attachments and such situations should be handled sensitively. You need to recognize such a development and make it clear to both the person concerned and a supervisor or colleague. Alternative arrangements should be made for the ongoing pastoral care of the person concerned.
- Do not undertake any pastoral ministry while you are under the influence of drink or nonprescribed drugs.

Your conversations with people

Formal or informal conversations in a ministry context are pastoral encounters. You should be aware of your language and behaviour. For example, innuendoes or compliments of a sexual nature are always inappropriate. You should consider in advance:

- the place of the meeting, arrangement of the furniture and lighting, and your dress;
- The balance of privacy for conversation with the opportunity for supervision (open doors, another person nearby);
- the physical distance between people determined by hospitality and respect, being aware that someone may have suffered abuse or harassment in the past;
- the propriety or danger of visiting or being visited alone, especially in the evening;
- the personal safety and comfort of all participants;
- establishing at the outset the nature of the interview in respect to subject matter, confidentiality and duration;
- the appropriateness of initiating or receiving any physical contact, for example gestures of comfort, which may be unwanted or misinterpreted.

Record keeping and privacy

- Consider keeping a record of pastoral encounters to include date, time, place, subject and actions to be taken.
- Any record should be factual and avoid rumour or opinion.