

# Other categories

## Staff

We anticipate staff will be active Life Group members and will benefit from the support of their group. They are encouraged to form accountability relationships (GAP groups, mentoring or other provision appropriate to their situation) where they can meet on a regular basis to talk and pray about their ministry and their own spiritual lives. The Administrator is primarily responsible for the on-the-job pastoral wellbeing of staff in Forefront Centre.

## Leaders of Life Groups and teams

Forefront organises all who exercise leadership in the church in teams of various kinds, and we intend those teams to provide ministry-related pastoral support to one another. In addition, we seek to provide opportunities for Life Group leaders to gather from time to time, and for similar ministry leader meetings, for discussion, prayer and fellowship. The Leadership team aims to connect with overseers of various teams at its regular meetings.

## Former members

People who leave the area often maintain contact, especially where they were in Life Groups. The Leadership will provide a confidential reference to the person's new church, on request. Those who have left to become **students** at University are still considered part of church life. The church office team will send them cards on a termly basis for their first year away as they settle into new spiritual homes.

## Missionaries

Those with whom we have a formal relationship are contacted primarily by the Missions Prayer Group, who organise a monthly prayer meeting. Where a missionary has no organisational support structure, the Leadership will keep in regular contact to offer a listening ear and counselling. Life Groups are exhorted to "adopt" one or more missionaries to provide stronger, more regular contact.

We aim to meet the practical and financial needs of people outside the church through our work at Forefront Centre. Members are discouraged from providing personal financial support to visitors in church or those they meet through their ministries. Please contact Forefront Leadership if a significant need emerges.

# Pastoral Care



Spiritual leaders of the church have overall responsibility for pastoral care (Acts 20:28). All members have a part to play. Some are specially gifted (1 Cor 12:4-7) but all should show care—listening and sharing, visiting the sick and lonely, providing practical help and meals at times of need, following up on those we have not seen recently and, especially, praying with people. Some may be invited to offer mentoring to those who have expressed a desire for it.

The nature of care varies depending on where people are on the faith journey, from fully-integrated members to others outside but in our networks. This leaflet seeks to identify categories who might need support, and those who can provide it. More information will be provided to members in identified care-giving roles.

The first point of contact for members seeking support will be Life Group leaders or Church leadership. Church office staff are trained to make appropriate referrals for members and those in the community.

The word "pastor" comes from a root word which means "shepherd". God, our chief shepherd, cares for his people and wants us to care for one another. Pastors seek a healthy and mature flock—spiritually, physically and emotionally. Pastoring includes friendship, practical aid, general and confidential prayer, visiting and informal counselling—all conducted in obedience to the command to love God and love our neighbour (Mark 12:30-31). We must also be ready to "speak the truth in love" so that damaging influences do not come into church life. The goal is a healthy church, Christians who function well and contribute meaningfully, and the witness of a loving community to the world.

Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

1 Peter 5:2-4

## Life Groups

Forefront wants all members to be in Life Groups. This is the best way to create “family” and enable us all to share joys, burdens and hope. Group leaders ensure pastoral care happens, but different members will provide support to one another as needed.

*Life Groups encourage members to:*

- share openly and pray, regularly and specifically, for members' needs;
- participate in “GAP groups”, where a few people meet to pray, support and keep one another accountable;
- keep in regular contact with each other outside of meetings;
- take the lead in coordinating practical help at specific times (births, deaths, sickness, and other personal crisis);
- follow up those who aren't attending the group or other fellowship;
- extend care to others with links to the group, such as missionaries, students, former members and other contacts;
- speak the truth to one another in love;
- be open to share honestly and receive advice on decisions they make.

## Children and youth

Parents are responsible for the care of their children to adulthood, but the church “extended family” will support parents, offer assistance and advice, and establish structures that help young people to develop through childhood and teenage years.

We provide structured meetings in a safe and welcoming environment for young people of all ages, and include time for children to share and pray together in an age-appropriate way.

Leaders make time to speak to young people regularly, follow up on absenteeism and problems, and organise mentoring relationships where that is helpful. All involved in children's and youth work agree to refer any safeguarding concerns immediately to Forefront's safeguarding coordinators.

We provide regular opportunities for church members to pray for children and their groups, and seek ways to encourage the active participation of young people in church life.

## Newcomers

The primary point of contact for “drop-in” visitors on a Sunday morning is our Welcome and Connect team. A friendly and enthusiastic greeting for visitors and seekers is a vital first point of pastoral care. The team welcomes all newcomers, steering them to sit with a regular congregation member and trying to discern what brought them. Where further contact is wanted, members inform the Leadership.

Those interested in joining are visited by members of the Leadership team, who seek to get to know them and help them make an informed decision. New members are then encouraged to join a Life Group, with seekers directed to an Alpha course.

Where someone from another church wishes to become a member of Forefront, we try to contact their previous church to better understand the situation they are leaving and any giftings they showed.

Members who meet non-church people through Forefront Centre or other ministries provide pastoral support, visits and prayer on a discretionary basis. We urge members not to visit alone or put themselves in any situation where they may be at risk.

## Members in crisis

Leadership, staff and Life Groups will all mobilise when members are hospitalised, housebound or in distress. Other members will be informed and encouraged to provide support where they have gifting and capacity.

While the church does not retain funds to support individual members' financial needs, where requested we alert members through a prayer chain. Through Forefront Centre we have access to Citizen's Advice, Lord's Larder and other lines of support. The church Administrator has contact with hospital chaplains and will invite them to support our members.

Those members who struggle to attend Life Groups obviously still receive support *in extremis*. In addition, we will respond positively to requests for visits. The Sunday prayer team are available for all members who seek prayer for pastoral prayer needs.

We will aim to contact any church member (in a Life Group or not) who is unable to attend meetings and may be in need of support.

Forefront is committed to being a safe place for children and all who may be vulnerable. We encourage everyone to read our Safeguarding Policy. Those working with children and youth are required to complete DBS checks.