PASTORAL CARE

GOAL
To have the ability to provide appropriate pastoral care for the adolescent and their family.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
After completing this module, participants will be able to:

a
i give a definition of pastoral care
ii identify their personal strengths and weaknesses
iii identify pastoral needs in their local setting
iv describe different ways pastoral care happens

b develop their own model of pastoral care arising out of the models they have examined taking into account their own strength and limitations

c model ways of caring which are empowering to others

CONTENTS

Continued on next page
## WHAT TO DO

### Step One  
**Pastoral Care - what is it?**  
**3 hours**

1. Write a paragraph explaining what you understand by the term "pastoral care".
2. Read the resource material on pages 18-22 entitled "Meeting on the Road: Pastoral care of the individual".
3. Talk to at least three different people, who are already involved in pastoral care, about their role and what they understand "pastoral care" to mean. Try to choose people working in a variety of situations. Make some notes about their responses for your own information.
4. **The Isaiah Exercise**  

   "The spirit of the Lord has sent me to bring good news to the humble, to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and release to those in prison to comfort all who mourn ... to give them garlands instead of ashes ..."

Using the Blank Worksheet on page 7, apply the words from Isaiah above to this time in history and identify such issues within your life experience. (Look at the worked example given on page 6 as a guide).

Use examples from your own life, or of people you know, when you prepare your response. It is important that this exercise is grounded in your experience and not just theoretical. In the interests of privacy and confidentiality record only people's initials.

### Step Two  
**Identifying your personal strengths and weaknesses**  
**4 hours**

5. Read the resource material on page 8.
6. Recall an experience when you needed personal support. Prepare a summary of the experience using the following headings:
   a. how did you let people know you needed help
   b. who was available to help you
   c. what sort of help did you want
   d. what sort of help did you get
   e. your feelings about the whole experience

7. Read the example "Pastoral Care - Hospital Visit" on page 11
   a. Using the format on page 10 as a guide.
      i. write up in full three situations in which you have offered pastoral care. In each case focus on your role in the situation rather than the role of the person who needed help. Again, be careful to guard confidentiality.
      ii. talk with your mentor to evaluate the care provided in each case. We seldom get it right all the time. Looking back are there things you missed and things you could have done differently.
      iii. include the mentor's comments with your report
8. make an inventory of the gifts and talents you already have in pastoral care - list everything from cake baking to courses that you have been on.

9. Being out of our depth in ministry is a normal situation. It helps us to rely on God's strength and also to realise that we are just one member of a body and are not expected or required to be able to do everything ourselves. Prepare a summary of a personal experience using the following questions as a framework.
   a. recall a time when you have felt out of your depth when caring for others
   b. in what way was the situation beyond you at the time
   c. what did you do
   d. reflecting back now, what might you have done differently.

10. Make a list of the community agencies you are most likely to need to use for referral in your situation. Talk over this list with the experienced carers in your faith community. Know how to make contact with these agencies.

N.B. This list needs to be updated regularly to maintain its usefulness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step Three</th>
<th>Caring in Community</th>
<th>2 hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>There are resources in the community around you that will add to your strengths in pastoral care.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>a. What pastoral care does your faith community offer? Make a list.</td>
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<td>b. Add to your list from Step Two, Question 10 any other people/agencies that are known for providing care in your local community?</td>
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<tr>
<th>Step Four</th>
<th>Family Structure in Aotearoa New Zealand</th>
<th>4 hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Most young people grow up in families. Within these families there may be a wide variety of structures and ways of relating to each other. A young person cannot be cared for in isolation from their family.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Describe the family in which you grew up. You may need to consider:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>i. number of siblings and their order by age</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ii. parents / grandparents / others who lived in your home</td>
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<td>iii. other family members who had a significant influence on you growing up</td>
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<td>iv. places you lived</td>
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<td></td>
<td>v. other events/circumstances that influenced your family</td>
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<td></td>
<td>vi. what family traditions exist?</td>
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<td>vii. what traditions have changed over time?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>viii. how does your family express/deal with conflict?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ix. what values are important in your family?</td>
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Below is the example of my family description:

**SIBLINGS**
I am the youngest of three girls. I grew up in a home where my father worked full time and my mother worked part time when we had left primary school. My mother is Australian by birth and all her family still live there and my father had only one brother who was killed as a young man. Consequently we had no cousins, auntsies, uncles etc in New Zealand. My paternal grandfather died when I was very young so the only extended family I had on a nearby basis was my grandmother and her network of family i.e. my great uncles and aunts and 2nd cousins. I lived in one town for all of my childhood until I left home to study. My parents still live there.

My sisters are 3 and 5 years older than me but 4 and 6 years ahead in schooling because of the timing of our birthdays. By the time I reached my second year at high school they had left home to study and so I spent my teenage years largely at the only young person at home. They both went overseas in their early 20s and have not returned to New Zealand, except for vacations, so we have had to work to get to know each other as adult siblings when we only see each other once every 1-2 years.

**TRADITIONS**
My mother wrote home to her mother once a week, every week and when we left home she extended her letter writing to include her daughters. We were not so good at replying and as toll calls have become cheaper and more common place, she has now substituted the weekly letter with a regular phone call. The contact between the sisters is regular too but less frequent. We are a family that talks easily with one another.

On a family member's birthday, the birthday person can expect to hear from each member of the family and because the family is small, even with the addition of husbands and children, we still exchange gifts at birthdays and Christmas.

Attending church together was part of all our growing up experience. I am now the only child that still adheres to that tradition and still attend the church I grew up in when visiting my parents. Various members of that church were very influential in my adolescent years because they were family friends as well.

Inviting guests for meals was our main way of celebrating special events or just celebrating friendships. We rarely ate out. This has changed over time.

A Sunday afternoon trip to the beach was a regular event, collecting my grandmother along the way. Summer time meant swimming and winter for walking. An ice cream was part of the deal no matter what the season.

**VALUES**
Our family values working together to achieve things and now when we gather as adults we would expect to all share in tasks at hand.

We have always been encouraged by our parents and knew that they were proud of us.

A network of friends of all ages was cultivated by my parents and we children were included in many social events. We all now have good networks with a similar wide age range in our own settings. We were encouraged to be independent in our thinking and our actions as emerging adults having been provided with a good background of education and social skills.

**DEALING WITH CONFLICT**
We happen to be a group of people with fairly even temperaments so there wasn't a lot of conflict in our family. Avoiding issues was perhaps more common than confronting them.

13. Interview someone you know well, whose family situation is different from yours. Describe their family using the guidelines as for Question 12.

14. Complete a mind map similar to that on page 9, using key phrases or words, to
15. Many of the young people you work with will have family structures and ways of relating different from yours. The way you do things and the things your family values is not the only approach and it’s not the "right" way for every family.

Choose two substantial differences that you have highlighted on your mind map.
  a. Describe how the differences may affect your attitude towards, and relationship with, the members of that other family. (approx. 200 words for each difference).
  b. Discuss your findings from part 15(a) above with your mentor.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Step Five</th>
<th>Working on Your Model of Pastoral Care</th>
<th>5 hours</th>
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16. This is where understanding of the topic and your individual ministry situation come together!!
  a. Read the resource material beginning on page 13 entitled "Models for Ministry".
  b. Identify and list three important elements for each model.
  c. Think about the circumstances of each young person and their family that you work with. (At least 6 young people). - What needs are being presented and what options for care are available?
  d. Keeping in mind your gifts and talents and the needs of the young people you work with, and their families, your faith community the material you have read about Pastoral Care write 500 words defining Pastoral Care, your role as a pastoral carer and identify practical ways of putting Pastoral Care into action in your setting.

*Remember:* Pastoral Care is not just the work of an individual. It takes place within a community of carers. Carers do not act alone!
# Isaiah Exercise Worksheet

## Worked Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>the humble who are the humble in our society?</strong></th>
<th><strong>examples from my experience</strong></th>
<th><strong>Find examples from the Bible that bring good news for this situation</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J is a 13 year old, overweight teenager, good-natured and quiet. Often teased for being fat.</td>
<td>God chose David (a humble shepherd) to be king Psalm 139. God loves us unconditionally Jesus' preference for the weak and socially unacceptable</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>the broken hearted what things afflict people and break their hearts today?</strong></th>
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| **the captives and those in prison what things trap, oppress or imprison people today?** | **M is a 15 year old who finds herself doing and saying things just because her peer group are doing them e.g. smoking, shoplifting** | **Zaccheaus - never too late to begin again John 14 : 26 Jesus' spirit is with us always** |

| **those whose lives have turned to ashes what are some of the situations of personal ruin which leave people's lives in ashes?** | **Zaccheaus - never too late to begin again John 14 : 26 Jesus' spirit is with us always** |                                                                   |
## Isaiah Exercise Worksheet

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Pastoral Care ....

Is a service which strives to support people in their everyday lives, helping them to look at their spirituality and how it is interwoven throughout their lives. Pastoral Care promotes healing and well being in both people’s living and dying. It can involve support, companionship and providing a safe space where people can look at issues of inner meaning, where people are often trying to make sense of uncertainty, fear, love, life and death. It usually involves issues of personal spirituality and may involve issues relating to religion (community expression of personal spirituality).

Source: CARA – a church agency in London working with HIV/AIDS

### What is Pastoral Care?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Support</strong></th>
<th><strong>Interconnectedness</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living and Dying</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>Mutuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interwoven</td>
<td>Aloneness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>Inner Meaning</td>
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<td>Well-being</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
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<td>Safe Space</td>
<td>Honouring Themselves</td>
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<td>Companionship</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Freedom (Inner And Outer)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dignity</td>
<td>Rebirth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wholeness</td>
<td>Significant Chaos</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reverence of People</td>
<td>Uncertainty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sacred Space</td>
<td>Fear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Annihilation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journey</td>
<td>Tragedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Love</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>Belief</td>
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Large – only in touch with a few members. No contact with some for many years.

Holidays spent traveling and camping

Small in number – keep in touch with everyone regularly

Holidays at home, working on the farm

Financially comfortable with money for educational and extra curricular activities

Father very strict and authoritarian

Because of family size little money available for children beyond necessities

Easy going relationship between parents and children

Children expected to contribute to work on the farm. Felt like they had to escape to gain independence.

Children encouraged to seek independence and leave home
Format for writing up Pastoral Care Visits

Age and gender of person visited:
Date of visit:
Duration of visit:

Reason for writing up visit:
When/why was visit made?

How did you feel?

What did you see?

What was your role and your goal? (these are different)

Relay conversation as well as you can remember it.
Always try to remember how you began and how you concluded the visit.

EVALUATION:
What were your strengths?

In retrospect what would you have done differently?

What pastoral issues did you identify?

What follow up do you propose?

Role and goal – were these fulfilled?
Pastoral Care – Hospital Visit

Verbatim No. 20: August 1988

Liz Cook

Patient: Mrs T. aged 25, married
Ward: 9B
Race: European
Denomination: Nil stated
Date of visit: 18.8.88
Duration of visit: 7 – 10 mins.

Verbatim written as it was my first day on this ward and this young lass will probably be seen again. I thought it would be helpful to write down some of the things that were said, firstly because it would be wise to remember them for the future and it’s easier if they are written down, and secondly because there were probably other responses I could have made which if discussed in supervision would be helpful in the future.

VISIT:
Made after lunch, on my own, having been introduced to the ward in the morning for the first time.

HOW DID I FEEL?
I had expected to feel apprehensive, but in fact this was not so. This visit had been preceded by an introduction to the ward, which had been encouraging (and a great deal of prayer). I knew Nancy, the ward sister, and felt welcome.

WHAT DID I OBSERVE?
This was a 6-bedded room empty apart from a young lass with a woollen cap on, and a cleaner with a heavy-duty polisher who was moving beds etc. Mrs T. was sitting on a bed – somewhat stranded in the middle of the room.

ROLE/GOALS
My role was in pastoral ministry to listen and encourage and I had a goal for this day to ensure I didn’t get sidetracked away from the patient (i.e. into all the externals).

The whole of the following conversation was conducted with the accompaniment of the floor polisher and the bed being moved from one end of the ward to the other.

V.1 Hello, you seem to be in solitary splendour here.
T.1 Yes I am (she was friendly and bright)
V.2 I’m Liz from the Chaplaincy Department.
T.2 I’m K.T. - pleased to meet you. You’ve probably just caught me - I’m hoping to go home this afternoon.
V.3 That’s great - did you expect that?
T.3 Well I came in last night by ambulance because I'd had 2 seizures, but they were really mild, so I've had a chest x-ray and once they've seen that I'm off - I hope.

V.4 How are you feeling now?

T.4 Fine, absolutely fine - I'm not about to pop off yet - I've got too much to live for. I must admit I got a bit of a shock with these seizures - they didn't tell me it would happen. I had a really lucky escape the first time - I had just driven my little boy home and I got out of the car feeling terrible. I managed to get indoors and phone my husband and that's all I remember. So I figure God was looking after me. He didn't want me to get killed and he got me safely home, so it's not my time yet.

V.5 Obviously not - you certainly seem to be on top of the situation.

T.6 I am (she was absolutely definite). This cancer I've got was found when I had a small lump in my neck checked out last April - they found I had as many as 12 small tumours in my lungs, and now there are two in my brain which cause these fits, but I'm going to fight it all the way. I know I shouldn't say that what has happened in the last two months is good, but if I say it was good for me you'll understand. I lost my father and my grandmother, and I stopped feeling sorry for myself because you see my mum lost her mother and her husband and now she's worrying about me - so I have got to get well. It's as simple as that-

V.6 I really admire your spirit and I agree with the power of thinking positively (she looked pleased and we discussed exercises in creative visualisation for a while).

T.7 I am convinced God is looking after me - there have been too many miraculous circumstances for Him not to be.

At this point her husband and little two-year-old came in - her husband has had to give up his job, as she can no longer be alone with the little boy. He was a fine looking guy who had obviously taken a great deal of trouble dressing up the little fellow. I introduced myself to them both and then left.

Evaluation

STRENGTHS
Good relationship established
Points of interest shared
Able to affirm her positive attitude

WHAT WOULD I HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?
Asked Mrs T. if she felt able to walk to the day room - away from the polisher and the noise.
Encouraged her to identify her beliefs a little more.
PASTORAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED?
Fear – this was not expressed

Determination and a total lack of self pity

Grief – re losses in family etc.

FOLLOW UP
She was going home and there was no named church – decided to write up facts as she will probably be in again.

ROLE/GOALS
I felt these were fairly well fulfilled - I resisted the temptation to shift the conversation to her mother.

MODELS FOR MINISTRY
If Pastoral Care is more a matter of shared belief than professional competence, what beliefs about God underlie the pastoral task and what models for pastoral ministry and leadership do they give rise to?

Most of us work to more than one model, depending on what pastoral situation we are involved in, whether it is, for example pastoral care within a congregation or some form of outreach work in our local area. But, for the sake of clarity, let us divide these models into two sorts: the incarnational or sacramental, and the redemptive.

THE INCARNATIONAL AND SACRAMENTAL MODEL
God is present, potentially at least, in all that he has created and in all people who are made in his image. The Church and its worship is the sign and sacrament of God’s presence in the world but his presence is not confined to the Church. The Church fulfils its nature as the sacrament of God’s presence by pointing to his presence and celebrating it in all its human manifestations, individual and corporate. There are two ways of apprehending this presence: The open and revealed way of public worship and the hidden way of pastoral ministry and intercession. The images of Christ which often most motivate pastoral activity in this model are that of the Christ of Nazareth – the helpless baby or the hidden Christ; and the suffering Christ of the cross – the victim.

This model has inspired some of the best examples of Christian service. In our own day, one thinks especially of the hospice movement and the work inspired Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The daily prayer of Mother Teresa begins:

Dearest Lord, may I see you today and every day in the person of the sick, and whilst nursing them minister unto you. Though you hide yourself behind the unattractive disguise of the irritable, the exacting, the unreasonable, may I still recognise you and say: ‘Jesus, my patient, how sweet it is to serve you.’

The heart of such work is identification with the hidden Christ who is already present. The work needs no further justification. The work we know about, like Mother Teresa’s, is itself
a sign, a sacrament, pointing to the presence of God in a myriad of unknown acts in response to human need, among believers and non-believers alike.

The work of a Mother Teresa is one of the greatest contemporary witnesses to the Christian gospel, undertaken as the result of a special call and gift from God. But how does the model work for those of us without such a special call, working in parishes as part of the ordained ministry? Here, I think, we can see dangers.

First, it does not help us to order our pastoral priorities, except by tilting them in the direction of response to human need. We cannot do everything. How do we give priority to one call for help over another, given that they are both manifestations of Christ’s hidden presence in human suffering? Perhaps the question betrays a need to keep control, when, as Mother Teresa’s own life shows, great things happen when we lose control (she was already doing a good job within a teaching order when she received the call to care for the dying). One the other hand, the feeling of being pulled in too many directions at the same time is less of a help than a hindrance.

Secondly, the model encourages a sharp distinction between pastoral care and other aspects of the Church’s mission, like evangelism. When someone says, ‘I’m more of a pastor than evangelist,’ we know exactly what they mean. Many Christians, lay and ordained, find themselves torn between the call to be responsive to human need and therefore to identify with and get alongside others, and call to evangelise others, which they see as an act of persuasion which is in some ways incompatible with such identification. (I shall argue elsewhere that the two activities are actually closer than they look.) Many aspects of pastoral care entail the underlying assumption of some kind of authority, spiritual or professional, whilst on the other hand, evangelism carried out without regard for pastoral priorities often becomes a form of spiritual tyranny. At this point it is sufficient to say that the model allows a split to occur between the hidden and suffering Christ known in pastoral encounters and the Risen Christ, the Lord of the Church, proclaimed in evangelism.

Thirdly, whilst the model acknowledges that God can be disclosed in many spheres of human life in which he is not directly named, it does not recognise the dynamic character of this presence. This is bound to be the case if God is pictured only as helpless victim or suffering love. It does not sufficiently take into account that, according to Jewish and Christian belief, creation itself is moving towards an end under the guiding providence of God. This leaves room for two contrary stances in regard to pastoral activity: one of inaction, where we simply ‘baptise’ and celebrate as the Church what other people and other institutions do; or one of intense engagement in various issues and problems alongside others, combined with an uncritical acceptance of their goals and objectives, professional or political. Chaplains working in the armed services, hospitals, industry and schools will have a particularly acute sense of what I mean.

**THE REDEMPTIVE MODEL**

The incarnational model is more likely to influence us the further we move away from the boundaries of church life. The redemptive model is likely to become prominent the more we think about pastoral care within and around church congregations, because it conveys a sense of the Church as the saved community, the locus and agent of God’s presence.

Often, in this model, the world is perceived as an evil place. Human philosophies, institutions and individual lives all lie under divine judgement. Social life in general, and individual lives in particular, are so corrupted that they convey little or no sign of the
presence of God, nor of humankind as made in his image. Thus, even the highest forms of human thought and action are potentially evil or misleading if they are not balanced or completed by an open acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty. Referring back to Mother Teresa, I have heard her work criticised by some Christians for being unchristian, because it did not include the active proselytising of the dying. What did comfort in their dying hours or minutes matter in comparison with their eternal destination, which, in these critics’ opinion, depended on an open acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour?

The differences from the previous model could not be put more starkly. There is no sense, in this criticism, that Christ may be met in the dying, that an act of care may be worthy in itself, nor of any claim to respect that the dying may have as those going through the same experience as Christ. Christ died and rose again in a once-for-all attempt to rescue fallen humanity. Now he can be met only as the proclaimed Christ, the Risen Christ of the Church.

Of course, such opinions are not usually expressed in such an extreme form. Nor do they preclude real pastoral involvement and concern. Many of the great attempts to ameliorate the social conditions of the urban poor in the nineteenth century were undertaken by people who were convinced that ignorance, poverty and vice endangered the victims’ eternal souls. Social reformers motivated by such opinions were willing to venture into situations which those with perhaps more liberal opinions or a more complacent faith were content to leave alone. Often their work of saving souls involved them in confrontation with powerful blocks of vested interest – the brewers, for example, in the case of the anti-drink crusades, or factory owners, in the case of those who worked for the reduction of factory hours and the observance of Sunday as a day of rest. But, as these examples show, where the redemptive model is strong, the expression of pastoral activity is likely to be one of conflict rather than identification. Engagement with the world beyond the believing community is seen more in terms of the unmasking of evils rather than the disclosure of what is good.

The redemptive model has great strengths. In particular it has a strong sense of the dynamic power of God, of the need for no other justification for pastoral action other than faith, and of working towards the fulfilment of a greater vision. But equally, these strengths are often the source of dangerous distortions.

First, there is a tendency to look on all types of pastoral activity either as a form of pre-evangelism, in the case of work among those outside the church, or as a means of maintaining conformity among the members within it. The value of pastoral activity itself as an expression of the nature of the Church and its mission is weakened by its subservience to the primary task of evangelism. A sermon as the price for a bed for the night, a prayer as the price for attention, is a phenomenon called in some parts of the world ‘rice Christianity’. Usually it is not as crude as that; but pastoral work and attempts to establish pastoral contact are often undermined by the sense that they hide an ulterior motive.

Secondly, this approach leaves little room for hints and guesses. Pastoral work is undertaken as a result of what we know and what we can give, not of what we may find out or receive. Nor does this approach leave much room for genuine disagreement. If little or no status is given to the person to be helped and the answers they give to their situation, there is no room either for genuine dialogue. This in turn has the effect of undermining the genuineness of some forms of contact. How much room for real dialogue, for example, is allowed in the Christian counselling programmes offered by some churches, and how much for outright persuasion?
Thirdly, whereas the fault of the first model is often to ignore altogether the issue of authority in pastoral contact, in the redemptive model the authority given to pastoral leaders is often too great, and untested. Because there is little expectation of finding God at work in the world outside the community of the redeemed, and no value is given to voices other than those within that community, there is little to balance their power, which is often further enhanced by very authoritarian images and language about God himself. As a chaplain I came across churches proselytising among students, in which members were set to watch over each other in a system of pastoral supervision, sometimes referred to as ‘heavy shepherding’. These churches made a deliberate attempt to cut off the recently converted from any source of support, advice and authority outside the church’s own system of leadership. Most Christians would recognise this as a form of spiritual tyranny undermining the true nature of the Church as a pastoral community. But there is logic in the position once the saved community becomes identified as the only locus and agent of God’s gracious activity.

It is important to be aware of what models are actually in operation in a particular context. If someone is asking for help on one level while the pastor is attempting to provide an answer at another, the pastor’s intervention is unlikely to be regarded as helpful. Often there has to be some negotiation about the models before a real pastoral exchange can begin.

The two issues about which people working according to these two models disagree most frequently are the relationship between evangelism and pastoral ministry in the mission of the Church, and the issue of authority. This difference arises from deeper differences about how the presence of God is apprehended in the world and in the community of believers. Is there a way of bringing the two ways together in a model which recognises that the Church is God’s agent and instrument of redemption as well as the sacrament of his presence in the world, but which also recognises that God cannot be contained by the Church, and that his activity is not defined only by its ministry? Is there room for a third model for ministry, one which may have a special relevance for modern conditions?

**The Wilderness Model**

Carlo Carretto wrote a book called *The Desert in the City* – a title which refers at once to the experience of the breakdown of traditional sources of community and identity in the urban wasteland, and also to the possibility of using these conditions to find God. What characterises everyone’s experience in the modern city, in which so many different social worlds and ways of living exist side by side in an ever-changing pattern – an experience also often marked by loneliness and uprootedness – is its fragmentary and fleeting nature. Our modern environment often seems inhospitable to the truly personal, and there are few stable points of reference which can be said to point, like sacraments, to the presence of God in and behind everything. On the other hand, in such an environment people may bind themselves to excessively authoritarian regimes, or make one aspect of their life, such as work or sex, a be-all and end-all, as the only way of providing a stable source of personal identity and purpose. Any model which seeks to preserve an attitude of openness to the world, whilst maintaining a sense of purpose which goes beyond it, must take these aspects of modern experience fully into account.

The wilderness model recognises that the world is full of presences, some of them divine, some of them demonic. Our experience of living in such an environment is full of ambivalences. According to the wilderness model, God is still understood to be encountered ‘out there’ in the world, as well as within the company of the redeemed. To obey the call of God in evangelism and pastoral action is to go out with him into the wilderness.
The but wilderness, as we know from the biblical accounts of the testing of the people of Israel and of Jesus, is a place of conflict as well as disclosure. Therefore we cannot determine beforehand, when entering a situation, whether our attitude should be one of resistance or acceptance. The wilderness itself will give us no clear clues as to the direction in which we may find God. For this we must rely on what we already ‘know’ about God within the company of believers. However, God is always moving beyond what we already know about him, and when we meet him in the wilderness, the encounter will still have about it something of the unexpected. Thus, according to this understanding, the mission of the Church is a pilgrimage in which we grow in faith and knowledge as we continue on the way. The goal of evangelism and pastoral care alike is not to gather people in and keep them in one place, but to nurture them and keep them on the move.

In the wilderness, nothing is taken for granted and all things are tested, including leadership. The wilderness is the place where human leadership is sought, but also broken. Moses grows in stature from the stammerer who meets God in the burning bush to the lawgiver at Sinai, but his failure nevertheless prevents him from entering the Promised Land. God is always in front of his people as an ultimate source of authority which cannot be entirely contained in their sacraments or leadership. This is Solomon’s insight too when, at the point of his greatest achievement in the building of the Temple, he cries: ‘But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain thee; how much less the house which I have built’ (1 Kings 8: 27 RSV).

Here we have an understanding of leadership in the Church which is based at root on what particular people in particular contexts help to disclose, rather than one based on the innate personal qualities, experience and professional status of the individual leader. All authority in the Church is, as it were, ‘lent’ by God. The Church itself only exists in that gap of time between the coming of Christ and the fulfilment of all things in him when all authority will be surrendered to God without the need of any intermediaries (cf. 1 Corinthians 15: 20-28). Thus spiritual authority hovers over particular people and particular functions, but it is not exclusive to them. They are foci, not containers, for an authority which God shares with his people as they obey his summons to come with him into the wilderness of the world.

I hope, in the following chapters, to unpack this very compressed statement in relation to the way ordained ministers see their work today, within church congregations and outside them. But I want to suggest at the outset, without seeking to replace the other two models entirely, the strengths which this wilderness model of ministry has in comparison with them.

First, it characterises the world as disputed territory in which various powers and authorities are in operation. No one is entirely in control, including God who has willed it should be so. Nevertheless God’s providential ordering of the world and our experience of it can be discovered in the act of faith which God himself enables, because he continues to call us in and through our experience of the world. This view of the world does full justice to the ambiguities and pitfalls we encounter in our experience, and to the need for judgement and discernment, without depriving us of the expectation that our ordinary experience can be sacramental, disclosing traces of the divine presence.

Secondly, it provides a balance between disclosure and conflict models for pastoral activity. This activity can be both a meeting of Christ in others and a liberation from hostile forces. Thirdly, it does justice to both the active and passive dimensions of pastoral experience. It leaves us room for understanding it as a way of receiving what God is trying to reveal to us as well as for acting on God’s behalf.
Finally, it preserves the eschatological perspective, the faith that everything is moving towards a final end. I have already hinted that the dangers associated with the other two models occur when this perspective is forgotten, either in an incarnational model which drives a wedge between the suffering Christ and the exalted One, or in a realized eschatology which sees membership of the saved community as in itself the goal for all mission and evangelism. God is bigger than the Church. The Church is possessed by him, not the other way round. In a real sense, we are not in control of ourselves or of our mission because God is. A defect shared by both the other models without this perspective is that they provide far too much control, either in the weight they give to our definitions of how God is present under the surface of ever-changing circumstances and experience, or in the authority with which we enter changing situations. On the analogy of the pillar of cloud (Exodus 13), we smut understand that the presence of God, or at least our apprehension of it in our contemporary experience, is always dynamic and changing refers, undertaken out of a strong faith in the gracious initiative God has taken with all of us, from evangelism. Pastoral care of this kind is at the same time a statement of faith in God’s future kingdom and a search for the truth of his presence and purpose hidden in creation. Every offering of pastoral care, every service to the gospel and every exercise of leadership should be tested against the background of God’s shepherding of the whole of creation, and not just of the Church. Even evangelism, if it is not undertaken in the spirit of compassion – if it does not, in other words, have a pastoral heart – ceases to be evangelism. For:

Man’s compassion extends to his neighbour
but the compassion of the Lord extends to everything that lives;
rebuking, correcting, and teaching,
bringing them back as a shepherd brings his flock.
He has compassion on those who accept correction,
and who fervently look for judgements.

(Ecclesiasticus 18: 12-14 JB)

MEETING ON THE ROAD: PASTORAL CARE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The Pastoral Ministry of the Church differs from other forms of professional advice and assistance in that it depends on a sharing of belief in the grace of God and a call to engage in struggle rather than self-edification or personal growth. It presupposes that grace is mediated at every level of life, not just the personal, but the social and communal as well; and that all forms of ministry, lay and ordained, point to this grace or uncover it in different ways by means of proclamation, challenge, forgiveness, strengthening and healing.

Since this belief is so central, it is interesting to ask oneself what episodes in the Gospels most clearly reveal for oneself as a believer the pastoral nature of Jesus’ own ministry. Our answers may reveal what assumptions we work from in our own ministry.

When I was a university chaplain the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus was the text which came to mean the most to me, because it seemed to characterise so well the situation I was in as a pastor to students. The story begins casually enough:

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talked with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. (Luke 24: 13-15 RSV).
As far as the disciples are concerned, their meeting with Jesus is a chance encounter. As they are walking an apparent stranger meets them and starts tagging along. This detail alone typified the hit-and-miss nature of much of my pastoral ministry among students. My office was on one of the main corridors in the college. When I was in it I was aware of the constant flow of humanity outside. Like the students, I spent much of my time wandering from one part of the building to another. When I did so, I would always try to make time so that if someone stopped me, or even looked as if they might, I would have time to spend with them. You could call this form of ministry loitering with intent. In the same way as a burglar watches a house for a long time before he finds the right moment to enter it, I would make myself wait, often for a long time, until someone would allow a real conversation to take place. Often that conversation would not have taken place at all if there had not been a long sequence beforehand, progressing from glances, to smiles, to open acknowledgment and short conversations in the corridor. The moment of sudden ease or intimacy, when it came at all, was entirely unpredictable. Many of my most important pastoral exchanges came about in this odd and inconsequential way. No amount of advertising on student noticeboards, or in official literature, would have acted as a substitute for it.

I suppose my suspicion of professional modes of behaviour stem a lot from this experience of ministry. For example, most professional modes of behaviour involve meetings by appointment. The more appointments you have in your diary, the more you feel in demand as a professional. I was careful, at first unconsciously and then very self-consciously, not to have a diary with so many appointments that there was not the chance, if someone knocked on my door, that we could have time together there and then. It seemed important in an institution in which students and academics alike spent their time meeting appointments and deadlines, that the way I arranged my day pointed to different priorities. This form of ministry could be extremely frustrating. There were days when one felt one had achieved very little. And yet I would describe it as an active rather than a passive ministry. It required a special sort of attention to be able to take advantage of the pastoral opportunities when they arrived. Without the awkward glances, the stilted conversations, the mutual embarrassment, the need for patience with the misapprehensions people had about my role and the wish they had occasionally to ridicule my supposed authority, these moments of ministry would not have arrived at all.

Again this is something which connects with the story in Luke 24. Jesus appears as a strange and allows himself not to be recognised at the outset, so that the recognition when it comes is all the more powerful. What the story said to me as a chaplain, was that I had to have the courage to remain faithful to what in professional terms was an undervalued form of ministry. In that way I might sometimes intervene in another person’s life in a way which revealed the presence of Christ and brought about real change. In an increasingly mobile society, when so many of our relationships with people are fractured and temporary, and as pastors we come in, as it were, half-way through a story, it is crucially important to make sure that space is made for this sort of ministry, lay and ordained.

Let us look more closely at the metaphors for ministry contained in the story from Luke 24, and how they are reflected in various forms of professional and non-professional care.

**The Help of Strangers**

Being on the road immediately suggests the metaphor of pilgrimage, but the first thing to note is that while the disciples are talking on the road, they are also at a point of crisis in their own lives. The thing that had given meaning to their lives has been taken away and they do not
know what to do. When Jesus meets them and asks them what they have been talking about, Cleopas says ‘Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’ and they express to the stranger their despair at the loss of a messiah whom they *had* hoped was the one to redeem Israel (vv. 17-21). This is a crisis of personal meaning and future hope for the disciples. They are in despair because now that their messiah has been proved false, in their eyes, by the fact of this death they no longer have a goal in life provided by discipleship, and a way of patterning their hope for the future.

This relates directly to many pastoral situations. Very often we come into contact with people at a moment of crisis, or in its immediate aftermath. Very often this crisis involves more than one person in a sudden loss of purpose and meaning, and they find they cannot help each other without the involvement of someone else from apparently outside the situation. Usually the people involved have already made a reading of their situation which puts them into some sort of cul-de-sac. Often this is connected with an experience of loss. It may be a bereavement, but it could equally be the loss of a loved object such as a romantic attachment, a cherished belief about themselves or another, a job, or plans for retirement. The shattering of hopes for the future is as important, if not more so, than the pain of separation in the present.

The crucial part which this loss of meaning plays in the disciples’ dilemma reminds us of the psychiatrist, Victor Frankl’s emphasis on ‘the will to meaning’ being as important to human flourishing as the will for pleasure or power. Human existence, he wrote, ‘is always directed to something or someone other than itself – be it a meaning to fulfil or another human being to encounter lovingly.’ The meaning of the resurrection relates directly to this need, as the disciples’ complaint to the stranger in this story makes plain. We may contrast the sense of loss and disorientation expressed in their first words to the stranger with their renewed vigour, purpose and sense of release at the end of the story when they recognise him for who he is. The same sense of loss fills Mary’s cry to the supposed gardener outside the tomb, again in answer to the stranger’s question: ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him’ (John 20:13). In both cases the resurrection means to the bereaved, the restoration of their personal sense of purpose, meaning and future hope as well as the restoration of the one they loved. But in order to discover this they have first of all to accept the great change that has taken place. There is no going back to the situation before the cross and the tomb.

Viktor Frankl developed his thought as a result of the almost mortal blow to his own sense of personal meaning and that of other survivors of the entombment of European Jewry in the Nazi concentration camps. He was himself an inmate of Auschwitz and Dachau. It is not surprising therefore that his thought relates so strongly to this story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They too are survivors, but at an almost unbearable cost. Many of the pastoral situations we become involved in have this character. Other people may deal more directly with the emergency which provoked the threat to personal meaning. It may even be something that happened a long time in the past. But we still deal with the aftermath for the walking wounded.

Jesus’ manner of approach to the disciples is very significant. He begins, not by announcing who he is, but by asking them about themselves. In situations of personal crisis and loss, what people need to do most of all is to tell their story. Often they cannot tell it to people within their circle because they feel the burden is too great, and so a friendly outsider provides them with a new opportunity. They may have got their situation totally wrong, and
we, as the outsider with greater knowledge, objectivity or faith, may see that they have. But before we can contradict them or introduce another interpretation we must first of all hear their own account.

So Jesus begins with a question. In the process of opening the situation and their feelings about it to one they suppose is a stranger and ignorant, the disciples begin to open themselves to change. Whereas their discussions so far have only trapped them into going around in circles, the intervention of this third party opens them to the possibility of seeing things differently. The ministry provided by Jesus to the disciples is challenging – it starts with a question – but at the same time it is humble; it does not force recognition from the disciples and preserves their freedom to react as they wish. To put this in counselling terms, Jesus keeps his greater knowledge of the situation in reserve. He allows the disciples to define the situation for themselves first, and then begins to work on changing it, still using the knowledge he shares in common with them through the Scriptures. A key issue here is that of personal freedom. Jesus could overrule the disciples. He chooses not to, in the interests of provoking a change that, when it comes, is all the more profound because it is unforced. This issue of respect for personal freedom is, as we have already noted elsewhere, one of the most critical for both pastoral care and evangelism.

Jesus helps the two disciples by getting them to tell their story first, and then reflecting it back to them, but in an altered context. In retelling the story he puts it into contact with the source of its meaning in Scripture:

O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (vv. 25-27).

I relate this in my own mind to how in some forms of therapy the counsellor enables the client to find direction by revealing a new meaning to the events that have already overtaken the person in the past.

There is a second aspect of the story I want to look at more closely. It is by keeping his personal identity a secret that Jesus helps the disciples. It is as a stranger and an outsider that he makes himself most available to them. While he is in this role he mirrors and reflects back to the disciples their own story and concerns, and reminds them of resources they already have at their disposal to help them (i.e., the scriptures and the interpretation that had been given to them in the life and teaching of Jesus when he was with them). In this hidden and unannounced way, Christ incognito acts representatively, in the sense that he represents and reflects back to the disciples a story which is already their own, if they could but see it. As soon as he is recognised for who he is, in the breaking of bread, he vanishes because his disciples no longer need his physical presence to assure them of the change that had indeed taken place.

It was my experience in chaplaincy especially, that in some pastoral encounters one was able to represent Christ in a way that paralleled this encounter between strangers on the road to Emmaus. For some sort of healing transaction to take place, it was not necessary that I should be previously known to the person seeking help, or that I should gain a very clear picture of what was at the root of their problem. Nor was it important that the person who came for help identified themselves as a believer or not. What was important on these occasions was that I should make myself available to listen, make evident by the sort of
attention I gave to individuals that I stood alongside them, and should question them about their feelings and what they saw as possible ways forward. It astonished me how sometimes in one session of real listening, whether this had happened formally by appointment or through a chance encounter on a corridor, one could make a real difference to the way someone dealt with their situation. Reflecting on this, I explained it partly by the fact that students are in a transitional state between school and career, adolescence and maturity, or, if they are already adults, between one focus in life and another. This provided a context, which in my own mind I associated strongly with the theme of pilgrimage, where change could come quickly and be recognised for what it was. But I also realised that the very lack of a strong professional image on my part, my lack of a strong and incontestable role in the institution, made me available to take on whatever role might be necessary for a person to begin a dialogue. What particular knowledge, skill and insight I brought to a pastoral situation was not as important as what I reflected for the person in need.

If I had asked individuals why they had chosen to come to me, in many cases I am sure they would not have been able to give a clear answer. Belief of an open and committed kind on the part of the person who wanted to talk was not essential. Nor was the fact that I was clearly identified as an institutional representative of the Church by reason of my ordination. My lay colleagues in chaplaincy would have been able to point to similar experiences. On the other hand, a form of half-belief, a wish to believe, or a memory of belief was often important in serving to identify me as someone who might be trusted at times when a person had lost their capacity to put their trust in God directly. In this way one could become a channel between the individual and the presence of God hidden in their situation, however hopeless it might seem.

Personally, it did not seem to me to be important that the person helped or listened to should, as part of the encounter, be brought to the point where they could openly acknowledge they had been helped by God. Only that there should be the possibility left of some such recognition in the future. To me this indicates a more profound trust in the providence of God and the work of the Spirit than an attitude which insists on an open acknowledgment as the be-all and end-all of every pastoral encounter.

Source: