



Pastoral Care Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Pastoral care at St Margaret's Church, Rainham exists to reflect the love of God through safe, compassionate, and responsible care of others. This policy sets out how pastoral care is offered, the boundaries within which it operates, and how we safeguard both those receiving care and those offering it.
- 1.2 Our core purpose of pastoral care is for our worshipping communities and those we come into contact with through the parish.

2. Who Offers Pastoral Care

- 2.1 Pastoral care is shared across the church:
 - **All** members are encouraged to care for one another through ordinary Christian relationships.
 - **Some** are recognised as having particular pastoral gifts and may serve in more structured ways.
 - **A few** may hold leadership, coordination, or oversight roles within pastoral care.
- 2.2 Those offering pastoral care must act within this policy and the church's safeguarding procedures, noting that the 'some' and 'a few' are carried out under the authority of the PCC.

3. Scope of Pastoral Care

- 3.1 Pastoral care at St Margaret's includes listening, prayer, visiting, encouragement, practical support, accompaniment through difficulty, and signposting to further help where needed. It may be offered informally by members of the church community, or formally through recognised pastoral roles.
- 3.2 Pastoral care is distinct from counselling or therapy. Where specialist or clinical support is required, appropriate referral will be made.

4. Core Principles

- 4.1 Pastoral care at St Margaret's is guided by the following principles:
 - Every person is valued as made in the image of God;
 - Care is offered with compassion, humility, respect, and integrity;
 - People are supported without judgement, coercion, or manipulation;
 - Pastoral relationships must not create unhealthy dependency;
 - The dignity, safety, and autonomy of those receiving care are paramount.

5. Boundaries and Good Practice

- 5.1 Pastoral carers must:
 - Work within their competence and recognise their limits;
 - Avoid exploiting trust emotionally, spiritually, financially, or sexually;
 - Maintain clear and appropriate boundaries at all times;

- Be mindful of power dynamics and dual relationships, (e.g. where the ‘carer’ has a relationship with the person receiving care outside of the church), particularly in small communities;
 - Step back or seek guidance where boundaries are at risk.
- 5.2 Pastoral care should never involve spiritual pressure, control, or the misuse of scripture or prayer.

6. Confidentiality

- 6.1 Confidentiality is central to pastoral care and builds trust.
- 6.2 What is shared in pastoral contexts is treated as confidential.
- 6.3 Confidentiality does not mean secrecy where there is a safeguarding concern or serious risk of harm.
- 6.4 The limits of confidentiality should be explained clearly, especially in more formal pastoral relationships.
- 6.5 Information will only be shared with consent unless safeguarding obligations require otherwise.
- 6.6 Any written or electronic records must be minimal, secure, and handled in line with data protection requirements.

7. Safeguarding

- 7.1 Pastoral care at St Margaret’s operates within the church’s safeguarding policy.
- 7.2 Any concerns about the safety of a child or vulnerable adult must be reported promptly via safeguarding procedures.
- 7.3 Pastoral carers must not promise absolute confidentiality.
- 7.4 Appropriate DBS checks and safeguarding training are required for relevant roles.
- 7.5 Where abuse is disclosed or suspected, safeguarding takes priority over pastoral confidentiality.

8. Care for Pastoral Carers

- 8.1 Those offering pastoral care are encouraged to care for their own wellbeing.
- 8.2 Pastoral carers should ensure they have appropriate support, rest, and space for reflection.
- 8.3 No one should offer pastoral care when unwell, impaired, or overwhelmed.
- 8.4 Pastoral carers are encouraged to seek supervision, guidance, or external support when needed.
- 8.5 The church recognises the importance of resourcing and supporting those who care for others.

9. Complaints and Concerns

- 9.1 Any concerns or complaints about pastoral care practice should be raised with the clergy or churchwardens and handled in line with the church’s complaints and safeguarding procedures. Complaints will be taken seriously, handled fairly, and addressed promptly.

10. Review

10.1 The PCC will regularly review this policy to ensure it remains fit for purpose, reflects current safeguarding guidance, and supports healthy pastoral practice.

11. Adoption of this Policy

11.1 The PCC of St Margaret's Church formally accepted this policy at the PCC meeting held on 22 January 2026.